Butterflies
protecting and empowering children since 1989

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT KHAZANA

CHILD HEALTH and SPORTS COOPERATIVE
A Butterflies Initiative
Since 1995

Voice, Agency, and *Participation*

Children at the centre of cooperative movements



CHSC · CDK · FOOTBALL
COOPERATIVE LEARNING
FACILITATORS

Acknowledgements

Butterflies would like to acknowledge MISEREOR, Germany, COMIC RELIEF, UK, British Airways and BUTTERFLIES USA FOUNDATION for the support they have given us over the years to initiate and sustain the Children's Cooperatives. They believe in the concept of cooperatives, its principles and values.

Written consent has been obtained from all children and their families whose narratives are included in this book.

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Voice, Agency, and *Participation*

Children at the centre of cooperative movements

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Abbreviations

CHSC	Child Health and Sports Cooperative
CDK	Children's Development Khazana
CHE	Child Health Educator
CSE	Child Sports Educator
CVM	Child Volunteer Manager
ACVM	Assistant Child Volunteer Manager
ACM	Advance Committee Member
BBC	Butterflies Broadcasting Children
CSPC	Child Social Protection Committee
MCD	Municipal Corporation of Delhi
NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
BSCC	Butterflies School of Culinary and Catering
DSC	Dayal Singh Camp

*In Butterflies, the adults are referred as Bhaiya (older brother) and Didi (older sister), and not Sir, Madam.

*Contact Points refer to the area where we conduct our programmes. The Contact Points are near the neighbourhood where children reside, it could be a nearby park, open space, market, railway and metro stations. Butterflies' programmes are conducted in open spaces and not in a building. This is consciously done as children are free, happier and enjoy the openness of the space to engage in the activities rather than inside a building. These open spaces are designed to be safe, welcoming and visible to all. It is out in the nature, and enough of ground to play, do artwork and study. Children come on their own when they see a group of children engaged in an activity and find out who we are and what we do; This visibility also creates a form of indirect social responsibility, as the community can see and understand Butterflies work with children.

Introduction

This collection brings together stories of children, adolescents, and facilitators whose journeys reflect the power of cooperation, participation, and collective action. At its heart is the belief that children are not passive recipients of support, but active citizens with ideas, abilities, and voices that can shape their own lives, influence their families, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Through the cooperative approach, Butterflies creates spaces where children learn to identify their needs, make informed decisions, support one another, and take responsibility for shared concerns. The stories in this document show how children's agency grows when they are trusted, listened to, and given opportunities to lead.

The first section, on Child Health and Sports Cooperatives, presents children as health educators, peer supporters, and sports educators. These narratives show how children understand issues such as nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, communicable diseases, emotional well-being, and safe living environments, and then translate that learning into action. Whether it is choosing healthier food, encouraging vaccination and treatment, cleaning neighbourhood surroundings, raising concerns with authorities, or leading community campaigns, the children demonstrate that health is not only an individual matter but also a collective responsibility. Their experiences highlight how knowledge, when combined with confidence and participation, can help children influence behaviour within homes, among peers, and neighbourhoods.

The second section focuses on Children's Development Khazana (CDK), a financial management cooperative owned and led by children. Through these stories, CDK emerges as much more than a savings programme. It becomes a practical space for life skills education, where children learn to distinguish between needs and wants, save regularly, budget carefully, take responsible decisions, and support their families during difficult moments. The money is saved in a nationalised bank account. The narratives show children using their savings for education, health, household emergencies, travel, school materials, and future goals. They also reveal how savings build confidence, dignity, leadership, and a sense of control over one's life, especially for children growing up in situations of economic uncertainty.

The third section explores how sports, especially football, becomes a pathway for change. For many children, the football ground is not merely a place to play; it is a space where they learn teamwork, discipline, equality, resilience, communication, and respect. The stories show girls challenging gender stereotypes, boys learning emotional control and cooperation, and adolescents moving away from isolation, stress, and excessive screen time towards healthier and more active lives. Football helps children build friendships across contact points, experience winning and losing with maturity, and recognise the importance of both physical and mental well-being. In these narratives, sport becomes a language of inclusion and confidence.

The next section on cooperative learning shows how children learn with and from one another through group study, peer support, storytelling, Bal Sabha, and shared problem-solving. It highlights how learning becomes more inclusive, joyful, and meaningful when children support one another and ensure that no child is left behind.

The final section brings in personal narratives of staff who are mentors and facilitates the cooperative approach in all the interventions of Butterflies, the narratives share their learnings through the lived experiences of the children.

These reflections remind us that transformation is mutual: while children learn through programmes, adults also learn from children's courage, wisdom, humour, honesty, and leadership. The facilitators' accounts show how cooperative learning, Bal Sabha, CDK, CHSC, storytelling, community visits, and sports create democratic spaces where children study together, solve problems collectively, and grow emotionally and socially. These narratives also underline the importance of relationship-building, trust, and respect in social work practice.

Together, the four sections present a living account of how cooperative movements place children at the centre of change. They demonstrate children budgeting and saving money, improving health practices, playing football, supporting peers, questioning harmful social norms, engaging with local authorities, and speaking up for their rights and communities. The stories are rooted in everyday realities of poverty, migration, overcrowded settlements, gender expectations, health risks, and educational challenges, but they are equally stories of hope, solidarity, and possibility. They remind us that when children are organised, supported, and respected, they can become powerful agents of change in their own lives and in the world around them.

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Written consent has been obtained from all children and staff whose stories, photographs and personal narratives are included in this document.

Child Health and Sports Cooperatives

Child Health and Sports Cooperatives (CHSC) is a unique programme that promotes safe and healthy living including emotionally wellness among children and families and communities through collective participation and awareness. The Child Health and Sports Cooperative focus on improving children's health, nutrition, hygiene, and overall well-being (including mental health wellness) by empowering children with knowledge, skills and leadership to have health-seeking behaviour, and share the knowledge with families to take collective action in the communities for cleanliness drives and mobilize the community for vaccination, especially during COVID. Through regular training workshops for Child Health Educators, Child Sports Educators, and Buddies of CHSC, health education sessions, first-aid awareness, and dialogue with health providers and local authorities, CHSC encourages children to advocate for their rights and healthier living conditions. The initiative also works towards reducing children's vulnerability to diseases and promoting holistic health.

The stories of change and narratives are the lived experiences of child members of Child Health and Sports Cooperative. The narratives by children express how the Child Health and Sports Cooperative made positive changes in their lives.



01

SECTION A · STORY 01

Health is indeed Wealth

NAME
Saksham

AGE
14

LIVES IN
Salimgarh colony

JOINED
2021

Fourteen-year-old Saksham resides in Salimgarh colony in north district of Delhi with his mother, who is a homemaker, his father, an autorickshaw driver in the nearby market Chawri Bazar, his maternal grandmother, and a 5-year-old sister. He is in the 10th grade in school. This is a story about when Saksham was 11 years old. Saksham's mother has known Butterflies for many years. Many children from the neighbourhood regularly come to the contact point, and that is how Saksham also joined Butterflies in 2021.

Like any other child, he also liked eating junk food like chips, French fries, and Bread Pakoras. Old Delhi is very famous for its street food delicacies, but it is mostly unhygienic and can make a person sick. The money that his parents sometimes gave him was used in buying junk food items and when the parents did not give him any money, he withdrew some amount from his Children Development Khazana (CDK) account. CDK is one of the important life skills-based education programmes for children and adolescents, equipping them with knowledge and skills in prioritizing needs, savings, budgeting, and entrepreneurship. This programme is immensely popular among children.

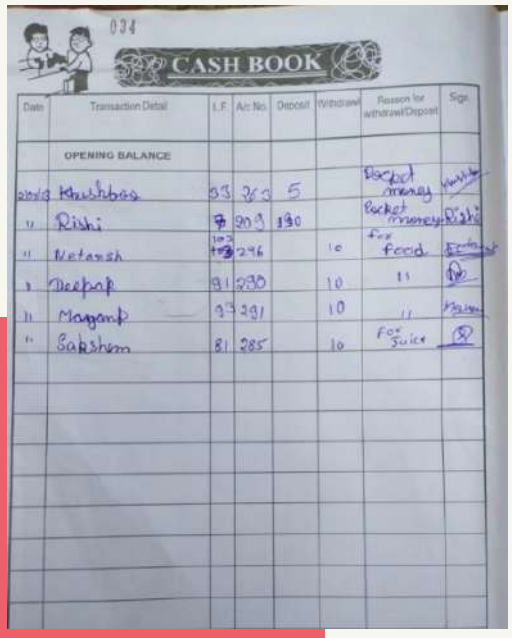
It is difficult to get rid of this habit as children typically do not understand how this kind of food negatively impacts their health, but Saksham understood that his habit of eating junk food can have serious health implications. He left eating junk food. But how?

Saksham shares, "My parents told me not to eat junk food or street food because I might fall sick, but they never explained how I would fall sick. Therefore, I never took it seriously. When I joined the Butterflies programme, I learned how eating junk food can cause serious health problems. I learned in one of the monthly health sessions that small infections could enter our body and damage vital parts of our body, such as the liver, intestine, and stomach.

“

Children's voices are not considered that important by adults in our homes, but the BBC is one such platform for children like me.

All this will incur medical costs, which may increase depending upon the intensity of the infection. It was during this session that I understood the monetary aspect of this small habit but most importantly about keeping my body healthy, and I realised its implications. I decided that now it is time to change this habit”.



FROM THE FIELD / 01



FROM THE FIELD / 02

When his withdrawal entries were checked in Cashbook, the reason for withdrawal has changed from 'pakoras' to 'Orange Juice'. Saksham pledges to continue following this habit in the future. That is precisely one of the objectives of the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC) that children make healthy food choices to stay fit. Through one cooperative (CHSC) he has learnt about the right food choice and through another cooperative (CDK), he demonstrated what he learnt by prioritizing on what he will spend his money and not spend it on junk food.

Saksham may not be old enough to understand each discussion held in monthly life skill sessions, but he understands that good habits must be shared with others. To do so, he contested the elections for the Child Health Educator (CHE) and received the highest votes. As CHE, he checked the personal hygiene of cooperatives members and encourages his peers and seniors to save 5 Rupees each month for their health. He disseminated information on diseases and their prevention. His most valuable learning while being a CHE is co-existing together in a group and cooperation among different members to complete a task. For Saksham, it is not only physical health that matters but also Mental health. His understanding of Mental health wellness has been shaped by the activities and information delivered in monthly health sessions. His response to an incident that happened in the community is proof enough to demonstrate that he is learning to cope with stressful situations.

The Yamuna River, which flows near Salimgarh, was flooded due to heavy rain. As the water level was rising in the river, tension grew among the community members as it could reach their houses too. Everyone was stressed about the situation, including him, but not to the extent that it would disrupt his daily routine. He says that he learned in one of the health sessions that as you start to get stressed, distract yourself with some other work, and the tension will not build up. So, when everybody in the community was stressed, he went to play with his friends. He says that sports are the best stressbuster.

Saksham's approach of using Sports, to go out and play with friends when he was stressed, helped him to calm down and be positive. Sports and play are tools which support maintaining physical health and emotional wellbeing. It also encourages social relationships, teaches children teamwork, respect rules, and accepting losing and winning as part of playing. Child Health and Sports Cooperative educate children the importance of living safe, healthy and emotionally well lives, as well as to collectively take care of their environment to keep it clean and safe for children and adults.

In the 5 years that he has spent being part of various programmes of Butterflies, he has enjoyed being part of the Butterflies Broadcasting Children (BBC) media programme. Saksham says that he gets the opportunity to prepare a script along with other BBC Team and speak on a Radio show anchored by BBC called "Bachon ki Nazar se" (Through the Eyes of Children). His voice is heard by people all over the country. He adds that "children's voices are not considered that important by adults in our homes, but the BBC is one such platform for children like me, where our voices are being heard by people all over the country". There has been an all-around development of Saksham in all spheres in the last five years of his engagement with Butterflies.

Butterflies' engagement with children is based on the Cooperative approach and has supported children to exercise their agency, continue schooling, improve learning outcomes, learn life skills education and use the knowledge and skills in bringing positive changes in their lives.

SECTION A · STORY 02

02 The Girl Who Underlined the Lies

NAME
Garima

AGE
17

CONTACT POINT
Sadar Bazar

JOINED
January 2022

Garima, 17 years old from Sadar Bazar contact point, lives in Tokriwallan of Sadar Bazar area of Delhi. Her native place is Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh; the city serves as a primary host for the monumental Kumbh Mela, recognized as one of the largest peaceful religious gatherings on Earth. Like lots of migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Garima's family also migrated to Delhi in search of better livelihood options. Her father works as an Assistant at a Stationary Shop, and her mother is a homemaker. She has four siblings, two of whom stay with her grandparents at her native place in Prayagraj. Garima lives along with her younger brother, mother, and father in Sadar Bazar. This is the story of Garima when she was 13 years old.



FROM THE FIELD / 03

Garima was introduced to the Sadar Bazar contact point in January 2022 by her friends, who were already enrolled in the Butterflies Programme at the contact point. Garima says, “I thought that it was a tuition center, but gradually, after spending a few days, I started playing football, chess and badminton. This is what I liked the most. I made friends here, we study together, and we play together also”

Garima is curious by nature. One can understand the level of Garima’s curiosity by simply having a 5-minute conversation with her. As she is curious about nature, she aspires to be a scientist. Once the Program Officer (Cooperatives) asked Garima why she is aspiring to become a scientist, she replied, "Bhaiyya, I’ve wanted to be a scientist ever since I was ten years old. I grew up seeing people in my village suffer whenever their crops were ruined, and they were left with nothing to eat. Even when people fall ill, it’s the medicines developed by scientists that save them. Just recently, it was scientists who created the vaccine for COVID-19."

Garima’s inquisitiveness made her an active member of CHSC (Child Health and Sports Cooperative). Through CHSC’s monthly life skill sessions, Garima learned new things. She also made sure to share the new information and knowledge that she gained from CHSC’s monthly sessions and meetings with her friends and family. A monthly life skill session that focused on teaching children to identify persuasive marketing techniques used by companies to sell their products was one of the sessions that Garima always remembers. When the program officer visited the contact point for the next life skill session, Garima shared how she applied the knowledge that she got from the marketing technique session.

She mentioned to the Program Officer (Cooperatives) that she told her mother not to buy products sold by big companies unless they are healthy, as they have chemicals in them which cause great harm to the body. To prove her point to her mother, she collected copies of the newspapers and underlined the misleading advertisements that made such attractive but unrealistic promises. For Garima, CHSC is an informative and interactive platform where she can talk without hesitation.

Her points are heard and are valued during the monthly sessions and meetings. This has made her more confident. To quote her, “I joined the contact point because of two things, first is the program officer in the contact point (Education) is so nice, she explains everything to me with so much affection and love. Secondly, here in our contact point, I get a chance to play football. Earlier, when I was not here, I always wanted to play, but there was no space near my house. Before joining Butterflies, I knew nothing about football, but now I know how to play football because my friends from the contact point taught me the rules of football. The reason I am so fond of sports is that they allow me to engage in healthy competitions with my friends, where we experience both winning and losing. I also want to learn various other sports so that I can teach children like me who come from underprivileged backgrounds who never get the opportunity to play football. Furthermore, two of my friends from my neighbourhood joined the contact point after I informed them about the Butterflies contact point and the sports activities conducted here”.

“

I’ve wanted to be a scientist ever since I was ten years old.

SECTION A · STORY 03

03 Ambia's Approach: Why Failure is Just an Unfinished Task

NAME
Ambia

AGE
13

LIVES IN
Okhla Mandi

MEMBER SINCE
2021

Okhla Mandi is one of Delhi's most famous and busiest wholesale vegetable markets, supplying fresh produce to millions of people across the city every single day. Right next to the market, hundreds of migrant families live in a crowded settlement, having moved to Delhi from states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal in search of a better life. This is the world where Ambia grew up. Her father earns his living by working in the wholesale vegetable market. Ambia has been an active member of Child Health and Sports Cooperative since 2021. She regularly comes to the contact point, dressed up in clean and tidy clothes with her nails cut and hair combed. She is cheerful and finds happiness in everything and everyone she meets. Ambia is thirteen years old today, but this story looks back at a time when she was just nine. Even at that young age, her deep sincerity and passion for the children's cooperatives went far beyond her age.

As necessitated by the rules of Cooperatives, elections for CDK (Children's Development Khazana) and CHSC (Child Health and Sports Cooperatives) elections of child leaders are conducted every 6 months. Each child leader has specific duties attached to their roles. To contest in the election, the cooperative members should fulfil certain criteria. A common criterion for all the leaders is that the child should be a member of the cooperative for at least the past 6 months, should be regular at the contact point, and should know how to read and write properly. The age criteria for CHE, CSE, ACVM, and CVM is 9 to 17 years, whereas for the Advanced Committee Member position, it is 9 to 14 years. At that time, Ambia was eligible to contest for all five posts: she stood as a candidate for CHE, CSE, CVM, ACVM and ACM, but she lost all 5!

What was inspiring about her was that she did not lose hope and went on to contest for posts one after another. Her loss at the elections was too little to break either her confidence or her positivity. It was such a joyous moment filled with contentment to watch and observe her sporting spirit about not letting herself feel low after the loss. In fact, she told the Programme Officer that, “Bhaiya, mai is bar haar gayi elections par mai cheh mahine baad phir se election me khadi hoongi” (though I lost elections this time, but I will contest elections next time after 6 months). Ambia is keen to be a child leader as she feels she can contribute to the Cooperative.

Ambia did not stop contesting elections. In the election conducted in October 2024, she became the CHE (Child Health Educator) and performed her duties brilliantly.

> *“Though I lost elections this time, but I will contest elections next time after 6 months.*

04

SECTION A · STORY 04

When they finally listened

NAME
Golu

AGE
13

CONTACT POINT
Sadar Bazar

JOINED
2022

Golu is a child from the Sadar Bazar contact point. He is a 13-year-old boy. He lives with his father and siblings in a rented room near Mukharjee Marg, Delhi. He was first introduced to Butterflies through his friends and has been an active member in Butterflies Programme since 2022. Golu was the Child Health Educator of Sadar Bazar Contact point for the tenure of October 2024. Through the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC), Golu shares that his learning goes beyond textbooks; he plays, learns life skills, and most importantly, acts on issues affecting his community. One such initiative that shaped his journey is a Collective Action he led.

Near Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Marg, a broken drainage system had turned the area into a serious health hazard for the community.

Broken drainage and poor sanitation systems contribute significantly to a high burden of water-borne and vector-borne diseases. Open and poorly maintained drains are a major public health hazard, as they facilitate the spread of infections, contaminate the environment, and increase the risk of diseases such as diarrhoea, malaria, and other preventable illness.5

As part of the Collective Action initiative under CHSC, Golu, along with other children from the contact point, decided to address this issue. Golu, with other CHSC child members, wrote a formal letter to the Municipal Corporation (MCD) and collected signatures from children's representatives, parents, and local shopkeepers. Golu recalls how he, along with his friends and their facilitator (Didi), went to the MCD office to submit the letter, taking a step that many children are rarely given the opportunity to take.

While they were at the office, Golu shared that he was apprehensive if the officials would listen to them. This apprehension came from an experience in his village in Uttar Pradesh.

He remembers how he and his friends had once raised a complaint about a garbage dump near their school. However, when they approached the authorities, no one listened to them. They were ignored simply because they were children. That experience left him feeling that such efforts were pointless, and the memory stayed with him. So, when he was encouraged to speak to the officer, he hesitated, expecting the same response. But despite his fear, Golu chose to speak. He describes this moment as a turning point. The officer listened attentively with genuine concern. He acknowledged the issue and assured that action would be taken. For Golu, this was not just a routine interaction. It was the first time he felt listened to and truly happy he was respected and not brushed off because he was a child.

This experience brought a big change in Golu's perception of how adults view children. He shares that "for a long time, I believed that children are not taken seriously and that change is something only adults bring about. However, through CHSC and collective action, that belief of mine has changed completely. Now I no longer feel small or unheard. Instead, I feel confident that my voice matters." Golu now acknowledges that children can identify issues, raise their voices, and contribute to solutions when given the opportunity.

The story of Golu shows us how initiatives like Collective Action improves participation of children by moving them from tokenism, where their voices are ignored, to Child-initiated and directed action.



Now I no longer feel small or unheard. Instead, I feel confident that my voice matters.

SECTION A · STORY 05

05

Health session that changed Gungun's plate

Gungun is one of the active members of Child Health and Sports Cooperative from the Chandni Chowk contact point. She lives with her family in a small rented one-room tenement near the busy market area, with her father mother, and two siblings Sapna and Nidhi. Gungun shares that her daily life is surrounded by an environment where junk food is easily available and commonly consumed.

Like many children residing in urban poor neighbourhoods, Gungun's eating habits were largely influenced by the availability of street food. She loved eating junk food and would spend whatever money she had on it.

She also did not like eating non-vegetarian food, and as a result, foods like chicken, eggs, and milk which had protein and vitamins were never part of her meals. This limited her intake of essential nutrients as her consumption of lentils and green vegetables was not enough either for proper growth and development.

IN CONTEXT

A pan-India survey by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) involving 13,274 children (aged 9–14) found that 93% consume packaged food and 68% consume packaged sweetened beverages more than once a week The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR-NIN) states that 56.4% of India's total disease burden is now attributed to unhealthy diets, including high intake of processed foods laden with sugar and salt

Gungun recalls that things began to change after she attended the nutrition sessions conducted as part of Child Health and Sports Cooperatives (CHSC) core education to teach children about health and nutrition to stay healthy.

Through these sessions, she learned about the importance of a balanced diet and how proteins, vitamins and minerals are necessary for an individual's growth and overall health. These sessions helped her understand food in a new way and encouraged her to reflect on her own eating habits.

