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AAWC

the right to a better life for women and children in red light areas

Newsletter No. 48



YOUR SUPPORT HELPED US



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The start of a new year set the cycle of major impacts in motion at Apne Aap Women's Collective. With well-established processes for virtual learning, continued sanitization, delivery of Covid-relief kits, frequent home-visits, and more, we welcomed 2021 with a self-assured Umeed, Udaan and Umang.

This quarter, we witnessed many take the journey from dependence to self-sustenance, across all the three programs. Our beneficiaries reflected the confidence to initiate change in several aspects of their lives. Not only did we see their strengths, but also, their gratitude and their immense ability to express the same. Celebrations and occasions like Annual Sports Day for Udaan, International Women's Day, and Holi among many others colored the first quarter of 2021 in vibrancy and enthusiasm. With invigorated spirits, our beneficiaries crossed milestones of progress in their academics as well as self-development.

Some of our Umeed beneficiaries mastered making mehendi cones, mehendi designs, and herbal facewash powders through our vocational training classes. Driven by diligence, practice and industriousness, they were able to market and sell the products and services in their locality. The new found capacities and the resulting source of income generation instilled great confidence and a sense of pride in the women.

The Udaan and Umang beneficiaries also made us proud in this quarter. Schools commended the academic progress of many Udaan girls, while also acknowledging their prowess in art and craft. The young beneficiaries of Umang, demonstrated their honesty, social skills and improved cognitive abilities in several heart-warming incidences. The start of the year has been exactly how it should be – full of hope, ambition and joy.



Women mastered making mehndi designs and herbal facewash powder and also **generated income** by marketing, and selling their products and skills confidently.

Increased interest of many beneficiaries who attended the adult literacy classes, led them to **invest** their own money in **buying books** to practice at home and learn better.

Due to AAWC awareness and medical camps many women undertook the idea of **family planning**, and many more mothers got their **children immunized**.

Beneficiaries, who got their accounts made with the assistance of AAWC services **received funds** under a government welfare scheme and expressed immense gratitude.

Strong rapport building results in an increase in enrolments:

Regular identification, interaction and rapport building by our outreach workers has strengthened the trust between the community and AAWC team. The increased trust reflects in the increased number of enrolments in the Umeed program this quarter. In thorough individual visits, our outreach workers informed the women about shelter home facilities and provisions for kids that were made available through the Child Welfare Committee referrals. The group visits covered information about general medicine, hospital facilities, shelter home facilities, while various initiatives were also undertaken with regards to health and documentation. Several area activities were conducted to break myths and spread awareness about prevalent superstitious beliefs, importance of skill training, girl child awareness, hand wash activities, importance of maintaining hygiene, social distancing norms and other relevant topics. New indirect beneficiaries have started attending these sessions regularly.

Beneficiaries received funds under government welfare scheme:

The outreach team was focused on making ration cards for the women beneficiaries so that they can avail the benefits of the government welfare scheme as well as attain ration at a subsidized rate. The beneficiaries were assisted with making their Aadhar card, pan card, birth certificates or affidavits in case of a missing birth certificate or if the delivery did not take place in a hospital. Our awareness sessions informed the beneficiaries about the importance and benefits of having these documents and hence, women persevered to get their identity documents with the help of our team.



Medical Camp at Kamathipura Center



Adult literacy classes in the area



Ration Distribution



International Women's Day Art Activity

The Umeed beneficiaries experienced increased confidence, which showed in their efforts to complete bank, documentation or Child Welfare Committee processes independently. Many beneficiaries came forward to open their bank accounts, and many insisted on having their own post office savings account. They initiated enquiries, asking more details as well as assistance. Some beneficiaries got their spellings corrected to ease the bank account processes, while some wanted to open their children's accounts and procure ATM cards as well. The women made it a point to inform the organization when they received funds through bank accounts under government welfare schemes and many expressed heartfelt gratitude for the same.



