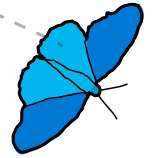




Protecting and empowering children since 1989



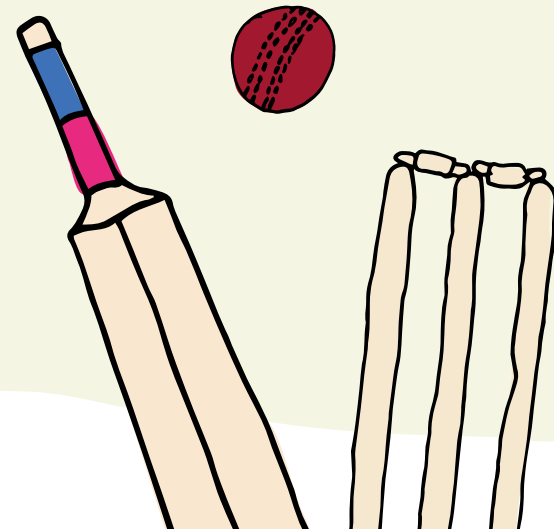
Safar... Our Journey

Stories of lives
transformed
by Butterflies



Contents

Acknowledgements	3	Salaudin	40
Glossary of Terms	4	Sanaullah	42
Foreword	5	Permanova	44
Introduction	6	Rohit	46
Hasim	8	Suraj	48
Deepak	10		
Staff Stories: Subroto	12	Frustrations and Challenges	50
An introduction to Street Connected Children	14	Our Future	54
Sameena	16	Emamuddin	56
Amjad	18	Sonu	58
Junaid	20	Chandan	60
Ilma	22	Staff Stories: Moushumi	62
Butterflies: a short history	24	Afterword	64
Akash	26	Priya	66
Nisha	28		
Staff Stories: Vijai	30		
Staff Stories: Sana	31		
Children's Participation and Democratic Values	32		
Rahul	34		
Children's Cooperatives	36		
Laxmi	38		



Acknowledgements

This impact study was initiated by Butterflies' Founder and Director, Rita Panicker, in partnership with ChildHope UK.

The document captures Rita's deep care and experience in the written narrative sections, around which the children's stories are told; it shares her wisdom and gives huge insight into what is now three decades of work. Other members of the team have also shared their experiences of working at Butterflies, some of which feature in this booklet.

Great thanks goes to everyone at Butterflies and to Tim Hartley from Impact Ready UK for their involvement in gathering, translating, documenting, reviewing and shortlisting the children's stories; in particular to Jayaraj for leading the process with Sakshi, Krishna, Satyavir, Subroto, Vijai, Pratibha, Sujay, Saju, JB Oli and Thomas. Recognition also goes to researchers Kime Pubyang and Rubina Khaliq, and photographer Bilal MM.

Special thanks to Amit Arulanantham and Alice Morgan from ChildHope UK for planning the study, refining the materials, and coordinating the design.

None of these life changing impacts would have been possible without the technical and financial support of Comic Relief, Misereor, Ministry of Women and Children, Government of India, ChildHope UK, Shinnyo-en, Social Initiative (PWC Sweden), Butterflies USA Foundation, Butterflies board members and countless numbers of sensitive individuals in the UK, Europe, India and the USA. However, most of all we are indebted to the children of Butterflies; without their courage and bravery there would be no story to tell.



Glossary of Terms

Bal Sabha

Children's Council

At each location where children convene, they are encouraged to hold council meetings to discuss issues arising within their communities.

CDC

Children's Development Centre

Also known as a Contact Point, these are specific public spaces, venues and locations in the city used by the children of Butterflies for their meetings.

CDK

Children's Development Khazana

A cooperative scheme organised and managed by children, focused on saving and distributing money. 'Khazana' means Treasure in Urdu.

CHC

Child Health Cooperative

A cooperative scheme organised and managed by children, focused on preventative healthcare promoting healthy practices in nutrition and home-based remedies.

CHE

Child Health Educator

This role is assigned to a child who takes on the responsibility of educating other children about matters of health and hygiene. This is a cherished leadership role, which is taken very seriously by children.

CRA

Child Rights Advocate

The job title for Butterflies representatives working at Children's Development Centres (often referred to as Didi/Bhaiya by children).

CWC

Child Welfare Committee

The Government's body responsible for decision-making about the welfare of children.

Didi / Bhaiya

Sister / Brother

An affectionate and respectful term given to adults. Throughout these stories these terms are repeatedly used by children in reference to Butterflies representatives.

MCD

Municipal Corporation of Delhi

This is the official name for the governing body of the city of Delhi.



Foreword

In our journey with disadvantaged and marginalised children we often fail to appreciate the depth of impact we have on their lives simply by being there for them.

The stories shared by children in this booklet reveal what they cherish most by being part of Butterflies: their relationship with us. Every child needs a significant adult in her or his life, to mentor them, a person whom they can trust to share their thoughts, fears and dreams. In the case of these children it becomes even more important as they lead such precarious lives.

Children at Butterflies speak so endearingly about their "Bhaiya" and "Didi" (older brother and sister) and how much they mean to them.

Often their parents - in their daily stress to find work and put food on the table - barely spend time with the children, nor have conversations with them, except to ask if they have gone to school, or have fetched the water, or whether they have earned any money. The setting in which these children are growing up is not intellectually or culturally stimulating for them to even contemplate having a different path to that of their parents, or that of their neighbours.

Our challenge is to inspire these children to think beyond their immediate circumstances to a future that is secure, stable, and out of poverty; a future that opens a door to opportunities

that will help them to access professional courses, gain skills and aspire for a better life. Our challenge is to support children not to give up on their education, to resist the temptation of petty crime or substance abuse and walk away from the negative influence of their peers.

This booklet is an attempt by us to capture the learning from our work with children and its impact on them, through their own eyes and words. Our hope is to witness the present generation of children completing their high school education, gaining professional skills and exiting the cycle of generational poverty, leading dignified lives.

We feel we would have achieved our mission if these children grow up to be adults who value truth, tolerance and compassion, and who accept all people, regardless of gender, age or sexuality. This is of grave importance in today's world and in particular in India, which has a diverse, plural society. We would hope that we continue to attract young, professionally qualified individuals who are inspired to engage with the work of Butterflies and to share their knowledge, skills and passion to positively impact the lives of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups of children, their families and communities.



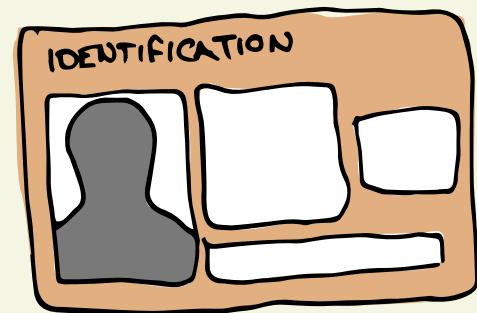
Image above: Children with their CDK passbooks



Introduction



By Rita Panicker, Founder and Executive Director of Butterflies



Children continue to inspire us in so many different ways. It is only too easy for those of us who are privileged to look down upon poor children.

One of the insights we have discovered after working in the field for many years is that it is often the poorest children who have the strongest spirits. They are resilient, generous, mischievous, full of life and optimistic. In that sense, it is not only we who impact the children, rather, they have profound impact on us too. They challenge us to reflect on our attitudes, our behaviour and our treatment of normal people. It is nearly always the children who provide us with the inspiration to carry on with our work.

I remember an incident when an adolescent boy was falsely implicated on a charge of theft and sent to prison. In the process of finding out more about his situation his friends learnt that there is something called bail: an amount of money to be deposited in the court, which would help get their friend released from prison. His friends called an urgent meeting and spontaneously collected money for his bail. Children who are so poor rallied together to help one of their own; they did not wait for the adults to take action. Butterflies's lawyer was able to get bail and, later, acquittal of the case. In fact, the children's money was returned to them.

Another narrative is sad but so very positive at the same time; it is of Anand. Anand was 10 years old when we met him, he had run away from an abusive father and hung out at New Delhi railway station. He was a scrap picker and glue sniffer. We got him enrolled in our programme and supported his detox treatment and therapy. What one always remembers about him is his smile.

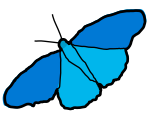
One day, Anand tried to escape being apprehended by the railway police for being on the platform without a valid ticket; jumped on to a moving train, slipped and his two legs got crushed. It was one of the most tragic events we witnessed. I could not bring myself to see him at the hospital, so I would stand at the door of the hospital ward and peep inside. On his discharge from the hospital we brought him to our Resilience Centre, a short stay home. I took the courage to meet him, I did not know what I should say to him, I was bracing myself to be strong. As I stepped into the room, there was Anand sitting on the floor with bandaged limbs and his beautiful smile. He looked up, saw me and before I could say anything he asked, "Didi, how are you?" I choked, I said I was fine and asked about his health. He said he was doing well and that he was looking forward to getting his new pair of legs.

Later, Anand was admitted to a residential school. Today he is in high school and volunteers at a hospice. In a couple of months' time he will join Butterflies Culinary and Catering school. He is one of the most positive people I have ever met in my life. Whenever, I feel low, I think of Anand.

Hasim is another child whose story is inspirational. As a young boy, he lived on the streets, scrap picking to earn a living. Hasim was good in his studies and we were determined that he would not drop out of school. On completion of high school, he expressed interest in the catering industry; we offered him admission in Butterflies School of Culinary and Catering (BSCC). During his last semester of training he interned at Taj Palace Hotel in Delhi. The chef of one of the fine dining restaurants at the Taj was impressed with Hasim's dedication to learn his craft. He mentored him and on completion of his internship he was offered a job at the Taj. Hasim spent his free time teaching our trainees at BSCC the finer points of French cuisine but most importantly had conversations and discussions with the trainees explaining that to become a chef meant long hours of hard work, to be open to learning and criticisms and bouts of bad temper from the chefs.

Today, he is a sous chef on a luxury cruise liner in Florida. Hasim is an icon for our children and adolescents. About his achievement, Hasim had this to say: *"My job is not truly my accomplishment, it is what Butterflies strived for me to be. And now finally I am that somebody"*. What touched my heart is that Hasim did not forget his beginnings, he still takes great care of his widowed mother and family. He is her anchor.

We were able to interview Hasim as part of this project and his story is on the next page.



Inspiration in focus:

Hasim



Originally, I am from Bihar. My family comprises my mother, elder brother, younger brother and younger sister.

When I first met with Butterflies staff fifteen years ago, I was not enrolled in school. I started coming to their contact points for education and gradually I became an active child. I participated in all their programmes such as sports, media, healthcare and cultural activities. I was even admitted into formal schooling in Kashmere Gate.

I was a very good and active child but as I was growing up I got involved with the wrong company and some illegal activities. I started skipping school and used to go around with friends, watching movies and so on. Back then I didn't show much interest in the Butterflies programme. I was not attending school regularly for a few months and as a result, I could not complete my 10th grade. This upset me and I lost contact with my family members. I remember Butterflies talking to me about my career and future at the time. I was confused about it and couldn't decide. Finally, I decided to join the Butterflies School of Culinary and Catering (BSCC) for vocational training.

After completing one year of training at BSCC I was selected for a training programme at the Taj group of hotels, facilitated by Butterflies. I was very interested in learning new things and new recipes but I was not sure during my tenure as a trainee whether they would ever hire me as an employee. I put my mind, heart and soul into it. I knew from being both a good cricketer and a great theatre and vocal artist that I had never faltered facing a new challenge. Through a lot of determination and hard work, the Taj invited me for a job interview. I was hired then and there in 2011.

I worked in the Taj Palace for almost four years, I felt so happy. During that period, I brought my mother to Delhi and started living with her. I also purchased land in Noida with my earnings. I feel indebted to the Taj Palace not only for ignoring my inexperience and lesser knowledge compared to my counterparts, but also for their impeccable methods, which inspire and motivate me every day.

Recently I was given another golden opportunity, which was to work on a luxury cruise liner in the USA. Sure enough, I came to the USA in October 2016. Butterflies was there for me then too; helping me get my travel documents together.

I always feel that the platform Butterflies gave me not only changed my life, but also stirred me to bring the same kind of transformation to other BSCC trainees. I volunteer to give theory and practical classes at BSCC and teach them more about different cuisines apart from Indian cuisine. I feel that I should pass on my learning to the trainees and that's why I teach them whatever I can.

I am still in contact with the Butterflies Bhaiya and Didi over social media. I will always be grateful to Butterflies and I feel proud that I was - and I am still - part of Butterflies. I would have been nowhere if I had not been in contact with Butterflies during this most crucial period of my life.



I will always be grateful to Butterflies and I feel proud that I was - and I am still - part of Butterflies.



Inspiration in focus:

Deepak

Years back, my father left our family and moved elsewhere. We struggled to meet our day-to-day expenses so as a teenager I started working, along with my brother. I began working in a restaurant while my brother was a tent maker.

In 2014, a robbery took place near where we stayed. My brother and I were caught by the police, who accused us of the theft. We were taken to the police station for questioning where we denied the theft as we knew nothing about it. We were beaten mercilessly by the police and sent to the Tihar Jail. The police had also recorded our age incorrectly, as adults. I mentioned this to the magistrate and we were eventually freed from Tihar. Our mother had been so worried that she had run away from Delhi to our native village, along with my sister. When my brother and I came back from Tihar, we noticed that the room where we had been living was locked from the outside, with all the belongings gone. We had no place to sleep and nothing to eat. We started living under the flyover near Bhikaji Cama place, eating food from the Gurdwara (a place of worship for Sikhs).

One night as we were sleeping, a few policemen came to us saying that they would feed us and offer shelter. We went to the police station and were beaten up very badly, being accused of stealing jewels and money. I pleaded with the police that we had not stolen anything: I said that if we had stolen these precious things why would we sleep under the flyover and live a struggling life. I was sent to an observation home for boys at Guru Teg Bahadur Nagar and my brother was sent to Tihar jail again, as we were said to have a criminal record.

I stayed at the Observation Home for two months. During this time, I got the chance to interact with Butterflies staff, who were there offering life skills sessions. I expressed my interest in training at the culinary and catering school, which Butterflies runs. I was told to inform the staff when I got released. Eventually the authorities failed to prove anything about my case. I was released from the Observation Home and was transferred to a Child Welfare Committee (CWC) shelter home at Lajpat Nagar. I underwent a bone test and the result said that I was above 18 years old. The CWC staff called

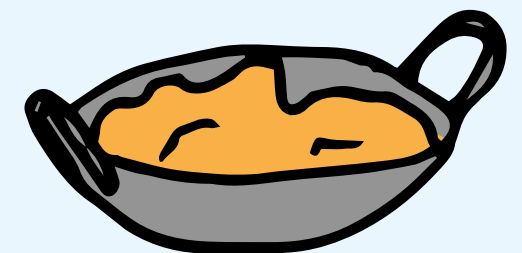
Butterflies and discussed my case: they referred me to the Butterflies School of Culinary and Catering legally and officially.

At first, I was not able to adjust to the strict scheduled environment in the BSCC, where I had to get up in the morning, do all the basic cleaning work, the packing of food, the food deliveries etc. I used to have outbursts of anger if anybody said anything, even as a joke. I created some silly issues. But Bhaiya-ji made me understand the positive and negative aspects of all these behaviours. Slowly I adapted to the timetable and became friends with all the other trainees. Before joining BSCC, I had not been in regular school – I dropped out in grade 5. At BSCC, I was given the opportunity to continue my studies, which would not have been possible if I still lived on the street. Bhaiya-ji enrolled me in grade 5, which I passed in the same year. During the next year, I was moved to grade 8 and I passed it. I learned a lot of new food recipes at BSCC and managed to cook food for the trainees and the staff all on my own. I learnt to give respect and respect during these two years.

In July 2016, Bhaiya-ji offered me the chance to get a job. I attended an interview for a restaurant in Malviya Nagar, named Cafe Jerry House. I was successful and started my career in a fine dining restaurant. I used to send money for my mother and sister, which I saved from my salary. I worked there for 4 months. Later, I got another opportunity in another famous restaurant chain named Vatika Hotels Pvt Ltd, in Gurgaon, Haryana. I am very happy now and have been working here for the last 5 months.



Frankly speaking, my turning point in life was when I became associated with Butterflies... I will always remember it as a great turning point in my life, otherwise I would have been behind bars.



Staff Stories

Subroto

The Butterflies approach means we work directly with children, so it is impossible not to feel what they are going through and see things through their eyes. I have learnt to really appreciate and respect the lives of each individual, regardless of their age or gender.

