

Annual Report

2021

2022



South Kolkata Hamari Muskan



Table of Contents

01	Introduction	p 0X
02	Pampers	p 0X
03	Nurture: Earn as You Learn	p 0X
04	Our Strategy	p 0X
05	inforgraphic	p 0X
06	Acknowledgements	p 0X

Introduction

In the summer of 2021, South Kolkata Hamari Muskan (SKHM) celebrated its twelfth year. YES! We turned 12 on March 2021, but we celebrated on the last day of July with a teeny-tiny ceremony in presence of staff and students. SKHM's goal this year was to reinforce steps taken to fight poverty during an on-and-off pandemic. So, even though we wanted to invite our extended family of friends and well-wishers, we could not, due to space and financial constraints. In 2021-2022, monthly ration disbursement continued till December 2021; as did emergency ration allowance, digital recharge allowance, and extra ration for stakeholders with some form of autoimmune diseases.



SKHM's 2021 Steps

Initiatives continued from 2020-2021:

- 354-days of outreach achieved by field outreach workers, caregivers, teachers, etc.
- 287 days of classes (online and face-to-face)
- 200 (approximate) families received monthly-rations till December 2021
- 30 (approximate) BPL families received special food-allowance during especially harsh months
- 2 individuals with auto-immune diseases received extra ration support
- 12 stakeholders received special support after 3 buildings fell in Bowbazaar red-light area
- 9 new recruits joined SKHM
- 5 families (living on footpaths) receive tarpaulins, candles, matches and infant food powder
- 4 specialized health-camps held
- 3 workshops on health and hygiene
- 2 men join the DIGNITY team and start working alongside the women
- 1 new center added to Sonagachhi

Actions	Details	Outcome
Dry Ration Distribution	Rice 15-kilos; <i>masoor dal</i> 1-kilo; mustard oil 1-kilo; sugar 1-packet; salt 1-packet; soya-bean chunks 1-packet; <i>masala</i> packets; eggs 30; potato 2-kilos; dates 1-packet; Amulspray infant food and hygiene kits (masks, sanitizers, soaps, shampoos detergents, sanitary pads, etc.)	Food Security Stronger immunity Improved concentration Less health-related anxiety Better participation of stakeholders
Health & hygiene sessions with stakeholders (mothers & children)	Issues tackled: diseases prevalent in the red-light area, reproductive health, safety & security in the red-light area, education & rights, early marriage & pregnancy	Dissemination of information Awareness on health & hygiene: teen and adults Better decision-making within families
Adult literacy & digital literacy classes (face-to-face & online)	Daily literacy classes for illiterate, semi-literate or school-dropout women & men along with compulsory computer classes	Understanding one's child's education requirements Better decision-making power Awareness of the world
Earn as You Learn	Paid internships within SKHM for SKHM senior students (Class XI onwards)	Learning punctuality & professionalism Alternative, dignified livelihood which looks good on a resume
Onsite health camps for women along with free health tests for 180 individuals	Women and children (and some men) received weekly and monthly check-ups with reputed doctors across Kolkata at a time when health care was becoming harder to obtain due to emphasis on emergency COVID-19 protocols	Early detection of diabetes, hypertension, anxiety-related issues, eye-problems, etc.
9 training sessions for the women supplemented with literacy classes	9 in-house training for 30 mothers Cooking & canteen management Costume jewellery-making course Embroidery & stitching Jam & jelly making Tailoring & dress-making Beautician's course Second-generation project	30 women are making astute financial choices and are better able to support their children in their education



Pampers

An year of marked improvements

SKHM's Pampers program is for children between ages 0-6 years. It was launched at Bowbazaar and Sonagachhi red light areas in 2019 as a PILOT project and then between 2020 and 2021, it began as a full-fledged program. Pampers is a one-of-a-kind initiative on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Early Childhood Care and Protection (ECCP) in the red light area.

In 2021, in order to prepare caregivers and teachers, especially newly-recruited ones (Kabita Ghosh, Madhu Das and Sangita Das); SKHM teacher Puja Singh trained the Pampers team in ECCE and ECCP. Mz Singh was an ICDS teacher and an SKHM teacher, and is currently on sabbatical.

Apart from the newbies, Puja Singh's Training of Trainers also included Nurture teachers and senior batch of students. SKHM's Pampers team expanded in 2021 with the inclusion of Riya Talukdar.

By the end of 2021, Pampers had **6 caregivers and 6 teachers** in the two fields. These experts worked with **26 children** in the two fields combined. At the end of 2022, SKHM is expecting the numbers to rise even further to **30**, as there are several children and mothers waiting for seats to open-up.

