

voice of change

Issue: 23, March 2020



From the CEO's Desk



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to share with you the latest edition of Voice of Change newsletter. This issue is dedicated to the 20 award-winning entries by the students of Satya Bharti Schools and our partner government schools across India at the national-level 'Design for Change' contest.

Holistic development is central to our approach of helping transform students into educated, confident, responsible, self-reliant and employable citizens of the country with a deep sense of commitment to their society. To inspire children to become change agents, community development campaigns have been introduced in schools' curriculum. Year after year, with their powerful campaigns against social odds, our children have brought visible transformation in the communities they live in.

The determination in our children brings about a wave of inspiration in each one of us at Bharti Foundation. Students have conducted awareness rallies around road safety, held meetings with community members to conserve water, organised workshops to educate village's elderly women who have never been to school, joined hands with local clubs to create community libraries, and many more.

Hope you find these stories as inspiring as we all do!

Jai Hind!

Mamta Saikia
Chief Executive Officer
Bharti Foundation

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Co-Chairman's Message



“An education with value system is what we need to give to our children.

*We are preparing humans who have the sense of nation building,
who have the sense of taking care of their elders,
who have the sense to fight against societal ills in the communities they live in...*

These children can go and influence anyone.”

Mr. Rakesh Bharti Mittal
Co-Chairman, Bharti Foundation

Paving the Way for a Safer Travel

The road leading to Satya Bharti School in Jejjaini village in Amritsar was damaged for almost a decade, and was prone to accidents, mostly in the rains.

A group of students, with hearts full of courage and hands ready to make an effort, came together to build a stable and sustainable pathway. The students faced several challenges, such as lack of resources to acquire soil, bricks and other materials and equipment necessary for building the pathway. But they were determined to bring a change.

The children shared the concept of a new road with their teachers, parents and leaders of the village panchayat, who promised to extend their support. Members of the community joined hands - while some bought bricks, others agreed to do soil filling; it became a community initiative, led by the students. Within weeks, the student-led team of individuals successfully built the road with their own hands, reducing the risks of injuries for the commuters.

The students encouraged the community members to bring about the desired change. Together, these students have inculcated a sense of responsibility, ownership and the power of unity to the entire community.





-Led by students, built by community : Road leading to Satya Bharti School in Jejjaini village in Amritsar

The RJs of Empowerment

The ability to communicate effectively enables children to articulate well, makes them confident and opens various opportunities for them in the future.

The students of Zila Parishad High School (Bharti Foundation's Partner Govt. School) in Telangana noticed that many children in the school feared speaking on a public platform. While some lacked confidence, some had performance apprehensions. A group of children, including those who could speak well in public, came together to address the challenge.

After a lot of brainstorming, the students came up with the idea of "School Radio." With permission from the Head Mistress, the students converted the school's store room into a radio station. They equipped the room with sound system and microphone used during the morning assembly.

The students who are good at communication used zero hours (lunch time) to encourage and engage as many students as possible in the school radio activity. On a daily basis, at least 10 students from a class assemble in the room, where each chooses a topic to speak on the radio. From reciting poems to singing songs, reading news, making announcements and more, the students began to use the platform to the most to express themselves, with confidence.



Ensuring Road Safety for a Safe Future

Road accident is a preventable problem, despite that, we lose many lives.

The students of Satya Bharti School, Bholian in Amritsar observed that many people in the village do not know/follow road safety rules. Sadly, a boy in the school also lost his father in a road accident as he was not wearing a helmet. To address the issue, a group of children came together and decided to steer efforts to spread awareness about wearing helmets and improve road safety.

Helped by their teachers and the village sarpanch, the children conducted many street plays and rallies to make the community aware the community on road safety. They went to nearby government schools as well to make the children aware about the same, so that they could pass on the instructions in their respective families and neighbourhood.

Going forward, the students plan to include traffic police personnel in the area to conduct bigger awareness sessions for a far reaching impact.