Gungun found it difficult to change her eating habits. She initially disliked vegetables, legumes, milk, eggs, meat, and fish, and she was hesitant to include these foods in her daily diet. Her strong preference for junk food made the shift towards healthier choices even more challenging. Through CHSC sessions, Gungun and other child members learned that a nutritious diet does not have to depend only on non-vegetarian food. They understood that vegetarian foods —especially green vegetables and legumes—can also provide essential proteins, vitamins, and minerals needed for healthy growth and development.

Motivated by what she learned, Gungun made a conscious effort to reduce her fast-food intake. She began saving the money that she used to spend on junk food in Children's Development Khazana and slowly started making different food choices. Even though she did not like certain nutritious foods at first, she gradually began tasting them and slowly included them in her diet.

Gungun expresses her learning in her own words:

"From the health sessions, I came to know that Go food (carbohydrates), Grow food (proteins), and Glow food (vitamins) are important parts of a child's diet. I have now made changes in my eating habits and want to become healthier with strong muscles."

Gungun's journey from the pre-contemplation stage, where she consumed junk food without concern, to the action stage, where she actively avoided junk food, ensured adequate nutrition intake, and began saving money in CDK, which she had previously spent on junk food, shows a meaningful change. Her ability to maintain this without relapse teaches us that the right knowledge and support at the right time can help children make informed decisions and become capable of bringing positive changes in their own lives.

SECTION A · STORY 06

06

The Clean Cooler of Vandana

Vandhana, a 15-year-old girl from Hathi Park contact point, is an active member of CHSC. Her father is a milkman; he delivers milk in shops and households, and her mother works as a helper in a dry fruit shop. Vandhana has 2 older siblings. She lives with her family in a rented room in Gandhi Gali near Fatehpuri, Delhi. Vandhana has been part of CHSC since joining Butterflies along with her siblings in 2019. She is the Child Health Educator (CHE) of CHSC at the contact point. As a CHE, Vandhana has learned to give first aid, filling the logbook, conducting health sessions for children, and inspecting hygiene conditions at her contact point.

Vandhana enjoys attending the monthly health sessions, where Didi takes sessions on various health-related topics. From the sessions, conducted in January and February 2025 on topics such as Understanding the importance of clean drinking water, Importance of Safe Sanitation Practices to Prevent Diseases, Vandana learned about the importance of keeping the home environment clean and how it causes dangers of spreading communicable diseases through unhygienic surroundings.

After understanding the importance of maintaining a clean household environment, Vandhana began prioritising cleanliness at home. She said, "Initially, I was not aware that the water in the cooler needed to be cleaned regularly. Neither my family nor I used to clean the cooler. But the health sessions from CHSC helped me understand that not cleaning coolers and nearby waterlogged areas leads to the breeding of mosquitoes and other dangerous pathogens that cause communicable diseases." Inspired by this, Vandana started to clean her surroundings. Especially her cooler.

She started to keep the cooler clean. Gradually, she noticed that the constant "buzz" in the house vanished. The family noticed they were no longer dealing with itchy mosquito bites every evening. She also noticed that the coughing of family members due to the dust accumulated in the cooler was also reduced to an extent. This helped her realise that one of the reasons why she and her family were falling sick was because of this unhygienic environment. Vandhana shared this knowledge with her family, and now they all make sure to maintain a cleaner and tidier environment, understanding how much the environment they live in affects their health.

Vandhana's story illustrates the Health Belief Model. Initially she did not believe that having a dirty cooler posed a risk to her health or the health of others; her perceived susceptibility and severity were low. The CHSC sessions provided her with a cue to act and encourage her to consider the benefits of having a healthy family vs. in not regularly cleaning the cooler and surroundings. As evidence of her family's improvement in health status (i.e., fewer sick days), she gained confidence in her ability to have a positive effect on her family's health, which boosted her self-efficacy. Vandhana is now a leader and believes that understanding the environment is the first step toward taking care of it.

IN CONTEXT

Amidst a sharp rise in dengue cases across Delhi, a study by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has identified desert coolers as the primary culprit for mosquito breeding. The analysis reveals that more than a third specifically 36.5%—of all sites found with larvae were desert coolers, making them the most significant risk factor in the city. Other major breeding hotspots identified include flowerpots and vases at 29%, overhead tanks at 13%, and construction sites at 10.9%. These findings underscore that stagnant water in household cooling systems remains the leading contributor to the spread of the disease in the Capital.

07

SECTION A · STORY 07

Jubair and the needle

Jama Masjid is one of the most famous historical sites in Delhi. It represents a blend of 17th-century Mughal history and 21st-century urban life. Jama Masjid is home to one of the largest mosques in India and stands as a living monument to Indo-Islamic culture. The area surrounding the mosque is filled with numerous street vendors and shops offering affordable clothing and footwear, along with flavourful dishes. The Jama Masjid Motor Market is another major attraction in this area and is known as one of Delhi's most popular hubs for second-hand and used car spare parts.

Jubair a 14-year-old boy works in the motor market. He assists the shopkeeper of Shop No. 51, Meena Bazar, by serving tea and doing odd jobs when needed. Jubair has been a part of Butterflies since the beginning of 2025. Every morning, he visits the mobile bus van of Butterflies, where he studies and completes his daily lessons with the help of the Programme Officer (Education). After that, he goes to his daily job at the shop.

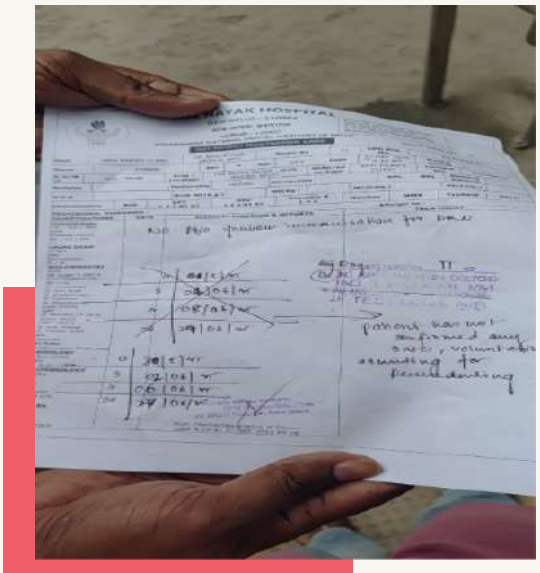
One day, Jubair experienced a devastating incident. He was assigned to bring chai, as usual. While returning, he was attacked by a group of dogs and was bitten on his upper leg. Terrified, he informed his relative (a cousin), who advised him to clean the wound and visit a nearby hospital. Jubair received the first dose of the Rabies vaccine and was advised to return for the remaining doses. However, after the first dose, Jubair refused to continue the treatment. This was brought to the attention of Programme Officer-Education of the Jama Masjid contact point, and later informed to the Cooperative Program Officer, Ms. Princy.

The Cooperative Programme Officer visited the contact point and had individual sessions with Jubair. It was understood that his refusal was due to fear of injections. Jubair was helped to understand the serious consequences of not completing the vaccination course.

The issue was also discussed with other CHSC members, who spoke to Jubair and encouraged him to continue the treatment. An effort was also made to contact his family in Bihar and inform them about the situation and speak with the shopkeeper as well.

After two individual sessions, Jubair understood the consequences of not taking the remaining doses of the vaccine. By the third session, he agreed to take the remaining doses. During all the vaccination visits, either Mr. Kalam Programme Assistant or the CHSC Program Officer accompanied Jubair to ensure that he felt safe and secure. Jubair successfully completed his final dose of the vaccine.

Jubair's story reflects how timely intervention, emotional support, and continuous guidance can help a child overcome fear and make healthy decisions. His journey from fear and refusal to acceptance and completion of treatment shows the importance of trust-building and consistent support in social work practice. It also highlights how programmes like CHSC play a crucial role in not only addressing physical health needs, but the support given by the members of the Cooperative to a member who is hesitant or afraid to seek support.



FROM THE FIELD / 04

The dog bite experienced by Jubair, was also a rallying point among the children to safeguard themselves against being bitten by a dog and in the event, it happens the importance to visit a hospital and get treated and complete the course of vaccination.

IN CONTEXT

Delhi reported over 68,000 dog bite cases in 2024, and more than 35,000 animal bite cases were recorded in just the first six months of 2025, showing a consistently high and rising trend of such incidents in the city

Jubair's story reflects how timely intervention, emotional support, and continuous guidance can help a child overcome fear and make healthy decisions.

SECTION A · STORY 08

08

A collective against Junk food consumption by children

“Most of the children in our community are addicted to junk food, every day children will at least have a packet of chips or a packet of biscuits.

Child Health and Sports Cooperatives (CHSC) is one of the major programmes of Butterflies, designed to empower children with knowledge and skills to live safe, healthy and emotionally well lives and to become active agents of change in their communities. At the Sadar Bazar Contact Point, one of the programme’s active centres with 107 child members, children regularly identify issues in their community and take collective action, with support from the facilitator. The area around Sadar Bazar Contact Point is a densely populated, low-income community where many families have limited awareness about healthy nutrition. As a result, inexpensive junk foods such as chips, biscuits, fried street food, instant noodles, and sugary drinks are common choices among children, highlighting the need for health awareness and education initiatives.

During the monthly CHSC meeting conducted on 24th August 2025, a total of 35 active CHSC members participated in an informal discussion on health and nutrition. This discussion helped the children reflect on and share their eating habits at the contact point. The pattern that emerged from the discussion was concerning. It revealed that most children relied heavily on unhealthy snacks such as packaged chips, biscuits, fast food, instant noodles, and sugary drinks, consuming them multiple times a day. In some cases, these foods even replace regular meals.

The children started reflecting on all the consequences they had seen so far among themselves. During the discussion they discussed various consequences from fast food consumption such as tiredness that they have while sitting in the classes, and stomach issues that they have experienced.

They began thinking about how these symptoms were linked to the food they ate. The children understood that the consumption of junk food is making changes in their health. One of the CHSC members from the contact point Nithin, quoted that “Most of the children in our community are addicted to junk food, every day children will at least have a packet of chips or a packet of biscuits.”

Through their collective efforts, the health cooperative members of Sadar Bazar decided to address junk food consumption in their community. They wanted to raise awareness in the neighbourhood, so they came up with a date for their action and divided the tasks amongst themselves (who would create the posters to display during the rally, who would develop slogans, etc).

A study done on "Food environment in and around schools and colleges of Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) in India" states that Delhi is among the top three states in India for adolescent overweight and obesity. The prevalence of overweight adolescents (10–19 years) in Delhi is 12.3%, with an additional 3.3% being obese. The study found that food options inside and around educational institutes in Delhi are predominantly HFSS (High in Fat, Sugar, and Salt). Despite government guidelines restricting these, they remain the most accessible options.

On 21st August 2025, a total of 43 health cooperative members from the Sadar Bazar Contact Point, 24 boys and 19 girls, collectively mobilised a rally against “Junk food consumption” in their community with the support of the facilitators. The children made posters that portrayed the nutritional value of junk food compared to that of other food groups. They put these posters up around the contact point as well as at other local community locations to educate people about healthy eating habits and the avoidance of junk food consumption. During the rally the children used slogans like "Healthy khaana, healthy jeevan" and "Chips chhodo, sehat apnaao", which the children created. The health cooperative members had conversations with their peers and inspired others in the community, including their friends and family members, to think about their eating habits and healthy choices.

The collective action led by the children of Sadar Bazar Contact Point reflects Paulo Freire's theory of Conscientization, which emphasizes moving from awareness to critical understanding and then to action. The children first identified the issue of widespread junk food consumption in their community, reflected its impact on health, and then acted by raising awareness through posters, slogans, and community outreach. Their efforts show how children, when given space and support, can become active agents of change within their own communities.



FROM THE FIELD / 05

09

SECTION A · STORY 09

Healthy Choices, Healthier Communities

The INA Contact Point is located next to the INA Market area in South Delhi, which is an older, highly developed urban area. The area is widely recognised for its large market which sells practically everything from vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, spices, rice, wheat, lentils, bread, buns and cakes as well as clothes, textiles, jewellery, leather goods, electronic goods, luggage and furniture. The residential area behind the market and other surrounding streets presents a different picture. There exists many daily wage workers, domestic helpers, small vendors, construction workers and service workers who have moved to Delhi from various other states in search of a job. Most families live in either one or two rooms.

INA contact point has significant numbers of children who are active CHSC members. INA has a total membership of one hundred and eleven (111) children as members of CHSC. The Monthly Cooperative Meeting is a major component of the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC). Held once every month, it brings together all child leaders from the CHSC and the Children's Development Khazana (CDK). The meeting usually begins with a life skills session facilitated by the cooperative facilitator. Following the session, the cooperative meeting is conducted and coordinated by the child leaders themselves, providing them with an opportunity to practice leadership, communication, and decision-making skills.

IN CONTEXT

Likewise, during the monthly CHSC meeting held on 28 July 2025 at the INA contact point, the children discussed two key agendas. The first agenda focused on reviewing the functioning of their cooperatives, including ongoing activities, challenges, and areas for improvement. The second agenda centred on the findings of a survey conducted by the cooperative facilitator across the contact points to assess the level of junk food consumption among children.

The survey findings revealed that many children had a high intake of junk food. It was also found that some children were consuming junk food as a substitute for regular meals. These findings led to a discussion among the children.

In the discussion, the Health Cooperative members identified several contributing factors. One of the factors that the health cooperative members mentioned was that some of the children in their group receive a small amount of money from their parents each day to buy snacks after school or for any other small needs. The members of CHSC noticed that some of the children from their contact point use this money to buy junk food, chips or some other highly processed food.

The children shared that there is also a much more complex problem involving peer pressure. They spoke about their social environments regarding food in relation to their friends. For example, children reported that if they did not want to eat junk food by choosing to have something from home or declining altogether, they would be at risk of being teased, excluded, or otherwise labelled as “different.” They indicated that eating chips together, sharing a plate of noodles, and buying the same bag of chips from the same shops were acts of inclusion. Very few children are willing to incur a social cost for choosing not to participate. One of the CHSC members from the contact point quoted that,“If I say that I don’t eat such kind of food, my friends make fun of me. It makes me feel different”

The children also saw the pressure from their peers and especially on their social status which were represented by consuming (high carbohydrate) food such as pizza, noodles and burgers, which was not traditional Indian food. As they saw these items on television, in movies with their favourite characters eating them, in advertisements, and consumed by people from middle and elite class considered to have 'ideal' lifestyles, these foods were elevated to a level of status. On the other hand, they viewed homecooked foods such as dal, sabji, and roti as 'average', 'not glamorous', and even slightly embarrassing. They referred to this food as 'cool', 'modern', and 'desirable' compared with the food prepared by their mothers.



FROM THE FIELD / 06

The health cooperative members discussed that their parents themselves purchase junk food items from the market and bring them home, not out of negligence, but because they too are unaware of the harm. Families regularly stock packaged namkeen (savoury), and instant noodles as household staples.

In many cases, parents see these as convenient and affordable options, a practical solution to spending time cooking a meal for the family in their busy schedules. The low level of nutritional awareness among adults in the community meant that the problem was being reinforced from within the home itself.

IN CONTEXT

An AIIMS study on Delhi school students found that 94.2% of adolescents consumed fast food with 18% eating it three to seven times a week. The study also found that 23.1% of boys and 27.7% of girls were overweight.



FROM THE FIELD / 07

On 19th August 2025, sixty-one children from the INA Contact Point twenty-nine boys and thirty-two girls led a door-to-door community awareness campaign on healthy eating and balanced nutrition. The campaign was entirely planned and carried out by the children after identifying key reasons behind junk food consumption in their community, including easy access to junk food with the money given to them to have some food after school, peer pressure, the “cool” image of consuming processed food, and limited awareness among parents. To carry out the action effectively, the children were divided into small groups and assigned different lanes within the neighbourhood.

They created colourful posters promoting healthier food choices and visited households to speak directly with parents and family members about the importance of balanced nutrition and reducing packaged snacks at home. They also displayed and distributed their posters in the community to ensure the message remained visible beyond the campaign. The activity encouraged children to reflect on their own eating habits. Through Guided Discovery and counter-attitudinal advocacy, they critically examined the social and personal factors influencing their food choices, laying the foundation for future behaviour change.

To carry out the action effectively, the children were divided into small groups and assigned different lanes within the neighbourhood.

10

SECTION A · STORY 10

When Children Scripts their Own Change

Sadar Bazar is one of Delhi's most active and most populated areas. It is a busy and densely populated area with narrow lanes, crowded markets, and closely packed homes. Many migrant and low-income families live here, and children often have very limited open spaces for play and recreation. Within the confines of the bazaar's chaos, Butterflies have a contact point for street-connected children. Currently, there are 107 members in CHSC from the contact point, comprising 64 males and 43 females.

CHSC (Child Health and Sports Cooperative) is a child-led initiative of Butterflies that focuses on the health and well-being of street children using the concept of cooperatives. CHSC believes children are capable of bringing about change on their own and are not merely passive recipients of care. One of the major components of CHSC is through a process called Collective Action that is based on the principles of collective action for the benefit of all which is a core principle of Cooperatives. Furthermore, it also draws upon community participation a fundamental social work principle. Collective action allows people to unite to solve a common problem or achieve a common goal by taking responsibility for one another and taking joint action. Collective action led the children of Sadar Bazar to identify a long-standing problem that has plagued them and work to resolve the issue.

There is a dedicated day once a week, for children involved with the CHSC to make use of sports/play as a channel to connect with one another. They play at the contact point. However, at the Sadar Bazar contact point, children faced a serious problem. There were many potholes in the play area, causing children to be injured when they played.

The problem was not because it came from an outside source; it was one that the children dealt with every single day, and therefore, they were the first ones to identify it. Golu, an active member of the cooperative and a former CHE, clearly recalls the problem he and the other children were dealing with. "There were so many potholes in the area where we play; we were not able to play in a safe way. Often, children came to me for First Aid because they had cuts on their fingers, and many had torn their nails as they were playing. We put this on the agenda of a CHSC meeting, and we have now solved the issue."



FROM THE FIELD / 08

On December 18, 2025, a group of 35 children, consisting of 21 boys and 14 girls, got together to fill the Pot holes with soil so that everyone could have a safer place to play. The children selected only a few members for this activity because larger numbers of children would make the work difficult in the small working area.

When we asked Divyansh, another active member of the CHSC, why they chose to do this themselves rather than calling someone from outside, he said, "Yes, we could have called someone from outside; however, we thought that this was something that we could do on our own. There are no jobs that are too small or too big. And most importantly, this center is our center; when we do it ourselves, we all feel like it is our center and we accomplished something for our center."

The playing ground at Sadar Bazar has been levelled due to the collective action of the children. More importantly, there was cooperation among all who participated to accomplish the task. Children proved that they could recognise issues, take responsibility for themselves, and work together to come up with solutions. This shows how children's participation in collective action can take place as opposed to it being an initiative that is done for them, but rather is done by them for themselves and to help one another.

The playing ground at Sadar Bazar has been levelled due to the collective action of the children.

SECTION A · STORY 11

11

Plastic vs the Children of INA

The Child Health and Sports Cooperatives (CHSC) is an initiative by Butterflies that was created in 1995, with one of its main objectives being promoting safe and healthy living for both children and their communities. The CHSC is a cooperative owned and led by children. The cooperative educates children on how to live safe, healthy and emotionally well lives, involve in collective action for the benefit of all members but also the communities. One of the core functions of a cooperative is to educate and enhance the knowledge and skills of the members on issues pertaining to their cooperative. Therefore, regular workshops and training programmes are organised for the members by the adult facilitators; some sessions are taken by the members themselves.

In INA, majority of families belong to the working class, with parents often working in informal sectors such as daily wage labourer, domestic maids, street vending, or minimally skilled service jobs. The children in this area live in a congested neighbourhood beside an open drainage.

At a meeting of the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC) on January 7th, 2025, some members expressed concern about the number of people in their community who have begun burning plastics as well as burning wood during the winter months to keep warm. Children expressed their opinion that these practices have now begun to be routine among members of their community. All the members agreed that burning plastics and wood are associated with risk to their health and the health of their community members.

Children discussed about the risks associated with burning plastics which produces toxic smoke that can lead to irritation of the eyes; respiratory problems; exacerbate asthma symptoms and potentially increase high levels of air pollution in their neighbourhood.

One of the most troubling aspects of this situation is that most of the individuals and families living here do not know the severe health hazard they are putting themselves in. Aksha, one the CHE, mentioned at the cooperative meeting, "We tell the community not to burn plastic because it is harmful to our health; however, since nobody will listen to us, we just stay silent." The children also expressed their frustration about the community members' lack of knowledge regarding the severity of the situation, while at the same time understanding that the longer, they remain silent the problem will continue to get worse.

At the CHSC meeting held on January 7, 2025, where this issue was discussed, it was decided that with the support and guidance of the Program Officers (Education and CHSC), the members of CHSC would take collective action. They planned to hold a community rally to raise awareness among the community members about this issue. To educate community members about how plastics pollute the environment. Children made posters and slogans for the rally. The rally was held on 30th January 2025, and 52 children from the contact point participated in it. The slogans were loud enough to be heard throughout the community; everyone could hear them long before they saw the children. The children marched through the community, spoke to people on the street, and used posters to get attention for their cause. The children explained to the public that it is dangerous to burn plastics and urged them to find safer alternatives. They encouraged community members to reduce their use of plastic products, not throw trash on the ground, and dispose of household waste irresponsibly.

The CHSC member had this to say at the end of the activity, "I am so excited to be a part of this collective effort! I cannot say for sure that all of the community's residents will change drastically, but I do appreciate the opportunity to have done something to contribute to it." The children from INA's collective action exemplify Empowerment Theory, which is based on the assumption that through their involvement in democratic processes and socially engaged behaviour, the individual or group will be empowered to take control over their lives and environment. The children moved away from feeling powerless and alone by participating in an organised public demonstration and using their collective efficacy to confront poor environmental practices in their community. Now, they are no longer just recipients of services but are working as "agents of change" with the power to alter the systems that affect their quality of life.