Understanding their issues, the challenges they face, the context they're in has sensitised me to see the bigger picture. They have inspired me to work harder, to learn more and contribute towards issues following a rights-based approach. I feel I have directly benefitted from working in this way.

In that sense, I would say the biggest change I have been through since being at Butterflies is that my sympathy has changed into empathy.

I developed a great interest in the area of child health and became aware of our public health system, which has so many gaps in it. I am motivated to learn more so that I can give more. This is what is unique about Butterflies.

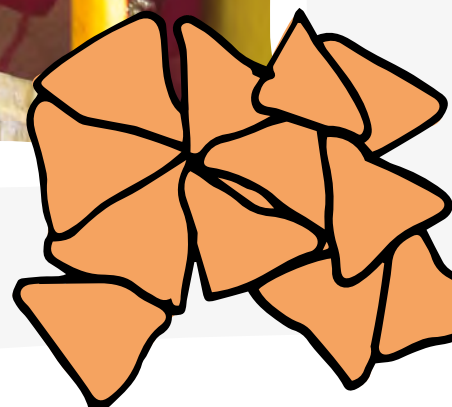
Previously when I worked with a children's charity our focus seemed to be on whether

or not we had delivered the activities we were committed to accomplishing. I was always taking photographs of the children and the context we were working in, without thinking about how the child might feel about it. Now working in the context of Butterflies, it doesn't even occur to me to take photographs – I feel it just wouldn't be right.

Understanding their lives in a very real way, seeing how they always want to learn and grow and their survival spirit despite the very difficult circumstances – this has affected how I see the whole world and helps me get through my own difficult times.

The children teach me how to celebrate life, in spite of all the adverse situations we face. It is a very transforming approach.

Image Right:
Children using the library
at the mobile school



An introduction to Street Connected Children

Twenty-eight years ago, when Butterflies began working with street children, the narrative of most children was that they had run away from dysfunctional families. Children left families for many reasons, including domestic violence, substance-abusing parents, aggressive or abusive step-parents, exclusion from schools with impossible learning environments (with corporal punishment widespread).

Street children living by themselves in the city do odd jobs to earn a living. The most common work among children is to pick scrap, to work in shops, markets and street vending. Their lives are rough and insecure, their shanties are demolished frequently and those who work and who are unlicensed get harassed by law enforcement officials.

Today, the number of children running away from their families due to domestic violence is significantly less as compared to a decade and a half ago; we find that often children on the streets are doing so with the knowledge of their parents and have come in search of work.

In our experience, the majority of children on the streets today are street-connected, which means they live with their families on the streets or spend most of the time on the streets but go back to their homes at night. Many of these are migrant families, who left their villages as a result of economic distress. Their traditional occupations are no longer viable, nor are there any viable alternatives for a livelihood in the countryside. The agriculture sector, which is the main source of employment, is in deep crisis; 97% of workers are informal workers. Other traditional trades such as weaving, pottery, carpentry and blacksmithing have also declined over the years due to the advent of modern technology, new designs, and better-finished products from overseas. Men and women are not technically skilled or equipped enough to apply new technologies to their crafts and have lost out on their livelihoods as a result. Once these economically distressed migrants arrive in the cities, they join the bulging ranks of informal workers. 25.7% - or every fourth person living in urban India - is poor (World Bank report 2010).

Parents work as unskilled workers at construction sites or as porters, scrap pickers, rickshaw pullers, or do odd jobs to eke out a living. Most of them squat illegally on unauthorised land. Their homes are fragile tents made of bamboo and plastic sheeting, or dingy single rooms in a congested slum. In both scenarios, there is no privacy and no sanitation; no kitchen, with only public baths and toilets available to them. Electricity is stolen from nearby electricity poles. The local government does not recognise these settlements as homes and so no basic amenities are provided. In India and elsewhere, urban poverty poses distinct challenges in relation to housing, sanitation, health, education, social security and livelihoods. It is our poorest children, women, and the elderly who feel the effects the most.

The phrase "street children" is potentially misleading and is quite contentious.

The term "street children" is a fluid concept. Children who live in shanties with their family might choose to spend time on the street away from them and at other times would choose to be at back home. In contrast, shelter-less families live on the streets itself and so their children have no option. A third category is children who have left their homes and choose to live on the streets by themselves.

It is worth noting that in developed countries children who are on the streets are generally called "runaways". This term implies that under normal circumstances children would live with their families. Meanwhile, children from southern countries exposed to equivalent home dynamics are called "street children". Immediately this term portrays them in a negative light, even though their reasons for being on the street in the first place are very similar to their northern counterparts.



Inspiration in focus:

Sameena



I was living with my mother. She had been divorced by my father when I was very small for a reason I don't know. My mother was always gloomy and rarely spoke to me. She worked as a rag picker, going out in the morning and coming back late in the evening.

I was left all alone at home. She cared very little about me. I never went to school, so I spent most of my time in Mandir Park, which is very close to where I live. In a way, that park was my home. I used to play and roam around the park the whole day. It was an unclean park with lots of waste, including from dogs. I never bothered about all that. Instead I spent days and days over there. Taking a bath was rare, maybe one per week. It was the same with washing my clothes. I looked like an urchin. I had only very few friends and most distanced themselves from me because I was so unclean. It was a heart-breaking experience but I was used to such a life and never bothered about anything, including my education and personal hygiene.

If you see me today like this, well-dressed and speaking like this to you, the credit goes to Butterflies. They have changed my life altogether. Once I was enrolled in Butterflies through my friend I began to follow Didi's advice. I began to attend educational classes and started learning alphabets and words. Today I am able to read and write. It is a great achievement as far as I am concerned. Looking back to the last four to five years, I can speak about a number of remarkable changes that happened my life, especially because of my involvement with Butterflies; I have learnt to read and write through the education programme.

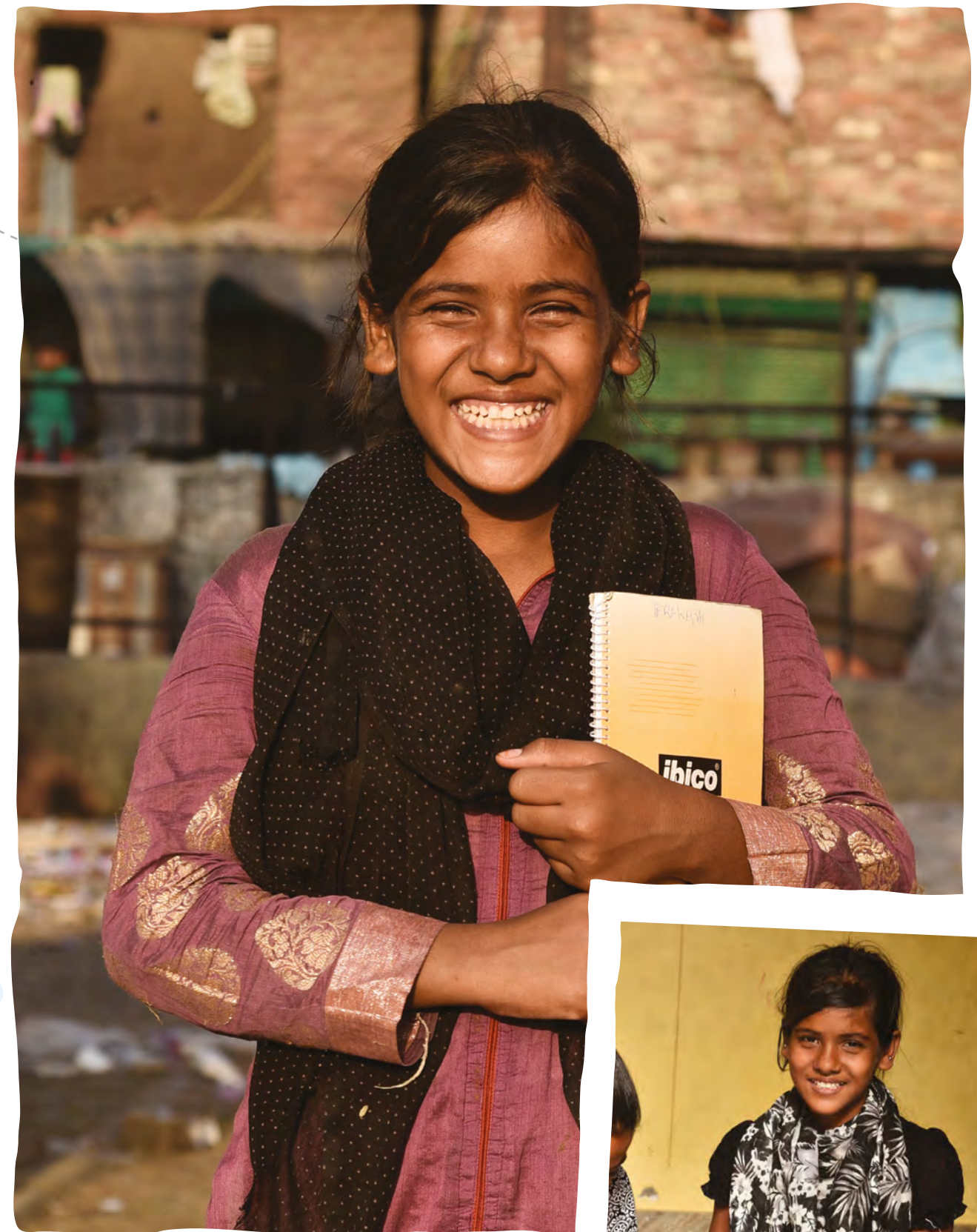
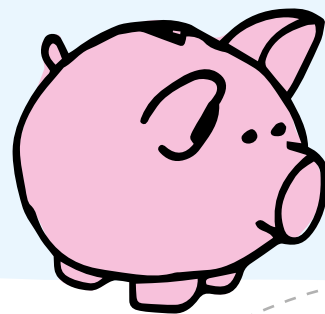
I am now enrolled in formal school. I have also learnt the basics of computers. The life skills education, Bal Sabha meetings and various training programmes and workshops have not only increased my knowledge about certain topics but by involving myself in them I have overcome my fear of speaking in front of others.

Today, I am more spontaneous in nature. I also participate in various sports and cultural events organised by the centre. It has helped me to bring

out talents I never knew I had. I have gained more friends and most importantly I have experienced a big change in my health and hygiene behaviours. Before I had a very casual attitude towards my health and hygiene; today I am more refined. I take my health and hygiene very seriously and I try to keep myself clean and tidy as far as possible.



My whole life has changed because of my association with Butterflies. Today I feel that I am not alone in life. I have started my education, I am more clean and tidy and I have a number of friends. It gives meaning to my life. I am a confident girl now who has an aim to achieve in life.



Inspiration in focus:

Amjad

Amjad, a 17-year-old boy, is currently working at the Cocoberry Restaurant in Delhi. He cherishes the dream to be a chef in a big hotel and is working extremely hard towards making it a reality.

His childhood was difficult: he lost his father when he was 2 years old and came to Delhi with his mother in search of a livelihood. Because of his poor economic conditions, he started working at the age of 10.

"I came to know about Butterflies in 2004 when I was 11 when they came for routine visits at Kashmere Gate, New Delhi. At first, I was not interested so I avoided them, but they persuaded me to join their education classes. One day I saw a number of children sitting together studying and later playing. I decided to go to the contact point on an experimental basis. I went there for a few days without enrolling or registering myself in the contact point. Initially, I was not that regular but I was present on days of sports and cultural events. Didi and Bhaiya used to ask me to come regularly and attend the educational and other activities. Once they said that they would not allow me to participate in sports and cultural events if I do not come regularly and be part of educational programmes, so I agreed to their suggestion. Though I joined reluctantly, I am grateful to them now as I realise its importance in today's world. At present, I am regular and I attend all the programmes at the centre."

Amjad gradually became a member of the Child Health Cooperative and got an opportunity to be a Child Health Educator (CHE). He received CHE training and learnt about basic first aid, how government hospitals function and actively took care of the first aid needs of his peers. The CHE training helped him become sensitive towards addressing the

needs of children in emergency situations. In one instance during his CHE tenure, Amjad was asked by one of the Municipal Corporation Department staff to provide care for a boy who was lying near a tree in Kashmere contact point area. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) staff had seen Amjad providing first aid to children earlier.

Amjad explains:

"On reaching the site I found the boy lying with blood oozing out from his hands and legs. It seemed that he had been brutally beaten up by someone. He was unconscious and so was unable to speak. I brought the first aid box, cleaned his wounds and provided first aid. Later with the help of Asha, another child co-operative member of the contact point, I took the boy to the nearest government hospital. The doctor over there knew me as Child Health Educator of Butterflies as I had taken a number of children to the hospital before. The Doctor treated the patient gently. Once the wounds were dressed up, I asked him what had happened to him. He then narrated the story, 'I am not from Kashmere gate. I live on the streets of South Delhi with my brother. I came here yesterday with my friends for an outing. This morning, older children living rough on the street asked for money and when I refused they beat me very badly, left me here and left.'"

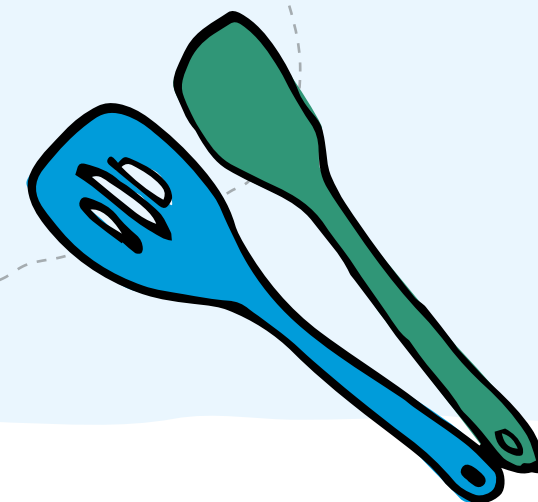
Amjad then got the phone number of the patient's brother and informed him about the incident and asked him to come. He continued to stay with him until his brother came. After a few hours, his brother came and took

him away and thanked Amjad for his help. "I felt proud of myself when I reflected on the way I served the boy. Now I am recognized as a Child Health Educator not only by the community, but also by the MCD workers. Many of them approach me for first aid. The Child Health Cooperative gave me the opportunity to become a CHE, through which I have gained an identity for myself. In another instance, I experienced the care of other CHC members and CHEs when I myself was suffering from a sickness."

"When I was 14 years old, I was struck by chronic liver disease. As I had learned about the functions and procedures of government hospitals, I was able to do most of the formalities very easily and get the treatment. There was no one from my home to stay with me at the hospital but I was not disappointed because many CHC members came to stay with me, to help me out and to give me moral support. I was surprised to see the love and care of my own friends. It gives me the hope to live. I understand that to have genuine friends in life means a lot. My association with Child Health Co-operative has been instrumental in giving me this realization. I now value all my friends and I support them in every possible way, staying within my own limitations."



I learned how I can be at the service of others, how I can contribute to society and become a man of worth. I learned a great lesson that by giving, you don't lose anything but will receive great things in times of your need. This has changed my attitude and behaviour towards other people in the community. Now I respect all of them.



Inspiration in focus:

Junaid

Junaid is 13 years old and lives in Okhla Mandi, near a famous wholesale vegetable market in Delhi. The area where he lives is hardly a place for children to grow up safely and healthily: open defecation and garbage dumping is quite common.

Junaid tells his story:

"My brother was a member of Butterflies. He used to visit the contact point and play carom and other games. One day I followed him and saw several other children playing on one side and several others studying on the other. I was quite interested but I did not enrol myself. Then one day I met Rajendra Bhaiya who is the sports teacher. He used to come to the contact point every Friday and teach children to play football. I spoke to him about my interest in learning. Then he directed me to enrol myself in Butterflies' educational programme. I attended educational classes first and then received coaching in football later.

"I have grown up in a place where foul language is quite normal. I was quite rude with everyone except with my parents. Here in the contact point, I came across Didis who would tell me not to use foul language; tease others; roam around and play cards for money. I used to get involved in fighting with others very frequently. Even at the contact point I used to make lots of trouble. But with the participation in various workshops and life skill education sessions I have made certain changes in my life. The counselling, supervision and encouragement from Didi Bhaiya motivated me to move away from negative behaviour. Today I have improved a lot in my social relationships.