Fighting Abuse, Institutionalising Change

Children are sensitive souls and, by nature, they remain unsure of how and what they can communicate even with their parents and teachers. The senior children of Satya Bharti School in Bari Khas village, Shahjahanpur noticed that many children are not able to differentiate between 'good touch' and 'bad touch.' In addition, cases of road accidents and child kidnappings have instilled a sense of fear among the children.

The young change-makers got together to strategise on the tools and means that could be used to sensitize the young girls and boys in the village on 'child safety'. With the help of teachers, the students devised innovative platforms, including assembly sessions, group discussions and awareness campaigns in the community to spread the message far and wide.

In the sessions, the students introduced child helpline numbers, shared ways to save oneself in vulnerable situations, and familiarised traffic rules to the children, parents and members of the community. They also sensitised parents on the need to keep communication channels open with their children.



A Community Garden to Feed the Needy

In an interior village in Rangampet, Telangana, the children of MPUPS govt. school wanted to do something meaningful to ensure that no family sleeps empty stomach.

The group of children collaborated with 'Family Gardens Association' (a local club) and set up a community vegetable garden. The garden would function as a cooperative, where families in need could grow a portion of their vegetables there.

The children formed different groups that took care of different departments, such as family identification, vegetable choices, research and grain harvesting, irrigation system, and first aid.

Very recently, the beneficiaries (families), teachers and the group of children celebrated the first harvest of 'their' garden over a picnic party!



Imparting Skills to Empower Women

In Satya Bharti School Harinagar in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, a group of students decided to extend basic education among the women in the community. Most of the women who reside in the village do not know how to read or write. They are often dependent on male members of the family or neighbours to assist them in basic tasks, such as making a phone call, reading/writing or sending a message.

Inspired to help the women of the village, the group of students planned to conduct workshops to teach women and the elderly basic alphabets, numbers, words, calculations, and basic functions of a mobile phone. Leading the process, the students chose the venue, extended invitations, procured blackboards and other equipment, and assigned two students to one participant to ensure effective communication.

As the word spread, more women reached out to the students and attended the workshops. To make the learning process sustainable, scalable and impactful, the students developed a peer learning model, where a trained woman teaches other women in the community and passes on the skills to them.



Encouraging Children to be Empathetic Citizens

Every child deserves to be mentored not only to face the world but to change it as well! And our contribution should be to give our children a safe and happy environment so that they grow up to be confident, fearless and ready to change the world. And most of all, sow the seeds of empathy in their hearts.

Taking a positive step in this direction, students of Khatsoo Ripnar Brightstar School in Meghalaya came together to raise awareness among their peers and the community against bullying to make children more sensitive towards this issue. The students launched a holistic campaign for over a period of 30 days. It was organized in the school in the form of taking pledge in the morning assembly, organizing group discussions to encourage children to talk about bullying, displaying message against child abuse all over the school, and inviting speakers from Child Helpline to raise awareness among children.

The students also organized rallies in the community to highlight this subject among parents and other members. The campaign played a very important role in ensuring that children respect each other, and stand for each other.



-Students of Satya Bharti School in Cheemna, pasting reflectors on a roadside pole

Alert Today – Alive Tomorrow

In a recent incident, a student of Satya Bharti School, Cheemna in Punjab lost her uncle in an accident due to fog, and absence of lights in the village road.

To ensure that no one else suffers, she decided to bring together a group of students and find a solution to this challenge that has put people's lives at risk.

The students pasted 'reflectors' on roadside poles and trees. They fixed broken poles; and on turns, blind spots and crossings with higher traffic, the students installed convex mirrors to reduce the possibilities of accidents.

The students collaborated with local welfare and youth club members, who provided the resources to procure the reflectors. The students and teachers regularly check the functioning of the reflectors and repair those which are damaged.

Like us, they too believe - 'whoever saves one life, saves the world entire.'