FROM THE FIELD / 09

With continued engagement with Child Health and Sports Cooperative, children in INA can keep building this momentum of collective community action on issues that will improve the health of the community members by adopting practices that are healthy and hygienic.

CHSC helps children grow as healthy individuals and as responsible citizens who can take small steps to be change makers in their communities.

CHSC helps children grow as healthy individuals and as responsible citizens who can take small steps to be change makers in their communities.

SECTION A · STORY 12 / COVID-19 PERIOD

12

How Cooperative Changed Rishi's Life

Rishi is one of the active alumni of Cooperatives, from Chandini Chowk contact point. He lives with his grandmother, parents, and younger sister in a Municipal Corporation apartment for the workers in Salim Garh. His father works as a sweeper at the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Currently, Rishi is preparing for government job exams after completing his B.A.(Hons.) in Political Science from Dayal Singh College of Delhi University. Rishi is 21 years old, and this story looks back to the time when he was 15 years old.

Rishi first came to know about Butterflies in 2016 through his cousins, who were studying at the contact point. In the initial period, he faced difficulty making a connection with the children of the contact point, but slowly, he started to make friends with them. Gradually, he became a regular member of the education programme. For Rishi, Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC) was one of his favourite Cooperatives.

Rishi shared that the CHSC's involvement deeply impacted him, his family, and his community. In his own words: "Of the many health sessions, one that really stayed with me focused on 'Savings and Budgeting for Health'. I love the idea that even children can learn to save and budget for health needs, rather than waiting until adulthood to start something as important as saving for health. Additional sessions that influenced me were personal hygiene and cleanliness, and sports for healthy relationships".

With COVID-19, I started taking the insights from these sessions much more seriously and used them to influence my family. My father, as an essential worker, had to go out into the field every day. He wore a mask but didn't carry anything to keep his hands clean.

Even though I was worried about his safety, I knew he wouldn't listen to me directly.

As a strategy, I first convinced my mother and grandmother about the importance of frequent handwashing to keep us safe from the coronavirus. I also suggested using a hand sanitizer for times when he had no access to water. Thanks to our collective efforts after they sat him down and explained how serious the issue was, he finally agreed to use a hand sanitiser in the field.

Even on lockdown days, all of us were sitting inside our homes, and everyone in my family was bored, and most of the time, I had fights with my siblings. Even after the lockdown, we followed the same routine. So, one day I took out all my games. I started playing cards with my grandmother and board games like Ludo and Carrom with the rest of the family. I started to spend quality time with my family, which created a positive bond between us. I had never seen my father helping my mother in the kitchen, but now they cook together after his shift ends at 2 pm. Moreover, besides playing indoor games, I also try to keep myself physically fit by going for a run in the morning. To avoid crowds, I wake up early. I also do some physical exercise and encourage my mummy too. It's difficult for her because of the household work, but she has recently joined me a couple of times. I am sure she, too, can do it regularly if I continue to motivate her like this. I started to focus on me and my family members' health, inspired by the CHSC health sessions and the discussion that we have in our cooperative about health and its importance

Another memory that I always keep with me is the way that I responded to a Covid positive case in my community as a CHSC member. When I found out about the case, I called up another CHSC member in Yamuna Bazar, the neighbourhood closest to ours, as well as Richa didi (Program Officer Education). I told Richa didi that I would investigate the situation further.

Because of misinformation, many false rumours started spreading about the family of the person who tested positive for COVID-19. To stop this, I found out the correct facts: only one family member had tested positive, and they had only mild symptoms. I shared this information with didi and other people in the community so everyone could understand the situation clearly and stop blaming or troubling the entire family.

When the COVID-19 outbreak began in Delhi, many rumours started spreading in my community. One common belief was that the virus was being used as a political strategy to stop the NRC/CAA protests happening in the city. I once overheard two neighbours discussing this and treating it as a fact.

I felt it was important to address this misinformation before it spread further. I explained to them that if it were only a political strategy, it would not have been declared a global pandemic, nor would it have affected people across so many countries. I encouraged them to follow the news and look at the facts rather than believe rumours. Later, when we met again, they admitted that their earlier belief was wrong and thanked me for helping them better understand the situation.

A lot of what I have learned about checking facts and speaking responsibly comes from Butterflies. In our sessions and meetings, the information shared with us is always based on facts and logic, and we are never given unconfirmed news or information. This has inspired me to follow the same practice in my own life as well.

A lot of what I have learned about checking facts and speaking responsibly comes from Butterflies.

SECTION A · STORY 13 / COVID-19 PERIOD

13

Collective effort of Cooperative members during Covid 19

I am Samiya, I am 22 years old. Delhi is India's Capital. It is the Centre of government, trade, business, and education. It has both skyscrapers, bungalows, and unauthorized and notified Basti (slums). I live in one such Basti known as Gandhi Camp situated near popular Okhla Mandi (Mandi means a wholesale vegetable and fruit market).

In our Basti, many families are daily wagers, and their livelihood is fully dependent on the wholesale market. There is no holiday for them. One day of no work means no meals. All the families have migrated to Delhi from the northern states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh of India.

I have been part of Butterflies since 2015. I came to know about Butterflies when I saw a yellow bus (later I realised that it was a Mobile School for children) in which there was a library, laptops and interesting videos. Gradually, I learnt more about Butterflies and became part of all the programmes of Butterflies, like education and children's cooperatives, which taught me about equity and equality.

Butterflies' programmes have changed us, as from an early age, it has inculcated in us the habit of saving for one's health and a cooperative way of living. In cooperatives, since we work collectively, everyone pays attention to our voices. During the COVID-19 initial period, we used a cooperative approach to help families in dire need. COVID-19 had robbed families of their livelihood and daily wages, and even my family was one of them. All were worried about their next day's meal.

Delhi government initiated a service during lockdown to provide dry rations to persons who do not have ration cards by registering on an e-portal. Unfortunately, many were not aware of this. Some of them knew about this, but they could not do anything as they lacked digital skills. Since we are part of cooperatives, we know our community and families who do not have ration cards and need help. I called up my three friends who are members of the cooperatives on their parents' mobile phones and requested them to prepare a list of such families who were required to be registered on the e-portal.

There were some families who hesitated to share information about their family members. Then, we reached out to Child Social Protection Committees (CSPC), another initiative of Butterflies. CSPC members talked to the hesitant families and convinced them. At last, we had the list of 22 families who needed urgent support. I met each family and uploaded their details onto the e-portal using my father's mobile. Within a week, those families got a message from Delhi government on their mobile phones and by showing the message at the distribution centre, they received the dry rations for three months. Their smiles of gratitude were an acknowledgement that our cooperative matters and can make a difference.

There were some families who hesitated to share information about their family members.

Children's Development Khazana

This section presents Children's Development Khazana (CDK) as a child-owned financial management cooperative that helps children build habits of saving, budgeting, planning, and responsible decision-making. The stories show how small and regular savings become powerful resources during moments of need —supporting education, examination fees, school materials, travel, household emergencies, health-related needs, and family crises. Through CDK, children learn to distinguish between needs and wants, set goals, access welfare advances responsibly, and use their savings for long-term priorities rather than immediate consumption. The narratives also highlight how CDK strengthens confidence, leadership, solidarity, and mutual support among children, enabling them to support not only themselves but also their families and peers.



SECTION B · STORY 01

01

Children's Development Khazana enabling education

A first-generation learner, Anokhi can access not only schooling but also higher education with help of their own savings in the Butterflies initiated financial management cooperative Children's Development Khazana (CDK).

Anokhi is a 14-year-old girl who studies in 10th grade. She lives with her parents and her three siblings in Ishwar Nagar. Her father came to Delhi from Darbhanga, Bihar when he was very young. He came in search of a better life and to earn money for his family back home. Due to financial scarcity, he could not complete his education. Today, he works as a security guard in a private company and earns a small salary. Anokhi's mother completed her high school education. She is a homemaker and takes care of the house and the children. To support the family, she also works as a tailor in her community in her free time.

Programme Officer at Dayal Singh Contact Point, South Delhi conducted a community profile assessment before initiating the contact point at the location. As part of this process, he carried out home visits to understand the background and needs of families in the community.

During one such visit, he met Anokhi and her family members at their home. He interacted with them to build rapport and gain a better understanding of their situation. He also explained the initiatives and programmes of Butterflies, highlighting the support and opportunities available for children and families. This initial engagement helped in creating awareness and encouraging their participation in the contact point activities.

Anokhi joined Butterflies from the very first day of establishing the Dayal Singh Contact Point. Since then, she has been regularly attending the contact point and actively participating in all activities with great enthusiasm.

She has shown a strong interest in the different programmes offered by Butterflies, especially appreciating the participatory method of teaching, which makes learning more engaging and interactive for her. Among all the programmes, she is particularly liked the cooperative programme, where she learns important life skills through collective engagement, discussions and participatory learning sessions. This approach has helped her improve her understanding, confidence, and overall development. In the cooperative programme, Anokhi has developed a better understanding of the importance of prioritising health, and emotional wellbeing, learning the importance of prioritising needs, budgeting and saving and practicing the same in her life and through her involvement in the Child Health Sports Cooperative (CHSC) and Children's Development Khazana (CDK).

Her active participation and leadership qualities were recognised by other children, who elected her as a Child Volunteer Manager (CVM) of CDK. In this role, she has taken on her responsibilities with sincerity and commitment. She supported the smooth functioning of CDK activities, encourages other children to participate, and helps maintain coordination within the group, demonstrating a responsible and positive approach to her role.

In 2025, when her brother completed his 12th grade, the family faced financial difficulties in arranging money for his admission in University of Delhi. During this challenging time, Anokhi took a thoughtful and responsible initiative. She shared with her parents that she could take an advance from her own savings in the CDK. She also explained to her parents that this support could be taken without any interest and without a strict time limit for repayment.

In her own words, “CDK not only supports us, but it also helps our family members during times of need. I feel happy because I was able to support my elder brother in continuing his studies.” She expressed her happiness in being able to contribute to her family, especially by supporting her elder brother in continuing his education from University of Delhi.

She aspires to complete her education with a degree in commerce and build a career in the banking sector. She is focused on continuing her studies with dedication so that she can achieve her goal of becoming a banker. Her ambition reflects her interest in financial knowledge and her desire to secure a stable and meaningful career in the future.

She aspires to complete her education with a degree in commerce and build a career in the banking sector.

02

SECTION B · STORY 02

The Power of Small Savings

Sadar Bazar is one of the India's largest wholesale markets for household goods, toys, stationery, cosmetics, imitation jewellery and there is also a spice market in the area. Over time, it became more than just a trading hub. People from lower socio-economic backgrounds, especially from northern parts of the country, began migrating here in search of better livelihood opportunities. This steady in-migration gradually transformed the area into a vibrant, densely populated community, which also lead to slum settlements near the Bazar.

Gauri, a 12-year-old girl, lives with her seven-member family including 2 sisters and 3 brothers in a rented house in Tokari Walan, a slum area. Her father migrated to Delhi from Siddharth Nager district (which state?) in search of livelihood opportunities, and in the initial phase, he worked as a street hawker (selling what?) to support his parents in the village. He returned to his village got married and settled down in the village. But as time passed his life became more challenging after his marriage, he was unable to earn a stable livelihood in his native village. As a result, he migrated with his family to Sadar Bazar in Delhi, the same place where he had lived earlier. Currently, he earns a living by selling fruit chaat on the pavement, while his wife occasionally works in sorting dry fruits in the wholesale market. However, most of the time, she manages household responsibilities as a homemaker.

Gauri joined Butterflies in late 2023 while studying in third grade. She first came to the contact point with her neighbour's brother, Kanhaiya, where she interacted with Anita Programme Officer - Education and learnt about the different initiatives of Butterflies. She was mainly attracted to the cooperative activities because of the games and interactive sessions, and she also became curious about the Children's Development Khazana (CDK).

Through her involvement in CDK, she developed the ability to prioritise her needs and gradually started saving money for her future requirements. She often deposits the money she receives from her mother, relatives, especially during festivals and special occasions, into her savings account for future needs. Gauri has saved in her CDK more than 2500 rupees she hardly withdraws any amount from her CDK saving account. Her father is engaged in street work selling fruit chaat, while her mother works occasionally depending on the availability of work. When her mother goes out to work, her father encouraged her to support the family by helping with household chores such as washing utensils and cleaning the house. In return, he would occasionally give her a small amount of money as appreciation for her efforts. Instead of spending it, Gauri developed the habit of saving and regularly deposited these small amounts into her CDK account. Over time, this practice helped her build savings and understand the importance of financial planning for future needs. She explained why CDK is important for her, "जब मेरे पास पैसे होते हैं, तो मेरा मन कुछ खाने का करता है। इसलिए मैं उन पैसों को पहले ही CDK में जमा कर देती हूँ। इसी वजह से मैं ज़्यादा बार पैसे जमा करती हूँ और बहुत कम बार निकालती हूँ। "

("When I have money in hand, I often feel like spending it on snacks or other things. So, I deposit the money in my CDK account this way I am not tempted to spending it. That is why I save money more often and withdraw it only when necessary.")

Gauri is eldest girl in her family and being a girl the household responsibilities are on her shoulders, so that her mother can go out and earn. There are times when her parents would tell her to stop going to school and stay at home to support her mother in housework. But Gauri wants to continue her education through regular schooling. The Programme Officer- Education Manoj had discussions with her family about the importance of education and that legally Gauri must be in school. The discussion resulted in a positive outcome for Gauri, and she continues her regular schooling. Gauri would like to be a teacher like Manoj the Education Programme Officer; he is her mentor and icon.

SECTION B · STORY 03

03 A Story of Savings, Leadership, and Hope

Nazmeen a calm and hardworking adolescent girl who lived with her parents and five siblings in the slum area near Nizamuddin Dargah, Delhi. She is the third child in her family and regularly attends the Butterflies contact point at Nizamuddin Dargah. Her family migrated from a small village in Madhya Pradesh in search of better livelihood opportunities. Her father works as a daily wage labourer and earns around ₹10,000 per month, which is often insufficient to meet the family's needs. The slum area where they live faces overcrowding, poor sanitation, unsafe living conditions, irregular income opportunities, and limited access to basic services, making children and adolescents more vulnerable to insecurity and educational challenges.

Nazmeen has been associated with the Children's Development Khazana (CDK) for the last seven years. Initially, she did not have the habit of saving money, due to which she often struggled to manage her needs during difficult times as her parents too had irregular income. Since she had very little savings in her CDK account, she was unable to take sufficient advances whenever required. Gradually, she understood the importance of financial management and started saving small amounts regularly in her account. This habit helped her become more responsible and financially aware.

She took welfare advances twice from the Children's Development Khazana (CDK). CDK members can access welfare advances to meet their urgent basic needs during difficult situations. Her family was going through a financial crisis when she needed money for her examination registration fees, due to limited income, it was difficult for her family to arrange the required amount on time.

In that situation, CDK supported her through its advance facility, which helped her continue her education without borrowing money on interest from money lenders. This support reduced the financial burden on her family and gave her confidence during a difficult period. In her own words, "If CDK had not supported me, it would have been very difficult for me to fill out my examination form."

She regularly attended educational programme at Butterflies and was also an active member of the Children's Cooperative Programmes, especially the Children's Development Khazana (CDK). She feels that CDK is like a treasure trove managed for and by children, where children not only save money but also learn responsibility and decision-making. She was deeply inspired by the monthly general body meetings, where children openly share their opinions, discuss community issues, and participate in decision-making processes together.

Through her participation in these activities, she has learned many important life skills that have helped in her personal growth and personality development. She also actively participated in child leaders' elections, which gradually increased her confidence and communication skills. Earlier, she used to feel shy and uncomfortable talking to new or unfamiliar people. However, through continuous participation in group activities and leadership opportunities, she has become more confident. In her own words, "Earlier, I was unable to talk to strangers, but now I can confidently explain myself to anyone."

If CDK had not supported me, it would have been very difficult for me to fill out my examination form.

SECTION B · STORY 04

04 CDK enabling the Goal setting

Ravi is a 12-year-old boy associated with the Sadar Bazar contact point and currently studying in 6th Grade. Along with his studies, he also supports his mother in household-based work such as making rubber bands whenever raw materials are provided by local vendors. He was elected as the Assistant Child Volunteer Manager (ACVM) at the contact point.

Ravi belongs to a migrant family from Bhagalpur, Bihar, and lives with his family in a rented room in the Pool Mithai Railway Colony area. His father works as a street vendor and earns on a daily wage basis, while his mother mainly manages household responsibilities and occasionally works from home to support the family income. He is the youngest among five siblings, including three brothers and two sisters. His two siblings relate to Butterflies programme at the contact point. Ravi dreams of becoming a police officer because he wants to help people and support those in need.

Ravi earns small amounts of money by helping his mother in her household-based work. Earlier, he used to spend his earnings on unnecessary things and was unable to save money for important needs. He always wanted to buy a bicycle because his school is far from his house, and travelling, especially walking to school during the summer season, was very exhausting. However, due to the family's irregular income and financially not stable, his parents were unable to buy a bicycle as most of their income was spent on daily household expenses.

After joining the Children's Development Khazana (CDK), Ravi learned the importance of saving money regularly. He started depositing his earnings into his CDK account instead of spending them. Gradually, his savings reached around ₹4,200.

When he had enough savings, he withdrew ₹3,000 from his own deposit and purchased a bicycle.

The Children's Development Khazana (CDK) cooperative helped Ravi not only in saving money for his future needs but also in becoming more responsible and financially aware. Through CDK, he learned the importance of saving money, managing expenses, and using money wisely. Earlier, he used to spend his money on unnecessary things, but gradually he understood how saving could help him fulfil important needs. This change became visible when he decided to save money to buy a bicycle for commuting to school instead of spending his money on temporary wants. Through this experience, Ramu developed better financial management habits and learned the value of planning for the future.

While working as an ACVM, he realised the importance of understanding basic mathematics, especially the four fundamental operations. He worked hard to improve his mathematical skills through regular studies of mathematics subject and cooperative accounting activities. Gradually, his confidence increased, and he developed a strong interest in mathematics and learning the importance to work towards pursuing a goal.

While working as an ACVM, he realised the importance of understanding basic mathematics, especially the four fundamental operations.

05

SECTION B · STORY 05

CDK – A Lifeline

“

I want to continue saving money in CDK because it helps us during emergencies and will also support my education in the future.

Abdul Kadir is a ten-year-old boy studying in the fourth grade. He lives with his family in an unauthorised settlement area near the Jungpura Metro Station, under the Barapula flyover beside a drainage near the metro gate. His family includes his parents and two siblings. Originally from Kishanganj, Bihar, they moved to Delhi in search of better livelihood opportunities and a stable life. Abdul Kadir’s father works as an auto driver to support the family, while his mother is a homemaker.

Abdul Kadir started coming to the Jungpura contact point when he was studying in the second grade. Along with continuing his education, he regularly took part in cooperative sessions and meetings. Through these activities, he learned important life skills, including the value of saving money and understanding the difference between needs and wants. The sessions also helped him become more responsible and confident. Whenever Abdul received money from his family members or relatives on festivals, birthdays or to buy sweets, he deposited and saved it in his CDK (Children Development Khazana) account for future needs and emergencies.

In November, the Delhi government imposed an industrial lockdown, and diesel vehicles were banned for some time. This created serious financial difficulties for Abdul Kadir’s family because his father, who worked as an auto driver, was unable to earn money during that period. The family faced problems in managing daily expenses and buying necessities such as food and other household items. However, Abdul Kadir had been regularly saving money in his CDK account. At that time, he had savings of 1,232 rupees. Understanding his family’s difficult situation, he withdrew 600 rupees from his account and supported his family in purchasing ration and essential items.

After Abdul Kadir's father resumed his work and started earning again, Kadir once again began depositing small amounts of money into his CDK account regularly. Through his habit of saving little by little, he was able to save around 1,300 rupees. In March 2024, when his younger sister Halima was preparing to start school, his mother became worried about arranging money for her school uniform and clothes. Kadir noticed the daily discussions at home about the financial difficulties. One day, he told his mother that she could use his savings to buy the school uniform for Halima. In this way, Abdul Kadir once again supported his family during a difficult time and showed responsibility and care towards his family members.

Abdul Kadir shared his feelings about the CDK by saying, "I want to continue saving money in CDK because it helps us during emergencies and will also support my education in the future." His habit of saving money and thinking ahead helped his family during difficult times. Even at a young age, Kadir showed responsibility, care, and understanding towards his family's needs, becoming a strong support for them when they faced financial problems.

Abdul Kadir enjoys reading Hindi and dreams of becoming a police officer in the future. His journey shows how the CDK and General Body Meetings helped him learn important habits like saving money, understanding family needs, learning from other experiences and making responsible decisions. Through regular participation in cooperative activities, he developed confidence, communication skills, and a caring attitude towards others. These platforms not only improved his financial understanding but also encouraged leadership qualities and positive behaviour from an early age, helping him support his family during difficult situations.

SECTION B · STORY 06

06

Small Savings, Stronger Families

Bharti's journey with Butterflies started when one of her friends told her about the contact point, where children could learn and take part in different activities. At that time, Bharti was not attending a formal school. After visiting the Butterflies contact point, she slowly became interested in learning and spending time at the contact point. The contact point gave her a safe and friendly environment where she could study, learn new things, and make new friends. Through different educational and group activities, learning became enjoyable and meaningful for her.

Bharti lives with her parents and two siblings in a small single-room house in Gandhi Gali, Khari Baoli, North Delhi. The living condition of the family is very congested, as all family members stay together in one room with very little space. Their room does not have proper ventilation, which makes it uncomfortable. The family also washes clothes in front of the room, which makes the entrance to their house very messy. Bharti's father currently works as a tea seller in the morning. Earlier, he also used to do palledari (loading and unloading work), but he had to leave the work due to health problems and physical weakness. Her mother works as a walnut cracker, depending on market demand and availability of work.