"With football at first I did not know much about the rules of the game. Yet by watching the matches on television,

I was inspired and wanted to become a goalkeeper. I was quite ignorant about how to shoot or dribble. It was the sports teacher at Butterflies - Rajendra Bhaiya - who showed me the path. He used to take us to the nearby park and give coaching in football. Bhaiya showed a special interest in me and encouraged me to work harder so that I could become a great player. He used to motivate me saying if I practice well, he could take me to other big matches. I began to spend a lot of time on the ground practicing football because of my desire to become a famous player. I learnt the basics of the game very fast and now I am able to play quite well. I am specialising to become the goalkeeper of our football team. During matches my whole team puts their confidence in me, and say 'Junaid, we trust you, you will take us to victory.' It makes me feel proud! When I first hurt my toe while playing, I thought about it the whole night and consoled myself saying that I was hurt in achieving my aim and not while stealing or anything like that. The first match we played was really exciting. When we won it, I really went crazy about it!

"I did not like to study much. Yet, because of my interest in football, I used to study as otherwise Bhaiya Didi did not allow me to play. I spend almost two hours every day at the contact point for my studies. In the morning, I go to school and in the afternoon come here to the contact point. After educational classes at the contact point I go home; take my goat and leave it at the mandi for its food

(waste vegetables) and leave for the park for practicing sports. By the time I come back, the goat will have a full stomach and then I return home with the goat. My life revolves around football, my goat, school and the Butterflies contact point.

"Once we went to watch the Indian Super League match between Delhi Dynamos FC play another team. As I aim to become a professional goalkeeper I watched the goalkeeper's moves throughout the game. I kept observing his tactics. It was a very good opportunity to learn more about football.

"We get hurt but we never stop, we continue our practice and we continue taking part in different matches. We want to win the matches that we play, so we keep on trying. I want to get into district/ state level teams and represent my community in the team. I believe that one day I will achieve it.

"Because of the encouragement and concern of our sports teacher I could focus in the game of my interest. He gives me the confidence that one day I will be able to play in big leagues and be famous.

"Along with a few other children I had the opportunity to meet and interact with two celebrities - Yuvraj Singh and Pawan Negi (famous Indian Cricketers). It was a great moment for all of us. Our photos made it to the newspaper and the TV. During our interaction with them we demonstrated the right way to wash our hands and to make them germ free. They in turn shared some tips about the cricket game. It was a proud moment for our parents and our community. They all praised us and we felt really proud. None of us ever dreamt of meeting such celebrities in our lives. Yet with Butterflies we could make it real."



My plan in life is to become a great football goalkeeper and play in professional leagues. I realise that if I can become a good enough player, media people will take my interviews, I will earn well and I can lead a better life. I never dreamt that this would be possible; never thought of a life outside the Mandi (vegetable market).



Inspiration in focus:

Ilma

Ilma, who is 11 now, comes from a Quraishi community and has five sisters and three brothers.

The elders at her home - her father and grandfather - are highly respected in the locality, as they are Haafiz-E-Quran (a term referring to a Muslim who knows the Quran by heart). Her father is a vegetable vendor and earns about 5000 rupees (£60) a month. Ilma describes her story in her own words:

"I had never seen school until I was 7 years old, for cultural reasons. When he saw my interest in becoming educated, my father wanted to get admission for me and my other siblings at the school in our village. But they refused admission as we were too old. With some difficulty, we went to a school which is outside our village and got enrolled. At the time of admission, the school asked me to write my name. I was unable. The teacher scolded me very badly and asked my father how she could give admission to a 9-year-old girl who does not even know how to write her name. She then refused to admit me. I was really disappointed and angry.

"My father then went again and met the teacher twice but I don't know what happened in those meetings. After two or three days, somehow my father received permission for me to be enrolled. I was the happiest when I got enrolled in school. But it was short lived as I found it really hard to catch up with other children in my grade. As I had skipped my lower primary classes, I was deprived of the basics of different subjects, for example learning alphabets, words and basic arithmetic. It caused a serious handicap to me as I did not understand how to read and write. The teacher used to take the lessons and I used to sit distracted, looking here and there and being mischievous. I only did this because I was unable to grasp what

was being taught in class. Often, I was a victim to her scolding due to my being behind in my education. I was ashamed of my situation. Other children in my class used to tease me too. There was only one teacher and we were about forty to fifty children. It was difficult for them to give attention to each and every child according to his or her needs. Therefore, I wasn't interested in going to school and at times I used to skip it.

"It was at this time that I came to know of Butterflies. I made up my mind to enroll myself in the centre, even though many people including my own parents and friends discouraged me, saying Butterflies take children away from the community. Through my visits to the centre and discussion with Didi and Bhaiya I was convinced that the rumours were wrong. It was quite easy for me to convince my parents about it. They also came and interacted with Bhaiya and Didi and they were very happy.

"I was in 4th grade when I joined Butterflies. I knew for sure that I would not perform well in my studies without the support of others. Now I can confidently say that Butterflies gave me their full support. I was able to learn reading and writing in Hindi and English in two months' time. Learning to read and write alphabets and words helped me to make a leap in studies as I started to take library books from Butterflies and read them to improve my language. I read a number of story books and poems in Hindi. Gradually, I also started taking library books in English. Today I am able to read both subjects quite fluently and I understand the meaning of most the things that I read. Whenever I have a problem I find Bhaiya and Didi to

support and help me. They are like friends to me. I am no more a victim of scolding by the teacher or teasing by other children. In class, I am doing quite well and I no longer skip my classes in formal school.

"Coming to Butterflies has been a great learning experience for me. I was a very short-tempered person. I used to irritate my mother and sisters often and used to argue and fight all the time. I roamed around the neighbourhood without paying any attention to my cleanliness or even my appearance. The weekly life skills sessions helped me to reflect on my behaviour and identify what is unacceptable. I am working on my behaviour, particularly on my short temper so that I can deal decently with my Mum, my sisters and others.

"Within one and a half years with Butterflies, I have made remarkable changes in my life, both in my education and in my personal behaviour. I have improved in my personal hygiene too. Today my appearance has changed as I wash and dress myself properly with clean clothes.

"By being at Butterflies I was also able to identify my hidden talent for dancing. I actively take part in the cultural afternoon programmes, which have definitely increased my self-confidence and self-esteem.

"I want to be a singer when I grow up. Butterflies has already helped me to overcome my stage fear. I have become more confident now. I will continue with my education till 12th grade or beyond college. My passion for reading will not end. I can always get books from the library through my siblings!"



Butterflies: a short history

During the 1980s the world's attention was drawn to the phenomenon of street children by UNICEF. This focus resulted in a number of situational analyses and studies of street children conducted in various countries, with a number of reports published.

The renewed focus resulted in national governments initiating policies, laws and programmes for street children. Civil society organisations began delivering interventions for street children: the approach was to wean children off the street and house them in childcare institutions. The underpinning idea behind this approach was that children need to be protected and the way to do it was to institutionalise them. Efforts were not made to trace their families and reunite them, nor to place them in alternative care if the family was not in a position to look after the child.

Somehow, we felt this was not the answer and there could be another approach.

Prior to initiating our programme, I, along with Dr. Praveen Nangia, associate professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, was commissioned by UNICEF¹ to do a situational analysis study of street and working children in Delhi (1987). This was the first empirical study on street children in India. The study gave us an understanding of the situation of street children and to inquire from them reasons as to why they were on the streets and what challenges they faced, and what should or could be done to support them. Interestingly, not a single child mentioned shelter. Soon after this study I undertook an independent study of 5 organisations in India who were the pioneers in this field.

This provided me with a wonderful learning opportunity. The founders of the organisations were charismatic, passionate and committed to their mission to bring positive change to the lives of street children. They were generous with their time, sharing of their learning, of successes and challenges. All programmes were institutional in nature. The children and street educators shared their life stories and experiences, which made

me think perhaps it is time to question the conventional, traditional responses to working with street children.

Children spoke of their independence, their freedom from being controlled by parents and adults in their lives, the lack of love and care in their lives. We had also met children in Delhi who had run away from children's institutions. The empirical evidence was telling us something important, that is children's voices need to be heard and listened to, they have to be consulted when decisions on their life were being taken.

Institutions are not the best places for children to grow up and should be the last resort when everything else fails - such as living in one's natural family or kinship care or adoption or foster care. Butterflies was initiated on the core belief and value that children had a right to participate in decisions related to their lives and that it would be non-institutional in its approach. The approach would be rights-based and our work would be guided by the Constitution of India and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

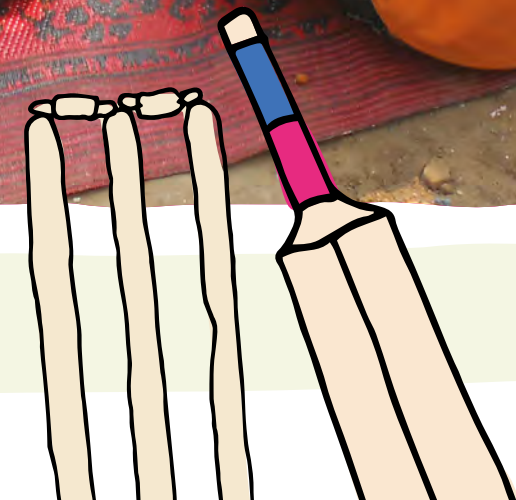
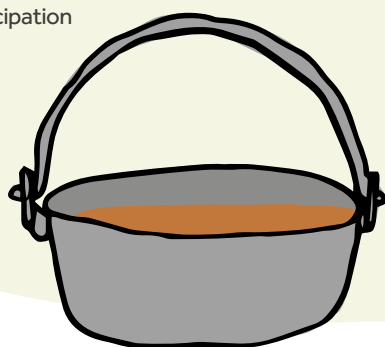
In 1988 when we began our work informally with street children in Delhi, testing the ground, UNCRC had yet to be adopted by the UN General Assembly. The idea of children's participation and non-institutional care was unheard of. In the initial years practitioners and theorists were critical of us when we gave space to children to share their views and insisted they need to be part of the deliberations. However, once UNCRC was ratified by India (in 1991) and international funding agencies started to question the role of children in various NGO programmes, children's participation became a buzz word spoken by almost all organisations working with children.

¹ The Ministry of Social Welfare (now known as Social Justice and Empowerment) Government of India (GOI) in partnership with UNICEF commissioned further seven studies in different cities of India which became the basis on which the GOI developed an integrated street children programme.

Image right:
A street education
contact point



By Rita Panicker,
Founder and
Executive Director



Inspiration in focus: Akash

Akash Kumar is a 13-year-old boy, studying in 8th grade in a government school. He was eight years old when he came into contact with Butterflies.

"My home is in Bagh Deewar (garden wall) Chandni Chowk. Every morning, I used to go to play in the park with my friends. One day when I was playing at Haathi park (a public park close to a Butterflies contact point) I saw a group of children sitting in a circle with Didi sitting in the middle. Some children were doing something in their notebooks, others were playing. Several posters and colourful books with pictures of fruits, animals, arithmetic and personal hygiene were hanging in and around the area. I was curious to understand what was going on there, but was afraid to go near and see what was happening. Several questions were popping in my mind from then on. Later in the evening, I happened to meet one of the children from the park; I spoke to him and asked about what they were doing there. He then described the different activities and told me that it is a contact point for Butterflies.

"The very next day I went to the contact point and spoke to Didi and asked her if I could come and study at the contact point. Didi asked about my interests and plans very politely. I told her that I dropped out at the 3rd grade but want to continue with my studies. Didi was very positive and replied that she would make arrangements for my enrolment. Later, I was invited to join different activities in the contact point such as educational classes, sports and other recreational activities. From then on, I came to the contact point regularly, involved myself in different activities at the centre and became part of the Butterflies education programme.

"I can recall only positive changes in my life in the last four to five years of being with Butterflies. I am performing well in academics and last year I topped 7th grade. I am assigned with a number of responsibilities in school which never happened before. I am able to complete my assignments every day and get appreciated at the school which was also rare before.

"My attitude and behaviour towards my family has also changed and now I support my mother and younger brother. Membership and learning from Children's Development Khazana and Child Health Cooperative has helped me to improve my personal life immensely. I was elected as Child Health Educator twice and Child Volunteer Manager of Children's Khazana once which helped to improve my leadership qualities and my responsibilities towards others. When I was removed of CHE post for my non-performance I was bit discouraged but with my hard work I was

able to regain the position. It taught me that if one has to earn respect then there is a need to perform our role with honesty and hard work. I am now much more careful in my spending patterns thanks to the training given through Children's Development Khazana. Today, I do not waste a single penny and my mother is very happy seeing that. I can experience the way other people in the contact point, the neighbourhood and school respect me after having mended my ways. It encourages me to continue to improve my behaviour and my performance even more.

"I feel that by being with Butterflies I have changed my way of living. I have become more responsible and a better performer now. All these were possible only with the support of Butterflies. If Butterflies were not there to help me by providing opportunities to improve my academic performance and life skills, I may not have continued my education."



I would still have been an irresponsible and low-performing student had I not come into contact with Butterflies. I would be nowhere near to what I am today if Didi Bhaiya had not come into my life.



Inspiration in focus:

Nisha

Nisha is a 12-year-old girl from Maharajganj village of Siwan district in Bihar, India. Her parents came to Delhi and settled in Gandhi camp years ago: her father was an Auto driver and her mother was a housewife.

She is the eldest sibling in her family and has two younger brothers. In 2011 Nisha's grandfather, who was living back in the village, fell ill and called Nisha's father back to the village to take care of him. Her family decided not to take Nisha back with them to the village and so Nisha moved to her Uncle, who also lives in the community:

"My family left me in Delhi with my uncle so that I could continue my education but I really missed my family. At first it was very difficult for me but gradually I got used to it. There are many things you can talk about with your father and your mother but you hesitate in asking those things with your uncle. I knew my parents were having a tough time in the village so I didn't ask anything of them.

"I stay with my two cousins whom I love; I take care of them mostly after school and when my aunty goes away. My uncle and aunty are very nice to me and treat me well but sometimes my aunty scolds me and tells me that I am not getting good marks in school because I am too busy making drawings and scribbles rather than focusing on my education.

"I was going to school regularly but whatever they taught me in school I was not able to understand properly. I wanted extra support but because of my family's financial problems my family couldn't arrange a tutor for me and my parents couldn't teach me because neither of them had ever attended school.

"I always go to school on time. One day when I came back from school I realised that my friend Sonia wasn't around. It was only when I asked Sonia about this that I learned about Butterflies. Sonia told me that she is going to Butterflies every day and they don't charge any fees. She told me Bhaiya and Didi are respectful of the children, they love and care for the children. I joined Butterflies in 2013. I clearly remember my first day; it was a day for sports for children, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

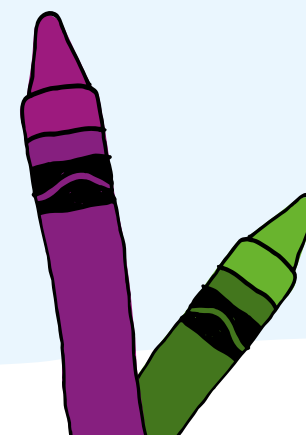
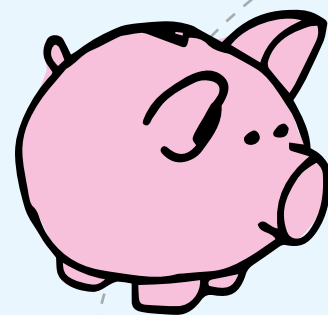
"Initially, when I joined Butterflies in 2013 I was not able to identify Hindi or English, I was not able to make even simple sentences, I was not able to read simple words from books. Through Butterflies I got the support which I was looking for, which is free and - most importantly - is safe and it is near to where I live. I got several chances to participate in sports, cultural programmes, and study tours, for example to the Nehru planetarium, the science museum and also to Jaisalmer and many more places. Before, I never explored places outside of my community as I used to be in the house taking care of my cousins or playing with other children at the nearby Okhla railway station.

"Today I am in grade 8 and doing very well in studies in my school - I got a B grade this year. Today I can read and write Hindi properly, and I can also read and write a little in English. I know I am a little weak in English still but I am practicing. I can read the newspaper and also take books from the library to improve.

"One of the most important things to happen to me was participating in a drawing competition, which was held at "bahut badi jagah" - a very big place. I won prizes for three years: two consolation prizes and one first place. The prize money of 15,000 rupees (approx. £180) was given to me with a certificate by Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, the Union Minister of Urban Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation and Information & Broadcasting in the presence of delegates from the UN and Japan, accompanied by several other government departments."