New income generation sources instil confidence in women:

A few women beneficiaries are undergoing job skill training. Continued follow up reveals that they are motivated and await completion to attain a job. A few beneficiaries are being introduced to basic skill training programme, where they learn to create simple new products. The women have learned how to make herbal facewash and even Mehendi designs and have already started making an income from the same. They are able to market their product in the area and get customers for the same. This has given them a new found confidence. Seeing them excel at what they do, other women from the area are gradually showing an interest in learning the skills.

The practice for tailoring classes continue in full swing. Previously, the women needed a lot of encouragement and constant reminders to come for these income generation classes; however, it has been observed that the beneficiaries have become punctual and responsible about the same. With the newly introduced online skill training classes women are learning to make sellable products from waste material. They proudly show their creations like bowl covers, book covers, satin flowers, book marks, wall organizers, bows, draw string bags, present pockets and more. They also express their desire to learn newer things and are excited about the possibility of learning new skillsets.

To introduce the beneficiaries to new job skill training opportunity, they were taken for exposure visits to organizations involved in advanced skill training. They showed immense interest and listened to the facilitator of the training carefully. They confidently asked their queries and also expressed their willingness to attend the advanced tailoring course.

Enthusiastic participation from women in all celebrations:

Many festivals and important days were celebrated in this quarter. A Haldi Kumkum ceremony was held to build community bonding in the area. On the birth anniversary of Savitri Bai Phule, the women were made aware about Jyotiba and Savitri Bai's contribution towards girl education. Republic Day, Makar Sankranti and Women's Day was celebrated with great zest.

The women participated in the recreational monthly music and dance sessions with equal enthusiasm. These activities gave them a much needed space to unwind, rejuvenate and express themselves.

Women look forward to our nutrition, advice and counselling:

The women's focus on their health has considerably improved. Unlike before, the PLWHA beneficiaries look forward to collecting their daily nutrition. Many refer their friends for nutrition distribution, thereby reducing their consumption of junk food as well as daily expense. The women ask for advice from the outreach workers, in case they notice a weight loss or weight gain. Contrary to prior observation, many have started drinking 4-5 litres of water every day. There is an average weight gain of 1-2 Kgs in majority of the Umeed beneficiaries who receive nutrition.

HIV and TB identification as well as treatments and medical referrals are being carried out diligently. With hospital visits, ART medicines, ANC and PNC sessions, cancer day activities, the outreach team has been in constant touch with the beneficiaries. Health Camps for Anti-Natal Care and Pre-natal care, and an awareness session on Anti-natal care was conducted. This led new beneficiaries to enrol with AAWC post the camps. Many women undertook the idea of family planning, and many mothers got their children immunized. More ANC women have started registering themselves early with the hospital. The beneficiaries are motivated to continue their medicines and treatments. Many indirect beneficiaries are also seeking advice of the outreach team. Owing to the constant efforts of our team, the women have become more receptive to reliable guidance and prefer hospitals and doctors, instead of seeking self-medication or going to the quacks in the area.

Major counselling sessions for the patients, as well as general counselling sessions for the beneficiaries continue to create a safe space for the women. They are able to find relief and develop better coping mechanisms as well as discuss issues like substance abuse, relationships, brothel problems and other personal issues. They eagerly look forward to the feedback received from our outreach workers.

The beneficiaries have **adopted a self-study approach** and have become proactive about taking responsibility for their studies, instead of depending on tuition

A beneficiary **secured the first and second positions** in her class competitions at school

A beneficiary was selected from her class on the basis on merit to apply for a **scholarship**

Udaan girls were commended by their schools for **attendance and punctuality** as well as their **proWess** in academics and art and craft



Udaan Mother's Meeting at Falkland Road Center

Support for mothers, ease teacher-student communication:

The outreach workers conducted frequent home-visits and through the monthly meetings the mothers of Udaan beneficiaries were oriented about online classes. Constant communication was maintained with mothers whose children were at the AAWC night shelter, to discourage them from taking the child back home. They were explained about its consequences on their child's health and academics. Regular follow-ups were undertaken to understand the needs of the beneficiaries in the current scenario. Owing to the well-established rapport with the women of the community, the communication process between the teachers and the Udaan beneficiaries was smooth throughout this quarter. The mothers were informed and advised to not allow their children to play outside in late in the evening. Follow-ups regarding the same are in process.