When Bharti first started coming to the Hathi Park contact point, she was neither interested in studies nor in sports activities. She usually came only to spend time with her friends and did not actively participate in any sessions or group activities. However, she attended the contact point regularly, which slowly helped her become more comfortable in the environment. Gradually, she started showing interest in sports and cultural afternoon.

Over time, she also began interacting with other children and developed better communication and social. Along with this, she started saving small amounts of money regularly in her CDK account.

Through regular saving of small amounts in her CDK account, Bharti was able to save more than 1,200 rupees within 18 months. Her family had migrated to Delhi from Muzaffarpur, Bihar, in search of livelihood opportunities. In December 2024, when the family was planning to visit their native place, they faced difficulties in arranging travel expenses. Understanding the family's financial situation, Bharti contributed 1,000 rupees from her own savings towards the travel costs. Her support became very helpful for the family and reflected the positive impact of savings habits and financial understanding developed through CDK activities.

Butterflies helped Bharti develop interest in education and learn important life skills like decision making and interpersonal skills. Through a safe and supportive environment, she gained confidence, improved her communication, and understood the importance of saving money through CDK activities. Her journey shows how a caring community and regular guidance can positively change a child's behaviour, thinking, and sense of responsibility towards family and future.

Butterflies helped Bharti develop interest in education and learn important life skills like decision making and interpersonal skills.

07

SECTION B · STORY 07

From Silence to Leadership

In the busy lanes behind Novelty Mall in Old Delhi, Radha lives with her parents and three brothers. Her family migrated to Delhi from Madhubani, Bihar, in search of livelihood opportunities. Her father works at a milk shop and is the main earning member of the family. Her mother works in a dry fruit processing unit, mainly cracking walnuts and removing the kernels, but this work is irregular and available only two to three days a week depending on market demand. With limited and uncertain income, the family often finds it difficult to meet daily household needs, education-related expenses, and other essential costs.

When Radha first joined the Hathi Park contact point, she was extremely shy, introverted, and hesitant to share her views. She usually remained quiet during group activities and found it difficult to introduce herself or speak in front of other children and facilitators. She avoided discussions, rarely interacted with other children, and preferred to observe silently from a distance. Her hesitation also affected her education, as she found it difficult to adjust to formal school environments and did not feel confident about continuing regular schooling.

Sonam Didi, the Programme Officer at the Hathi Park contact point, made two attempts to enrol Radha in regular schools so that she could continue her formal education. Although Radha secured admission in two different schools, she attended each school for only two days and then stopped going because she felt bit fearful and uncomfortable in the new environment. Instead of forcing the process, Sonam Didi continued to counsel and encourage her, helping Radha understand that education could continue in a way that suited her pace and confidence. With this steady support, Radha later chose to continue her studies through NIOS, where she felt more comfortable and motivated.

Although Radha was shy and fearful, she continued coming to the contact point regularly. Over time, with encouragement from the Didi and Bhaiya, she slowly began participating in Butterflies' activities. General Body Meetings became an important platform for her learning, as she listened to other children, observed how decisions were taken, and gradually started sharing her own views. Through these meetings and cooperative activities, Radha learned communication, teamwork, decision-making, and confidence-building. Her transformation was gradual and took nearly five years of regular participation. The girl who once struggled to speak in front of others became a child leader in the Children's Development Khazana (CDK), taking responsibility as a Child Volunteer Manager (CVM) and as a member of the Advance Committee. She is also expected to participate as a speaker and panellist at a conference on cooperatives in June 2026.

Through CDK, Radha also learned that saving was not only about keeping money aside, but about understanding needs, making choices, and planning for important expenses. Whenever her parents occasionally gave her a small amount to buy snacks or meet a personal need, she began to think carefully before spending it. Earlier, she would spend most of this money immediately. After participating in CDK sessions, she started prioritising her needs and consciously budgeting the amount. She decided to save around half of what she received and use the remaining amount only for necessary personal expenses. This helped her develop discipline, responsibility, and a clearer understanding of the value of money. In her own words, "मेरे पैसे जमा भी हो रहे हैं और मेरे पढ़ाई में काम भी आ रहे हैं," ("My money is getting saved, and it is also helping in my studies.").

Radha used her CDK savings for education whenever the need arose. The first major use of her savings was for admission to Class 8 through NIOS and for paying examination fees. This enabled her to continue studying without placing additional pressure on her family at a time when arranging money was difficult. Later, during her admission to Class 10, her mother was able to arrange only part of the fee.

Radha then used the remaining amount from her CDK savings to complete the admission process. These decisions show how Radha applied financial management in real situations: she identified education as a priority, planned her spending, and used her savings for a long-term goal rather than immediate wants.

Radha's journey shows how CDK works as more than a savings space. It helped her learn to prioritise needs, budget consciously, save regularly, and use her own resources for education. It also gave her opportunities to participate, take responsibility, and grow into leadership. From a child who was once silent and hesitant, Radha has become more confident, responsible, and hopeful about her future. She now believes that CDK will continue to support her education and goals, while also giving her the confidence to speak, decide, and lead.

> *My money is getting saved, and it is also helping in my studies.*

SECTION B · STORY 08

08 Shivani's Path to Change through CDK

We think that the Preferential treatment of boys or gender discrimination is a thing of the past. But these attitudes take time to wane especially inside homes. Meet Shivani, a 15-year-old girl who lives with her parents and two brothers and two sisters in one room dilapidated house in north Delhi near wholesale market area. Two of her older sisters were married off by their parents prior to completing their high school. Shivani is the youngest sister and aims to complete her education with the support of Butterflies' Children Development Khazana. She feels lucky that she came to know about Butterflies.

Shivani's parents moved to Delhi from Bihar, a northern state for better livelihood and better educational prospects for their children. However, Delhi has its own share of Dickensian elements. Both parents struggle to make both ends meet. Father is a daily wage labourer, and mother is involved in dry fruits packaging, a common work available in this side of the market. The meagre income of parents barely meets their family needs. This could be one of the reasons that the older sisters were married off early.

Shivani joined Butterflies in 2022 through word of mouth as she wanted to continue her schooling. She shared that her parents are not that much supportive of education and wants their sons to work and the girls be married at an early age. After getting to know, the perception of the parents regarding education, Butterflies Programme Officer visited her house and met Shivani's parents and explained about Butterflies work and the importance of education and Life skills. However, Shivani's parents were not much convinced but allowed Shivani to continue her association with Butterflies.

She learnt about various programs, was especially interested in CDK because it allowed her to save money and earn a small incentive on her deposits. She became a member in June 2022.

From that point until October 2024, she saved 2,246 INR in her CDK account. Remarkably, she never withdrew any money. Proud of her efforts, she shared, "I'm saving this money for my education after 10th grade. Joining CDK taught me the habit of saving—I haven't touched a single rupee since I started saving."

Initially, the girl was afraid of speaking in public. However, by attending general body meetings, she gradually improved her communication skills. With her confidence, she eventually became a Child Volunteer Manager (CVM) and excelled in her role.

"I'm saving this money for my education after 10th grade. Joining CDK taught me the habit of saving—I haven't touched a single rupee since I started saving.

09

SECTION B · STORY 09

Cooperation among children

Red Fort is known as a symbol of India's freedom and an important centre of power since 1947. However, many poor families are still struggling to get freedom from poverty, illiteracy, and superstitious beliefs that continue to affect their lives and opportunities. Due to financial difficulties, several children in these communities start working at a young age to support their families instead of focusing only on their education and childhood. The Salimgarh Railway Colony, located beside the Red Fort, is surrounded by old and dilapidated railway quarters of the Railway Department, where around forty families often live in a single quarter under difficult living conditions.

Kartik, a playful and energetic 12-year-old boy, lives in the colony with his single mother and elder brother. His family does not have a stable source of income, and they struggle every day to meet their basic needs. The family mainly survives with the support of Kartik's maternal grandmother's pension. During festival seasons, his mother also sets up a small stall near the Red Fort to earn some extra income for the family's livelihood.

In August 2024, Kartik's family faced a serious food shortage because of their unstable financial condition. His parents were struggling to earn required money, and it became difficult for the family to arrange daily meals. Kartik's mother was very worried about how she would feed her children.

One day, Kartik's mother was discussing the family's financial situation with someone and considering taking a loan to manage their household expenses. During the conversation, Kartik overheard what she was saying. It was then that he remembered the Welfare Advance facility available through the Children Development Khazana (CDK) programme.

He suggested to his mother that he can apply for a Welfare Advance instead of taking a loan, as it could provide immediate financial support to the family during this difficult time.

IN CONTEXT

Kartik took confidence and wrote an application and submitted it to the Advance Committee. However, when the committee reviewed his request, they found that he had only Rs. 171 in his CDK account. According to the Welfare Advance rules, a child must have at least 20% of the requested amount saved in their account to get an advance; a criterion decided by the CDK members. As a result, the committee could not approve his application.

Even though his application was rejected, he did not give up. He discussed his family's situation with the Didi at the contact point and spoke to the Advance Committee members. Since the committee members were children from the same community, they understood the difficulties his family was facing. A discussion was held with other child members about Kartik's. They decided to help; three children came together and contributed money from their own savings to increase the balance in his account. Their support helped him meet the required eligibility criteria for the Welfare Advance.

The application was presented again before the Advance Committee. After discussing the situation, the committee unanimously agreed to approve the Welfare Advance. As a result, Kartik's family received urgent financial support and was able to manage their immediate food needs.

This incident became a powerful example of cooperation, solidarity, and collective support among children through the CDK programme of Butterflies. It showed how children can come together to help one another during difficult times. The experience also strengthened values of empathy, responsibility, and mutual support among the children.

This empathetic yet powerful gesture of support and compassion reflects the values cooperation among children in their yearly age through life skills education.

SECTION B · STORY 10

10 Entrepreneur in the making: Nurtured by CDK

"Talent and intelligence can grow in every child, regardless of their background."

Bidya Sagar, a 15-year-old boy with an entrepreneurial mindset, lives with his parents and younger brother in a rented house near Lal Kuan, close to Fatehpuri, North Delhi. His family moved from Sahebganj, Jharkhand to Delhi in search of better livelihood opportunities. His father works at a local tea stall, while his mother manages household responsibilities and sometimes works at a nearby dry fruit shop to support the family. Despite their hard work, the family earns around ₹15,000 per month, making it difficult to manage household expenses. Growing up in these conditions, Bidya dreams of building a better future for himself and supporting his family financially.

Bidya came to know about Butterflies through one of his friends when he was studying in the fourth grade. Now studying in the ninth grade, he is part of the formal education system. Although he finds academics challenging at times, Bidya has shown strong entrepreneurial skills from a young age. His creativity, confidence, and interest in earning and managing money make him different from many children of his age.

At the age of 13, Bidya started his small business journey. He began buying empty dry fruit boxes and other low-cost items available in the market from wholesalers and reselling them at a small profit. Through this work, he learned basic business skills at a very young age. In the beginning, he spent most of the money he earned on his personal needs and contributed very little to his family.

However, over time, he also developed the habit of saving money through the Children Development Khazana (CDK) programme of Butterflies, which encouraged children to prioritise needs, save regularly and manage money responsibly

Seeing Bidya's potential and interest in business, the Education Programme Officer and the Cooperative Programme Officer at Butterflies guided and motivated him regularly. They explained the importance of disciplined savings and how the Children Development Khazana (CDK) could support his future goals. Through regular discussions and counselling, Bidya understood that saving money could help him grow his small business and achieve his dreams. This learning slowly changed his attitude towards money management and encouraged him to think more responsibly about his future.

As his confidence grew, Bidya expanded his small business by buying dry fruits in small quantities on Saturday evenings and selling them in the Sunday market. This helped him earn regular profits. He also developed a disciplined habit of managing his earnings wisely. Bidya started depositing half of his income into his savings account while using the remaining money to support his family and meet his personal needs.

Over time, Bidya developed a better understanding of business and money management. He even used some of his Children Development Khazana (CDK) savings to support his family during the Deepawali festival, which brought happiness and relief to them. Today, his CDK savings have grown to around eight thousand rupees. Bidya dreams of becoming a successful businessman after completing his education. He believes in saving money regularly before taking any financial risks. Through this habit, he wants to build a secure future for himself and support his family in a better way.

Bidya's journey reflects hard work, determination, and a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

Despite financial difficulties at home, he has continued to work towards a better future with confidence and dedication.

From a young age, he learned the value of discipline, saving, and responsible money management through Butterflies' Children Development Khazana (CDK) programme. While contributing to his family's needs, he also built savings for his own future.

His story shows how the right guidance, life skills education, entrepreneurship training, regular budgeting, and consistent saving can positively shape a child's life and encourage them to dream bigger.

> *Talent and intelligence can grow in every child, regardless of their background.*

SECTION B · STORY 11

11 Intelligence is born from determination, not privilege

Himanshu, a 14-year-old boy, lives in Nai Basti with his parents and four siblings. Sadar Bazar is known as one of the largest wholesale markets for different commodities and provides livelihood opportunities to thousands of migrant families. Himanshu's father is one of them. He works as a staff member at a dry fruit shop to support his family and manage their daily expenses. Himanshu's mother is home maker. She cooked food for labour and through this way she also supports her family.

Himanshu is currently studying in the 9th grade and is considered one of the most intelligent students in his batch. He joined Butterflies when he was in the 7th grade. He first came to the centre with Prachi a member of Butterflies programme, and since then, he has been actively participating in different learning and cooperative activities.

During the early days of joining Butterflies, Himanshu was mostly interested in games and recreational activities. Whatever small amount of money he received from his mother, he usually spent on snacks like chips and Kurkure instead of saving it in his Children Development Khazana (CDK) account. Later the Education Programme Officer, spoke with him about how important it is to not waste money but to budget for a future need by saving money. The Programme Officer-Education encouraged him to recognise his potential and work towards his future goals. The Cooperative Programme Officer also guided him about the importance of saving for future educational needs, especially for buying extra books and learning materials that could help him gain more knowledge and improve his future opportunities. After some time, Himanshu started saving a small part of the money he received from his mother.

Gradually, he developed the habit of regular savings through the Children Development Khazana (CDK). Using his own savings, he bought Science books from S. Chand Publications and a Class 10 Mathematics book to improve his knowledge and strengthen his understanding of the subjects.

In Himanshu's words, "Earlier, I had no idea how books outside my school syllabus could help me improve my learning and understanding. After Bhaiya explained their importance, I decided to buy some books for myself. The most special thing for me was that I purchased them using my own savings from the Children Development Khazana (CDK). It made me feel confident and responsible. Now, I enjoy reading and learning new things, and I understand how knowledge can help me build a better future."

This may seem like a small step, but for Himanshu, it is an important beginning towards changing his future. Through regular savings, learning, and determination, he is slowly moving closer to achieving his dream of becoming an engineer.

This may seem like a small step, but for Himanshu, it is an important beginning towards changing his future.

12

SECTION B · STORY 12

From Junk Food to Savings

A small, playful, mischievous and cheerful little girl at the contact point would bring a smile on everyone's face with her playfulness. She happily joined the noise, fun, and playful activities with other children. She was a free-spirited talkative girl, spreading joy all around.

When the Cooperative Programme Officer (PO-C) first noticed her during a Life Skill Session, she was secretly holding a packet of chips in her bag. With an innocent yet clever expression, she tried to eat the chips without catching the attention of the adult facilitator. Every now and then, she would quickly take a bite while pretending to listen carefully to the session.

After the session, Bhaiya came to know that the little girl's name was Gungun. She was a 12 -year-old girl studying in Class 7 at that time. Bhaiya gently spoke to her about secretly eating chips during the Life Skill Session, which made both laughs. Later, he also talked with her about her family and daily life. During the conversation, PO got to know that Gungun lived with her parents and two siblings in the Peti Market area. Her father works as rickshaw puller and mother is home maker. Despite living in difficult surroundings, she appeared cheerful, active, and full of energy. Her talkative and playful nature easily attracted the attention of everyone around her.

During the conversation, PO-C got to know how Gungun was able to buy chips. She shared that whenever her mother, Bhabhi (Sister-in-law), or Maushi (aunty) sent her to the market to buy groceries or vegetables, they usually gave her a little extra money, around 10–15 rupees. Gungun would carefully save some of that money and use it to buy small things for herself, especially the snacks and items she liked.

When PO-C asked Gungun whether she knew about the Children Development Khazana (CDK), she replied with a smile that she already knew about it. PO-C then asked her why she did not save her money in CDK. She simply smiled and listened quietly. PO-C explained to her the importance of saving money and how small savings can become helpful in the future. He told her that even little amounts saved regularly can support her during times of need. He also encouraged her to attend the Life Skill Sessions carefully so that she could better understand the lessons and learn useful habits for her future life.

After some time, Gungun slowly started saving small amounts of money in her CDK account. Today, she has more than 1200 rupees in her savings. She saved this money from the small amounts given by her mother, habhi, and other family members whenever she went to buy groceries or vegetables from the market.

Gungun is becoming more responsible and thoughtful about her future. Along with learning the value of saving money, she has also started paying more attention to her studies and Life Skill Sessions. Her short-term goal is to score good marks in her Class 10 examinations and continue her education with confidence. With her cheerful nature, growing understanding, and regular efforts, she is slowly moving towards a brighter and more secure future.

Gungun is becoming more responsible and thoughtful about her future.

Using Sports (Football) to Bring in Change

This section explores how sports, particularly football, becomes a medium for confidence-building, discipline, inclusion, and emotional well-being. The narratives show children moving from hesitation, isolation, excessive screen time, stress, and gender-based restrictions towards active participation, teamwork, and healthier routines. Football provides children with a safe space to build friendships across contact points, learn cooperation and fair play, manage winning and losing with maturity, and develop communication, leadership, and self-control. The stories also show girls challenging stereotypes around sports and boys learning empathy, respect, and emotional balance. Together, these experiences demonstrate that sports can be a powerful tool for social change, helping children grow physically, mentally, and socially.



SECTION C · STORY 01

01

Discovering Confidence Through Teamwork and Football

When Aleena, a 15-year-old, first became part of the Butterflies program, sports were never something she thought deeply about. She had never really played football before, and honestly, she did not have much interest in it either. At that time, football was simply another activity happening around her. But sometimes, life changes quietly. As Aleena continued attending sessions and spending time with other children, she slowly became curious about the game. Watching everyone play together, laugh together, and support each other made her feel included. Step by step, football stopped feeling unfamiliar and slowly became something she looked forward to.

What attracted her most was not just the game itself, but the feeling of togetherness.

For Aleena, football is about playing as a team. She enjoys how everyone works together, plans together, and communicates with one another on the field. Before every match, teammates discuss strategies, decide positions, and encourage each other. These small moments made her realize that football is not only about scoring goals — it is about trust and teamwork.

Through sports, Aleena also discovered something important within herself.

Earlier, she was quieter and less interactive, but football gradually helped her communicate more openly. Simple conversations during practice and matches slowly improved her confidence. She learned how to express herself, cooperate with others, and become more socially active.

Football also brought new friendships into her life. She met children from different Butterflies contact points and enjoyed interacting with teammates she may never have known otherwise.

As she continued playing, she started learning valuable lessons from sports. Rules, discipline, coordination, and supporting teammates became part of her learning journey. She understood that every player matters and that success comes when everyone plays together.

Sports also changed the way she understood winning and losing.

When her team wins, it brings excitement and happiness. But even when they lose, she believes there is always motivation to improve and work harder for the next game. Instead of giving up, the team encourages one another to practice more and come back stronger.

Outside the playground, people around her began noticing these changes too. Seeing girls participate confidently in football often surprises people in the community. For many families, it is still unusual to see girls actively involved in sports.

But Aleena feels happy when others appreciate the growth and confidence children gain through these opportunities.

Slowly, she even began motivating other children to join Butterflies. She encouraged them not only to participate in sports but also to focus on studies and personal growth.

Sports also transformed her daily routine. Earlier, her life followed a simple cycle of school and home, but football added energy and excitement to her days. She started feeling more active, physically fit, and mentally refreshed.

For Aleena, playing football is also a way to reduce stress.

“Stress becomes less while playing,” she shares.

The football ground became a place where she could relax, enjoy herself, and forget worries for some time.

Today, Aleena believes sports are extremely important for children, especially girls. She feels that sports give young people confidence, discipline, friendships, and opportunities to grow beyond their comfort zones.

Her journey may have started without interest, but over time football helped her discover confidence, connection, and happiness.

Aleena's story reminds us that sometimes the most meaningful journeys begin with a simple step into something unfamiliar and slowly grow into experiences that shape who we become.

Her journey may have started without interest, but over time football helped her discover confidence, connection, and happiness.

SECTION C · STORY 02

02

From Screen Time to Active Living Through Sports

Aman's journey reflects the reality faced by many adolescents today, where mobile phones and online games often take up more space than physical activities. Associated with the Butterflies programme since 2017, 17-year-old Aman has grown alongside the community and witnessed its activities through different phases of his life, including the challenging COVID period, when lockdowns, school closures, and limited outdoor movement further increased his dependence on screens and reduced opportunities for physical play and social interaction. During this time, like many other young people, he spent even more hours on mobile games and online platforms, which gradually shaped his routine and habits before he slowly began reconnecting with outdoor activities through the programme's continued engagement.

For a long time, Aman's daily routine revolved around screen time. Mobile games and social media became a major source of entertainment, leaving little room for outdoor activities or sports. Although he occasionally played cricket or badminton with friends, sports were never a regular part of his lifestyle. He mostly remained an observer rather than an active participant.