Committed to Connecting Lives

The Army Goodwill School Harka Bahadur, Kargil (partner school under Bharti Foundation's Satya Bharti Quality Support Program), which is located approx. 8000 ft. above sea level amidst mountain peaks, often faces mobile connectivity issues.

A group of motivated students came together to brainstorm and find ways to improve the mobile phone signal strength in the school area. The young students decided to build their own mobile tower using recycled material. Showcasing leadership, the children collected unused scraps of aluminium wires, pipes and cables, with support from local community people. Using the principles of applied science learnt at school and a lot of research, the children built an antenna like tower in just three days.

A considerable improvement in the signal strength was noticed after the fixing of the tower. The efforts of the students were highly appreciated by teachers and local people, inspiring many more children to participate in science experiments and activities.



Save Water, and It Will Save You

The children of Satya Bharti School in Channa village, Punjab found that many homes have no taps on the main water supply connection of the house. Consequently, the overflow of water tanks remained uncontrolled, resulting in wastage. Around many houses, water stagnated throughout the day, making it a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Realising the importance of every drop, the young agents of change adopted a multi-level approach to combat this issue. They conducted awareness meetings and door to door visits to talk about the importance of saving water and reached out to the village panchayat to advocate for installing taps in houses.

In a true leadership spirit, the children installed the first tap through crowd funding. This motivated the villagers and the panchayat to ensure that each house has a tap. Today, as many as 30 houses in the village has a tap, which has saved gallons of water.



Kitchen Garden – A Work of Heart

Gardening is the study of life. The simple act of caring for living soil and plants gives children a foundation for understanding the principles of birth, growth, maturity, death, competition, cooperation and many other lessons that transfer to human lives. In a school garden, children experience these lessons 'hands on' through a learning method that is rich and inclusive to varied learning abilities.

In a novel experiment, students of Sadharupar Govt. LP School in Assam (Bharti Foundation's partner govt. school) created their own kitchen garden, where they are growing vegetables of their choice.

The students received support from the school management committee, teachers, parents and community members, in procuring seeds, learning about soil types and cultivation methods. Inspired by the commitment of the children, parents and teachers contributed resources to build a bamboo fence around the garden.



Recycling, Recreating and Relieving

Children of Class 5 in Satya Bharti School (Mithewal village, Punjab) noticed that many of the junior children face problems during the rains - as many of their parents cannot afford raincoats and umbrellas. Many children came up with complaints that their books and notebooks were getting damaged in the rain.

To help the juniors, the head girl of the school and her class-mates came together to find a cost-effective and long-term solution to this issue. The students decided to recycle plastic bags and create raincoats out of them. They collected plastic bags from the neighbourhood, cleaned them, and stitched the plastic with their own hands.

Named as 'Magic Raincoat' by the children, the coats have been used by more than 100 children in the school. The students also shared the concept of magic raincoat with students of 22 other Satya Bharti Schools in Ludhiana.



The Impactful Rs – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

Students of Satya Bharti Adarsh Sr. Sec. School in Rauni village in Ludhiana realised that many parents and grandparents who come to pick up the children from school are often unable to find a place to sit. Most of the elderly are tired as they come from work and standing for a longer time, becomes a painful affair for them.

The senior children of the school decided to come up with an innovative solution. The bright minds decided to use discarded tyres to make permanent sitting arrangements. The students were helped by community in collecting discarded tyres of the required size. They joined them, painted them and strung them to make attractive and comfortable seats.

Encouraged by the positive response garnered from parents and teachers, the students have started a club to raise awareness on how to use waste material in innovative ways to solve the minor issues one faces on a daily basis.



Ending the Cycle of Excessive Paper Waste

Paper constitutes over a third of all litter. And areas with litter problems are unattractive to tourists and businesses. The students of Army Goodwill School in Partappur, Ladakh (partner school under Bharti Foundation's Satya Bharti Quality Support Program) noticed that tons of paper are getting wasted on their school and the surrounding Nubra Valley, on a daily basis.