I used to draw pictures all the time during my free time, for which I normally got scolded. My aunty blamed my drawing for my poor performance in my studies. When I was rewarded for my skills my uncle and aunty were happy and realized that I was not wasting my time. They were very happy that I had won 15,000 rupees and came first among many children in a big competition.



Staff Stories

Vijai



What I have learnt is that it is so important to understand the real context of children before making any conclusions about them.

Previously when I saw a child begging I would form judgments in my mind: I assumed that they were in the wrong somehow, that they are probably addicted to some kind of substance. I would think there is no real hope for them. I might feel some sympathy but I stayed disconnected from them. I never let myself understand their lives or feelings.

But now I have learnt to be more curious, to understand why that child is begging. What is going on in their life that they should have to beg for money? I have developed more sensitivity towards them and more awareness of the issues they face.

Now I feel better equipped to deal with these situations we see all the time. In my mind, I am

thinking "how can I help?" As a result, I have much greater optimism, with the feeling that we can always do something. This is a big change for me personally.

In fact, I have learnt that some of the poorest children, who are not educated in the traditional way, have a much stronger ability to learn difficult life lessons than most privileged and educated children do.

In my experience street-connected children have more practical knowledge and experience about society, about communities and about life. I want to know if we could build a school where all children get to learn both types of learning: a traditional education and learning from life as well.



Image Below:

Children filling up their health workbooks at one of the contact points.



Staff Stories

Sana

In my experience street-connected children have more practical knowledge and experience about society, about communities and about life. I want to build a school where all children get to learn both types of learning:

I joined Butterflies five years ago – it was my first job after graduating with a BSc degree in Maths. I started working as a Child Rights Advocate at the Okhla Mandi fruit and vegetable market. When I started we had 6 children attending my sessions. Five years later, we have 169 children and a team of three people.

It is a tough environment but I have noticed lots of changes over time. Change doesn't happen overnight, you have to build trust with shopkeepers and locals. Now when we move our teaching location, people ask for us and tell us that they miss us.

On a personal level, my life has changed so much since I started working at Butterflies – this is something my family reminds me of regularly. I come from quite a conservative Muslim community. Whilst I was growing up everywhere I needed to go was within walking distance. This means that when I joined Butterflies I had to use public transport for the first time. My colleagues still tease me about this!

The biggest change has been in my confidence. I have always been a shy person, but now I have no problem speaking up in a public environment. I have no problem saying anything to anyone. At Butterflies, I have learned so much about the way society works. It's changed my perspective on things, like child protection and what poor children have to do to survive. In my family, everyone knows I'll put them right if their attitude towards poor children is wrong – I have become almost like an activist now that I am more aware.

My attitude has also changed about what it means to have a good job.

I have a good job because I can help put a smile on the face of a child. Previously, I thought only doctors and engineers have good jobs, now I know that all jobs are good.

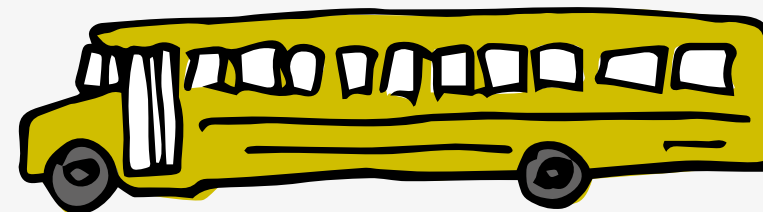
The children have taught me so much because they never give up, even in the toughest circumstances. They are always laughing, always playing. I keep

going because of the children, my girls and my boys. I feel so supported by everyone at Butterflies who are always encouraging me to push myself, to learn more, to continue my studies.

The biggest surprise was when I was awarded the best performer award for my work in 2014 – something I never expected.

Image Below:

A Bal Sabha in progress



Children's Participation and Democratic Values

Children's participation as a concept has been largely interpreted by practitioners and theorists based on theories emanating from the west. We too were guided by these theories.

The most common questions posed to us by international agencies related to the level of children's participation in the organisation: were the children in charge, were they part of planning programmes and its strategies? Are they members of the governing board, part of the hiring and firing processes of staff, budgeting and how the funds must be spent? The emphasis was on "rights". In this whole process of making children 'in charge' we completely lost the core value - or rather spirit - of participation.

The ugliness of power could be witnessed. We quickly learnt that children's participation did not mean all the above. We learnt that by harping on about rights alone we missed out on "responsibility", which is the flipside of rights. Children were vocal in demanding their rights but were silent on their responsibilities. We had to make them understand that rights came with responsibilities.

In the race to be seen as an organisation that values participation, organisations would select children and older adolescents who are articulate communicators to represent the organisations in public at conferences, press briefings, giving testimonies and so on. These children participate in most of the public events of the organisations and become professional conference-goers. They read papers written by adults in a language which is not of a child, nor are they the thoughts and ideas espoused of children.

Sadly, a façade is maintained that child representatives are older teenagers when they would actually be young adults. Apparently, the children do not grow up; a journalist once remarked to me that he had met a 17-year-old from an organisation 4 years ago, yet when he met him next, the young man maintained he was still 17 years old. These permanent young leaders find it very difficult to give up their positions and their power.

Children's participation in the political space is facilitated by NGOs through numerous children's councils, parliaments, assemblies and federations, which negotiate with the adults' political and administrative agencies to get their entitlements. This is another area where there is a compelling urge to facilitate children's participation in governance, without giving much thought to where one should draw the line.

In some instances, they function and imitate adult structures. In the bargaining, children imitate and imbibe some of the power dynamics of the adult political structures. Are we thrusting children to play a role that they are not prepared for? Or are we making the adults sensitive to children's views and involve and consult them while planning a policy, law, programme, or infrastructure for them?

To see this as a right of the child and not a favour bestowed on them by adults, the important thing is not to force children to be involved in a decision-making process if they do not want to or are not prepared.

Our experience has shown that it is not difficult to organise children into a forum; children are articulate, they have opinions on everything, they are very interested in sharing their views, and would be the most enthusiastic campaigners. What is important is to consider how we educate children about the values of participation and what it means to be democratic.

Butterflies is concerned with this core value. For us, children's participation does not begin and end with children's councils, children's parliaments, children's newspapers or radio. These are symbols of participation, which are visible. In our endeavour to listen to children and draw them into the process of decision-making, we are teaching children the principles of democracy.

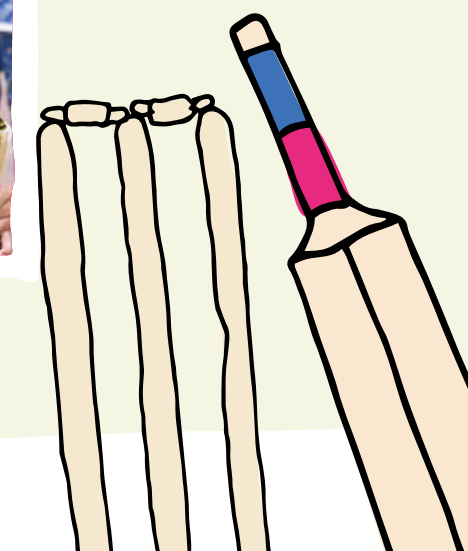
In Butterflies, every children's council meeting elects a Convenor and a rapporteur to write down the minutes, which gives all children a chance to be a Convenor and a rapporteur, thus preventing the creation of permanent leaders. Children at meetings make sure that the quieter members get a chance to share their views and younger boys and girls are also given space to voice their views. Older children respect decisions taken by those younger than them.

To us, the test of true participation is realised when children embrace the values of democracy, that is, to be fair and just; tolerant; to believe in equity and equality; to listen; to give a chance to others to speak and be heard; to accept differences; to respect diversity and plurality in terms of race, ethnicity, language, religion, caste, class, gender and age. This has been our priority in our engagement with children. We have evidence of where children have been able to negotiate with their parents about continuing education, their participation in sports and - especially in the case of girls - prevention of early marriage.

Child members of the two cooperatives (Child Health Cooperative and Children's Development Khazana) elect their child health educator and child volunteer manager every six months. There have been several occasions when the child volunteer manager would have been a girl as young as 11 years old.

Children in media is another area where children are involved in bringing out their own newspaper, radio programmes, television programmes, photography and theatre. Butterflies too has its own children's media group; they publish a newspaper called Delhi Children's Times and is brought out by Delhi Child Rights Club a forum of children from 21 NGOs in Delhi which is facilitated by Butterflies. There is also a radio programme called 'Through the Eyes of a Child', which is aired every Thursday at 4.45 pm by Butterflies Broadcasting Children (BBC) from All India Radio FM station Rainbow.

In all initiatives that involve children the test is to ensure that their participation is genuine and not tokenistic and adult-driven.



Inspiration in focus:

Rahul

"My family lived in Bihar where I lived with my parents and six other siblings (three brothers and three sisters). All my sisters have been married which caused a big financial burden on my family. Meanwhile, my mother became ill and we had to spend a huge sum for her treatment."

"The debt and financial constraints in the family brought us to Delhi. Now we live at Narela (north West Delhi) where my father works. He earns about 9000 rupees per month (approx. £110). To pay off the debts and to survive, my brother and I had to skip our education and start working. My brother is working at Sikanderpur and I am working in Delhi.

"I started working in an electrical shop at Prem Gali and was engaged in wiring. I was not interested in that work but my struggles in life forced me to stick to it. I was paid 3000 rupees per month (approx. £40). I worked there for 3 months until I left for home for Diwali. When I came back I found my current workplace - the motor market in Kashmere Gate. I now earn about 6000 rupees per month (£70). I live with two other friends in a rented room. I never attended school due to working the whole day.

"I heard about Butterflies from one of my friends who used to go there for education. He spoke to me about the different activities and programmes Butterflies provide for children. I was quite interested in it and went to see the centre along with a friend. When I came for the first time, a children's council meeting (Bal Sabha) was going on. It was interesting to see children expressing their problems with the intention of finding solutions. I was impressed with my first experience so I started to visit the centre, at first without enrolling myself in the programme. Eventually

Didi and Bhaiya asked for my details and registered me in the Butterflies educational programme.

"I told Didi about my work and so she came and spoke with my employer. He agreed for me to study without losing my job. So, I was formally registered with the Butterflies education programme.

"On the advice of Didi I tried to enrol myself in the 5th grade of NIOS (National Open School) but I failed to get enrolled that year. I prepared myself for the next chance by studying hard at Butterflies. I was enrolled at NIOS by the next year and began to prepare myself well for the exams. Didi helped and encouraged me constantly, advising me to work hard to excel. Their supervision helped me to concentrate on various subjects. Bhaiya taught me Maths and English and I learned to read and write Hindi and English without much difficulty. I am confident that I will be able to get good marks as I have shown a good level of performance in the tests.

"Meanwhile, I also carry on with my work at the motor market. I buy motor parts and sell them to customers. My employer is very kind to me and he supports and encourages me in my studies. He gives leave if I have to take an exam or for any training programmes or workshops organised by Butterflies. He does not reduce my salary for such events. Sometimes he gives me an advance, as he knows that I do not spend wastefully. I come to the contact point regularly at

9 in the morning and go to work by 11 am. My workplace, my room and the contact point all are within walking distance.

"I have also learnt about personal health and hygiene behaviours. My appearance is often very shabby from the motor market. But with the influence of Didi and Bhaiya I have changed a lot and try to dress myself up neatly. I began to take a bath every day after my work, which I never did earlier in my life. My employer and others in the market look at me with respect now. They don't use the foul language they used to shower on me earlier. My behaviour towards them has changed because of the support and encouragement they give. I also work hard to make them happy.

"Occasionally Bhaiya takes us out to various historical places near the contact point. It was an interesting learning experience for a boy like me who is a migrant. Before coming to Butterflies, I never used to interact with other children or people. My life revolved around my workplace and the room where I lived. By joining Butterflies, I gained many friends and I find life more interesting and enjoyable. When I got sick one time, other children in the contact point took me to the health post in Chandni Chowk and provided the necessary treatment.

"My mother is well now and my other siblings encourage and support me to study as I show great interest in my studies. When I grow up I want to be like Amal Bhaiya at Butterflies, who teaches and educates children - particularly children who are in difficult situations. I will study well and work hard like him for children who are deprived."



At 16 years old, I know I'm not at the age to be working but constraints at home force me and children like me to take up jobs. I'm very thankful to Butterflies because they have given me the vision to take both work and education hand in hand. My employer has no problem in that and supports me immensely. When my family made the decision to come to Delhi I never thought that I would be able to continue my education.



Children's Cooperatives



The two cooperatives have taught us that when children are given the opportunities and responsibility to be the decision makers of a programme, it is more likely to succeed. There is more continuity in the way that it is managed and a greater sense of achievement amongst the children. This way of working also educates children to be responsible, not only for themselves but collectively. We have noticed that children own the cooperatives to such an extent that when they speak about it they name it without the prefix of their organisation. In their eyes, the cooperatives are absolutely for children and by children.

Children's Cooperatives - Health

Child Health Cooperative (CHC) was initiated in 1995 when we realised that our lessons on health, hygiene and nutrition were not bringing about the desired behavioural changes in children. Children needed to take ownership over their bodies and live safe and healthy lives, so the way forward was to make the health project their programme.

The approach was to take the concept of cooperatives and redesign the health programme to be a cooperative, whereby children would be members, decide on the objectives and activities to be taken up. The concept of cooperatives was broken down to simple child-friendly language to help children understand the concept. This proposition was discussed at a children's council meeting and approved by the children.

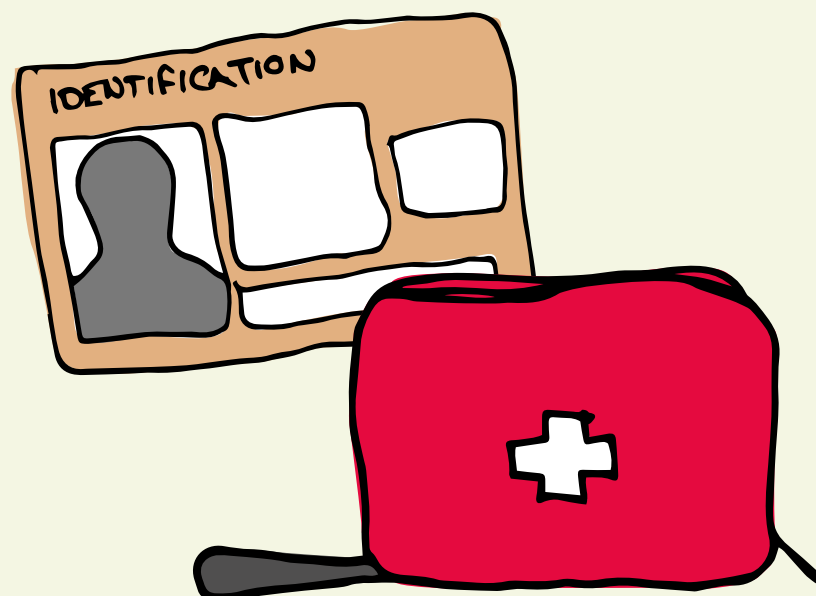
CHC today is operational not only in Delhi but across 8 states in India and 8 countries (India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ghana and Madagascar) since 2011. CHC has been adopted by 23 NGOs in these countries.

The health cooperative has brought a radical change in the dietary habits of children, their sense of hygiene and cleanliness - not only of their bodies, but also of the environment and the neighbourhood. There has been a reduction in some of the seasonal illnesses and preventable diseases.

The health cooperative has a team of child health educators (CHE) who are given training in first aid.

The CHEs promote safe, healthy lifestyles including maintaining a clean environment among their peers, families and communities. The members of the CHC are taken to three government hospitals in Delhi for an orientation of how a hospital works and to break the fear of hospitals among children. They are also introduced to the doctors and nurses of the hospitals.

All CHC members and CHEs have an identity card that allows them easy access to the outpatient and emergency departments. The children have helped a number of adult patients to access medical care in these government hospitals. The doctors and nurses recognise them. In fact, they are called little doctors in their communities.



Children's Financial Management and Life Skills

In 2001, we initiated the Children's Development Khazana (CDK), a life skills education programme teaching children financial management and democratic values.

CDK's primary objective is to impart life skills, teaching them how to be responsible, to prioritise needs, to budget and save. In our early years of work with children on the streets, we observed that whatever money they earned during the day would be spent by night-time. The reasons for this were obvious: no safe place to keep their money, older boys forcefully took the money from smaller kids, etc. Furthermore, they lived for the present - the future was too distant.