Over time, however, Aman began to understand the importance of sports through his connection with the Butterflies programme. Conversations with facilitators and exposure to different activities helped him realize that sports are not only about competition or winning but also about staying healthy, active, and mentally refreshed.

One of the biggest lessons Aman has learned is the role of sports in maintaining physical fitness. He now recognizes that outdoor games keep the body active and energetic in ways that mobile-based entertainment cannot. Playing cricket, even occasionally, gives him a sense of freshness and enjoyment that he does not experience while spending long hours on screens.

He also speaks honestly about how he approaches games. He admits that he does not take winning or losing too seriously and usually accepts defeat casually. While this reflects his easy-going nature, it also highlights how regular participation in sports can help young people develop focus, resilience, discipline, and a stronger sense of commitment.

Through his experiences, Aman has become more aware of the impact of excessive mobile usage. He understands that spending too much time online can distance people from real-life experiences, relationships, and physical engagement. Sports, on the other hand, create opportunities to connect with others, interact with the environment, and experience life beyond the screen.

Another important realization for Aman has been the need to maintain balance. While he still enjoys online gaming, he now understands that not everything enjoyable is necessarily beneficial in the long run. This growing awareness marks an important step toward building healthier habits and making better lifestyle choices.

For Him, sports also represent happiness and stress relief. Although both online and outdoor games provide entertainment, he feels that physical sports contribute more positively to overall well-being. They help him feel more active, relaxed, and connected with people around him.

Aman's journey is still evolving.

With continued encouragement and regular opportunities to participate, he has the potential to become more involved in sports and gradually reduce his dependence on mobile devices. His experiences show the importance of guiding adolescents toward balanced lifestyles where technology and physical activity can coexist in healthier ways.

For Aman, the playground is slowly becoming more than just an open space. It represents an opportunity for change, a movement from passive screen-based engagement to active participation, real-world interaction, and healthier living.

For Aman, the playground is slowly becoming more than just an open space.

SECTION C · STORY 03

03 Finding One's Voice and Confidence Through Football

Faiza's journey with football is much more than a story about sport. It is a story of courage, confidence, and quiet transformation. It is about a young girl who grew up hearing that games like football and cricket were meant for boys, and that girls should not run freely, play openly, or step onto the field with ambition. For a long time, these beliefs shaped how she saw herself. Football felt distant from her life, almost like something she was not allowed to dream about.

Faiza has been associated with the Butterflies program for nearly eight to nine years. During this time, she saw how sports were introduced alongside education, giving children a space to learn, play, and grow together. Her own turning point came when she visited the Chandni Chowk contact point and saw girls and boys playing football openly. Watching them move freely on the ground awakened her curiosity. Slowly, hesitation gave way to participation, and participation opened the door to joy, friendship, and self-worth.

Through football, Faiza began building friendships beyond her own centre. Children from different areas, who were once strangers, became teammates and friends. What started with simple conversations soon grew into strong bonds. The field became a place where she learned to trust others, support her team, take responsibility, and move forward together.

Football also taught Faiza lessons that went far beyond the game. She learned leadership, time management, communication, discipline, and self-control. On the field, she understood the value of rules, fair play, and controlling anger. She also learned how to accept both victory and defeat with strength.

Winning brought happiness, but losing taught her to reflect, improve, and try again.

“Even loss teaches us something,” she says, reminding us that defeat can also become a teacher when met with courage.

Her presence on the field has also begun to change the way people around her think. In her community, many were surprised to see a girl connected with Butterflies and actively playing football. Some did not know that such opportunities existed for girls at all. Faiza now proudly shares information about sports, education, and health with others. Her own journey has encouraged cousins and friends to join the program, showing how one girl’s confidence can inspire many more.

At home, Faiza has found support from her family, especially her mother, with whom she shares a close bond. Their encouragement has helped her continue balancing sports, studies, and daily life. This support has been important in helping her believe that her dreams matter and that her place on the field is valid.

One of the biggest changes Faiza sees in herself is her confidence. Earlier, she struggled to introduce herself or speak freely. Today, she can communicate with confidence, ask for help, and support others. Football has helped her find not only her strength, but also her voice.

“My confidence level has increased a lot,” she reflects.

Sports have also changed her daily routine. Earlier, her life moved between school, studies, household responsibilities, and stress. Play had little space. After joining Butterflies, she realized that playing is not separate from learning; it supports learning. Football refreshes her mind, helps her release stress, and allows her to return to studies with greater focus.

For Faiza, the ground has become a place of happiness. Whether she is playing or simply watching others play, the field gives her energy. When she steps onto it, the worries of home begin to fade, replaced by movement, laughter, and a sense of freedom.

“I feel only happiness when I play,” she says.

Looking back, Faiza recognizes how much her life has changed. Earlier, she described her life as ordinary, but not deeply joyful. Today, she feels stronger, more active, and more empowered. She believes that sports and tournaments are important not only for boys, but equally for girls. If girls can move ahead in education, she feels, they can also grow through sports.

Faiza hopes to see more girls' teams, more tournaments, and more opportunities where younger children can watch girls play with confidence. Her journey reminds us that when girls are given space, support, and opportunity, they do much more than participate. They lead, inspire, and transform the communities around them.

Faiza hopes to see more girls' teams, more tournaments, and more opportunities where younger children can watch girls play with confidence.

04

SECTION C · STORY 04

Sports: An Equaliser

Himanshu's journey with football is not just about 13 years old learning a sport—it is a story of transformation, discipline, and self-belief.

Coming from a local community near Sadar Bazar, the wholesale market in north district of Delhi, Himanshu began his football journey with curiosity and excitement. So far, he has participated in two tournaments and regularly attends practice sessions. What started as a simple interest has now become a meaningful part of his daily life.

For Himanshu, football is far more than ninety minutes on the playground, it represents something much bigger than just a game for him. It is a lens for life.

He reflects on how, in most schools, the focus remains heavily on academics, often overlooking physical and mental well-being. But through his association with the programme, he found something rare—a space where both mental and physical health are equally valued.

"This is a place where we don't just study—we grow," his journey suggests.

What inspired him the most in the beginning was watching skilled players on the field. He remembers observing how confidently they dribbled the ball, outplayed opponents, and controlled the game. That sense of admiration slowly turned into motivation.

"I wanted to be like them," he recalls.

And so, he began learning—by watching, practicing, and playing alongside others.

Before joining, Himanshu had little exposure to football. In fact, his parents were initially hesitant and prioritized studies over sports. Opportunities to play were limited. But everything changed once he became part of a structured sports environment where regular tournaments and practice sessions were available.

As his academic performance remained strong, his parents' perspective also began to shift. Today, they not only allow him to play but feel proud of how responsibly he balances both studies and sports.

One of the most significant changes in Himanshu's life has been his growing confidence and sense of belonging.

Through tournaments, he made new friends from different areas. What began as casual interactions soon turned into meaningful friendships filled with shared experiences, laughter, and teamwork.

On the field, he found something even more valuable—respect and trust.

Unlike informal play, where rules are often ignored, football taught him discipline. Initially unaware of the rules, he gradually learned the importance of structure, teamwork, and mutual respect.

"Unity and respect—that's what I've learned the most," he shares.

Winning or losing, according to Himanshu, is not the ultimate goal. What matters more is how the game is played—with fairness, teamwork, control, and a positive mindset. He believes aggression should never overpower the spirit of the game.

Beyond skills, football has brought visible changes in his life.

Physically, he feels healthier and more active. He recalls a time when he struggled with overweight and faced body shaming and teasing by his classmates. But today, he feels lighter, faster, agile confident and happy of his body.

Mentally, the impact has been even deeper.

Earlier, stress often affected his focus. But now, playing football helps him stay calm and relaxed. Even during exams, he feels more composed and less anxious.

“Stress doesn’t control me anymore,” his experience reflects.

His daily routine has also improved. Football has brought structure, discipline, and motivation into his life. Interestingly, it has also positively influenced his studies—he now manages his time better and stays more attentive.

For Himanshu, the football ground is more than just a field—it is a place of freedom.

He especially enjoys playing in open, green spaces surrounded by nature. In contrast to the pollution and stress of city life, these environments make him feel refreshed, focused, and confident.

Another powerful change is his social growth.

Earlier, he had limited connections, but now he interacts with more people, builds friendships easily, and feels a stronger sense of community. His skills on the field have also earned him recognition among peers, further boosting his confidence.

Even in his neighbourhood, people have started noticing his involvement in sports. When they see him in his jersey, they become curious and inspired. Himanshu proudly encourages them to join as well, emphasizing that sports are open to everyone and can truly transform lives.

One of his most memorable experiences was his first match against Okhla Blaster.

Playing as a defender, he was given a crucial responsibility. Despite facing strong opponents, he stayed confident and focused, successfully blocking attacks and supporting his team. That match ended in a victory—but more importantly, it marked the moment he truly believed in himself.

Looking ahead, Himanshu strongly believes that sports should be an essential part of every child’s life.

According to him, sports teach lessons that books alone cannot—discipline, teamwork, respect, and real-life skills. They provide practical understanding, build character, and even open doors to future opportunities.

Today, his parents recognize this transformation. They see a healthier, happier, and more responsible child—someone who understands balance and takes ownership of his growth.

And for Himanshu, that is the biggest victory.

> *"This is a place where we don't just study—we grow."*

SECTION C · STORY 05

05

Life Lessons Through Sports

Before sports became a part of his daily life, 16-year-old Sachin Yadav was very different from the confident and balanced person he is today. Like many children his age, he spent a lot of time on his mobile phone and often struggled to manage his emotions. Losing games made him angry, and small disappointments affected him deeply. He lacked a proper routine, became distracted easily, and had limited opportunities to build strong friendships or express himself confidently. Everything slowly began to change when he joined the Butterfly organization and started playing sports regularly. Over the years, cricket and football became more than just games for him—they became a source of learning, discipline, and personal growth.

Sachin remembers how earlier he would react emotionally after losing a match. Defeat felt frustrating, and anger would take over quickly. But sports gradually taught him an important lesson: losing is not failure, but an opportunity to improve. Instead of reacting impulsively, he now takes time to reflect on his mistakes and understand what he can do better next time. This change in mindset made him emotionally stronger and more mature. Playing regularly also transformed his lifestyle. Earlier, he spent more time indoors and on screens, but now he prefers being outside on the field with friends. Sports brought energy, structure, and balance into his daily routine. He began feeling more active and focused, both physically and mentally. The impact was visible in his studies as well. With regular physical activity, he noticed better concentration, less stress, and improved sleep. Sports gave him a healthy outlet for his emotions and helped him stay calm under pressure.

Along with personal growth, sports also changed the way Sachin connected with people. Through cricket and football, he built friendships, learned teamwork, and experienced the joy of sharing responsibilities on the field. Sometimes he would ask for the ball, and other times he would pass it to a teammate. These small moments taught him trust, cooperation, and the importance of supporting others. Over time, the playground became a space where Sachin discovered confidence and happiness. The boy who once struggled with anger and distractions slowly transformed into someone more disciplined, socially connected, and emotionally aware.

Today, sports are not just a hobby for Sachin—they are a way of life. They have helped him grow into a healthier, calmer, and more confident individual who understands that true success is not only about winning games, but also about learning, improving, and enjoying the journey along the way.

Today, sports are not just a hobby for Sachin—they are a way of life.

SECTION C · STORY 06

06

Building Confidence, Equality, and Leadership

Tinu Kumari, a 16-year-old student, has been associated with the Butterflies programme for the past 8–9 years. Her journey began in childhood when she was inspired by watching other children play. What initially started as a simple interest in sports gradually became an important part of her life.

Football soon became her favourite sport because of the sense of equality and teamwork it offered. According to her, in football every player gets a chance to contribute, and success depends on the collective effort of the team. No one wins alone; everyone supports each other, passes the ball, and works together towards a common goal. This inclusive nature of the sport kept her motivated.

However, her journey was not without challenges. At times, she had to play with boys, where she often received fewer opportunities because others assumed she would get tired easily. In the beginning, she sometimes stepped back herself, doubting her abilities. But gradually, she started understanding her strengths and built the courage to participate more actively. She learned that challenges are not meant to stop a person but to make them stronger.

Through sports, Tinu learned several important life lessons. She developed the ability to work together, stay patient, control her anger, and follow rules. Playing in a team taught her that mistakes are part of learning, and reacting negatively—such as taking revenge during a game—does not help. Instead, maintaining focus and improving oneself is more important.

Her perspective on winning and losing also changed over time. Earlier, victories and failures felt very personal, but now she understands that both belong to the entire team.

She celebrates wins together and accepts losses with a positive attitude, encouraging herself and her teammates to perform better in the future.

Football has had a strong impact on her personality. She has become more active, disciplined, and confident. She can now express herself more freely, make decisions independently, and interact better with others. Sports have also helped her stay physically active and develop a routine that supports her overall well-being.

Despite these developments, societal attitudes often posed a challenge. When she returned home after playing football, people in her community would question why girls should play such sports or comment on their appearance. These judgments sometimes affected her, but she did not give up. Instead, she grew stronger in her belief that sports are equally important for both boys and girls.

She also contributed positively to her community. She motivated children in her neighbourhood to join her in playing and learning sports. By bringing together 9–10 children from her locality, she helped create a supportive environment where others could also benefit from teamwork and physical activity.

Her daily routine also improved through sports. She became more organized, energetic, and conscious about taking care of her body. The discipline she learned on the field gradually began to reflect in other aspects of her life as well.

Today, for Tinu Kumari, the football ground is much more than just a place to play. It is a space where she discovered confidence, friendships, discipline, and important life skills. Her journey shows that sports not only strengthen the body but also shape a person's mindset and future.

SECTION C · STORY 07

07

Finding Confidence, Discipline, and Belonging Through Football

When Shivam first became associated with the Butterflies program, he was at an important turning point in his life. He had just appeared for his Class 10 board examinations and, like many young people his age, was trying to find confidence, direction, and a space where he could grow. Encouraged by his seniors, he joined Butterflies and slowly began to discover how football could become much more than a game.

For Shivam, football opened a new world of friendship, learning, and shared joy. On the ground, children from different contact points, including Sadar Bazar, came together as one team. The field gave him a chance to speak, listen, cooperate, and trust others. “There is an opportunity to play and talk with everyone,” he says. In those simple moments of passing the ball, planning a move, or cheering for a teammate, Shivam began learning the deeper meaning of teamwork, communication, and mutual support.

The change in Shivam has been visible both on and off the field. Football has helped him become more disciplined, patient, and committed. He credits the program and his mentors for supporting him in his studies and helping him successfully complete grade 10. Sports also taught him how to face both victory and defeat with maturity. Losing a match was not easy, but it helped him understand resilience, self-control, and the value of effort over immediate results.

Physically, Shivam feels stronger, more active, and healthier. He can run across the ground with greater ease and feels more energetic through the day.

Football has also helped him build a routine around exercise, health, and responsibility. What began as participation in a sport has gradually become a way of living with greater purpose and discipline.

Perhaps the most meaningful change has been in the way Shivam relates to people around him. Earlier, he had limited interaction with others. Today, he speaks more confidently with peers and seniors, forms new friendships, and feels comfortable being part of a group. His neighbours and community members notice his involvement in football and encourage him to continue. At home too, football has given him stories to share and conversations that bring him closer to his family.

Shivam's journey has also begun to inspire others. He now encourages children who do not have access to such opportunities to join Butterflies, telling them that the program offers both education and sports. He proudly shares that he has already helped bring at least one child into the program. In doing so, he has moved from being a participant to becoming a young influencer in his community.

For Shivam, football brings happiness, reduces stress, and keeps him motivated. It has helped him become mentally fitter, emotionally stronger, and socially more confident. His story shows that when young people are given safe spaces, caring mentors, and opportunities to play and learn together, change does not remain limited to the playground. It reaches their studies, their homes, their friendships, and their sense of self.

> *"There is an opportunity to play and talk with everyone."*

Cooperative Learning

This section focuses on cooperative learning as a child-centred approach that encourages children to study together, support one another, and take collective responsibility for learning. The stories show how children who were once hesitant, irregular, shy, or at risk of dropping out gained confidence through peer support, group study, storytelling, Bal Sabha, sports, and shared problem-solving. Cooperative learning reduces competition and creates democratic spaces where children learn at their own pace while helping others improve. It also strengthens empathy, communication, leadership, accountability, and emotional safety. The narratives demonstrate that when children learn with and from one another, education becomes more inclusive, joyful, and meaningful, especially for children facing poverty, migration, gender barriers, and disrupted schooling.



SECTION C · STORY 01

01

From Uncertainty to University

Sumaila is the first girl in her family who has finished formal school and has reached to the university. She scored 90 percent in her senior secondary exams in 2021 and joined Delhi University for undergraduate course in Humanities. After completing graduation, she wants to complete bachelor's in education (B.Ed.) and become a teacher. Her remarkable achievement has changed the perception about girl's education in her extended family and community. Today, Samaila proudly said, "The day when the results were declared and I scored 90 percent, it was the happiest moment not only for me but for my parents, relatives and all the children in our family. I was the first girl to do it, and other children will learn from me. What else one expects".

Sumaila lives with her parents and seven siblings (six sisters and one brother) in an unauthorised settlement/slum name Gandhi Camp near Okhla Mandi vegetable market.

Sumaila's family migrated from a small village, Mirzapur, Districh Badaun, in Uttar Pradesh to a bustling urban center in another state in search of better economic opportunities. Her parents were drawn by the promise of employment and a chance to improve their standard of living. Sumails's family has faced challenges to adjusting into the urban settlements.

At a very young age Sumaila's father came to Delhi, and work as a labor on a local shop. Later after their marriage he came along with his wife and worked along with his elder brother who works inside the Okhla Mandi. From then started selling vegetable inside the Okhla Mandi as a small vendor. Their hard work and perseverance allowed them to gradually improve their socioeconomic status.

Her father sells vegetable and earns around twelve to fifteen thousand rupees in a month.

Sumaila attends a primary govt. school (SDMC-Primary School) where she is navigating the challenges of adjusting into the new environment. Despite initial struggles, she is determined to excel in her studies.

Sumaila was studying in Class 8 when she joined the Butterflies education programme in 2017. At that time, she was unsure whether she would even be allowed to complete her schooling. She often said "I belong to a Muslim family, in our community generally parents don't prefer girls to go for higher education especially in the cases of girl children"While talking to her, she expressed her desire and determination to continue her education and become a teacher clearly, "I wish to be an educated and well qualified person, but I am worried about my future, (without my parents support my dream cannot be possible for me) if it would be possible without my parents wish".

During conversations with her, it became clear that she had immense potential but lacked confidence and family encouragement. Understanding the situation, continuous home visits and discussions were initiated with her parents. Through parents' meetings, awareness sessions, and repeated interactions, gradual changes began to emerge in the family's thinking. Her mother started attending meetings regularly and slowly became convinced about the importance of girls' education. Eventually, both parents became supportive of Sumaila's studies, which became a turning point in her life.

As Sumaila started attending the contact point regularly, she became deeply involved in academic support sessions, life skills activities, and cooperative learning groups. She often shared that before joining Butterflies she never imagined herself becoming anything, but through the encouragement of the programme staff and teachers, she developed the aspiration to become a teacher herself.

The career guidance sessions helped her understand the pathway toward higher education, while the collective learning environment gave her confidence in her own abilities.

One of the most remarkable changes in Sumaila's journey came through the cooperative learning approach. In the group-learning process, children studied collectively, helped one another understand difficult concepts, and ensured that no one was left behind. Sumaila became an active participant in this shared learning culture. She experienced how children could become each other's strength when they studied together with trust, cooperation, and responsibility.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, when schools remained closed and uncertainty surrounded every family, cooperative learning became a lifeline for Sumaila and her group members. Living in a small, overcrowded room made it nearly impossible for her to attend online classes peacefully or focus on studies. Yet the children refused to give up. Together, the group took ownership of their studies. They borrowed a blackboard from the Butterflies contact point and carried it to the terrace of one of the group members' homes. Every evening, the children gathered there while maintaining safety precautions and studied collectively for hours. Those who understood lessons better would teach others, while programme staff continued guiding them over phone calls whenever they faced difficulties. The terrace slowly turned into their classroom, where hope replaced fear and collective responsibility replaced isolation. Through this spirit of cooperation, discipline, and mutual support, the entire group successfully passed their Class 12 board examinations with good percentages. For Sumaila, this was not only an academic achievement but also proof that collective learning and solidarity could overcome even the harshest circumstances.

IN CONTEXT

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Sumaila worked with extraordinary determination. The additional academic support, regular guidance from programme Officer, and the collective efforts of her study group helped her secure 90 percent marks in her senior secondary examination in 2021. Her outstanding performance made her eligible for admission to University of Delhi for an undergraduate course in Humanities. However, financial difficulties once again became a major barrier. While her parents were supportive emotionally, they were unable to afford the expenses of regular college education. With support from Butterflies for her first-year college fees, Sumaila was able to take the first step toward her dream.

Today, Sumaila proudly stands as the first girl in her family to complete formal schooling and reach university education. Her journey has not only transformed her own life but has also changed the perception of girls' education within her extended family and community. Her younger siblings continue their education without pressure to discontinue studies, and even her elder sister completed graduation and started working. Her younger sister pursuing training from Butterflies School of Culinary and Catering (BSCC). Her father, who once hesitated about girls pursuing higher education, now firmly tells relatives that he wants all his daughters to study as much as they wish and stand independently on their own feet.

Currently, Sumaila completed her graduation and pursuing M.A. and simultaneously preparing for the B.Ed. entrance examination to continue her journey toward becoming a teacher. Her story reflects the power of resilience, family transformation, and cooperative learning. More importantly, it demonstrates how collective support, shared responsibility, and belief in children's potential can create pathways for change even in the most difficult situations. Through her journey, Sumaila continues to inspire other girls to dream beyond limitations and reminds children that with determination, cooperation, and hard work, it is possible to create new paths for the future.