Awareness and assistance increase mothers' participation:

A principal member from Child Welfare Committee was called to hold an awareness session for the community, which reduced the mother's fears about shelter home facility to some extent. Regular follow-ups from shelter home facilities revealed that the beneficiaries currently placed in other institutions were healthy and coping well with their new surroundings. An Udaan mothers meeting conducted to impart information on importance of immunization, and days of immunization in a nearby health dispensary. A session on oral hygiene was also conducted for the mothers of the beneficiaries. They learned tips and easy steps to maintain oral hygiene and were happy to receive free toothpastes.

The outreach workers facilitated regular communication between mothers and children, and also continued follow-ups regarding identity documents and savings accounts. Another session was conducted where the outreach workers worked with the mothers of Udaan beneficiaries to help them understand the benefits and importance of saving, while also helping them to curtail their expenditure with better planning. Post this sessions, Mothers showed interest and came forward to get Adhaar card and savings account made. Our team took continuous follow-ups to help mothers save money for their children. Home-visits were conducted to get a better understanding of available documents and a few mothers were helped to get their cheques cleared. It has been observed that mothers are willing to open their bank accounts and saving process. Some have already started depositing small amounts in their account.

Wholesome nutrition and care aids healthy growth in beneficiaries:

The beneficiaries at the day and night center showed remarkable pro-activeness during the preparation of their diet charts. Breakfast, Lunch, Evening Snack, and Dinner given as per the new diet chart. They looked healthier, owing to their wholesome diet of vegetables, poultry, fruits, sweets and daily intake of Multivitamins, Ferrous Sulphate Syrup, Calcium and Moringa Seeds. They were also served special food like Puri, Bhaji and Kheer during Makar Sankranti and other celebrations. The Udaan girls enjoyed their meals and asked for extra servings as well. The beneficiaries who were not at the centre, were being provided with daily breakfast and Khichdi. This preparation was served with different lentils to make it more interesting. Anthropometric measures reflected that the weight of many beneficiaries increased by an average of 0.7 to 3.1 kg. In some beneficiaries, an increase in height by 0.2 to 2 centimetres was recorded. A few girls, who are a part of the football club at their school, were observed and their progress was recorded. The beneficiaries were able to perform several exercises ranging from jumping jacks to push-ups and other activities, owing to higher fitness levels.

A session on menstrual hygiene was conducted in collaboration with the FPA, wherein the beneficiaries learnt about periods. The girls retained values like taking full control of one's body and being receptive to the advice of guidance from elders or teachers for their wellbeing. Additionally, Karate sessions have resumed in full swing, keeping the social distance norm in check. Beneficiaries regularly practice and even enjoy their meditation sessions. This quarter's healthy habits session, touched upon various hygiene aspects and served as a quick reminder session for the beneficiaries to keep their habits in check. It was observed that they later imparted their newly gained knowledge to the younger beneficiaries. A therapeutic session by Art first introduced the kids to experience how primary colors form secondary colors. They were fascinated throughout the session and demonstrated their learning in their paintings later. A meditation session by Apnapana was also conducted.

Self-dependence and academic focus reflect in individual progress:



There is a noticeable improvement with enhanced concept clarity, adoption of self-study, improved reading skills and problem-solving skills. The children have started enjoying the online classes since the visuals and imagery keep them interested for longer span. The staff members have extensively focused on guiding the beneficiaries to resolve their doubts from the teachers available through the day at the centre. A beneficiary stood first in slogan writing and got the second position in her school on Sports Day. Another Udaan beneficiary was selected for a Scholarship due to their diligence, determination and hard work.

Regular teachers' meetings, GK sessions, educational games, spoken English sessions, and story-reading sessions keep the children involved in engaging activities that indirectly help their academics. The beneficiaries are able to better communicate the intended information to younger children in the Umang-Udaan Sessions. Many look forward to the community classes. They feel happy that they are able to stay in touch with their school friends and teachers VIA online classes. Most of the students have shown improvement in their ability to comprehend and read Hindi and English. A beneficiary also reflected on their own previous lack of confidence and the newly gained grasp over spoken English.