We encouraged them to save money by having a savings scheme but we realised that children were not learning to manage their money. We went back to the children and in one of their council meetings placed an agenda about initiating a children's development bank: a cooperative banking system whereby children took responsibility to manage not only their own money but everyone's money. They would learn to prioritise needs, give advances for welfare and development needs, budget and save. This offered a life-skill where the "bank" was a mechanism to learn about cooperation and financial management.

The money went into a mainstream bank. The name was changed from children's development bank to "Children's Development Khazana." Khazana is a Persian word which means treasure: it was a more appropriate word than a bank.

The children drew up the rules of CDK as to who could become a member, for what

purposes an advance could be taken and so on. The initial rules drawn up by the children were typically strict rules that any group of children would list. The list had more "don'ts" than "do's", such as if a child smoked she/he could not be a member; if he/she was a bully they could not participate; whoever swore could not join; whoever did not do their studies; and whoever did not regularly attend classes could not join. Fortunately, they tempered it down, otherwise there would have been no CDK!

This initiative took the imagination of the children by storm. There were more children lining up to become a member of CDK than there were registering in our education classes. The upside to this interest among children was that they were learning to be responsible, focused, with a goal to look forward to. Children were regular in our learning centres; they were keen to study as they knew that to become a volunteer manager they would have to be good in writing and arithmetic. There was a remarkable improvement in their learning levels.

As mentioned earlier, CDK is an excellent tool to teach children democratic values and cooperation. Children learn to respect each other irrespective of the age or gender of the person. Decisions are made with a consensus and where that is not possible through majority vote - but the dissent of the minority is noted down in the minutes.

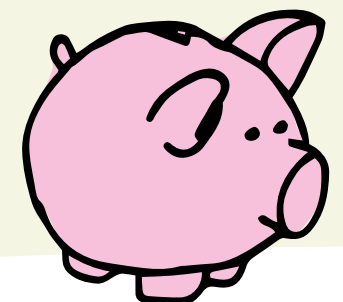
Over the years we have analysed the pattern of saving, withdrawal and advances taken and have found that most often children took advances for educational and health needs - not

only for themselves but for their family members and older members - to start a business enterprise.

The saving patterns show that children are saving more and spending less on unhealthy snacks and sodas, games, movies and on knick-knacks. This can also be linked to the learning they get in the health cooperative.

In 2004, CDK went international. In partnership with NGOs in the south and central Asian region (Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), Ghana in West Africa and Madagascar in East Africa, CDK has become one of the major programmes of the organisation.

The ultimate goal that CDK promotes is an exit from the vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy. Towards this end, gaining an education and training in vocational skills and in management are critical tools. As part of their training, children are taught the value of ethical practices in their business, to keep an eye on the business practices of their peers and exert pressure on each other to follow ethical principles. All children associated with CDK continue their education. They focus on becoming entrepreneurs or learning professional skills and existing from their situation of poverty and insecurity. Once a member has completed 18 years, we support the member to open an account in a mainstream bank. CDK gives them the security to think of a future where they can be self-reliant. To put it simply - CDK is a lifeline for them.



Inspiration in focus:

Laxmi



Laxmi is a very strong and intelligent 17-year-old girl who comes from an underprivileged family from a village in Jharkhand. Her father is a rickshaw puller and her mother is a labourer. Laxmi joined the CDK programme in 2014 after getting in touch with Butterflies through Pratigya, a local NGO Laxmi was associated with.

"People in my village had a very apathetic attitude towards education and neither did they motivate their children to participate in these programmes. Alcoholism is a major problem in our village; the majority of people spend their earnings on alcohol and children waste their money on eating junk food. People hardly saved money so I felt the need to explain the importance of saving to my family and villagers. After mobilising a few other children and people in my village, I conducted a meeting about the CDK programme. I made pamphlets and printed slogans saying, "children in other villages are learning to save money, when will we learn?" I invited CDK members and their parents from another village to share their experience. Listening to the experiences of these children and parents had a profound impact on the people in my village. Gradually, people became motivated and began to show interest in the CDK programme. Chandan Bhaiya and I then explained the process of CDK to them, its benefits, the need to save and how CDK can help us bring our village out of the darkness of alcoholism. We had to fight a lot to convince parents to start a CDK programme in our village, but now enough parents are convinced and are allowing their children to be a part of the CDK programme.

"For many years my family has sold local rice beer (hadiya) for 10 days at a fair organised in our village every year. We made a good profit from this business but my view of our business changed after attending a CDK international workshop in 2014. At the workshop Ms. Rita Panicker explained about ethical and unethical business practices. It was then when I realised that our family's business was unethical. Instead of eradicating the problem of alcoholism, our business was contributing to it. People were not only harming their health but alcohol also fuelled fights and domestic violence. My conscience was activated and so I tried to explain to my parents how unethical our business was. Our business was profitable for us but harmful for our society.

"After some debate, I managed to convince my parents and they decided to change their business. I started to develop the idea of starting a more constructive food business selling healthy home cooked food at low cost. Seeing food as a daily need for people and they should invest in healthy food, I thought this business would be good. We tested how it would do at a fair and thankfully

it did well. I won my parents' trust and now I am planning to expand the business further. With the help of Chandan Bhaiya I prepared a more detailed business plan and presented it to CDK members at the international workshop. Their feedback and suggestions helped a lot in improving my plan.

"I took a development advance from CDK to start the business and for the last two years we have been earning a good profit. I am thankful to the CDK international workshop for giving me the knowledge about ethical and unethical business, business strategies and skills and helping me to become an ethical entrepreneur."



Inspiration in focus: Salaudin

"Among the different programmes I was attracted to at the Butterflies contact point, the CHC programme appealed the most. It helped me learn more about my own body, my health, and gave me the opportunity to discuss health issues. Membership of CHC also taught me the importance of helping other children to take care of their health."

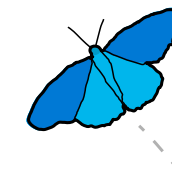
"I live in an unclean area. I was surrounded by heaps of garbage, open drains, stagnant water, improper sanitation and human waste in my area. None of us ever considered it to be an issue, none of us bothered to take any steps to resolve the issue as we all considered it very normal. I was quite comfortable with the situation until I became a member of CHC and learned about healthy and unhealthy situations and behaviours."

"The weekly health sessions I attended discussed various health issues and hazards and addressed the issue through collective and individual actions. In one of the health sessions Didi spoke to us in detail about environmental health. She explained how careless dumping of solid waste and animal or human waste could affect the health of everyone in the community. This was new learning for me as neither I nor the others including the adults ever thought about it. We never knew how it affected our health. After the session, we discussed the environmental health issue in our wider community. We sat in a group and began to discuss the environmental issues that hamper health. I spoke about the issue of human and animal waste, as well as the open drain in the community. I put forward the suggestion of meeting the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) councillor, to discuss the issues with him and submit a memorandum on the issue. Along with others I prepared the memorandum and sought permission to meet him and discuss the issue. The memorandum demanded the placing of dustbins in different areas of the community and cleaning the area on a daily basis by MCD workers. Prior to this, I had never met any government official face to face or discussed anything with them. With the presence and support of others, I gained courage and went to meet him, along with other CHC members. I can say for sure that CHC gave me the courage to give the presentation in front of him and other government officials. The councillor listened to our points carefully and assured us they would look into the matter. A week later MCD workers started visiting and cleaning our area. Placing dustbins did not take place, even after several follow up visits to community members. The change that we could bring about through this intervention gave me and others the confidence to take up other health issues in the community and involve ourselves in resolving the issues. The opportunity, training, guidance and support given to me through the Butterflies CHC was the backbone for my achievement."

"In 2010, I was selected as Child Health Educator (CHE) which gave me the opportunity to serve other children and the people of my community. I always carried my First Aid box along with me and provided first aid to people in need. I was a CHE for one tenure and used to give first aid assistance to other children and people in the community. In one instance, I saw a child who had had an accident on the road. I gathered my confidence and gave first aid and later took the child to a nearby government hospital. The child was a stranger to me yet I served him. Other children and people in the community appreciated me and started calling me 'little doctor' after that instance. My father and I are proud of this acknowledgement and recognition because it was our first experience of this kind."



This story is significant to me because I am now called 'Little Doctor' by the people in my community, which gives me a special identity and recognition. I have gained confidence and courage to face people, to speak to them and involve myself in community health issues.



Inspiration in focus:

Sanaullah

"I am a native of Darbanga district, Bihar and came to Delhi for treatment. My leg was seriously fractured in an accident that happened while I was cycling."

"Initially the injury was small with some swelling so I ignored it, but soon I could not walk and was suffering with severe pain. My parents feared something serious was wrong with my leg and took me to different hospitals and spent several thousand rupees on treatment but there was no change in the level of pain. Then a few of my close relatives suggested taking me to Delhi for better treatment and immediately we left. We were new to the place, we did not know where to stay and our purse was also nearly empty. We took a cheap room for rent near Jama Masjid. My father started working for a meagre income as a fish-fry worker in a small shop. It wasn't enough to bear all our household expenses and we couldn't afford much for my treatment."

"My family situation was really tough at that time."

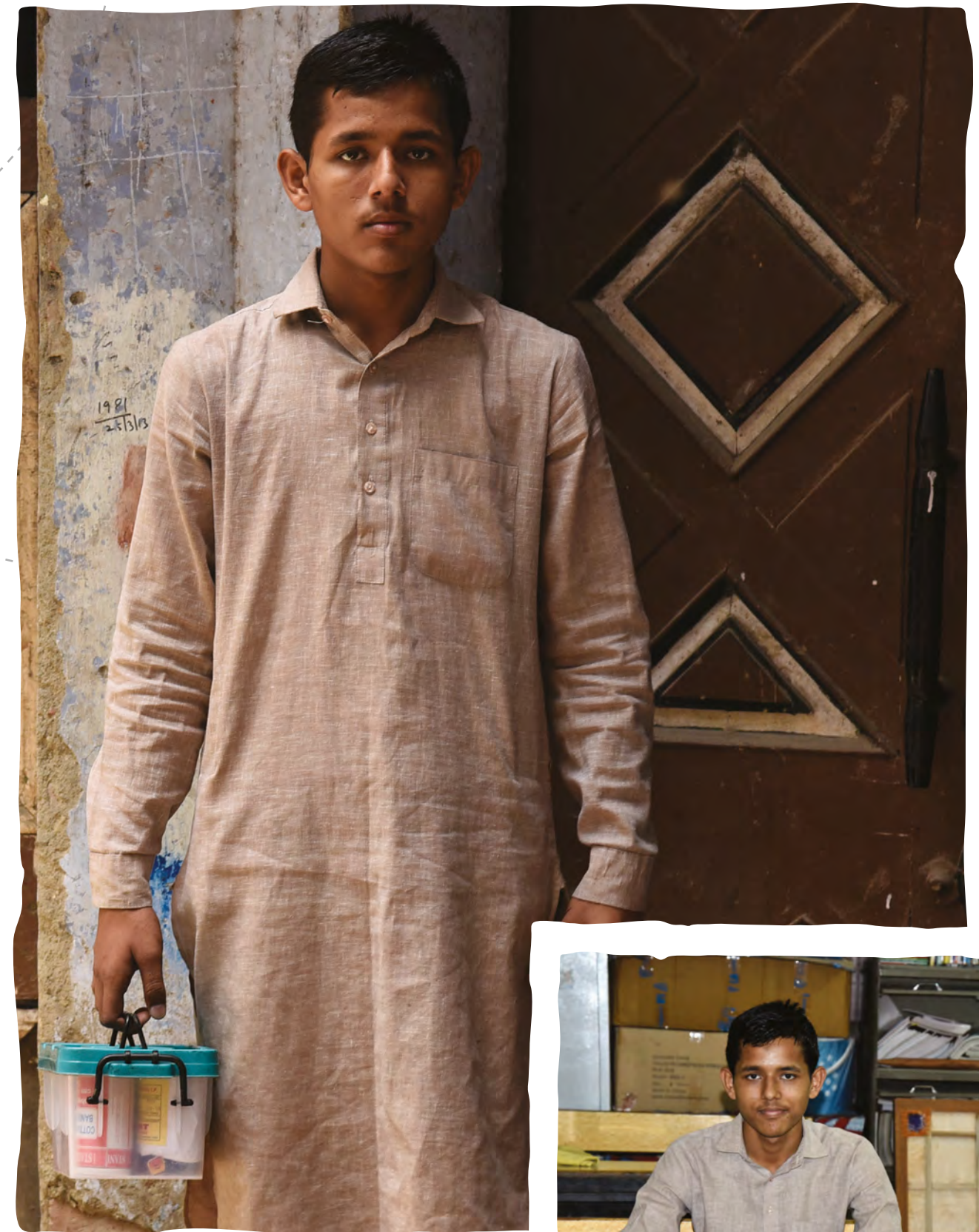
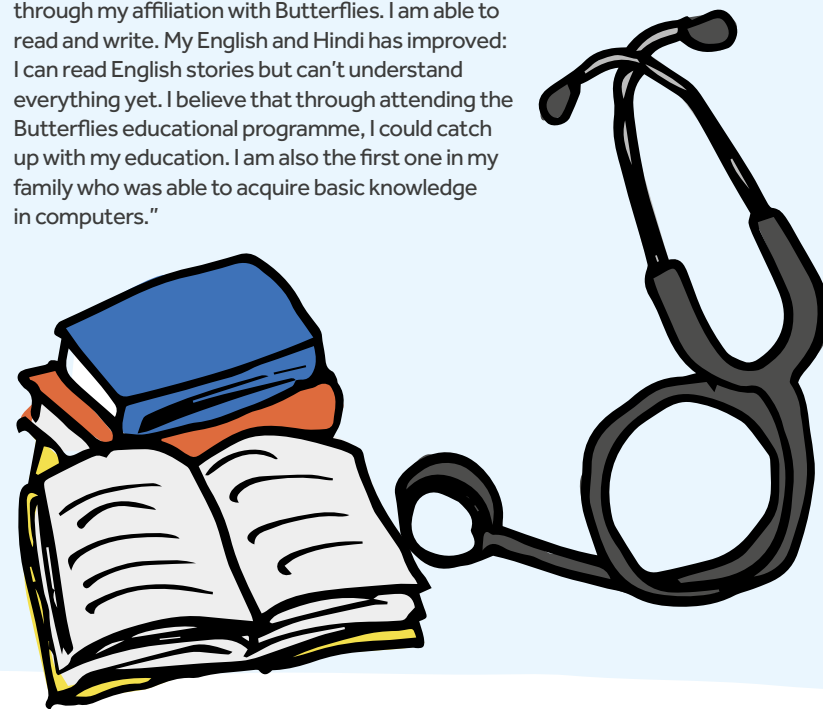
"It was at this time that my brother suggested I join Butterflies. I visited the centre and found that they provided a host of programmes that contributed to the overall development of children. I was attracted to the Child Health Cooperative programme because I thought it would help me to get better treatment for my leg injury. I paid 5 rupees (6p) and became a member. After that I experienced the care they gave me, taking care of all my treatments. Initially I was taken to the Health post, located in Darya Ganj, and from there I was taken to Lok Nayak Jay Prakash Government Hospital on the recommendation of the Doctor at the health post. All the necessary tests were done there but found nothing serious. The Doctors could not find anything wrong with my leg but at the same time I was in severe pain. Then I was taken to the most prestigious hospital in Delhi - St. Stephen's hospital. They operated on my leg and drained out some water-like substance. I am still undergoing treatment from that hospital although I am in my recovery stage. I would have still been limping with great pain had I not become a part of the Butterflies CHC programme. I am indebted to Butterflies because my health has improved."

"Now, I have returned to normal and I am carrying on with my studies and other activities. I am able to participate in all the programmes at the child development centre. I am able to walk properly without pain."

"My family is really grateful to Butterflies for the assistance provided to me. My parents really praise the work done by Butterflies for poor children like me. I can proudly say now that with the intervention of Butterflies, the life of an ordinary boy from Bihar has changed totally. I love Butterflies a lot."

"In Bihar, there was nothing right in my life as my family was struck by poverty and deprived of basic amenities. There were no proper education facilities available to me and there was no one to motivate me. There was no discipline at school, both amongst teachers and students. I remember well that the teachers were not interested to teach and the students not interested to learn. This created a dislike in me for education, which made me weak in subjects like English, Hindi, maths - but with the exception of Urdu. I did not even know how to read and write."

"Today, I can see remarkable changes in my life through my affiliation with Butterflies. I am able to read and write. My English and Hindi has improved: I can read English stories but can't understand everything yet. I believe that through attending the Butterflies educational programme, I could catch up with my education. I am also the first one in my family who was able to acquire basic knowledge in computers."