The young students, determined to bring a change, started looking for ways to reduce the environmental effect of paper. They researched and learnt that recycling and reusing is one of the effective ways to reduce paper wastage and pollution.

They moved from classroom to classroom, then to the surroundings and collected all the waste papers they could find. These waste papers were cut into bits and then soaked in a bucket of water for three days. They applied dyes like indelible ink, food color and water color into it. When the paper dissolved, they made paste out of it and spread on top of a plywood and left to dry in the sun.

Students used those handmade chart papers to write good thoughts and draw beautiful paintings on them and showcase them around the school campus. As many as 200 children has so far participated in recycling paper in the school, thereby keeping the school environment free of paper waste.



Promoting Good Health and Hygiene Practices

Sound hygiene practices play a fundamental role in giving girls the confidence they need to progress.

A group of considerate girls of Satya Bharti Adarsh Sr. Sec. School in Jhaneri, Punjab learnt that many of the parents, owing to poverty and/or lack of knowledge on health risks, did not provide undergarments to their daughters. The challenge was unique as it was hard to mobilize girls and the mothers in a small village like theirs to talk about the issue due to pre-existing social norms.

However, committed to their goal, the senior girl students came together to take the first step of providing undergarments in the school with support from their teachers. The girls then arranged for meetings in Gurudwaras to counsel parents and seek their participation in their endeavour. One of the mothers, a tailor by profession, offered to teach other parents on making undergarments with unused cloth and organize stitching classes in the school to provide a cost-effective and environment friendly solution.

This led to an increased production of undergarments for girl children in the village and, most importantly, drove awareness among the parents.

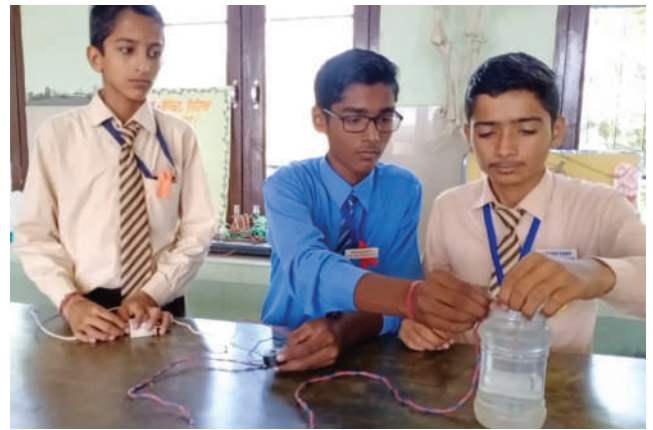


Preserve Water, Save the World

In GHS Hiranwali, Punjab (partner govt. school under Bharti Foundation's Satya Bharti Quality Support Program), a group of students came together to reduce the wastage of water due to overflow in the four overhead tanks at the school. In addition to the wastage, the excess water got collected around the school, compromising its sanitation and hygiene conditions.

The students were keen to find a solution that was long-term and easy to apply. An interesting innovation then came to light when one of the children suggested to make a "water level alarm" which would ring once the tank is filled to its capacity.

After school hours, the students divided themselves in groups to collect discarded materials in their surroundings to design the circuit of the alarm. With support from their teachers, the students successfully built the circuit and installed it.



Embracing Culture, History and Heritage

In the thinly populated, remote corner of Ladakh, lies Army Goodwill School Faroona (partner school under Bharti Foundation's Satya Bharti Quality Support Program). Most children of this region belong to the Sankoo belt. To preserve the culture of the older generation and leave a piece for the future, the students ideated to make a "Mini Museum".

The objective of the museum was to involve the community and generate ownership among them. Over a period of 30 days, the students divided themselves into groups and initiated the process to curate material for the museum. While some students collected artefacts, others interacted and interviewed the elderly to know about the culture in detail. The museum was formed in one of the rooms in the school.

As the museum took shape, it was the elderly who were deeply touched and impressed by the zest of the students to take up such a unique, and much needed initiative. The school's Arts and Culture Club took responsibility of maintaining and promoting the museum.