Recreation and empowerment activities give beneficiaries' emotional health a boost:

Activities in the Art and Craft sessions, Music and Drama classes have helped the beneficiaries channelize and express themselves much better. A social skills session, imparted knowledge on various values and the beneficiaries were particularly influenced by the value of being grateful. This quarter, they were introduced to positive thinking and coping mechanisms that they can employ when they feel scared or worried. The art sessions, ensured free experimentation with art to fuel the children's creativity. Our beneficiaries explored various emotions like anger, excitement, love and also their own interpretations of the same. They also learned about not making promises when they feel too happy, or not making decisions when they are angry. They learnt about using art to express themselves, when they feel overwhelmed.

The internal committee meeting in this quarter witnessed increased problem solving skills among the beneficiaries. They feel empowered because of the delegated roles and responsibilities, since they get a chance to explore their leadership capacities. Under easy-cooking, the beneficiaries made egg-rolls, cakes and even learnt how to make aloo paratha. Apart from cooking, they invested their energy in vocational training classes, where they used materials like wool, old cloth, cardboard, foam and other basic supplies to make hand-made keychains, scrunchies, cord organizer, block printing on cloth etc.

This quarter was eventful with various festivals and celebrations. The birth anniversary of Savitri Bai Phule and Shivaji Maharaj was observed at AAWC, where in the children learnt and discussed about their contribution to our history. They tapped into their desire to do something for the nation as they celebrated Republic day. On Makar Sankranti they learned about cultural practices like making 'til ladoos' and kites. The International Women's Day celebration witnessed gestures of gratitude from the beneficiaries towards their teachers, staff and other AAWC members. The beneficiaries also celebrated an eco-friendly Holi with colors, music, dance and sweets. Apart from the festival celebrations, the children forward to their garden visits and Sunday movie screenings and express how rejuvenated they feel due to these activities.





Due to constant health hygiene sessions with mothers and the beneficiaries, majority of the children now come to classes wearing **cleaner masks and clothes**.

The children, without exception wish the teacher 'Good Morning' and also use **golden words** like 'Please' or 'Sorry' in their communication.

Our young beneficiaries have started using English words in their communication and are also **able to talk**, when asked **about 'self'**.

The children's dedication and joy of learning was reflected in multiple incidences when they specifically asked the teacher for **more 'Homework'**.

Mothers take pro-active efforts for brighter future of their child:

Regular home-visits and consistent follow ups by the outreach workers ensured that the established rapport only strengthens between the women of the community and AAWC. A few major observations by our team revealed that the mothers have started talking to their children about studies. They also keep a check on the child's behavior. Many have shown increased interest in Balwadi and help the teachers to arrange chairs, and tables, also expressing their desire to learn. If there are any fights among women and customers in the area, the mothers take the initiative to ask them to calm down and not disturb the Balwadi session. In response to the regular follow-ups about Documents, Bank Accounts, and Sukanya Yojna (a social welfare scheme for girl child), mothers have started putting efforts in trying to procure certain documents from their village. Form filling for ration card and other documents is in process, while the team continue to reinforce the importance of saving during their rapport building with the mothers. A child welfare committee member conducted an interactive session, where in the women could enquire and clarify their doubts about shelter home facilities. Women were attentive during the session and a lot of their prejudice dissolved and a few came forward later to give an application to enroll their kids in shelter homes. The women have also started to understand the value of documents like birth certificate, pan card, aadhar card, ration card etc. and cooperate with the team in procuring the same.

The impact of health and hygiene session is reflected in the children, who come to the community classes wearing clean masks and decent clothes. The mothers have even started sending the kids on time. They enquire when the child can be sent to the center again. Many come forward to ask for books, and slates. Regular counseling sessions led many mothers to stop giving money to their child. They proudly share that the children study and complete their homework sincerely and eagerly ask to be dressed up and ready for their balwadi classes on time.