Inspiration in focus:

Permanova

"My father migrated to Russia in search of a livelihood as he did not have any permanent work in Tajikistan, so I lived with my mother and five brothers in Gissar district, Tajikistan. For the past 8 years my father has not been with us and has not given any money to support the family."

"My mother is sick and not in a position to work. She needs constant medical care. All of my brothers had to skip their education and work to support the family. One of my brothers works as a porter in the market and another as a car washer. The combined income was just enough for our daily requirements. It wasn't enough for the education of all the others.

"I studied until fifth grade and then I too had to stop my education and start working at a very early age. It was at that time I attended an awareness programme on Children's Development Khazana (CDK) organized by an organisation called Munis and it is there that I came to know about the Butterflies programme. After some initial hesitation, I decided to become a member of CDK and started saving my earnings. Soon I became an active member and started participating in all CDK activities.

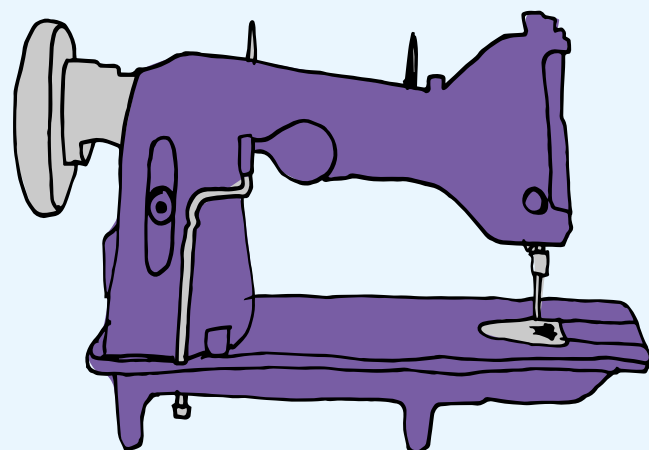
"In one of the CDK workshops, I shared my dream of becoming a seamstress with an aim to earn a decent amount of money to support my family. If I could earn a better income I could send my brother to school and buy food for my whole family. I was amongst the first to apply for an advance at my centre. In 2015, I took a development advance of 1500 Somoni (£125) to purchase a sewing machine. Munis supported me in developing the business plan and in purchasing the sewing machine.

"I started to work as an apprentice under a master seamstress. Within a month I was able to pick up the skills and began to sew national dresses, trousers, shirts and other things. Gradually the volume of my work increased and I began to earn a good sum of money. I started to work independently and now I receive both direct works and a number of sub-contracts for sewing. I can proudly say that my business has taken off quite well and I have already repaid my CDK advance. I expanded my business and purchased two

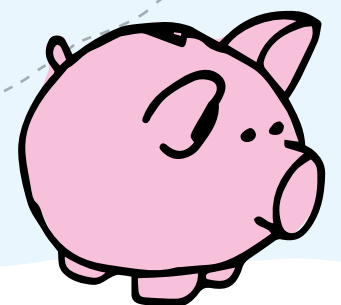
more sewing machines and two other CDK girls are learning sewing skills at my shop. Now I am able to earn about 3000 Somoni (£250) every month.

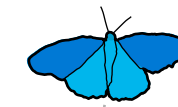
"I am grateful to CDK for all the support I have received. I have a dream to be a well-known designer of national clothes and to start a big tailoring shop. I have a plan to establish an independent tailoring unit and boutique for ready-made dresses. In the future, I have a plan to develop my business as a family business.

"I can confidently say that the CDK programme has changed my life. I am very grateful to Butterflies, an Indian NGO, to have introduced and offered this to the children of Tajikistan. I thank them for that, along with my family. This project has helped me and my family to come out of our financial constraints. I pray to God that all the children of the world become happy and that they do not face discrimination and work as child labourers. Children should study and become lawyers, doctors, and teachers and help everyone."



Joining CDK gave me the confidence that I can succeed in life. The support CDK gave me was instrumental in joining a self-employment programme, through which I support my family. Today, we do not struggle as we did earlier to meet our needs. I have also restarted my education through evening school and am helping my brothers and sister access education.





Inspiration in focus:

Rohit

"Prior to my involvement with Butterflies, I was addicted to smoking. I used to have a pack of 12 bidis (local tobacco) and four to five cigarettes every day. I also used to take one or two packets of gutka (chewing flavoured tobacco)."

"I used cash I took from home or I borrowed it from my friends. When these sources failed I resorted to selling iron rods that were in an old, vacant building in our area. I was quite unaware of the bad effects of my habit until I was a participant in one of the health sessions by Butterflies. The videos they showed had images of mouths and livers of cancer patients, caused by smoking tobacco. It was horrifying and an eye opener for me. I decided to distance myself from smoking and although it was quite difficult in the beginning, within three months I was able to overcome my habits. Today, I neither smoke nor consume any tobacco products.

"This was only possible because of the counselling, support, encouragement and guidance of the child health educators and the staff of the Child Health Co-operatives, particularly Nausheen Didi.

"Distancing myself from smoking and the intake of substances has helped me to concentrate on my studies. It seems to have had its effect on my health in general, as I rarely fall ill now. Today, I feel like a better person.

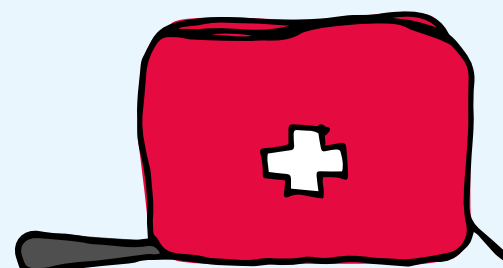
"With my parents' meagre income, it was always difficult for them to take care of us. Our clothes were torn and we were unclean as we played in filthy surroundings near our jhuggi (shacks). We rarely took a bath and rarely wore clean clothes. There was an open nala (drain) in the village info, which I often fell into but never bothered to clean myself afterwards. It risked my health and I fell ill frequently.

"My membership in the Child Health Cooperative had a huge effect on my unhealthy behaviours. It has helped me not only to stop smoking but was instrumental in promoting several healthy habits, both on a personal and at the community level.

"At the personal level, my earlier behaviours included not washing my hands before and after meals, not taking baths, not wearing washed clothes, not combing my hair or cutting my nails, not having a clean bed and eating unhealthily. Now I take regular baths, I change my clothes when they are unclean and wash my clothes regularly, I cut my nails, I brush my teeth every day and also comb my hair. I no longer play in unhygienic surroundings anymore.

"At the community level, Butterflies taught us that we should not throw garbage outside or litter our surroundings. There used to be heaps of garbage in various places in the community, including right in front of my house. I never bothered about it - my attitude was "if others litter, why should I clean it?" Through Butterflies I have realised that it is the responsibility of each one of us to keep our surroundings clean. It prompted me to clean the garbage in front of my house and I asked my friends to do the same around their houses. Along with other children in the community I help educate people about health and hygiene with door to door campaigns, rallies and street plays. Recently we performed a street play on Dengue Fever and Malaria.

"I am convinced that I can contribute something to the community in which I live. Whatever I have learned and done to myself and to the community is because of the Prevention and Promotion Programme of Child Health Co-operatives. Looking back to the last four to five years, I can name a number of remarkable changes in my life because of my involvement with butterflies."



Inspiration in focus:

Suraj

"I live with my parents and other siblings. We were four siblings although one brother died due to his uncontrolled alcoholism. My father and all my remaining brothers are addicted to alcohol and drugs."

"My second elder brother is addicted to Ganja (cannabis) and other drugs. He doesn't do any work to earn money. He steals things with his gang of friends. I have tried to tell my father and brothers about its harmful effects but they never pay any attention to me. They come home drunk and then it is war at home. Often my mother is the victim getting beaten by them, particularly by my father. It has been like this my whole childhood. She has never experienced peace in her life: I am the only consolation to her. At the same time, her fear is that I will take the same path as my father and brothers.

"What stops me from falling into such habits is my association with Butterflies. I participate in most of the activities organised at the centre. I am particularly interested in the Child Health Co-operative. I was chosen as the Child Health Educator of the CDC. After the training, I have cleaned and dressed the wounds of several children in the Child Development Centre and in the community. In one instance, I saw a child bleeding after he got hurt running. I approached him and told him that it would become septic if it is not cleaned and dressed properly. He did not know what to do. He was not a member of the CDC. I told him that I can help him: I went to the centre and came with the first aid box and cleaned and dressed his wounds. He was happy and thanked me. My mother who saw what happened was really happy too. It was one of the rare moments in life that I saw a smile on the face of my mother.

"Since then, her dream is seeing me as a doctor. She always speaks to me about it. In a way, that motivates me to learn more about health issues, various diseases and treatments for them. I used to share with her whatever knowledge I gained from being a member of Child Health Co-operative: that 8 glasses of water per day is essential for the good health of children; that there are six to eight steps involved in washing hands properly; the importance

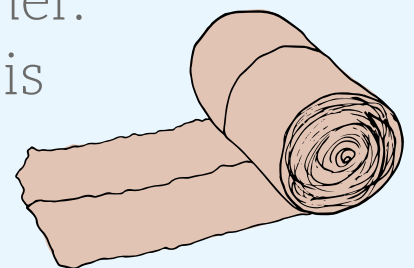
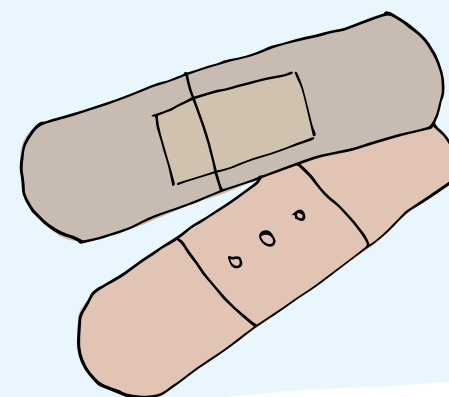
of clean surroundings at home. With the help of Butterflies, I believe that one day I will be a successful doctor.

"I am able to speak to you like this only because of the protective environment Butterflies provided me to grow up in. I am sure I would never have been to school. I would not have received so much respect and encouragement if I were not associated with Butterflies. I would have been like the other children in the area, who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. I was at a higher risk as my father and brothers were addicted. Today I feel confident enough to deal with household problems. I am more focused in my studies and health now."



“

I came with my first aid box and cleaned and dressed his wounds. My mother saw me and was really happy. It was one of the rare moments in life that I saw a smile on the face of my mother. Since then, her dream is seeing me as a doctor.



Frustrations and Challenges

Throughout our journey at Butterflies there have been disappointments and failures when we have lost contact with children, or simply failed to get through to them.

Despite trying our best, we somehow could not reach their soul and mind: instead these children took a path in their lives that did not lead them to escape poverty and illiteracy. It is deeply painful and makes us wonder where we went wrong. However, their stories makes us determined to do all we can, to not give up on any child and to continue to strive for interventions that are relevant to children, to support them in their journey to discover knowledge, skills and independence.

As practitioners, my colleagues and I have had equal measure of satisfaction and disappointment in our work. In the early years of our work we had immense problems in admitting children to formal schools. The school management representatives demanded all sorts of paperwork that was nearly impossible to obtain. For example, they would ask for birth certificates despite most children not having any, as they were not born in hospitals and their parents had not registered their birth with the Registrar of Births and Deaths. For residential addresses: when we mentioned the address "care of Butterflies" it was not acceptable to them. We had numerous arguments and unpleasantness with school authorities but stood our ground until we got admission for the children. In some instances, we had to use the threat of going to court. Matters improved after the Right to Education Act was legislated in 2009, which gives every child up to the age of 14 years the right to education and no school can deny a child admission on any grounds.

Team member Moushumi describes one of her experiences:

"In the year 2008-09, I was involved with the Butterflies mobile school near Lodhi road, Sai Mandir. One aim of the mobile school is to enrol children into formal school. During that year we had 40 such children to be enrolled. I initiated the process for their enrolment in February 2009 so that the maximum number could be enrolled in the coming academic year. I visited the communities, interacted

with parents, organised meetings with the parents, encouraged them to send their children to school and we discussed it in the Bal Sabha. I also had meetings with school authorities, as these children did not have any valid proof of identity. They asked for an affidavit for each child, which Butterflies prepared and provided. Finally, out of 40 children 34 were taken for admission to school (the remaining six were enrolled in open schooling for several reasons.)"

"Of the 34 children, 25 children were enrolled without any hassle. However, nine children were not enrolled as their age and academic level were disproportionate. I spoke with the principal again and convinced him of how eager the children were to study; I took personal responsibility for their education and behaviour in school. Reassured, the principal gave admission. After just one week I received a call from the principal informing me that the boys had not attended for the past 2 days. They had come on the third day but after the first period ran away. They also motivated eight other boys to skip the classes."

"The principal was furious and I was shocked. I apologised to the principal and went to meet the children and found three of them playing caroms. When I asked them about the incident they responded very casually, stating that the teacher was lying and they are not interested going to school anymore. I was very depressed and it seemed that my entire efforts over a year had gone in vain. I felt like crying and totally worn out. I also experienced guilt, feeling that these children had created embarrassment for Butterflies. I was depressed for few days until one day I noticed five out of the nine boys going to school again. When they saw me they approached me and apologised for what had happened. They were readmitted as they had gone to the school and apologised to the principal and their teacher for what had happened. The boys then bid goodbye and ran to their school. I was in tears of joy as my hard work had paid off at last."



"Our run-ins with police constables were constant and quite stressful; every so often we were at police stations trying to get children released who were falsely implicated for crimes they had not committed. A couple of our colleagues were booked by police officials for stopping them from beating children, on charges of "obstructing officials from performing their duty!"

Salim, a social worker at Butterflies reflects on his experience.

"From the very beginning, I had passion to do something for the most marginalised. My dream came true when I joined Butterflies four years back and got the opportunity to work at grassroots level."

"I was placed at Kashmere gate, one of the contact points of Butterflies and was working as a child rights advocate, helping children get an education. On 27th February 2015, it was at around five o'clock in the evening when I saw a child aged 10 crying in an isolated place near Kashmere Gate Bus Stop. I reached out to him and enquired what had happened. He whispered "meim akhele hum mere papa mammi nahi hain" (I am alone. My parents are no more). He was staying with his paternal uncle and aunt who used to beat him and make him work instead of sending him to school. He told me with tears in his eyes "Bhayya mai School Jana Chaahta hu" (I want to go to school). "Please take me to a place where I could study and play".

"Learning about his situation I was quite depressed and was almost in tears myself. I wanted to help him out of his situation but did not know where to take him and provide a shelter. I was in a dilemma. I then took the child to the nearby police station hoping that the situation would be sorted out there and that the child's wellbeing will be ensured. To my dismay things began to take a bad turn as the police personnel made me to wait for 7 hours in the police station, just to make a Daily Diary entry. They began to treat me as if I had committed an offence and looked at me like a criminal. They began to use foul language against me, which embarrassed me. When I reached my limits, I dialled 100 from inside the police station. This made things worse as it hurt

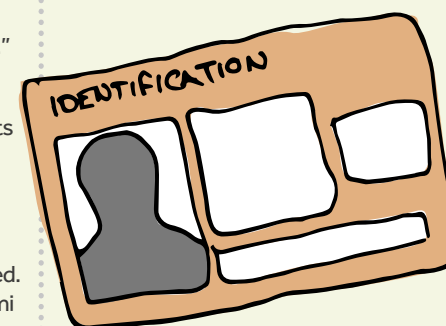


Image Top:
A child at a contact point in Old Delhi.

Image Bottom:
Administering first aid at the health van.



the ego of the police personnel. They threatened me, saying that I will be booked on false charges and that they will show what they can do to me. I was quite frightened and was at a loss as to what to do. My intention for dialling was not to hurt the police but rather it was an innocent act of doing something for the innocent child, who was suffering immensely."

"Finally, after many hours waiting they made the diary entry and the child was taken to the hospital for a medical check-up and later to the Child Welfare Committee. Based on the directives from the Committee, the child was placed in a shelter home run by Delhi government, where he could study and grow up like other children. I was quite happy at the outcome of my efforts but my joy was short-lived. Days later I found him back on the streets. It was quite shattering as all my effort went in vain. When I asked about what had happened, he stated that the street was a much better place for him than the shelter home. It was demoralising for me to see that the caregivers in the childcare institution were not sensitive and caring but just doing a job. I felt hurt and discouraged at that moment when all my hopes and efforts went in vain."