Suparna Rudra who handles the psychosocial aspect of Pampers; apprised parents and guardians on good habits and hygiene; sleep cycle and wash either face-to-face or online depending on which side of the lockdown Kolkata was on.

According to Montessori-trained teacher Champa Bose, in the past one year the students have learnt how to hold a pen, write basic alphabets in English and Bengali, draw shapes, identify colours and hold the fork and spoon while eating. They have also learnt that afternoons are for naps and early evenings are for playtime.

PAMPERS involves 6 caregivers and 6 teachers in the two fields. They work with 26 children in two fields combined.

Pampers in photos



Pampers: Early education, protection and care for children of working mothers and at-risk homemakers within the red-light area



INNOVATIONS 2021: Earn as you Learn



An Indian red light area functions as a society within itself. It has its own set of employment opportunities, work ethic and work norms. Early on, children are "groomed" to accept a handful of illegal and unsafe professions as normal and safe—be it selling marijuana (which is not legal in India) or selling *desi* alcohol (which is also not legal unless sold by a licensed trader which most people in the red-light area are not) or running small-time gambling dens referred politely as *lotto dens* or lottery shops.

Entry into such "jobs" and the inevitable grooming for the same, starts young—families that run these trades take in neighbourhood children (especially ones hailing from economically-underprivileged families) while they are barely five or six years old and make them "a part of the Family". At the beginning, children are encouraged to earn as errand boys & girls (cleaners / cooks / "little helpers") who either make tea or get you tea. Sometimes, the sum received for this "help" is substantial (for a young person). Kids are also encouraged to partake in whatever illicit / illegal / unsafe "stuff" that the family deals in (if it is a substance).

However, not every family in the red-light area is poor. Not all youths (especially men) are disenfranchised. In India, patriarchy (celebration of perceived "male" characteristics and scorn for perceived "female" characteristics) encourages a breed of men who feel entitled to preferential treatment when compared to the women from the larger society and community; but have little to no skill-set or education to offer in exchange.

New internship opportunity for the students right in Muskan's safe centers

These are individuals, who have been told that they are "special" and have had money handed to them either by their mothers or their sexual partners. These are usually children of pimps or traffickers or landlords and landladies who have cash to spare.

These young people enjoy the money at the same time don't feel entirely comfortable with how it is earned. It is not rare to find a young man filled with machismo and deep sense of inadequacy, simultaneously. This duality affects all professional forays into the mainstream: on one hand young people expect to be paid handsomely at their jobs from the get-go irrespective of skill-set; on the other hand they do not wish to work too hard for it nor do they have the professional ethics that the mainstream works upon.

Nurture: Earn and Learn

Children of families which don't have much are easiest to groom. The bread-earners keep more than one job and are either too busy or too tired or too disenfranchised to tend to the needs of the children. At SKHM, we work with both sets of youths and young adults – the better-off and the poor.

When SKHM started in 2009 in Bowbazaar red light area, its students were young. Their needs were primary – an education that would lead to a professional career, wholesome nutrition that would aid both a healthy mind and a body, mental health support along with attention and care and a chance and the space to rest / relax / play.

But SKHM's first set of students, are no longer kids. SKHM's eldest student is 24-years-old. Her two friends are 23yo. All three are part of SKHM's Internship project for adults. And what about those children who followed these three young women closely? They came in with their elder sisters. They are now 15 and 16-year-olds. These youths are growing-up in an environment where expenditures (in employment and education) are increasing exponentially. They have needs that SKHM cannot meet (more than food, shelter and clothing). At the same time there are "employment choices" close by that are safe or legal. It was keeping the reality in mind that for a young person working temp jobs in a red light area is problematic at many levels: SKHM created Earn as You Learn.

EAYL encourages teenagers to work as "paid interns" with SKHM. It encourages teenagers to develop (mainstream) professional ethics. It offers them a series of jobs (as assistant teachers and teachers' aid) which are not only legal and safe but also play to their individual strengths. These temp. jobs include (in no particular order):

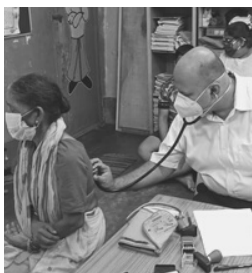
Assistant Teacher (science / humanities)
Laboratory Assistant (chemistry / physics)
Library Assistant
Outreach Assistant
Second Generation Project Assistant (Sec-Gen Assistant)
Fine Arts Teachers' Assistant

At the end of the project period (first batch) the young ones will also receive an "Experience Letter" much like any other Volunteer or Intern from any major Universities, who come to work with us at South Kolkata Hamari Muskan. At the end of the month, each student who qualifies for the Earn as You Learn project will be paid INR 800.00. For now 8 students are involved in EAYL. The students will work for one year.

