



SMILES ALL THE WAY

INSTITUTED WITH THE FOUR-PRONGED PURPOSE OF HEALTHCARE FOR FAMILIES, EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN, LIVELIHOOD FOR YOUTH AND EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN, THE SMILE FOUNDATION REACHES OUT TO A STAGGERING 400,000 UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN, YOUTH AND WOMEN IN 26 STATES THROUGH 200 WELFARE PROJECTS. BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

William Arthur Ward once said, “A warm smile is the universal language of kindness”. Our very own Mother Teresa said, “We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do”. Perhaps it is this philosophy that sowed the seeds of Smile Foundation back in 2002, when a group of young professionals decided to give what society had given them, plus more.

Smile Foundation started out by focusing on four areas: education for children, healthcare for families, livelihood for the youth, and empowerment for women. While

education for children was the mainstay, it emerged that this could not be achieved without ensuring overall welfare of the family first. “Realising this, Smile Foundation, beginning in the corridors of education, adopted a lifecycle approach with intensive programmes focused on family health, livelihood and women’s empowerment that addressed the needs of children, their families and the larger community,” says Co-founder and Executive Trustee, Santanu Mishra.

Smile Foundation’s journey was not without challenges, especially initially, when they were tasked with putting in place a robust working model and processes that would ensure sustained benefits for children and their families, along with good governance. “The absence of a dependable financial mechanism for the development sector was scary. Taking a cue from the ‘venture capital’ business model, an innovative model called ‘social venture philanthropy’ was evolved to empower genuine grassroots’ initiatives (small NGOs) by inculcating accountability, sustainability, communication and leadership,” recalls Santanu of their early years. Smile Foundation developed an understanding of how the corporate sector functioned. Over the years, a bridge was established; linking the needs of development initiatives with corporate business needs. And it started producing results.

PUTTING PEDAL TO METAL

Smile Foundation generates funds through two modes - corporate fundraising and individual fundraising. “In terms of corporate support, there are numerous kinds of partnerships like CST, cause-related marketing, direct child support and youth support, to name a few. In terms of individual contribution, one can associate with us



Top: Virat Kohli and M S Dhoni with Smile kids. Bottom: A Swabhiman session in progress

services, benefitting 310,000 lives across 265 remote villages and urban slums in India. Their women’s empowerment programme, Swabhiman has successfully made a difference to the lives of over 150,000 people. Smile Foundation recently made headlines for the charity dinner they hosted in partnership with the Virat Kohli Foundation. The foundation’s fundraising events are usually in the nature of similar such charity galas or in-house productions like “Ramp for Champs” where celebrities walk for a cause and “Cook for a Smile” where corporate honchos cook for a cause. “In case of partnering with external events, we usually associate with reputed and respected brands that have a positive image in the minds of the audience. The tie-up with the Virat Kohli Foundation was for supporting the cause of empowerment of underprivileged children and youth of the country. As a first step towards this endeavour, we organised a one-of-its-kind charity dinner in Mumbai,” says Santanu.

by giving individual donations, donating in kind, jointly planning and executing a campaign, raising funds, and being a volunteer,” informs Santanu.

If numbers are any indicator, every year, the foundation reaches out directly to over 400,000 underprivileged children,

Kohli himself was the host and the dinner brought together eminent cricketers, industry stalwarts, corporate honchos, Bollywood personalities and achievers from diverse fields. The evening witnessed an auction of high-end luxury products, spectacular performances, and a five course Michelin-starred dinner for 200 distinguished guests by celebrity chef Vikas Khanna. The event gave the Smile Foundation a wider platform to sensitise people about the work they do, day in and day out, apart from boosting its fundraising drive.

youth and women across 26 states of India through over 200 welfare projects in education, healthcare, livelihood and women’s empowerment. Their flagship initiative has reached out to 19,000 children across 21 states through 90 projects. Employability training has been imparted to 16,000 underprivileged youth, while over 11,500 youth are already working for over 140 brands in the country. Twenty-two operational projects have provided doorstep healthcare

THE FOUR PILLARS

Healthcare: Smile on Wheels is a national level mobile hospital programme

Education: Mission Education provides basic education and healthcare

Women Empowerment: Swabhiman is a programme focusing on girl children and women empowerment.

Livelihood: Smile Twin e-Learning Programme (STeP) evolved as a logical linkage to Mission Education.

REAL PEOPLE, REAL STORIES

The foundation's records are peppered with inspirational stories involving real people. Take for instance, Adil, who was abandoned as an infant by his mother only to be given shelter by eunuch Salma, who raised him as her own child. All was well except that Salma's poor financial condition meant she could not send Adil to school. However, thanks to a counselling session conducted by Smile Foundation in the locality, Salma came to know about the bridge course centre. Adil went on to join the Mission Education Centre and recently passed his seventh standard with flying colours.

Another example is that of Razia from Begumpur village in Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Noida. She had paid a visit to the foundation's Smile on Wheels (SOW) mobile hospital, complaining of ear infection. A full check-up later, doctors diagnosed that she was suffering from Acute Otitis, a disease where ears get severely damaged. Razia was prescribed medicines while her mother was advised to take proper care of her. The SOW team kept following up on Razia's health till she was completely cured.

Yet another instance is Phulwa, a 22-year-old first-time mother and resident of Shri Ram J.J. Camp, who was experiencing the trauma of having lost her first child, made worse by her in-laws putting pressure on her to conceive again. Smile counsellors met Phulwa through an intervention programme conducted in the community and counselled her husband and in-laws about the condition of her health. The couple was sensitised about various family planning methods. Phulwa got pregnant again and the Swabhiman programme is keeping track of her as she prepares to give birth to her second child.

In future, Smile Foundation wants to



Smile on Wheels reaches the needy in villages and urban slums

keep up and enhance its good work of empowering underprivileged children, youth and women through relevant education, healthcare and market-savvy livelihood programmes. As Santanu puts it, "We want to keep developing and deploying the best possible methodology and technology for achieving ideal SROI (social returns on investment) and promote good governance more widely."



THE WIDE REACH OF SMILE FOUNDATION

- **LIVES TOUCHED:** More than 400,000 underprivileged children, youth and women
- **ACTIVE IN:** 26 Indian states
- **PROJECTS HANDLED:** 200 welfare projects in education, healthcare, livelihood and women's empowerment.
- **EMPLOYABILITY TRAINING:** Imparted to 16,000 underprivileged youth
- **LIVES BENEFITTED THROUGH HEALTHCARE SERVICES:** 310,000 across 265 villages and urban slums
- **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME:** Swabhiman has successfully made a difference to the lives of over 150,000 underprivileged adolescent girls and women