Reducing the Use of Mobile Phones among Children

Smart phones are constantly being improved by expanding on their functionalities, which in turn increases the likelihood of overuse and addiction. Several researches have linked smart phone overuse with physical and psychological effects, like sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety and more.

Seeing the overuse of smartphones among parents, teenagers, young children, and even the toddlers, the students of Satya Bharti School Barrondi in Kurukshetra, Haryana decided to raise awareness in the community about the ill-effects of mobile phones.

The children conducted rallies in the village, where they visited homes to make the family members aware on the warning signs of smartphone and internet overuse, its side effects, and self-help tips. They have also conducted street plays around the same.

Gradually, the impact started to show as parents and grandparents began to involve children more in physical activities. They encouraged their children to eat together and have more conversations with each other.



Education – The Movement from Darkness to Light

Libraries are temples of learning. It holds the resources that one can take great benefits from. Realising that many people in the village never had a chance at education, the children of 626 No Jyoti Patshala in Assam (Bharti Foundation's partner government school under Satya Bharti Quality Support Program) thought of starting a community library. Through the initiative, they wanted to give the villagers free access to a variety of books, and also raise awareness about the importance of education.

With support from the head master, teachers and community members, the children went door to door to raise resources to build the library. They also encouraged villagers to contribute books to the library for public use. To ensure that the library functions in order, a community member volunteered to be the library in-charge.

So far, more than 600 people in the village have benefited from the community library.



Fostering Safety at Workplace

For children, every emotion is unconditional. With untainted intentions and genuine concern at heart, children teach us a new lesson every day. Encouraged to work towards the well-being of the community, these little helping hands hold the potential to bring the needed change for those who are the most vulnerable.

Students of Satya Bharti School Jattapura, Ludhiana noticed that the helper of Mid-Day Meal provider in the school often faces inconvenience during rains, and from the scorching heat during summers.

The students decided to help by building a shade; they divided themselves in teams and collected discarded plastic bottles from the neighbourhood. They created a shade within a week - making the working environment better, and most importantly, making the helper know that they care.



Convoke - deliberating research as a tool for driving school excellence

Bharti Foundation, in association with Bharti Institute of Public Policy at Indian School of Business convened its pan India conference series 'Convoke 2019' at Mohali.

Over 150 educationists working at the grassroots level gathered at ISB, Mohali to present research based papers on the theme 'School Excellence - Preparing for the future'. The conference had participation of experts and policymakers from reputed institutions like NCERT, Group Ignus, Sambodhi Research and Communication, and Indian School of Business along with principals and teachers from government schools/colleges of education in rural India.

Research based paper presentations, discussions and exchange of ideas on three broad areas - policy framework and systemic support, importance of school leadership towards delivering the holistic education and role of technology for driving excellence in the rural schools were the highlights of the event. Sambodhi Research and Communication, jury partner, led the rigorous exercise of selecting the papers and giving feedback to the speakers for improving the content.



Indus Towers

We thank employees of Indus Towers for sharing their world with our children in Jodhpur (Rajasthan), Rewari (Haryana) and Murshidabad (West Bengal). Our children cherish the moments of interactions, games, lots of knowledge sharing and most importantly, the new friendships and endless smiles!



Luxor

Luxor/Parker has supported our students and teachers through donation of stationary items like writing pens, teacher diaries etc which were distributed in various districts in Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. Our students and teachers have shown great excitement in receiving them. These contributions have gone a long way supporting our schools with required study material. We thank Luxor/Parker for their ongoing support.



Partner With Us:

Our journey of providing quality education to underserved children has been made possible through the valuable contributions/donations made by our myriad supporters and partners, which include corporates, institutions and individuals.

If you are interested in partnering with us, write to us at partnership@bhartifoundation.org

We thank our readers for their continuous support and encouragement.



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Please send your feedback and suggestions at: communication.foundation@bhartifoundation.org

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