There have been occasions when parents have disappointed us, when they abdicated their responsibility to take care of and protect their children. It is not easy witnessing constant poverty, injustice and violence: it affects us emotionally. At these times we opt out from field work for a while to recover. However, we are not disillusioned for long.

Another team member describes their experience:

"During my last five years of work with street and working children through Butterflies, I have come across several cases that caused deep sorrow within me. The sadness becomes heavier when I find myself helpless in addressing their problems and concerns. In several cases, I have taken many steps forward and gone the extra mile to support them, but ultimately, I feel disheartened to find that the deprived and poor are always at the boundaries of the existing system."

"Once I met an eight-year-old boy who was suffering

from acute anaemia. He was from Bihar state. His mother brought him to Delhi as she had lost all her hopes in the medical treatment she provided him at her village. She brought him to Delhi as per the suggestion of a relative who recommended that Delhi provides the best treatment for medical cases. The relative suggested her to take the child to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). With the hope of receiving the best treatment free of cost, she gathered whatever she could and moved to Delhi. But by reaching Delhi, she found herself at a loss as there was no one to help her. The relative who suggested Delhi and offered support also turned her away. She made several attempts to get an appointment at AIIMS but failed. The situation became grim as she had very little savings left. It was even difficult for her to provide a meal for her child two times a day. Often, she collected food from the temples and shrines where people served food freely as a token of gratitude."

"Being on the street and having no proper food and other medical facilities, the child's health situation was getting worse day by day. It was in this condition that they were referred to us by nearby shopkeepers. Butterflies was running a contact point in that neighbourhood and local people knew about our work. When the mother contacted us the condition of the child was critical, he could not even breathe properly. Along with another colleague I took him to the nearby government hospital. After diagnosing the problem doctors advised for a blood transfusion. This is when the real struggle started: the hospital, which had a blood bank, refused to provide even one unit of blood to this child who was in such a critical situation. He was denied blood from the hospital as he was not able to produce any basic documents, such as proof of identity, age proof and Below the Poverty Line (BPL) Cards."

"His mother did not know anyone in the city who could donate blood to him yet her eight-year-old boy was struggling for survival. Butterflies arranged a personal donor who gave blood for the child. The incident made me think about the rigid and bureaucratic procedures in a government setup that fails to help a person when most needed. We speak



Image Top:

Teaching computer education at the mobile school.

Image Middle:

Children studying at a contact point in Old Delhi.



about "Vasudaiva kutumbak" (the world is one family) yet cases such as these happen. I can still remember the scene when I came out from the hospital and turned back to say goodbye. The child was sitting and smiling on his mother's lap. His face was expressing a thousand feelings- a story of sadness too! The eyes of the child and his mother met mine and it seemed to me that both of them were asking the question "is human life worth only of a proof of identity? How long do the poor need to struggle and remain at the boundary of the system?"

One other big frustration we share as practitioners is that sometimes we are not taken seriously by theoreticians and researchers. We tend to find that our body of knowledge and experience from the field are not given the value it deserves. It seems that our body of knowledge gets negated because we do not do official research or document our work with sufficient academic rigour. This is a shame as the work we do in the field is exceptionally rich; we are constantly testing theory, refining it and - in some cases - adding a new perspective to a pre-existing theory.

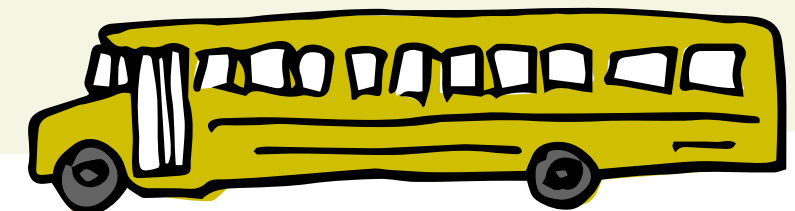
We maintain that to be able to take a studied position on the socio-economic issues we ourselves need to be educated on the matter. It is our endeavour to learn and to improve our skills and knowledge-base in social work practice. The majority of our staff are professionally qualified social workers, educationists, researchers, medical and mental health professionals.

Nikita, who heads Childline, recalls one of her challenging experiences:

"I joined Butterflies in 2016 and it was my first time working in the field of child rights. Within one year's experience of working in Childline, I have come across a number of cases where children are abused, exploited and not protected. Every case that comes to Childline gives an astounding and diverse experience. Certain cases are adventurous whereas some others are very emotion-driven. Similarly, some cases motivate while others demotivate. Ultimately, it is a mix of positives and negatives,

but it gives a visceral sense of achievement when our efforts put a smile on the face of an innocent child, or when they are provided a safer place to stay and be protected. For the past 4 years I have been dealing with cases of child labour, child marriage and child sexual abuse (POCSO) cases. While dealing with several of these cases, the trauma situation undergone by the clients sometimes becomes traumatic, giving me sleepless nights and a depressed mood. Dealing with the POCSO case of an eight year child was one such instance. The girl was sexually abused by an unknown person and left late at night in bushes in an isolated place in South East District of Delhi. The child was an orphan and was staying with her uncle and aunt. They used her for fetching water for the family. We came to know of her when an unknown person contacted us through Childline. Soon my colleagues and I went to the place, along with the police, and found her in the bushes naked, unconscious and bleeding. She had bruises and scars all over her body. The sight of the little girl was horrifying. Soon we got into action and the child was rushed to the trauma care centre. She was provided with all the immediate care and had to undergo three operations. Meanwhile, the media reported the issue and it attracted widespread publicity, which drew many other official stakeholders to the issue. All wished to take charge of the child and what we saw was a tug of war between different government setups for the care of the child. In the midst of their war, more attention was being paid to the custody than to the child's well-being. It really tore my heart apart. It was sickening to see how government mechanisms, which are expected to work in the best interests of the child, fight for their own publicity."

"On visiting the hospital after her third operation we found her happily lying on the hospital bed, watching television. The sight of her in the bushes still haunts me. Though it has been several months since I handled the case, everything is very clear in my mind. I manage to find satisfaction in that I could do something for the child but on the other hand I feel disheartened at how society treats children. This instance made me questions where our nation is heading."



Our Future

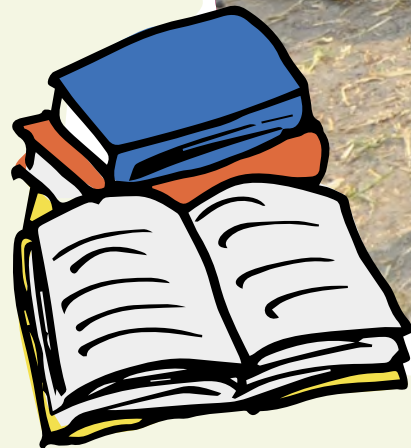
Our future focus is to positively disrupt our approaches of working with children. We want to work towards making all of Butterflies a cooperative of children.

In other words, all our programmes would be based on the concept of cooperatives. Our success in facilitating two children's cooperatives gives us the confidence to build on these learnings and facilitate our education, sports, theatre, and media programmes as cooperatives. This would make children responsible, understand the value of these programmes and the efforts that go into it to give them an education and life skills. It would encourage adolescents to plan a future for themselves, to have a goal in life and work towards achieving it.

As much as peer pressure can be a negative influence in certain situations it can also be positive in supporting and encouraging its members. We would have meetings with children in small groups to discuss the concept, get their inputs, and work out the modalities and their approval.

The Children's Development Khazana and Child Health Cooperative will focus on entrepreneurship, business enterprises and franchises among its members and health insurances and promotion of generic medicines, yoga and meditation as a way of life.

Image right:
Children studying primary subjects at a contact point



Inspiration in focus:

Emamuddin

Emamuddin lives in INA market with his parents and five sisters. He is now 14 years old and studying in 9th grade. His mother is a sweeper and his father a mechanic in Andrews Ganj. He has been associated with Butterflies since 2011. He describes how he first learned about Butterflies:

"I used to see a child with a small bag in his hand passing in front of my small hut every day. I was quite curious to know where he was going. The next day I joined him and visited where he was going. I met Alam Bhaiya and learnt about the programmes and activities provided to children by Butterflies. He spoke to me about sports, cultural programmes, study tours, exposure visits and about education. I went there for a few days but I was suspicious as I heard stories on television about people who kidnap children after tempting them with some attractive things. Bhaiya met with my parents about Butterflies, its mission and vision, including the activities and programmes. After that I began to come to the centre, initially not that regularly but gradually I became a regular attendee. Bhaiya emphasised that Butterflies helps poor children to study and I should make use of it. Now I make use of every opportunity provided to me to improve myself."

Emamuddin describes how his involvement in the children's councils was particularly important:

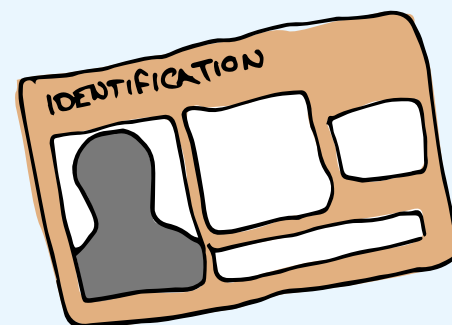
"One of the things that attracted me most to the Butterflies contact point was the Bal Sabha meetings (children's council meetings). We can raise issues affecting us and find solutions together. Participating in Bal Sabhas gives first-hand experience of learning democratic values, to know how democracy works. We have meetings every month, where one child is selected as the chair person. They convene the meeting and another child acts as secretary to write the minutes of the meeting. In one such meeting I raised the issue of stray dogs in the INA market. Many children are bitten by these stray dogs yet no-one used to bother much about it. The dogs also make the place unhygienic. The Sabha took up the issue and discussed it seriously. It was decided by majority vote to submit a petition to the Municipal

Corporation of Delhi (MCD) about the problem. Later we wrote a petition with the help of Didi Bhaiya; we got the signatures of all the children and some of our parents too. We went to meet the MCD official along with Didi Bhaiya and submitted the petition to the official. The very next day the MCD people came with a vehicle and caught a good number of dogs and took them away. After all this the number of dog bite cases has definitely gone down.

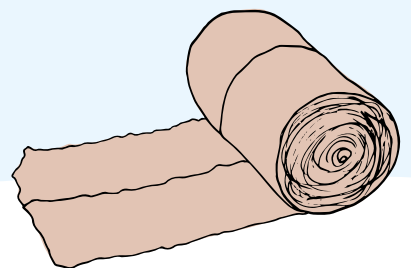
"At another Bal Sabha we discussed the issue of solid waste management and decided to sensitise the community about the issue. We gathered together and organised an awareness rally holding placards on the garbage disposal issue. We also spoke to people about the after-effects of careless waste disposal. As a group, we decided to organise more campaigns on a regular basis so that the issue stays in the limelight, to attract attention from the authorities."

Emamuddin summarises:

"Butterflies opened my eyes to my responsibility in society. I learnt that I can involve myself and contribute for the betterment of the whole community. Today I am more conscious of the issues that children face and I think about what can be done about it. Learning about a democratic way of decision-making and taking up actions in groups is another piece of learning, which has developed my confidence and leadership qualities."



If I get a chance to write a story someday I would write about child labourers. I want to tell society that children are supposed to be studying and not doing hazardous labour.



Inspiration in focus:

Sonu

Sonu belongs to the Rajput caste, considered as a high caste group in India. However, his family was going through a very hard time as his father was not able to make enough money for the survival of his family.

His father took the decision to migrate to Delhi with his family - father, mother, two sisters and a younger brother - in search for better means of survival. His father found work as a labourer and managed to get a rented place in a slum area in old Delhi.

Today Sonu is a very confident 20-year-old man. He has a vision for his life. He not only takes care of his family but also helps and guides other children in his locality. He continues to visit the Butterflies contact point and shares stories about his journey. His younger brother is also a part of Butterflies.

Sonu tells his story in his own words:

"I failed in my 6th grade at school as there was no one to help me with the studies at home. My mother, being an uneducated person, was not able to help me with my homework/school assignments. Gradually, I started losing interest in education and school. I used to be absent from the school frequently. I started roaming around the area instead of attending classes. At that time, I met with some other adolescents who used to chew Gutkha and smoke. I joined them and in a few days' time I also began to use substances. I tried to refuse in the beginning but they continued to pressurise me. I tasted it out of curiosity and eventually I could not do away with it.

"Meanwhile my family was going through a very hard time as my father lost his job. There was not enough money to meet the day-to-day expenses and also to pay the rent for the hut. I wanted to support my family and so I decided to take up a job and earn income, by which I could reduce the burden of my father.

"I roamed around Old Delhi Railway Station area in search of work. Several days passed by but I couldn't find anything. Finally I decided to start selling Gutkha at the wayside of Bagh Deewar in old Delhi. It was the easiest thing that I could do as it involved only very little investment and risk. I started the business by investing an amount of 1200 rupees (€14) which I managed to borrow from my maternal uncle and aunt.

"Today, at my shop I sell toffees, chocolate, cool drinks, other snacks, mobile phone accessories, mobile phone recharging and downloading of movies and songs for my customers. I earn between 15,000 to 20,000 rupees (€180-€240) in a month. I use this money to support my family and my education. A portion of the income is kept aside to expand my business and for any future needs or emergencies.

"I am also continuing my education and I am doing a BA (Bachelor of Arts) programme through the School of Open Learning (distance learning through Delhi University). I have also completed a six-month certificate programme on an advanced computer course, issued by the Habitat learning Centre in Delhi (HLC).

"This would not have happened in my life without Butterflies being with me at every step.

"I had stopped going to school for almost a year or more. I had forgotten many things which I had learnt. The pre-test conducted by Butterflies to assess my learning level at the time of my joining proved that though I had completed 6th

grade at school my learning level at that time was only of 4th grade. I was advised to get myself enrolled to the fourth grade of the Butterflies programme and revise everything from the 4th grade onwards. In six months I was able to cover most of the subjects of lower grades and reach my age-appropriate learning level through hard work. I appeared for all the examinations at the contact point and secured good marks in all of them.

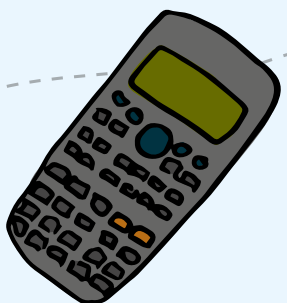
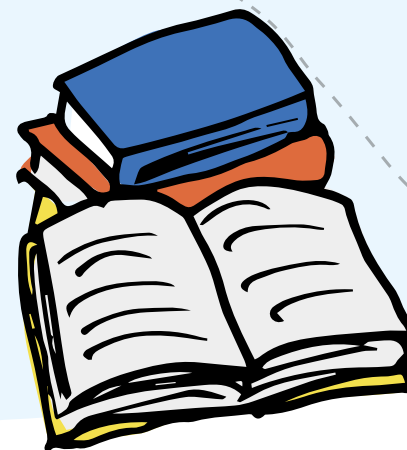
"Later, I was told to enrol myself in formal school after discussing the matter with my parents. Didi also visited my house and spoke to my mother. My mother was quite hesitant as she said, 'if he goes to school, the family will be in trouble as we will not be able to earn money.' Eventually they allowed me to enrol in school and I was very happy. Didi instructed me to put in extra effort as I had to manage the shop and study as well.

"The school year commences in the month of April and so I was taken to the Ramjas Senior Secondary School by Didi and I was again assessed by the teacher there. The result showed that I should be enrolled into the 8th grade. I performed very well in all the years and completed my senior secondary exams. I also learnt basic computer skills through the mobile education school. I finished my 12th grade in 2014 and decided to continue my education by enrolling in the School of Open Learning.

"I strongly believe that everything I have been able to achieve in life today is because of my association with Butterflies. It brought a change in myself and in my family. Today I am confident enough to teach my younger brother about the importance of time and education, which I learnt from the life skills conducted by Butterflies."



Other children can learn from my story that you might sometimes lose hope in life but try to grab all the opportunities that come your way. It can change your life the perception you have about yourself.



Inspiration in focus:

Chandan

Chandan is now 19 years old and has been associated with Butterflies since he was 10 years old.

He earns 5000 rupees each month working at a suit shop (approximately £60) - he gives half of it to his sister-in-law who feeds him and the remaining half he keeps to himself.

Chandan was orphaned whilst young, first his mother died and then his father two years later. Once a fairly bright student, Chandan lost his interest in studies, left school and went away from Delhi to help his brother-in-law's broom making business. In his short life Chandan has been affected by gambling and substance abuse.