Reduced health issues due to multivitamins and nutrition:

The Umang beneficiaries at the day and night shelter, expressed how they enjoyed the chappatis, pulav, chicken biryani and eggs, fruits custard and even special preparations like Puri, Bhaji and Kheer. Breakfast, lunch, evening snacks and dinner is being given as per the new diet chart. Beneficiaries ask for more servings as well. The children are encouraged to eat everything in their plate and also to follow eating etiquettes. Since the diet includes vegetables, poultry, fruits, and sweets, the children look healthier and it was observed that there were reduced health issues in this quarter. The daily multivitamins, ferrous sulphate syrup, calcium and moringa seeds make a great difference in the children's energy levels. The beneficiaries enrolled in at Falkland Road centre, were provided with breakfast distribution and wholesome khichdi every day. It was observed that children not only enjoyed the Khichdi, but also attended the community classes regularly. Bottles of multivitamins were given to the mothers and regular follow-up ensured that the children were given their vitamin supplements consistently.

All Umang beneficiaries were trying to follow the healthy practices taught to them in daily classes and majority of the children attended community classes and followed tips and lessons taught to them in the health and hygiene sessions. Exercises like jumping, running, body movements and meditation were conducted every day by night shelter staff in the garden or at the centre. This has improved the children's diet and concentration and they also expressed feeling fresh because of the exercise.

Mothers and beneficiaries were assisted with immunization and medical care:

Women who had not immunized their kids were counselled to visit the hospital and get the due vaccinations. It was observed that some mothers were ignorant about immunizing their kids but the counselling sessions by the outreach workers helped them understand the importance of immunization for child growth and health. Vaccination of Hepatitis-B was provided to the Umang other beneficiaries between the ages of 8 days and 2.5 months. Continuous reminders and follow ups were done for the mothers to remember the next vaccine date. Cough syrup, medicine and steam provisions, hand wash practices and social distancing norms were followed at the center and immediate intervention and medical check-ups were provided for cough or cold.

Improved identification, memory, language and social skills:

The Oral assessments revealed that children were able to clearly identify colours, numbers, alphabets, shapes, names of flowers and animals. They were also able to recite rhymes and songs with much more confidence. The beneficiaries appreciated when their friends answered the teacher's question correctly and expressed the same by clapping in unison. Many children have become better with counting, additions, and framing small sentences. The children could distinctly remember the names of week days, shapes, body parts, colours and more. Their academic performance has improved in terms of habits, phonics, language, basic math etc. The teacher observed noticeable speech skill improvement, fine motor skill development and cognitive and language improvement.

Beneficiaries are able to relate their observations with their learnings and remember to say 'sorry', 'please' and 'thank you'. They wish their teachers every morning and demonstrate honesty in their behaviour. Children proactively ask questions during their General Knowledge sessions and love writing on their notebooks and slates. They are especially motivated during the E-learning sessions. These online sessions introduce the kids to new poems, cartoons and educational videos on vegetables, names of the fruits, names of the vehicle, good habits, bad habits, etc. Mostly, beneficiaries sit glued to the laptop and watch attentively, since they like the stories and the audio-visuals. Children create different things from provided waste material and are able to explain what they

have created. They also enjoy games and puzzles and the time they require to solve the puzzles is now comparatively lesser. They look forward to their art and craft sessions with enthusiasm. They have learnt to cycle and also to share their toys and games.



The social skills and group session are being conducted regularly, where in the Balwadi teacher and night shelter staff discuss on various topics like good behavior, discipline, honesty, personal hygiene, respecting elders, not wasting water, importance of greetings, etc. As an impact of these sessions, we have seen the children use dustbins to throw garbage, diligently wear masks and ask for a sanitizers as well. Some beneficiaries have confessed about eating junk food and realized that it isn't a good habit. They have become more disciplined and learnt to form and line and walk in a queue. They talk about their strengths and weaknesses and follow the instructions of their teachers. Group activities have taught them to wait for their turn and demonstrate their social skills. The children have become a lot more observant, creative, and expressive.

Recreations and festivals make the happy days happier:

Children regularly played simple indoor games such as passing the ball and also shared observations from their regular garden visits. They thoroughly enjoyed the music and dance sessions that are designed to boost the beneficiaries' creativity and muscle movement. The beneficiaries celebrated Republic Day, Shivaji Maharaj and Savitribai Phule's Birth Anniversary, Makar Sankranti and Holi in this quarter. They also made special crafts and enjoyed the sweets, dance and music with their teachers and friends. The enthusiasm of our young beneficiaries added a zestful flavour to all our celebrations!