Two of the senior students accompany Bela Chakraborty on the outreach walks-these students have chosen to help SKHM in data and outreach



Photos of the year



In the red light area, self-care does exist. However, its definition is different. It does not entail adopting a positive lifestyle which leads to emotional and physical health and happiness. It is focused on immediate gratification of pleasure (fried and roadside food rich in umami flavours but high in MSG content, cooked in old or unhealthy oils; cheap clothes, vibrant in colour but with textures that harm the skin during Indian summers; cheap jewellery that leads to skin infections along with liquor and gambling). As a result, by the time a woman is in her thirties, she has accrued a debt taken at a high interest rate (12%–25%) to purchase insignificant items that she derives pleasure from fleetingly. At the same time, the lifestyle leads to ill health. SKHM decided to target this lack of positive self-care and began health diagnosis through health camps; linking around 190 women to health and health-related referral services (as per need and when needed). Altogether 4 doctors (medicine specialist, a gynecologist, an eye-specialist, a doctor of general medicine and a pediatrician) and a health care worker and one pathologist have visited fields. The women have also benefitted from free check-ups which includes blood work as well as ECG and eye tests.

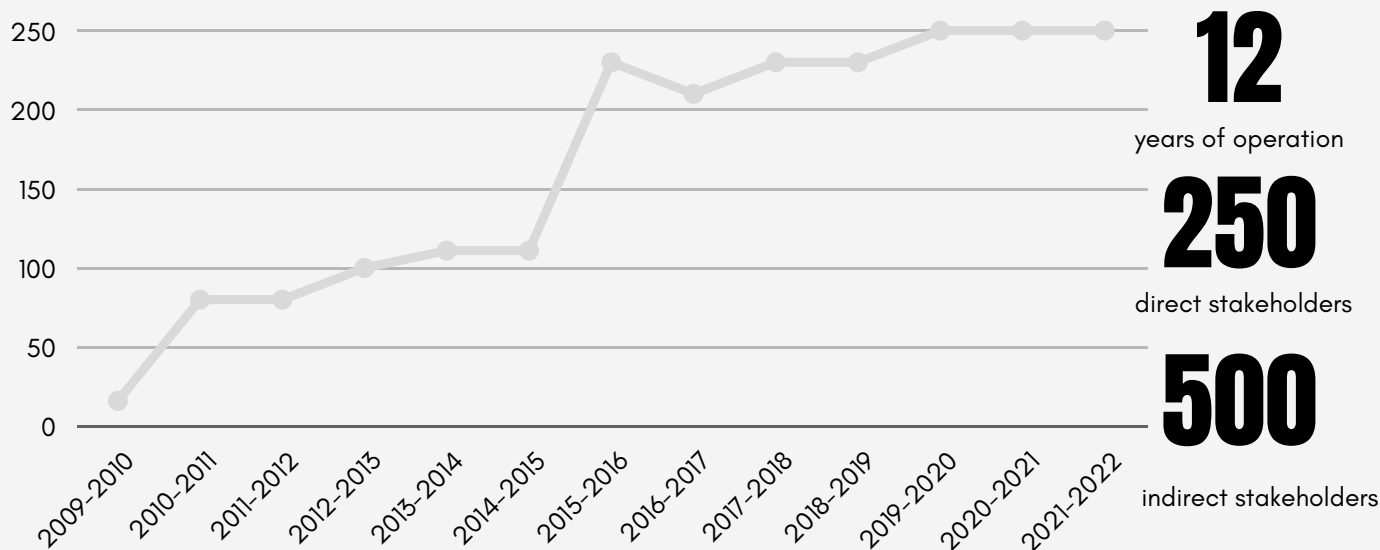
INNOVATIONS 2021: Health camps for all along with self-care sessions

Photos of the year



Steady rise in stakeholders

Here, you can add a brief line explaining your data.



The plan for 2021-2022 is to:

Strengthen training programs for the women and men of the community

Strengthen the education program further with career counselling sessions

Help students adjust to college life as and when they start it

Push more students to think about mainstream jobs

Bring more children into the folds of PAMPERS to ensure a safer childhood for those growing up in the red-light area

0%

Drop outs even in such tumultuous times
because of relentless effort of the field staff