Chandan tells his story:

"It's been more than 6 years that I've been coming to Butterflies. Prior to that, I was involved in gambling with a group of young rag pickers who used to come home daily to watch cartoons. Being with them I began to take substances. Both my parents were working, and so they had very little time to supervise me. In order to get money for gambling, I started to lie to my parents. I failed in 4th grade but the school still promoted me to 5th grade. It was during that time I joined Butterflies.

"I remember we were playing 'catch me, catch me' here in the park, when Rahul Bhaiya came to us and told us about Butterflies. He asked each of us about our family and about what we do. Bhaiya then invited us to the Butterflies contact point and told us that we could learn, play different games and improve our latent talents. The next day we all went to the contact point and enrolled ourselves in the programme. I was then in the 3rd grade. A lot of children of my age were there, many of them left and many girls got married off too.

"At the contact point Didi used to give us individual attention: she ensured that I completed my studies and revision prior to

the examinations. Once I started to focus on my studies, I began to improve and I was ranked 4th in 5th grade and 3rd in 6th grade in formal school.

"I had to discontinue my studies in 7th grade. My parents had both died, my Mum died when I was in 5th and my Dad when I was in 7th. I was very lonely at that time so I started roaming around and playing outside. There was nobody to care for me or to support me. I stopped going to school. My brother who is ten years older sent me to Ajmer to help my brother-in-law in a broom-making business. I lived there for a year and half. I used to make brooms from 9am to 5pm sitting in a tent outside a temple in the scorching sun. I did not like it at all.

"When I returned to Delhi I was re-enrolled in Butterflies. Bhaiya here encouraged me to continue in my studies. He enrolled me in NIOS (National Institute of Open Learning) and I cleared 8th grade in 2016. My brother-in-law continued calling me back to Ajmer as he was having troubles with his business. He wanted me to help him for another 2 years. I did go but I did not see any future for myself over there and so came back in the beginning of 2017. I had to be strong to leave. I have been in and out of Delhi many times. But every time I return I come back to Butterflies because of my desire to learn.

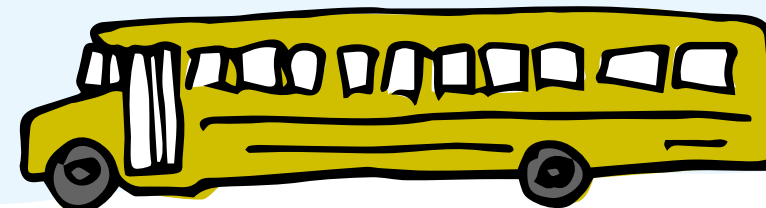
"My gambling continued for quite a long period, even after getting enrolled at Butterflies. After seeing a video showed by Bhaiya about a person who loses everything in life - his house, gold watch and wife too through gambling - I began to reflect on my own life and feared losing it. It was then that I decided to come out of that habit. It was not an easy journey. But with the constant support, counselling and guidance of Bhaiya and Didi, I was able to come out of it to a large extent.

"Another reason that prompted me to come out of gambling was that often people who gamble gradually fall to alcoholism. I have seen many people falling into it that way. Even my brother is victim to such a path. I hate it when people are addicted to alcoholism because I have seen people using all types of foul language, getting into fights etc. I have witnessed the way people look upon such people. One day I saw people spitting with disgust at my brother who was drunk and lying on the roadside. It was a great shock to me and it led to my decision to stay away from taking alcohol. This experience also prompted me to stop my gambling.

"In 2014, Butterflies took us for a cultural afternoon. In the programme, some children performed dance, others acrobatics, and the rest music. I was inspired watching them. The very next day few of us gathered together in Hathi Park and attempted the same thing: that's how my passion for dancing began. We never gave up and instead worked even harder. Children who observed our improvement day by day wanted to join us. We started off with 5 or 6 children and now we are 20 or more now. I teach them the steps. I practice for half an hour after work to perfect all of my steps, though it is hard to practice after a whole day's work. I somehow manage to practice each day without fail. Dance has become my passion and work is my survival means. My ambition is to stage dance performances in various platforms. I have already joined an academy with Suraj - Ultimate Vibrate Dance Academy - who perform in Luck by Dance - a TV reality show. I am optimistic that I'll be able to join a group someday and participate in it myself."



Getting involved with Butterflies after the death of my parents was a means to get out of the loneliness that I felt in life. It provided a direction to life which was quite absent. Today I have an aspiration and passion to work towards, which in turn gives me an aim in life. I wish to be known as a performer and pursue that as my career.



Staff Stories

Moushumi

My family still comment that they have seen a change in me since I started working at Butterflies. When I started at Butterflies it was 2006. I was a teacher in a convent school – we had no problems at all, we were able to teach and the children came from good homes. I was looking for a different kind of challenge, which is why I decided to apply for a job at Butterflies.

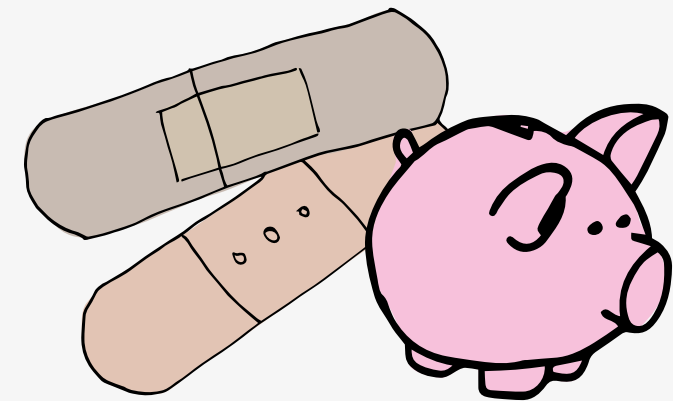
Because this was a very different kind of teaching we agreed to trial the job for a short period, about three months to start with. At first I didn't really understand the context of the children Butterflies supports. I had many assumptions, for example, I assumed that poor children had homes to go to, even if they were small homes.

In fact I learned that some children just stay on the side of the road, without access to even basic sanitation – not even a roof. I began to learn stories about the young people, for example boys who worked from 4am to 7am preparing food for train passengers at roadside eateries. The train would arrive at 6am, which is why they had to start work so early. Whatever money they earned they gave to their families, to pay for the very basics like food, shelter and clothing.

From my point of view I realised that I was given an education and that as their teacher, even if I

could only pass on just 50% of what I knew, that this would be valuable to them. I feel very fulfilled when I see a child reach secondary school, or even succeed in their exams. I was given an education but the children teach me so much about life. I grew up in a fortunate environment, where we celebrated birthdays and enjoyed big parties. I used to worry when a festival came whether I had enough dresses. My outlook has changed because I know there are people living in a different world. I have become far more aware of wastage, whether that is food or money.

I taught children academic and life skills but they taught me the value of life, which I will never forget. The vision they created for me is to see the world beyond the horizon.



Afterword

Collecting these stories has been a very enriching and moving experience for the Butterflies team. Many of us at Butterflies are so committed to doing our work that we don't often pause to reflect on what is really happening.

In total, we gathered sixty children's stories; what is presented here is a short selection of them.

Many of the stories offered us reassurance and validation about the basis upon which Butterflies was founded, yet we also learned about changes in the children's lives previously we were not aware of. This we found inspiring and heart-warming. We were often struck by learning what has been the most meaningful part of a child's experience with Butterflies, which perhaps we didn't fully appreciate before.

What started as a one-off process of collecting stories proved to be so valuable that we intend to continue on an on-going basis.

By spending time listening to the children we are reminded about the meaning they place on being taken seriously by adults. We have learned about changes in their behaviours but - more importantly - change in their attitude and how they see themselves. Many of the children describe how it feels to have discovered a latent talent, which by pursuing they become inspired. Next time we see a child experimenting with an activity for the first time, we might remember to offer them encouragement.

Some children seem to have benefited simply by having an aspiration in their lives for the first time, to have a dream they want to fight for and which feels possible for the first time - no matter how unconventional it might seem by

the class of mainstream society. For example, we have heard stories from children who want to dance for a living, draw or perform for the rest of their lives. These are children who have truly come alive.

It is deeply significant to hear children describe their willingness and ability to negotiate with their parents and enter into dialogue other grown up members of society, including government officials: the empowerment they must have developed to be able to stand up for themselves is a sign that they have grasped life with both hands.

We are also reminded of the significance of a child choosing to wear clean clothes, to make an effort in their physical appearance and to look after their health and hygiene. At first this might not seem like a significant outcome, but on the contrary, it is a sign that a child is thinking "I matter, I belong". Children who actively behave in a way which shows they want to get on in life is perhaps the most positive sign of all. These children are giving themselves a chance of exiting a cycle of poverty, which is likely to have been engrained over many generations.

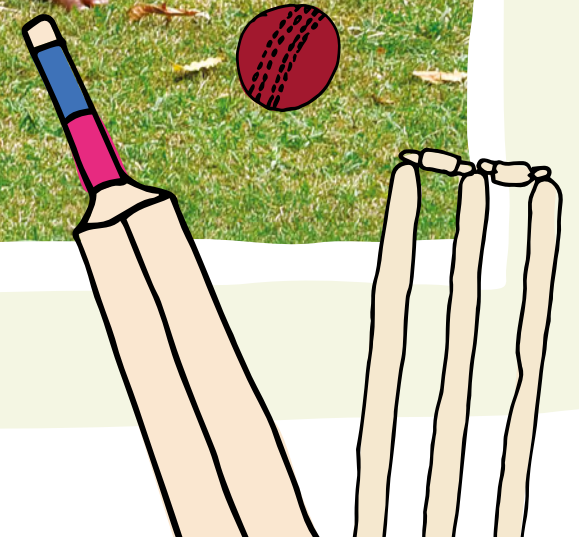
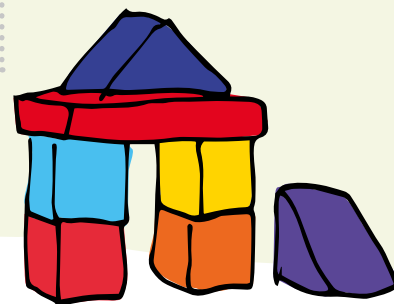
The children learn about democratic values, about respecting diversity, about equality and decision-making; they realise that rights come with responsibilities. They become active members of their local community, creating positive change to the way their neighbours experience life. In that sense, the children become role models for others to follow.

In reviewing the stories, it was striking to us how much we as adults can learn from the children. In fact, those of us in the organisation who are grown-ups, who are well-educated and professionally trained must never stop learning. As fellow members of society we must stay aware of how we think about others, how we treat people and of the assumptions we make about people who appear to be different to us, including our youngest citizens.

We noticed similarities between the children's stories and the way our staff describe their own learning journeys with Butterflies. In that sense, we really are the change we seek - we are connected by a common humanity. We have shared some of our own frustrations about the challenges we face daily and the personal heartache we go through, as this is an essential part of the process. We cannot pretend that all our experiences are positive ones, nor that we are doing things perfectly as an organisation every time. Working in this way is not about perfection, it is about discovery and growth. It requires patience and good humour and it starts when we see our inconsistencies not as failures but as places to explore.

Our intention in sharing all these stories is to give hope: that the work we are doing makes a great difference yet there is plenty more still to be done. Stories of transformation are out there happening all the time.

At this time, it feels appropriate to give the last word to another of our children who shared with us her story, 16-year-old Priya.



Inspiration in focus:

Priya

"I have three brothers and a sister. I am 16 now but my father died when I was 13 years old. It was a hard time for my family to survive on the street without support."

"My mother started working as a domestic helper but was unable to make enough money to run our house and afford education for all of us. Gradually my sister, my brothers and I all started roaming around in the area in search of food during the day time when our mother was at work. I was the eldest among my siblings. One day I came into contact with some other children in my area who used to collect rags and other waste materials and sell it to scrap buyers. I joined them and started collecting rags and selling it to the scrap buyers. I could make 50-60 rupees (60p) a day through this. This amount was a big support to the family to meet our day to day expenses of living.

"One morning in 2015, when I was roaming around in the Kashmere Gate area collecting empty plastic bottles and polythene bags I saw a group of children in the Tikona public park sitting in a circle with notebooks and pencils in their hands. I also noticed a black board, some posters and books hanging on strings tied to trees and fences in the park.

"Curious to know what was happening over there, I went nearer to the group of children and found that some were involved in reading and writing and others were playing on a carom board. I waited there for some time observing the children and I saw how happy they were. While staying there, Bhaiya noticed me and invited me to sit along with other children. I sat down there and Bhaiya then inquired about me and my family. Introducing myself I said, 'I am Priya Verma, I live in a hut in the slum area near to Kashmere Gate metro station.' Asked about my education, I said "mene ek saal pahle school chhod diya kyonki mujhe padhna acchha nai lagta" (I left my school one year ago because I didn't like studying). I was then asked if I would like to go back to school and continue my studies. I refused to return saying that other children will make fun of me since I am a rag picker. Bhaiya inspired and encouraged me to come to the contact point every day and start studying. I gradually started coming to the contact point once or twice in a week, not to study but to play carom with other children. Bhaiya and Didi continued to stimulate me to learn and advised me to come daily and spend time studying. They helped me understand the importance of education in life so I decided to continue with my studies.

"But my family circumstances were difficult: my family depended on the income from my work to meet our needs, including the payment of rent. Butterflies guided me and advised me to study

and work simultaneously. Butterflies staff visited my house regularly to interact with my mother to convince her about my education. They also suggested various ways for my mother to increase her own income.

"Thus, I was enrolled in 5th grade at Butterflies contact point. I used to spend two hours for my education and the rest of the time I continued with my work. Didi and Bhaiya helped me to learn new lessons every day. They also met my mother to discuss about my education and share the progress I have made. My mother was convinced of the significance of my education and allowed me to go for the education classes every day. Now I am regularly attending and active at the contact point, participating in various Butterflies programmes.

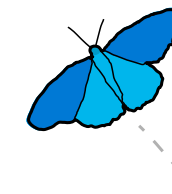
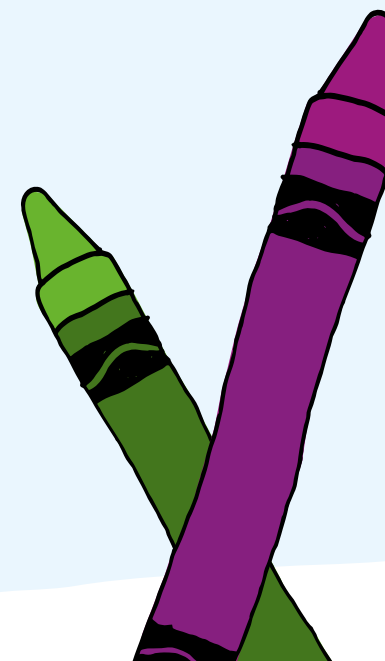
"Now I am in the 8th grade and achieved 3rd ranking in my school examination this year (2017). Within two and a half years, I managed to reach my age-appropriate educational level. I am keen to excel in my studies and keep my aim of becoming a teacher. I never miss classes either in school or at the Butterflies contact point. Today, I help other children, including my younger sister and brothers in their studies, especially in maths and science.

"My hidden talent in Yoga and dance were identified in my association with Butterflies. One day during the usual cultural afternoon organised by Butterflies, I performed yoga with my peers. Everyone appreciated and applauded our performance. This grew my interest in yoga and motivated me to learn more about it. I learnt more about it from books and watching videos and continued to perform in various platforms. Later I began to teach yoga and dance for other children in my contact point.

"When I teach yoga and dance to other children they call me teacher, which increases my worth and dignity. I am well-respected and appreciated by other children, which increases my self-confidence and self-esteem and this pushes me to achieve greater things in life. I can say for certain that if Butterflies was not there to motivate and help me maybe I would have been still working as a rag picker. Today I have paved the way for all my younger siblings to be educated."



I had lost my interest in education. I was working as a rag picker; people giggled and mocked me while I picked up scraps off the street. But today I am focused on my studies and I can make my dreams come true. I want to become a teacher in future and help children like me who do not have opportunities to complete their education. Today I have paved the way for all my younger siblings to be educated.





We flutter and fly. We are messengers of beauty. We once were enclosed but now are free. Our colors are bright, our colors bring joy. We were not what we were yesterday. We love to be Butterflies.



Protecting and empowering children since 1989

U-4, Green Park Extension, New Delhi-110 016. India

Tel.: +91-11- 46471000, 26163935 Fax: +91-11-26196117

E-mail: butterflies@vsnl.com Website: www.butterflieschildrights.org