SUCCESS STORIES



When potential met opportunity, Seema was hesitant to take the leap. Associated with AAWC since the past eight years, Seema was one of our Umeed beneficiaries who denied job placements since she couldn't leave her younger daughter alone. Empathising with her situation, our outreach workers initiated consistent counselling and follow-ups to help her broaden her horizon. At the same time, our team was able to find a safe environment to place her daughter, so that Seema was relieved of her concerns. In this quarter, she took a leap of faith and is prepared to accept a job placement and move towards the direction of a dignified income source.



When she first joined us, Anita was very reluctant to sit in the community classes. Her mother who was completely against sending her to the centre used to come to pick her up earlier than the said time. The teacher tried to explain why it was important for Anita to sit through the entire two hours, but the mother gave excuses and didn't pay much heed. Eventually Anita settled in the class and started showing interest by learning and participating in the activities. This quarter when her mother came earlier than the said time, to pick her up, Anita herself refused, saying she wants to study and that she'll go with her mom only after she has finished studying. Her mother was pleasantly surprised at this and shared that it's the first time her child, was so willing to stay with the teacher and study.



When she landed in Mumbai, Shiny found it difficult to understand, communicate or mingle. She joined the AAWC night shelter in 2018, when she was brought to Mumbai with her mother from West Bengal. One of the major challenges was her lack of motivation towards academics. Our teachers and the team, worked with her consistently to instil discipline in her and help her feel more anchored. With specific attention to her academics, she soon showed immense improvement and started finding hope in the new direction her life had taken. Currently, studying in the eighth grade of a BMC school, she is among the top performing students of her class. She has been appreciated by her teachers and was also selected for a scholarship class by her teacher. She has recently also been elected as one of the child representatives of the child management committee at AAWC and will be interacting with experts from the fields of education, health and more.

ANNUAL EVENT

An all-day Annual sports event for Udaan was held in this quarter. The beneficiaries were pumped with excitement to give their best in all the games. The girls participated with great zeal in sports like relay, frog jump, skipping, three legged race and more. It was delightful to see them motivate each other and their teams and also develop the strategies to win their game. The felicitation event held at the end of the day, brought immense pride to the participants who won medals and certificates, while other beneficiaries expressed their determination to perform better and win in the next annual event.

CHALLENGES

Due to the COVID pandemic we couldn't take certain beneficiaries back into the centre to ensure the protection of children already in the centre. Community classes were introduced to help these children in the area overcome any hindrance in their learning. However the small community space is a major challenge that limits us from conducting educational activities for more children. We are looking for a bigger space to accommodate a larger number of child beneficiaries.

STAFF CAPACITY TRAINING

AAWC undertook several capacity building programs for the staff of Umeed, Udaan and Umang in this quarter. Members from Child Welfare Committee conducted a seminar for the entire AAWC staff. These sessions informed the staff about the functions of CWC and also the importance of individual care plan for each child. The training program helped the staff gain more clarity about the role of Child Welfare Committee. The team also learnt procedures like preparing indigenous child care plans or detailed growth charts etc. On the world Tuberculosis day, a seminar on Tuberculosis awareness conducted by BMC officials for Umeed staff. It began with a drawing/rangoli competition for the staff and went on to become an interactive session that informed about the causes, symptoms, treatments, challenges as well as government schemes for Tuberculosis patients. An official from the disaster management committee addressed the staff members of all programs in this quarter and equipped them with information on Dos, Don't and tips to follow in case of a fire hazard. The session was packed with interesting anecdotes and easy steps to remember. The official additionally motivated staff members to be vigilant during the pandemic





Keychain by an Udaan Beneficiary



**FROM
THE
HEART**



Drawing and Coloring
by an Udaan Beneficiary



Collage by an Umang Beneficiary



Collage by an Umang Beneficiary



Drawing and Coloring
by an Udaan Beneficiary



Bracelet by an Udaan Beneficiary