SECTION C · STORY 02

02 Learning-Beyond Competition

As a practitioner working with children at Okhla Mandi contact point, I have witnessed how the Cooperative Learning approach can change not only academic learning but also children's confidence, participation, and sense of collective responsibility. Arun's journey is one such example that reflects the true spirit of collaboration, group autonomy, and equal participation.

Arun joined the Contact Point in 2021 while studying in Class 7. He came from a family where education opportunities were limited. His father, a vegetable seller at Okhla Mandi, had studied only up to Class 5 and always wished that his children would continue their education. Like many children living in the community, Arun lacked academic support at home and often remained unnoticed in school classrooms. Initially, he spent most of his time playing or helping his father at the market.

When Arun first came to the Contact Point with one of his friends, he appeared hesitant and unsure. During the COVID-19 period, only a few children could attend at a time, making interaction difficult in the beginning. However, as more children started returning, Arun gradually became part of the learning activities. What stood out most was how the Cooperative Learning approach helped him feel included and valued.

At the Contact Point, children do not study in isolation. Learning takes place through small groups where every child participates equally. Rather than depending entirely on the teacher, children take ownership of the learning process themselves. During sessions, concepts are introduced collectively, after which children discuss, explain, question, and solve problems together.

This process encourages peer learning, equal participation, and shared responsibility.

One of the most visible changes in Arun was during mathematics sessions. Arun had a strong interest in mathematics and gradually began supporting group members who struggled with the subject. Instead of positioning himself as the “best student,” he learned to work collaboratively with peers.

I remember one instance when Arun’s friend-group member, was finding it difficult to understand a mathematics chapter before a school unit test. Rather than leaving him behind, the group collectively decided to continue studying together after the Contact Point session. They gathered at Arun’s house in the evening and revised the chapter collaboratively. Each child contributed by explaining different concepts, solving examples, and checking each other’s understanding. Eventually, Anurag and Arbaz performed very well in the test, and the success was celebrated collectively by the entire group. This reflected one of the strongest values of Cooperative Learning-which is the achievement of one child becomes the achievement of the group.

Another powerful example emerged during examination time. Arun’s group were struggling to complete revisions because there was no preparation gap in between the date-sheet. Instead of studying individually, the group members collectively created a study timetable for the entire group. The group divided responsibilities among themselves, one child solved mathematics problems, and another explained Hindi grammar, while someone else revised science and social science. Arun actively supported the younger children in solving mathematics questions and ensured that quieter children also participated during discussions.

Arun suggested that after completing every chapter, one child should summarize the topic while another child reflected on what remained unclear. This method helped children identify learning gaps collectively and support one another more effectively.

They decided the timing, divided learning tasks, and ensured everyone understood before ending the session. No child was left behind, and every member of the group took ownership of the collective learning process. Through such experiences, Arun gradually developed leadership qualities rooted not in authority, but in cooperation and shared responsibility.

As practitioner, I observed that children became more disciplined and emotionally connected through these collaborative spaces. The sense of competition gradually reduced, while peer support and mutual accountability increased. Currently Arun studying in 12th Grade and wanted to grow his career in banking sector.

As a practitioner, Arun's story reaffirmed how Cooperative Learning creates democratic spaces where children learn to value collaboration over competition. The approach nurtures confidence, equal participation, group autonomy, and collective ownership of learning. Arun's transformation was not the result of individual achievement alone; it emerged from the strength of the group, where every child learned with and from one another.

As a practitioner, Arun's story reaffirmed how Cooperative Learning creates democratic spaces where children learn to value collaboration over competition.

SECTION C · STORY 03

03

A Second Chance: Kishan's Path of Learning and Leadership

When I first met Kishan at the Butterflies contact point in Okhla Mandi it was 2015, he was a quiet child carrying a loss far heavier than his age. His mother, Poonam, had lost her husband in 2014 in Asansol, West Bengal. With no financial or emotional support from extended family, she struggled to survive with her two children- Sandhya and Kishan. The family's fragile world collapsed almost overnight. Both children had dropped out from school.

Their journey to Delhi became a turning point. Kishan's aunt, whose children were already associated with the Butterflies programme, brought the family to the contact point. This was Kishan's first introduction to Butterflies in September 2015.

Kishan's story reflects how cooperative learning and child-participatory programmes can rebuild confidence and restore continuity in a child's life after crisis. When Kishan joined the contact point, he had already spent months away from education. Re-entering formal schooling in the middle of an academic session was difficult because the family lacked important documents like a transfer certificate etc. Through continuous follow-up, school visits, and academic support at the Butterflies contact point, the Program Officer worked closely with the family and the school to ensure Kishan and his sister- Sandhya's admission.

Kishan often recalls that period as the moment he received "a second chance" to study again. What stood out most in his journey was not only school admission, but the way cooperative learning changed his connection with education.

He slowly began participating in group learning processes where children studied together, exchanged notes, discussed lessons, and created quizzes among themselves. Learning became joyful and participatory rather than stressful and isolating.

Over time, Kishan evolved from being a quiet child to someone who actively engaged with others. Cooperative learning gave him a sense of belonging and ownership. Group study circles, pair activities, and shared problem-solving helped him build confidence, communication skills, and friendships. He frequently shared how studying with peers made difficult subjects easier to understand and made education "interesting and enjoyable."

Kishan became deeply involved in the child cooperatives and gradually emerged as a child leader. Among the different collectives, he connected strongly with the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC). Watching older Child Health Educators being respected within the community inspired him to take on similar responsibilities.

One of the most remarkable moments in his journey came during the child cooperative elections held after the COVID-19 restrictions eased. Despite being younger than many contestants, Kishan campaigned among smaller children in the community, convincing them that younger children also deserved representation in leadership spaces. Through his communication and collective mobilisation, he won the election and became a Child Health Educator.

This experience demonstrated how democratic participation within cooperatives helps children understand leadership, inclusion, representation, and accountability in practical ways. Kishan learned that leadership is not about age or power, but about listening, organising, and standing for others.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kishan's role as a child leader became even more meaningful. Using the information shared through health sessions, meetings, he spread awareness in the community about hygiene, use of masks, hand washing, and safety precautions.

He spoke with friends, neighbours, and younger children, helping them understand the seriousness of the pandemic through videos and discussions. The same child who once struggled to find direction had now become a source of guidance for others.

Kishan's growth was also visible through sports, arts, and cultural activities. Football became a space where he developed discipline, teamwork, and confidence, eventually becoming captain of the Okhla Blaster senior football team. Alongside sports, his artistic abilities flourished. Through exposure and encouragement at the centre, he participated in an inter-NGO drawing competition organised by HUDCO and won third prize. These opportunities helped him recognise that his passion for fine arts could become a future career pathway.

IN CONTEXT

Today, Kishan continues his education with determination and hope, currently he completed 12th grades with first division (64.3%) and plan for the higher education in bachelor's in fine arts from Delhi University.

Kishan's journey reinforces the importance of strengthening cooperative learning spaces where children learn together, support one another, and participate in decision-making processes. Going forward, continued mentoring, exposure opportunities, career guidance in fine arts, and leadership development can help Kishan further build on his strengths.

His story also reminds practitioners that when children are provided safe spaces, collective support, and opportunities to lead, they do not simply return to education—they begin to rebuild confidence, identity, and hope for the future.

SECTION C · STORY 04

04 The Power of Care: A girls Journey of Holistic development

The streets of Gandhi Camp in Sri Niwas Puri are filled with the sounds of sewing machines, vegetable carts, and the everyday struggle of migrant families trying to survive in the city. Among these crowded narrow roads once lived a shy young girl named Subhana, who rarely spoke in front of others and often hid behind her father whenever strangers approached. Few people could have imagined then that this quiet girl would one day travel to Germany, lead community action during the COVID-19 crisis, and eventually build a career for herself as a dialysis technician in a hospital.

IN CONTEXT

When Subhana first became associated with Butterflies at the Okhla Mandi contact point in 2015, she carried deep hesitation and self-doubt within her. Coming from a financially struggling family of seven children, opportunities were limited. Her father, a tailor who had migrated from Uttar Pradesh in search of better livelihood opportunities, worked tirelessly to support the family. Though her brothers could not continue their education, Subhana held onto her desire to study and move ahead in life. Recognizing her determination, her father encouraged her despite the family's financial hardships.

At that time, Subhana was struggling academically and lacked confidence, especially in language. She was searching for tuition support because private coaching was beyond the family's means. A friend introduced her to Butterflies, and from there her journey slowly began. In the beginning, she hardly interacted with anyone and avoided participating in activities. However, through cooperative learning sessions, she gradually started open-up.

Learning in groups with children of the same age created a space where she could express herself without fear. She began asking questions, discussing lessons with peers, and helping others during group study, reflected the group participation.

This collective learning process brought a change in her personality. Her confidence grew steadily, her academic performance improved, and she secured second position in the Butterflies semester examination. More importantly, she began believing in herself for the first time. The same girl who once avoided attention slowly started participating in events, discussions, and leadership activities.

Her journey with cooperation deepened when she joined CDK (Children's Development Khazana) and CHSC (Child Health and Sports Cooperative). Starting with small deposits, she developed financial discipline and understood the difference between needs and wants.

Another important chapter in her journey was becoming a Child Health Educator (CHE) in 2017. Though she had once dreamed of becoming a doctor, her role as a CHE allowed her to support children through health awareness and first aid services. After receiving training, she actively helped children who were injured or unwell and conducted awareness sessions on diseases and prevention. Children affectionately called her "Chota Doctor," a name that filled her with pride and purpose. She also takes an extra effort on the personal hygiene of the children of her contact point. Subhana selected as Buddy in 2019. During this period has become more sensitive and observant with the children. She understood the needs and took session with children. She also supports one of her friends, who was in need. Her friend was irregular at the contact point, she observed and talk with her also link the child with available options according to her need. She becomes the link between the child and the contact point.

Through these cooperatives, Subhana learned the importance of savings, health awareness, and collective responsibility. These lessons became especially meaningful during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic brought severe hardship to migrant families living around Okhla Mandi. Many people lost work overnight and struggled even for daily meals. During this difficult time, Subhana understood the pain and needs of her community, she shared her concern and decided to help their community. She stepped forward with courage and compassion. Along with her father, friends, Butterflies staff, community members and local leader, she spoke with families in the locality, identified those in urgent need, and collectively helped arrange free cooked food support provided by the Delhi Government for migrant workers and vulnerable families in community centre. Witnessing such suffering strengthened her belief in standing together during crises. The cooperative values she had learned-mutual help, solidarity, and collective action became visible through her actions.

Subhana learns this from Bal Sabha, is a democratic platform of children where children raised, discussed the issues affecting them and community. One major concern raised was the unsafe and overflowing drains in their community. Together with other children collectively, they helped draft applications, mobilized community members, and approached local authorities (MCD) demanding action. With continues follow-ups with the concern authorities, the drains were repaired and covered, it strengthened her confidence in the power of collective participation and children's leadership.

Her involvement with BBC (Butterflies Broadcasting Children) further transformed her communication skills. Through radio programmes like "Bacchon Ki Nazar," she learned public speaking, interviewing, and storytelling. She used her skills during the pandemic time and when everyone was locked in homes, she used this platform to spread awareness about the covid-19 vaccine. When people have fears/myths about the vaccine, Subhana and her friends took the step and prepare a radio program, to spread the awareness about the vaccine.

Today, Subhana serves as a dialysis technician in a hospital, caring for patients with dedication and empathy. Her journey reflects the power of cooperative learning, collective support, and child participation. From a shy girl hidden within the crowded lanes of a migrant settlement to a confident healthcare professional, her story stands as a powerful example of resilience and social transformation.

The cooperative values she learned continue to guide her future. She believes in helping others, standing together during difficult times, and creating opportunities for other children. She hopes to continue spreading awareness about education, health, savings, and collective responsibility so that more children can discover their own strength, just as she once did.

The cooperative values she learned continue to guide her future.

SECTION C · STORY 05

05 A story of holistic development of a girl child

Sonia first met the Butterflies programme through Mobile School "Chalo School Aaya" when she was very young. At that stage, she mostly participated in games and other activities. Later, in 2014 she started visiting the contact point inside the Okhla Sabzi Mandi area along with her friend-Nisha, despite the restrictions often placed on girls' mobility in the community and market area.

She comes from a family that migrated from Rajasthan in search of livelihood opportunities. She lives with her parents and siblings in Kalicharan Camp near Okhla Railway station. Like many girls in the community, her exposure to opportunities outside the household was limited. However, her family's connection with the Butterflies programmes slowly became an important turning point. Her elder sisters and younger brother had earlier been associated with the Butterflies programme.

Initially, studies were never her priority. She was never the one to sit quietly with books, her world was filled with laughter, games, and endless roaming with friends. A bubbly soul, full of life and mischief, she chose moments over marks. Yet behind that playful nature lived a heart full of care, whenever she saw a child in need, she never ignored them, instead, she brought them to the Butterflies Contact Point.

During interactions, Sonia often expressed that she had no clear dream or direction for her future. Like many children growing up in vulnerable conditions, she lacked guidance and motivation regarding education. She was always busy in playing and rooming with friends.

Over the years, we observed a gradual shift in her attitude towards learning. One major factor behind this change was her active participation in the cooperative learning process.

Through group-based learning, children collectively supported one another in understanding concepts and completing lessons. Instead of competing individually, the children learned to progress together. Sonia became part of a small peer learning group where every child had both a responsibility to learn and a responsibility to support others. If one child struggled to understand a topic, the group worked together until everyone was able to participate equally.

IN CONTEXT

The cooperative learning environment created a sense of belonging and emotional safety for Sonia. Since learning happened collectively, she no longer feared making mistakes or asking questions. As studies was not her priority, but she completed her schooling and senior secondary Class 12 board examinations with 67% marks.

Alongside academics, Sonia actively participated in sports, cultural programmes, and life skill sessions. Football, dance, and group performances became spaces where she could express herself freely and build confidence. Cooperative values were also reflected during sports and cultural activities where children learned teamwork, discipline, leadership, and collective decision-making. For many girls living in vulnerable situations, stepping outside to play football is not easy. Social restrictions, safety concerns, and lack of support often stop them from sports. But Sonia showed that courage by breaking those barriers. She not only came forward to play football herself but also inspired and encouraged her friends to join the team. Sonia especially enjoyed being part of the Okhla Blaster girls' football team, rather than focusing only on winning or losing.

Through life skill education sessions, she developed a better understanding of negotiation, decision-making, communication, empathy, and mutual respect. These learnings became visible in her daily interactions with family members and peers. She began handling disagreements more thoughtfully and developed the confidence to articulate her opinions respectfully.

One of the most significant changes we witnessed in Sonia was her growing leadership ability. Through her participation in Small Bal Sabha-a democratic platform of children where they raised their issues and collectively come up with the solution, she gradually overcame her fear of speaking in public. The democratic functioning of the Bal Sabha helped her understand participation, accountability, and collective problem-solving. She raised the issues which directly impacted the children and community. Once she raised the issue of broken roads and stagnant dirty water near her house, which affected the people living there. Sonia along with other children decided to plan collective action.

Meanwhile the area councillor visited the community regarding civic issues. Despite the presence of many adults, no one raised concerns about the broken roads and stagnant dirty water near the settlement, which was creating serious health and mobility challenges. Sonia gathered the courage to speak directly to the councillor and highlighted the difficulties faced by them. Though initially discouraged by her mother for speaking publicly, her action later encouraged other community members to collectively raise the issue with local authorities. Later a collective action was taken by the children and community members on this issue. This incident reflected a remarkable change in Sonia—to understand the needs and stands out for the community rights and collective welfare.

As practitioners, Sonia's journey reminds us that when girls are provided safe learning spaces, opportunities for collective participation, and consistent mentorship, they begin to imagine possibilities beyond their immediate circumstances. The cooperative approach not only strengthened Sonia's academic engagement but also nurtured values of solidarity, empathy, responsibility, and democratic participation. Currently, Sonia pursues her higher education and at the same time during part time job to support her education.

06

SECTION C · STORY 06

From Struggle to Strength

I met Sunakshi when she was 13, in Class 8. She lived in Sadar Bazar. Her father left their village at 16 — not by choice, but by burden. “Ghar ke jimmedariyon ke bojh se.” After months of struggle, he found work. He worked hard, earned respect, and after years of struggle, finally settled in Delhi. Sunakshi has three siblings and she is second in his family.

Sunakshi grew up in that shadow of migration. For 13 years in Delhi, she never stepped out. “Pehle main kahi ghumne nahi ja pati thi. Mujhe khel mein koi ruchi nahi thi.”. School was a place to go, not a place to grow. Like many children of migrant families, she carried silence, not dreams.

When Prachi Didi (previous child of Butterflies) told her about Butterflies, she thought it was “ek tuition jaisa”. But she realized it was different. “Yahan bahut saari activities ke saath sikhne ke aur bahut mauke bhi the.”

Her first breakthrough came on a 3-day trip, the first time she travelled. Then she had a chance to participate in sports-Football. “Us-mein ladkiyan khel rahi thi.” it was not usual for her and was surprized. As time goes Sunakshi join Sadar Bazar girl’s football team, in a few days, she was on the field. For the first time, she felt she belonged somewhere.

Cooperative Learning

Sunakshi is a part of cooperative learning group. In her group there is six children of class 8th. All different, some loved English, others Social Science. Some were fast, some needed time. She began studying in a group. “In sab ke saath-saath meri padhai mein bhi madad milne lagi,” she says. But it wasn’t smooth at first. Some children didn’t come on time. Some came only to play.

But it was not the end of the story, children itself solved their issues in small bal Sabha. Children discussed the problem and found their own solution. They decided they would come to the Contact Point in group and bring all the group's members together to the contact point, and made sure no child was denied playtime. They made rules. Slowly, change came.

When children with different abilities sat to learn together, magic happened. Reading didn't just become easier — "empathy grew". The child who was quick in English started helping her friend who doesn't like English. The boy who feared Mathematics found a buddy who explained it through games. Each child excels in something. And because they learn together, "no child feels weak". They support each other's studies, and the impact shows in their confidence and marks. Sunakshi says: "In sab ke saath-saath meri padhai mein bhi madad milne lagi." The girl who hated studies now studies in a group. The child who never went out now leads discussions. "padhai aasan ho jaati hai, balki ek dusre ke prati samajh aur sammaan bhi badhta hai." Today, they come on time-study together "aur saath mein padhai karte hain."

Sunakshi says about the group that the diversity of our group became not our weakness, but our strength. "Hamare group ki vividhata hamari kamzori nahi, hamari taakat bani." Group members quote that they are like different colours in one frame_ "hum 6 sadasya hain. Alag-alag rangon ke tarah. Shuru mein ghulne-milne mein samay laga. Lekin jab hum ek saath aaye, toh humein apne group ki taakat jaani."

Cooperative learning did not just improve marks. It gave Sunakshi and her friends the childhood and right way to learn together. "Ab hamara group sab ek dusre ka sahara hai."

And that support shows –in their confidence, in their laughter, and marks, “hamare number pe bhi iska asar dikhta hai.”

Cooperative learning taught them important of group strenght: No child is weak—they just need the right company and the right approach.

“Koi bhi baccha kamzor nahi hota - bas use sahi saath aur sahi taree-ka chahiye.”

Cooperative learning taught them important of group strenght: No child is weak—they just need the right company and the right approach.

SECTION C · STORY 07

07

Ayush Journey through "Cooperative"

In the narrow lanes of Okhla Mandi, where life moves between daily wage struggles and uncertain tomorrows, lives 11-year-old Ayush with his family in a small, rented room. The room, barely enough for six people, holds his dreams, fears, and quiet hopes. His father works as a welder, spending long hours in heat and sparks to earn a modest income, while his mother manages the household and stretching every rupee to ensure her children are fed. Ayush is the third among four siblings.

It was his elder sister-Riya who first brought him to the Butterflies Centre. At that time, Ayush was seven years old was extremely shy. He was an introvert child, barely spoke, avoided eye contact, and often hid behind his sister whenever someone tried to talk to him.

"I used to feel scared of people," Ayush recalls. "I thought if I spoke, I might say something wrong."

Ayush was introduced to cooperative learning—a method where children learn together in small groups, supporting and learning from each other. In the beginning, he struggled to participate.

"He would sit quietly, avoiding eye contact," Even answering a simple question felt difficult for him.

But cooperative learning created a safe and inclusive environment. Instead of being asked to speak alone, Ayush became part of a group where everyone contributed in small ways.

Through cooperative learning, Ayush began working in groups. He learned how to share ideas, listen to others, and participate actively. These sessions helped him overcome his hesitation and build trust among peers.

In group activities, Ayush was given simple roles—holding charts, sharing materials, or reading a line. These small responsibilities slowly built his confidence. Cooperative learning extended beyond discussions. In art and craft activities, Ayush worked with peers to create projects. He began sharing ideas and appreciating others' work.

"When I draw, I feel happy," Ayaan says with a smile.

The first breakthrough came through storytelling sessions. We used to have story telling session at every contact point, it is part of the academics. Through storytelling sessions within these groups, Ayush found his voice. Narrating stories together made him feel less judged and more supported. He likes to read story books, listening to stories and gradually participating in them allowed Ayush to express himself without fear.

"When we tell stories together, it feels like we are helping each other," Ayaan says. "I am not scared anymore."

As time goes Ayush participated in other programs too. He joined the junior Okhla blaster team, Football became another important space for cooperative learning. Playing in a team taught him coordination, communication, and trust. On the field, he found energy, teamwork, and confidence. He started communicating more, cheering for his teammates, and even guiding younger children.

"Football taught me that losing is okay, but not trying is not," he says.

Over time, Ayush transformed from a silent observer into an active participant. He now contributes ideas, asks questions, and even supports other children who are shy.

"Now I like working in groups," Ayush says with a smile. "We learn faster when we help each other."

Despite financial struggles, Ayush dreams big. He wants to continue his education and become someone who can support his family.

"I want to study and make my parents proud," he says.

Ayush's journey shows that learning is not just about books—it is about connection, participation, and encouragement. Cooperative learning did not just teach him skills; it gave him confidence, a sense of belonging, and the courage to grow.

"

I thought if I spoke, I might say something wrong.

SECTION C · STORY 08

08 Muskan's Journey Back to Education

Muskan, 12-year-old living Gandhi Camp an unsettle arrangement near Okhla Mandi with her parents and three siblings. Her father worked as a porter in the mandi, while her mother collected leftover vegetables. Muskan, along with her siblings, spent her days doing the same.

Though she had once been enrolled in school, her responsibilities at home, caring for younger siblings and supporting her mother, made regular attendance impossible. Over time, she drifted away from education, even though her desire to learn never faded.

The family had migrated from Chandanbara, Bihar, hoping for a better life. But the pandemic in 2020 forced them back into deeper hardship. With no access to digital learning, Muskan dropped out completely. When they returned to Delhi, attempts to re-enrol her in formal school failed due to the learning gap and age mismatch. For Muskan, school began to feel like a closed chapter.

Yet every morning, as she watched other children walk past her lane in neat uniforms, something stirred within her-a quiet but persistent longing.

"I thought I would never go back to school," she once said.

A New Beginning through NIOS and Cooperative Learning

IN CONTEXT

In 2023, during an outreach visit, Muskan was identified while working in the Okhla Mandi. Conversations with her and her parents revealed not just her situation, but also her strong willingness to study again. She was encouraged to join the contact point, and while her younger siblings were enrolled in formal school, Muskan was given a second chance through the NIOS Open Basic Education (OBE) program.

Muskan was hesitant, quiet, and deeply conscious of her learning gaps. She had forgotten basic reading and writing, and sitting among other learners made her feel uncomfortable. But what changed her journey was not just the curriculum, it was the cooperative learning environment.

Instead of studying alone, Muskan became part of a group where children learned together. They shared stories, solved problems collectively, supported each other, and celebrated small achievements. Learning was no longer a test of individual ability-it became a shared experience.

Slowly, the silence faded. Muskan began to speak, participate, and engage.

"Jab maine phir se likhna shuru kiya, mujhe bahut accha laga… mandi mein reh kar ye sab aasan nahi tha."

With consistent support and collective learning, Muskan successfully completed Level A (Grade 3 equivalent) under NIOS. Today, she appeared in Level B (Grade 5 equivalent).

She now attends classes regularly, no longer works in the mandi. She takes care of her siblings and motivates them. Most importantly, she sees herself as a learner again—not a dropout.

Muskan's journey highlights how cooperative learning can bridge not just academic gaps, but emotional barriers as well.

For children like her, who carry the weight of work, responsibility, and lost opportunities, learning in isolation can be intimidating. But learning together creates belonging, confidence, and motivation.

Today, Muskan dreams of becoming a teacher. "So that no child has to leave school to work like I did."

Her journey shows that when children learn together, they grow together—and second chances truly become possible.

> *"I thought I would never go back to school.*

Personal Experiences of Facilitators

This section brings together personal experiences of facilitators and staff, reflecting how working with children through Butterflies' programmes is also a process of learning for adults. The narratives show facilitators building trust with children and families, understanding community realities, and witnessing how cooperative learning, CDK, CHSC, Bal Sabha, storytelling, sports, and community visits create meaningful change. Staff reflections highlight the importance of patience, respect, listening, and relationship-building in social work practice. They also show how children's leadership, confidence, responsibility, and collective action inspire facilitators to see children as active partners rather than passive beneficiaries. These experiences underline the mutual nature of transformation—children grow through support, and adults grow by learning from children's courage, ideas, and participation.

D

01

SECTION D · STORY 01

Yogita Arora

ROLE

Programme Officer, Education

I started my journey with Butterflies on 01st July 2025 and was designated as a Programme Officer (Education) at Okhla Mandi contact point of Butterflies.

As a Programme Officer, I observed how cooperative learning has become an effective and engaging approach for children at our contact point. This method encourages children to study together in groups, where they support each other, share responsibilities, and learn with collaboration. I found that this approach not only made studies easier for children but also increased their interest and confidence in learning.

During my observation of Class 8 children, I saw them sitting in groups of six and studying together by dividing topics into smaller parts. Through this process, the children were able to understand their lessons more clearly, and the concepts retention level was higher. I observed that whenever any child faced difficulty in understanding a topic, the other group members immediately helped them to solve it, also if any child was lagging behind in a subject, any one member would take it upon himself/herself the responsibility to sit with the member regularly and help the individual to understand the concepts. The children liked to share their knowledge as they believed that their learning will be enhanced and members in their cooperative learning group would improve their learning levels. This spirit of teamwork improved the learning of the entire group because the children were not only studying for themselves but also for ensuring everyone improved in their academic studies.

IN CONTEXT

I also observed a positive impact of cooperative learning on their academic performance. One of the girls in the group, scored 69.3% last year, but after regularly participating in cooperative learning activities, she achieved 79.5% this year. This was a remarkable improvement for her. Other children also showed gradual improvement in their academic results and participation.

Another encouraging observation was the sense of responsibility children developed towards one another. Since the group members knew each other well, they would check whether everyone was present at the contact point. If someone was absent, they visited the child's home the next day to find out the reason. This reflected their active engagement, teamwork, and seriousness towards studies. One day a child did not come to the contact point for 3 consecutive days due to fever, members got to know through visiting her home, when she came next day, the other members of the group shared the written notes of the lessons they had studied during her absence and also in explaining to her in Hindi as it provides the clarity of the content to her.

During the Bal Sabha, I experienced a very inspiring moment when the children confidently raised the issue of garbage strewn all over the neighbourhood. They explained how the foul smell from the garbage was affecting the health of all community members. The children discussed the problem and collectively thought of possible solutions. Together, they decided to write an application to the MCD and collect signatures from their parents to strengthen their appeal. I observed that the children worked together on both identifying the issue and resolving it because Bal Sabha is their own platform. This process encouraged their democratic participation, collective decision-making, and sense of responsibility towards their community.

Every Thursday, we conduct storytelling sessions at our contact point in Okhla Mandi for children from Classes 3 to 5. During these sessions, children sit together in a circle and first discuss the story read in the previous week before moving on to a new story.

The stories mainly focus on values such as honesty, kindness, emotional understanding, and decision-making skills. Through storytelling, I noticed a significant increase in children's regular attendance and participation. They became excited to know the title of the new story and eagerly waited for their turn to read aloud. Storytelling also helped children improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, listening skills, reading habits, and writing abilities. I felt especially happy when children started expressing their emotions openly during discussions. For example, during a story on anger management, many children shared situations in which they felt angry and expressed their feelings confidently. This activity helped me connect more closely with the children.

I also noticed that children support each other during storytelling sessions. If any child struggled to pronounce a word, another child would immediately help her/him. This showed that learning was becoming a shared and supportive process. Through this process, I realized that learning was happening mutually — not only were children learning from us, but we were also learning from them.

One memorable experience was when I planned to conduct a story telling based on honesty, but upon reaching the contact point, I discovered that the children had already collectively decided to read a story on the importance of trees. I appreciated their initiative and continued with the story they had chosen, keeping my planned story for another day. This reflected the children's growing confidence, participation, and ownership in the learning process.

During community visits, parents also shared positive feedback about the changes they observed in their children. They mentioned that children were now eager to attend the contact point regularly and often discussed the day's activities at home with excitement. Parents also shared that children had started studying at home to complete the tasks assigned during cooperative learning activities. Seeing this positive change made the parents happy and motivated them to support their children's education further.

They shared that children learned how to help others, they came back from contact point and helped us in our work, they bring vegetables and other things from the market. When there is shortage of water at home they help to bring water from the common supply unit in the community.

One of our key focus areas is to promote a gender-neutral society. This learning approach helps nurture these values among children, especially boys, by encouraging them to take responsibility and participate actively in household chores.

One of our key focus areas is to promote a gender-neutral society.

02

SECTION D · STORY 02

Rohtash Sisodia

ROLE

Programme Officer, Education

I am a Programme Officer (Education) with Butterflies. I have been working here for more than a year. Before joining this organization, I worked in an institution where children studying in one grade level were taught through a traditional classroom system. In that setting, a teacher only had to focus on one group of learners at a similar level, which made the teaching process relatively straightforward.

However, working with multi-grade children at the Chandni Chowk and Jama Masjid areas was a completely new experience for me. Here, children of different ages, grades, and learning levels come together. Initially, I found it challenging to understand how to effectively teach all of them at the same time. During this period, I learned about Cooperative Learning. My senior colleagues explained that this approach could help engage and teach multi-grade children more effectively.

I then participated in a workshop on Cooperative Learning, where I had the opportunity to understand the approach in a practical way. It was a new and inspiring experience for me. During the workshop, I observed how children learn and teach one another while working in groups. They asked questions, explained difficult concepts to each other, and progressed through mutual support and collaboration. Children who were initially hesitant to speak in groups gradually began to participate more openly. As a result, their confidence increased, their active participation improved, and the learning environment became more engaging and effective.

At my Chandni Chowk learning point, I realized that Cooperative Learning is not limited to academics; it also plays an important role in the social, emotional, and moral development of children.

I have observed positive changes in the behaviour of children who have been associated with Butterflies for a longer period. They respect elders and help younger children. Whenever they feel that a child at the contact point is facing a problem, they talk to him/her and are always ready to offer support. They help one another with studies as well. If a child stops attending the contact point, they visit the child's home to find out the reason and encourage them to attend regularly. They also bring younger children to the contact point and ensure that they return home safely.

When new children join Butterflies, gradual positive changes can also be seen in their behaviour and attitudes. As children work together in groups, they develop a sense of helping and supporting one another. Initially, some children focused only on completing their school homework, but over time they began helping their peers understand concepts and solve problems. This improved their communication skills, behaviour, and relationships with others, while also teaching them to respect elders.

I have also observed that Cooperative Learning helps develop teamwork, patience, and a sense of responsibility among children. Even slow learners gain confidence because they receive continuous support from their peers. Through this process, children learn to listen carefully with one another, show respect, and solve problems collaboratively.

Today, the atmosphere at the contact point is much more friendly, active, and cooperative than before. Instead of competition, children have developed a spirit of collaboration and participation. Overall, Cooperative Learning has fostered positive attitudes among children and strengthened their social skills, cooperation, leadership abilities, empathy and most importantly to learn collectively, support each member of the Learning Cooperative Group to improve their learning levels. This experience has been enriching and inspiring for me not only as an educator but also as a learner.

The best example of this transformation can be seen in Ashutosh, a student of Grade 8.

Ashutosh was a very quiet and shy child. He often sat alone, rarely spoke to others, and avoided group activities. Even when teachers asked him questions, he would remain silent despite knowing the answers. He believed that he could study on his own and did not need to be part of a group. He also preferred not to sit and study with girls. Whenever he was encouraged to join a group, he would say, “Bhaiya, I can do it by myself.”

As a result, his academic performance in Grade 8 during 2025 was not satisfactory, and he had to repeat the same grade. This deeply affected him, and he became even more withdrawn. However, all the children at the learning point encouraged and supported him. They helped him understand that failure is not the end but an opportunity to work harder and improve. They motivated him by saying, “Work hard and show everyone that you can pass with good marks.”

Ashutosh was particularly afraid of Mathematics. Around the same time, Gungun, a younger girl who was academically strong, joined his class. She said, “Bhaiya, I want to help Ashutosh.” Through Cooperative Learning, she began studying with him and supporting him in his learning journey.

Gradually, Ashutosh started engaging with the group. The child who once avoided interaction with others began sitting with his peers and solving problems together. With the support of Gungun and other children, his academic performance improved significantly. His fear of Mathematics gradually diminished. After some time, he not only performed better in his studies but also successfully passed the grade with good marks.

Along with his academic improvement, there was a remarkable change in his behaviour. His confidence grew steadily.

He began helping his mother make flower garlands at home and started supporting younger children in their studies at the contact point. The child who once preferred isolation became an active and valued member of the group.

Today, Ashutosh is no longer the quiet and withdrawn child he used to be. He actively participates in discussions, expresses his ideas confidently, and helps his friends. He listens carefully to others, takes responsibility for his tasks, and believes in moving forward through cooperation and collective effort.

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Work hard and show everyone that you can pass with good marks.

03

SECTION D · STORY 03

Balmukund Singh

ROLE

Programme Officer, Education

It has been nine months since I became associated with Butterflies. During this time, I have learned and understood a great deal, gaining experiences that will always remain close to my heart. Initially, I was a bit nervous because this was my first experience with fieldwork. I was not sure how I would work with the children and the community, but gradually, this place became like a family to me.

My most memorable training took place at Jama Masjid and Chandni Chowk. I had the opportunity to observe the old lanes, the crowds, and the lives of the people there up close. During this time, we had the chance to work with and learn from my colleague Rohtash Bhaiya.

Seeing the children and the people at Jama Masjid made me realize that they are the ones facing true struggles; they live their lives masking every pain with happiness and move forward, treating every situation as if it were a dream. From them, I learned that one should never back down from a struggle but should keep moving forward while staying happy.

Now, let's move to Chandni Chowk to meet the people and children there. We saw families of all sizes—children working, children returning from school with smiles, and parents coming home from work, masking their own pain to find happiness in their children. Whenever we met them, it felt as though there was a unique story behind every hardship; some were battling their own struggles, others were struggling for their families, and some were striving for the sake of future generations.

After this, I had the opportunity to attend the BIW Camp. There, I witnessed many people working hard to sustain their lives despite difficult circumstances.

Spending time with the children made me realize that they needed not only education but also love, a sense of belonging, and encouragement. Playing with the children, listening to them, and seeing them happy became one of my most cherished experiences.

Now, let us move to Sarai Kale Khan, where I have been working with children for the past five months. Here, I witnessed and understood people's struggles and hard work up close. Life involves a constant struggle—whether it is about education, family, or illness. Large families live in tiny rooms. Electricity is intermittent; sometimes it is available, sometimes not. Filthy drains flow outside the rooms, spreading disease, and there is someone sick in almost every household.

When I taught the children, some would be sad while others were happy. When I asked the sad ones why they were upset, some would say, "Bhaiya, Mom is sick," while others would say, "Bhaiya, my brother has gone to the hospital; we have no money, Dad has stopped working, and we have had to borrow money from an acquaintance in the village." That was when I realized that whether rich or poor, everyone goes through some form of struggle in life. At 'Butterflies,' I learned to treat every family and child equally and to view everyone as part of my own family. I learned that one should never abandon their own people during times of joy or sorrow.

My dream for the future is to complete my education and become someone who can contribute positively to society. I want to continue working with children and those in need, bringing happiness to their lives and helping them fulfil their dreams. My time at 'Butterflies' will remain one of the most beautiful journeys of my life; here, I learn not just how to work, but how to connect with people, understand their joys and sorrows, empathize with their emotions, and truly grasp the meaning of humanity.

When we first visited the Sarai Kale Khan night outreach site, we met the local people. Some of my colleagues accompanied me. Everything was new to me—the place, the experience, and the people.

Initially, there were some challenges because people harboured various rumours and questions about who we were and where we had come from; consequently, it took some time to earn their trust.

As we continued our community visits and interacted more with the residents, we realized that the people there were good-natured and genuinely interested in their children's education. There was a sense of excitement among them about the upcoming launch of the 'point' (centre) in their area. We went door-to-door to explain the organization's work. Gradually, the community's trust in the organization grew, and they began sending their children to us.

That was when we saw the fruits of our hard work and the efforts of our team. One day, I organized a 'Bal Sabha' (children's assembly); the children were unfamiliar with the concept, and the term itself was entirely new to them. I explained what a Bal Sabha is and what activities take place during it. As we explained, the children became happy and really enjoyed the idea. In the end, they said, "Bhaiya, we really loved it." We gained a lot of insight from this. Then, the children said, "Bhaiya, from now on, we will all do this together." One day, while the children were sitting in a group studying, I asked them, "Do you save money?" When they asked, "Why, Bhaiya?" I asked if they put aside some money in a box; some said they did, while others admitted they just spent it. I suggested they save with Children's development Khazana (CDK)—specifically in the 'Bal Vikas Khazana' (Child Development Treasure), which teaches children financial management, a life skills education programme. The children manage themselves the CDK (handling both deposits and withdrawals), and the money is put in a savings account in a nationalised bank which earns them an interest. The children were delighted and asked if they could deposit money right away. Some were initially apprehensive—worried that I might run off with their money—but after I explained the process, they were reassured and began depositing their savings.

As the weeks went by, Ashish, my colleague (who is the Programme Officer of CDK) and I gathered the children one day and explained CDK and its benefits in detail.

The children were delighted; they felt that 'Bhaiya' (big brother/mentor) had dispelled all their doubts and provided them with complete information about CDK. Children who attend regular school but are not part of Butterflies programme showed interest, and asked me, "Bhaiya, can we join CDK too? We will come to study whenever we find the time."

Regarding sports—when we first started our activities, many children were afraid to join. Those who were already coming to me for studies and play would tell others, "Bhaiya teaches us, plays games with us, and even takes us out for outings." Hearing this, the children who were initially reluctant began to feel a desire to join as well.

A few days later, those children approached me themselves and asked, "Bhaiya, can we come to study too?" I told them they certainly could. Then they asked, "Can we play football as well?" I assured them they could play football or any other game.

Initially, some children and their parents were hesitant, but gradually, trust began to grow. They became convinced that the children were indeed being taught and engaged in play. Whenever the children were taken out to play, they were also dropped back home afterwards; this further strengthened the parents' trust.

Gradually, other children and their parents also started sending their kids for studies. Today, 48 children are regularly participating in the program.

As a result, the trust of the children and their parents steadily grew, and more children began taking part in both educational and sports activities.

SECTION D · STORY 04

04 My Learning Journey with Butterflies

NARRATED BY
Sonam

My name is Sonam, and on 10th April 2022, I began a new and meaningful journey by joining Butterflies. Before this, I had worked in the field of education through programs such as Adult Literacy and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). These experiences helped me develop important skills and provided valuable learning opportunities. However, my primary reason for joining Butterflies was the belief that it would offer me a unique space to learn, grow, and contribute to the development of children while enhancing my own professional and personal growth.

I still remember my first day at the Hathi Park Contact Point in Chandni Chowk. Everything about the place was new to me. The area is located in a busy market hub where many children live in small, congested rented rooms tucked away in narrow lanes. Most families face challenges such as poor sanitation, inadequate waste disposal systems, and limited access to basic resources. In many households, parents work as daily wage labourers or in informal jobs to support their families.

Despite these challenges, children love coming to the Hathi Park Contact Point. It is a place where they can express themselves freely, play, share their thoughts, and seek guidance from the Bhaiya and Didi. It provides them with a sense of belonging and acceptance. Perhaps that is why they are always willing to travel long distances to participate in its activities.

When I was introduced to the children, I was amazed by the confidence with which they spoke about their leadership roles, responsibilities, and contributions. Seeing such young children demonstrate confidence, responsibility, and an understanding of democratic values left a strong impression on me.

At that moment, I realized that I was entering a space where I would learn as much from the children as they would learn from me.

As I spent more time with the children and their families, I gained a deeper understanding of their living conditions, challenges, and aspirations. This helped me appreciate the significance of the cooperative values promoted by Butterflies. Through various workshops and training sessions, I learned about the organization's programs and began working closely with children to support their development.

One of the programs that particularly stood out to me was CDK (Children's Development Khazana). When I joined Hathi Park Contact Point, all children were registered with CDK, but they were not actively participating. During informal conversations, many children shared their concerns. They were not sure and wondered whether children could responsibly manage savings.

I spent time discussing these concerns with them and explaining the purpose of CDK. I helped them understand that CDK is not merely a place to deposit money but a tool for developing savings habits and financial responsibility. Children also learned to distinguish between "needs" and "wants," enabling them to make thoughtful financial decisions and become less dependent on their parents for small expenses.

Gradually, the children began trusting both me and the CDK system. They started contributing regularly to their savings. Children such as Vidyasagar, Vandana, Sakshi, Lakshmi, and Bharti developed strong saving habits. Their savings later proved extremely useful for school admissions, travel to their villages, purchasing stationery, and meeting other essential needs.

Through this experience, children realized that CDK is much more than a savings scheme. It is a platform that nurtures responsibility, confidence, financial literacy, and self-reliance.

The Child Health Sports Education (CHSE) program has also had a significant impact on children's lives. Through CHSE, children have developed an understanding of personal hygiene, health practices, and first aid. Life Skills sessions have helped them become more aware of disease prevention and healthy habits, knowledge that they often share with their families and communities.

I vividly remember an incident when a child fell while playing and sustained a head injury. There was bleeding, and the situation could have become serious. A Child Health Educator (CHE) immediately provided first aid and supported the child to visit a doctor. Later, the doctor confirmed that timely first aid was crucial in preventing further complications. When the child learned that the CHE had gained this knowledge through Butterflies' training, he was deeply impressed and expressed his desire to become part of the organization as well. This incident clearly demonstrated the practical value of the skills children learn through the program.

Another powerful initiative is Cooperative Learning. This approach encourages children to learn together, share knowledge, and support one another academically. It's not only improving educational outcomes but also fosters teamwork, empathy, and collective growth.

One example is Sakshi, who had previously dropped out of school and showed little interest in her studies. Through Cooperative Learning, her peer Lakshmi supported and encouraged her. Over time, Sakshi's confidence and academic performance improved significantly. Today, she confidently states that she wants to excel in her class and work toward achieving top results. Her progress reflects the transformative power of peer support and collaborative learning.

I have witnessed many such positive changes among children. They are not only advancing in their own lives but are also helping their peers move forward. This spirit of collective growth is one of the most inspiring aspects of Butterflies' work.

Another important platform is the Bal Sabha (Children's Council). This monthly gathering provides every child with an opportunity to participate, express opinions, and contribute to decision-making processes. Children take on different roles such as Convenor, Secretary, and Timekeeper, allowing them to develop leadership, communication, and organizational skills.

Through regular participation in Bal Sabha, many children have overcome shyness, hesitation, and fear of speaking in public. Gradually, they learn to present their ideas confidently and engage in collective problem-solving. These experiences equip them with valuable life skills that will benefit them in the future as active and responsible members of society.

As I look back on my journey with Butterflies, I realize that the organization has not only transformed the lives of children but has also profoundly influenced my own life. Working here has deepened my understanding of democracy, cooperation, leadership, responsibility, and social change.

Butterflies have taught me that real development happens when children are trusted, empowered, and given opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives. It has strengthened my belief in the potential of every child and inspired me to continue contributing toward creating a more inclusive, participatory, and child-friendly society.

For me, Butterflies is not just an organization, it is a place of learning, growth, and transformation that continues to shape both the children it serves and the people who work alongside them.

Working here has deepened my understanding of democracy, cooperation, leadership, responsibility, and social change.

05

SECTION D · STORY 05

Mukesh Kaji

ROLE

Programme Officer, Mental Health

My name is Mukesh Kaji, and I work with Butterflies as a Programme Officer in Mental Health and Wellness. It has been around seven months since I joined the organisation and these months have been full of learning, experiences, challenges, and many meaningful moments.

I completed my Master of Social Work (MSW) from the Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi. Soon after finishing my studies, I got the opportunity to work with Butterflies. I consider this one of the most meaningful experiences of my professional journey.

When I first joined Butterflies, my role included conducting group work sessions with children, doing social case work, facilitating Child Social Protection Committee (CSPC) meetings, helping children understand their rights, ensuring their safety and well-being, conducting life skills sessions in schools and providing support to families whenever needed. However, before doing all of this, I realised that the most important thing was to get to know the children and the communities we work with. In the beginning, my responsibility was to visit all the Butterflies contact points. I spent time meeting children, observing, listening and building relationships with them. Sometimes, I also met their parents, community members, and other people connected with them. Slowly, I understood that meaningful work cannot happen unless people trust you.

If we want to work with children or support communities, we cannot walk in with solutions before understanding their realities. We need to sit with people, listen to their stories, understand their experiences and earn their trust. Only then we can make decisions that truly meet their needs. We often talk about bringing change at a larger level, but I believe real change starts at the grassroots. If we work well at the community level, we can make better decisions at every stage.

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We don’t want our children to go through what we have gone through. We want them to study, build a better future, and have opportunities that we never had.

So, I began by visiting every contact point and spending time with the children. I tried to understand what they were going through. Was any child feeling lonely or left out? Was someone finding it difficult to express their feelings? Were they dealing with anxiety, stress, fear, or other emotional challenges? Understanding these experiences became just as important as finding ways to support them.

One of the first things that touched me deeply was the way the children greeted us. Every time I entered a contact point, I would hear, “Namaste Bhaiya” or “Namaste Didi.” The warmth in their voices and the ease with which they shared their thoughts were truly heartwarming. They spoke to us not as outsiders, but as trusted elder brothers and sisters.

Of course, the journey was not always easy. Building trust took time. Understanding children’s concerns deeply and finding the best ways to support them was sometimes challenging. But I learned that patience, kindness and consistency go a long way. Every challenge teaches us something and every problem gives us an opportunity to learn. As I interacted more with children and their families, I realised that many of them had moved from different states in search of better opportunities. They often lived in difficult conditions, with limited access to basic facilities, and many families had faced poverty for generations. Yet despite these hardships, parents carried the same hope in their hearts: “We don’t want our children to go through what we have gone through. We want them to study, build a better future, and have opportunities that we never had.”

I also realised how intelligent, capable, and ambitious these children are. They want to learn, play, dream, and build meaningful lives. They have ideas, opinions, and the ability to make choices. But sometimes, circumstances beyond their control force them to grow up too quickly and take on responsibilities that no child should have to carry alone. This is where I feel Butterflies play such an important role. It provides children with a safe space where they can express themselves freely, feel heard, understand themselves better, recognise their strengths, build confidence, and grow in every way.

It supports them in becoming emotionally stronger and making informed choices about their future.

I also had the chance to understand the different programmes at Butterflies, whether it was Cooperative Learning, CDK, Mental Health and Wellness, Sports, or Children's Media. One initiative that especially inspired me was the children's budgeting, priortising needs and savings cooperative programme. Children save small amounts sometimes just five or ten rupees- for future needs. They use these savings for school fees, stationery, books, medical expenses, and sometimes even to support their families during difficult times. Through this, they learn responsibility, planning, setting their priorities and becoming more independent.

Another memorable experience was taking part in the Night Outreach Programme. Since many parents leave for work early in the morning and return late at night, we often miss the chance to meet them during regular sessions. Night outreach allowed us to sit with parents, understand their concerns, and talk about the importance of spending time with their children. We often shared with them that parenting is not only about providing for children's physical needs. Children also need someone who listens to them, understands them, guides them and reassures them. Childhood and adolescence are important stages of development. Children are learning who they are, understanding their emotions, and trying to make sense of the world around them. They can also be influenced easily during this period. A caring conversation, emotional support, and a little time from parents can make a tremendous difference in a child's life.

These seven months at Butterflies have taught me that change does not always come through big actions. Sometimes, it begins with listening, being present, showing care, and building trust. Every child deserves to be heard, valued, protected, and given the opportunity to reach their full potential. I feel grateful to be a part of this journey and look forward to continuing to learn, grow, and walk alongside the children and communities we serve.

06

SECTION D · STORY 06

Manoj Kandpal

ROLE

Programme Officer, Education

I have been working with Butterflies for the past 12 years at various Contact Points, including Hathi Park, Okhla Mandi, Kashmere Gate, Nizamuddin Dargah, Chandni Chowk, Khanna Market, BSCC, and currently at the Sadar Bazar Contact Point in north Delhi district. Along with teaching children, I have also continued my learning. While working with children at different Contact Points, I have gained many valuable experiences. By this, I mean that I have witnessed significant improvements in children's education and overall development. Today, I would like to share my experience with Cooperative Learning.

At its core, cooperative learning is based on the principle that students learn more effectively when they work together in a collaborative and supportive environment. It focuses on shared goals, positive interdependence, individual accountability, and active participation of all learners. In this approach, students engage in group activities, help one another, and complete tasks collectively, which enhances their understanding and improves their learning outcomes. Cooperative learning is highly effective in the teaching-learning process as it not only strengthens academic knowledge but also develops essential skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. It also builds important values like empathy, responsibility, and respect for others. The spirit of cooperation is not limited to the classroom; it extends to students' daily lives as well, where they learn to support their parents in household activities such as cooking, cleaning, and other family responsibilities. In this way, cooperative learning creates an inclusive and meaningful learning environment that engages students both in school and at home, preparing them for real-life situations.

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Bhaiya, today we will memorize five questions together and then play.

IN CONTEXT

Cooperative Learning has been part of Butterflies Contact Points for many years. Children from Grades 3 to 12, between the ages of 8 and 18, come together here to learn. Children of different grades and learning levels study in the same open space, group-based cooperative learning has always been a practical and effective approach.

Every year, the organization conducts workshops on Cooperative Learning. During these workshops, both facilitators and children learn about its principles, importance, and practical application. These are refresher trainings to help us go through the principles, review and discuss the learnings and if there are any challenges. This helps us to strengthen cooperative learning approach in conducting our education classes, it is an integral part of educational activities at all Contact Points. Today, children have become highly knowledgeable in applying this methodology while studying in their cooperative groups.

IN CONTEXT

For the past two years, I have been teaching at Sadar Bazar Contact Point. When I first arrived there, my biggest challenge was making the Contact Point suitable for children to sit, study, and play. We had to first get the area cleaned, and a proper sitting space was created, and the ground was made usable. At that time, only 24 children attended the Contact Point for learning. One major reason was that the Contact Point had remained closed for six months, as the previous Programme Officer had moved on from Butterflies. When I resumed our work at the contact point, I found some children had forgotten about Cooperative Learning. They would come, solve one or two mathematics questions, and then start playing.

A few months later, another Cooperative Learning workshop was organized, with 20 children from Sadar Bazar participating. After the workshop, the children began studying regularly in groups and following the principles of Cooperative Learning. For the approach to work smoothly, it was important that the children understood and believed in the concept. To support this, we introduced a daily 10-minute discussion on Cooperative Learning at the Contact Point, which continued for nearly three months.

As a result, children began forming study groups according to their grades and learning levels. This made it easier for me to provide additional support to weaker students. Cooperative Learning significantly improved the academic performance of children. Even shy children who rarely interacted with others became active participants in group learning. One child who was very shy got the confidence to speak in the circle of speakers (a teaching-learning process of cooperative learning) in her cooperative group.

One example is Dinanath, a student of Class 8 at L.N Girdhari School. He rarely spoke to other children and would leave for home immediately after study sessions while others stayed back to play. I placed him in a group of ninth grade students. Gradually, his studies improved, he made friends and today he actively plays football and cricket with other children.

Another positive example is Gayatri Devi, a parent whose five children are connected with our Contact Point. Earlier, two of her children, Himanshu in grade 9 and Sonakshi in grade 8—were enrolled with Butterflies but did not attend regularly. However, after seeing children learn together in groups, she recognized the value of the Contact Point and began sending her children regularly. She also shared information about Butterflies with other parents and helped connect seven new children to the Contact Point.

Due to the positive learning environment created through Cooperative Learning, I no longer need to visit homes personally to invite parents for stakeholder meetings. Now children and parents play active role in motivating children proactively to join the cooperative learning groups.

IN CONTEXT

Cooperative Learning has also contributed to significant academic improvement. For example, Divyansh, a grade 8 student, passed with 79% marks, whereas he had previously scored around 61% in examinations. Nitin, Golu, Gauri, Daya Shankar, these five children used to only pass in their school examination but now they have started passing in first division by scoring 80 to 95% marks.

At the Sadar Bazar Contact Point, Cooperative Learning has become such an important part of daily life that children and I often negotiate between study time and playtime. We currently have four study groups consisting of students from grades 6 to 10. Each group has a leader, who are Himanshu, Nitin, Udit, and Ashu. These leaders communicate the group's plans to me. Sometimes they say, "Bhaiya, today we will memorize five questions together and then play." I may respond that they should complete ten questions. This often leads to lively discussions before we finally agree on five or six questions.

The most encouraging aspect is that children help one another whenever someone struggles with a question. Himanshu and Daya Shankar are particularly active in supporting the members of their group. He completes his own work quickly so that he can help other children learn and remember the answers.

Beyond academics, Cooperative Learning has encouraged collective action and responsibility. The children organized a cleanliness campaign at Contact Point. Twenty-five children from four study groups worked together to address one of the biggest problems at the center—large potholes in the ground that posed a risk of injury during play. They collectively arranged to have these potholes filled, evening the ground making the space safer for everyone.

IN CONTEXT

The impact of Cooperative Learning is also reflected in educational outcomes. The annual result of children at the Sadar Bazar Contact Point reached 98.7%, compared to 87.9% in 2025. Moreover, children attended the Contact Point consistently throughout the year. I can confidently say that around 90% of the children now attend regularly for studies and life skills education.

My experience has shown that Cooperative Learning not only improves academic performance but also develops confidence, teamwork, leadership, responsibility, and a sense of community among children. It has transformed the learning environment at the Sadar Bazar Contact Point and continues to play a vital role in the growth and development of children.Top of Form

SECTION D · STORY 07

07 Child Health and Sports Cooperative – A Buddy's Narrative

NARRATED BY
Aleena Mariam Babu

I am a senior programme officer working in the Mental Health Wellness portfolio of Butterflies for the past one year.

Buddies are part of the Child Health and Sports Cooperative; they are child leaders trained in basic knowledge and skills in communication and empathy, to observe, identify and reach out to a child or their peer in times of distress and harmful behaviors. I work with Buddies who identify children who are facing difficulties or problems in contact points of Butterflies.

Buddies report distress identified in children and peers from their observations to the medical and psychiatric social worker (social case worker)/programme officer who then supports the individual child with therapeutic intervention based on social diagnosis of the existing problems that the child or peer is experiencing.

As an illustration of the important role a Buddy plays in supporting a child or peer in distress, I would like to share the case of Rohit identified by Buddy Mika.

Buddy Mika from the contact point in the North part of Delhi observed that Rohit, aged 13, a peer from his community, who was part of the Butterflies Programme was missing classes for a long period of time from both his school and contact point and was found smoking and using tobacco products when he was with the seniors of his school. He seemed dis-interested in studies.

The Buddy reported the issues he had observed about Rohit with the social case worker. He also reported that since they are from the same school, he feels concerned about his wellbeing as Rohit was part of a gang of senior students who had dropped out of school.

Mika reached out to Rohit and had conversations with him. Mika got to understand through the conversations his with Rohit that he was doing this out of pressure from peers who were part of this gang and wanting to be accepted by the gang rather than of his own volition.

The social case worker understood Mika the Buddy's concern regarding his peer Rohit and tried to find out of there was any information Rohit was not confident or reluctant to speak about with him.

After verification, the caseworker met the child, who was initially not interested in interacting. The child had his own views about the world that led him to consider his seniors cool and accept whatever they did without questioning whether they were for his good or not.

This worldview led him to isolate himself from children his own age and develop harmful habits such as smoking. When the caseworker gently probed if he smokes or consumes other tobacco products, Rohit denied he smoked and gave various reasons for missing school. He also does not visit the contact point regularly; however, he comes there to play in the evenings, though not in the afternoons when the cooperative learning sessions are held.

The caseworker developed an assessment of the problem with Rohit but since Rohit does not come to the contact point regularly it is a challenge to meet up with him.

However, Buddy Mika had shared that he will help the caseworker Didi, and he will encourage Rohit to meet the social case worker. Mika had conversations with Rohit and encouraged him to meet the social case worker and the Programme Officer-education as they were concerned for his wellbeing as he has been absent for a long time, and that caseworker Didi is concerned about him. Rohit agreed to visit the contact point regularly and he would meet the case worker Didi.

Based on the assessment, the caseworker hopes to conduct tobacco cessation through motivational interviewing techniques and used methods such as scaling questioning to help Rohit develop an introspective character which question his actions and thoughts that are being influenced by peer pressure based on the observations from both the Programme officer at the contact point and the Buddy, as well as Buddy's observation notes and record of conversations Mika had with Rohit in the log book. Prior to writing down the conversations, the Buddy takes the permission of the child and also mentions it will be shared with the Case Worker Didi.

In the above shared case, it is clear how the Buddy observes, shares, and helps in identifying children or peers who are facing problems in their lives. The Buddy is a member of the community who is a respected and friendly person whom the children and peers, look up to and are comfortable to share their problem with rather than to an adult.

Without Mika's intervention, I may not have known about Rohit or been able to support him in rejoining school, quitting smoking, and gradually distancing himself from the group of senior students. The Buddy's role is crucial in making the first contact with a child who is distressed, withdrawing from friends and social activities, missing school, or not attending the contact point. Buddies are able to encourage the child to meet the social case worker and get the therapeutic support to help the child resolve the crisis in his/her life.

Guilt and shame are emotions that a child experiences and lead to decisions that are not in the best interest of themselves, however the steady presence of buddy who has undergone training on basic communication, active listening, empathy, respect and observation by the programme officers of mental health wellness provides a safe space to share their problems.

"For children in our contact points,
To not feel unhappy all the time,
To not feel guilty all the time,
To not feel shameful all the time,
To support a child in seeking help, Buddy exists."

I have never seen a model such as the buddies' model in any other projects. Though, I have seen peer support groups but not quite like the buddy model which trains a child to understand another peer or child's difficulties and help them by letting a trusted adult (programme officer) know.

In a way, it ensures the effectiveness of the cooperatives because it creates and sustains a model that accepts mental health problems and ensures that help is available.

The buddy model leads to the gap in mental health care accessibility being reduced, especially among vulnerable populations where mental health care is not a priority.

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SECTION D · STORY 08

08 Child Health and Sports Cooperative

NARRATED BY
Princy Jose

I have been working as a Programme Officer of the Child Health and Sports Cooperative at Butterflies for the past two years. I am an MSW graduate from the southern part of India. For me, working with Butterflies for these two years has been a nourishing experience and a milestone in my career. It has helped me learn and understand the realities of street-connected children in ways that no classroom could have taught me.

I did not have any prior experience working with street-connected children. Therefore, each working day at Butterflies was a new learning experience for me. Every interaction, every conversation, and every activity with the children gave me new insights into their lives.

Butterflies' programs focus on Child Centric approach and by considering children as active participants, which is the building block of Cooperatives. There are three children's cooperatives in Butterflies: The Children's Development Khazana (CDK), the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC), and Cooperative Learning. From what I have observed, this approach is creating meaningful changes in the lives of children. As the word "cooperative" suggests, it is about the group and the collective feeling among children, enabling them to work together towards a common goal.

One incident from my initial days at Butterflies remains vivid in my memory. As part of the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC), Child Health Educators (CHEs) conduct a weekly hygiene check-up of children and record their observations in the CHSC logbook. During these check-ups, children examine basic hygiene indicators such as nails, hair, teeth, and clothes.

Children who come neatly groomed and maintain good hygiene are marked with a smile in the logbook. This practice is to make the children to understand the importance of maintaining basic hygiene habits and taking care of their health.

During one such interaction, I asked a Child Health Educator from Dayal Singh Camp (DSC), "What if during your hygiene check-up you find that a child is not maintaining clean nails or is not coming to the contact point in clean clothes? What would you do?"

The child's answer still stays with me. She responded, "I will not tell the child in front of other children that he or she is unclean. Rather, I will tell the child separately that he/she should improve his/her personal hygiene before the next hygiene check-up."

Her response made a deep impression on me. Instead of choosing criticism or embarrassment, she chose empathy and respect. At that moment, I realized that the cooperative approach was not simply teaching children about health and hygiene. It was nurturing compassion, dignity, responsibility, and care for one another. This experience reflected the principle of Concern for Community, as the child was concerned not only about hygiene standards but also about protecting the dignity of her peer. It also reflected Democratic Member Control, where children themselves take responsibility for promoting healthy practices and maintaining the standards of their cooperative.

Another experience that remains memorable for me is related to Himanshu from Sadar Bazar. He was always very curious and enthusiastic about becoming a Child Sports Educator (CSE). During the cooperative elections, I suggested to Himanshu that if he was interested, he could stand as a candidate for the Child Health Educator (CHE) election. However, Himanshu was very clear about what he wanted. He specifically told me that he wanted to contest for the position of Child Sports Educator because he enjoyed sports and liked distributing sports equipment to other children. His interest was not simply in holding a leadership position; rather, he was passionate about promoting sports among his peers.

Himanshu contested the election for the position of Child Sports Educator and was elected by the children. As I had expected, he carried out his responsibilities with great dedication. One thing that stood out about him was how seriously he took children's right to play. Whenever programme officers were engaged in teaching, conducting monthly sessions, or other activities during the designated playtime, Himanshu would confidently remind us to stop and allow the children to play. He would often say, "This is our playtime. Please send us to play."

This experience helped me understand the principle of Democratic Member Control. Himanshu was not appointed by adults; he was elected by his peers through the cooperative election process. The children exercised their right to choose a representative whom they trusted, and Himanshu in turn took responsibility for representing their interests. His confidence in advocating for children's playtime reflected Autonomy and Independence, as he independently carried out his responsibilities and ensured that children's voices were heard. Furthermore, the leadership opportunities, training, and responsibilities provided through the cooperative enabled him to develop the confidence, communication skills, and sense of accountability needed to perform his role effectively. In this way, his journey also reflected the principle of Education, Training and Information. Through Himanshu, I witnessed how the cooperative approach transforms children from participants into leaders and decision-makers within their own community.

Another memorable experience emerged from a survey that I conducted to understand the eating habits of children. The survey revealed that many children were frequently consuming junk food and highly processed foods. Based on these findings, the monthly life-skills session was focused on educating children about the importance of a healthy diet and the harmful effects of consuming highly processed foods.

While preparing for the session, I had a question in my mind. Could a 45-minutes session really bring about a change in habits that are shaped by advertising, popular brands, peer influence, and social conditioning? I was doubtful, but I went ahead and conducted the session.

At the end of the session, I told the children to observe each other and let me know if they noticed anyone frequently consuming junk food. After this discussion, I left the contact point.

On my way back, I saw a group of children having an argument with a shopkeeper. When they noticed me, they called me over and explained the situation. One child had purchased chowmein (not a healthy snack, it is highly processed noodles) immediately after attending the session. The other children were upset because they felt that the message of the session had been ignored. In front of me, they asked the child to return the chowmein to the shopkeeper, collect back the money she had spent, and deposit that amount into her CDK account as health savings.

Witnessing this incident made me realize that the session had become much more than a 45-minute educational activity. The children had collectively taken ownership of the learning and transformed it into action. This experience reflected the principle of Education, Training and Information, as the children applied the knowledge they had gained in their daily lives. Their suggestion to deposit the money in the CDK account also reflected Members' financial management learning, which is taught in Children's Development Khazana, while their concern for their peer's health demonstrated they were applying the knowledge to practice.

As I reflect on these experiences, I realize that the cooperative approach at Butterflies goes beyond creating child leaders. It provides children with opportunities to practice the cooperative principles in their everyday lives. The cooperatives are open to all children who wish to participate, reflecting the principle of Voluntary and Open Membership.

Through elections and leadership roles such as CHEs and CSEs, children experience Democratic Member Control and learn that their voices matter.

Children are encouraged to make decisions, advocate for their rights, and take ownership of their responsibilities, reflecting Autonomy and Independence. The various trainings, life-skills sessions, health education programmes, and peer-learning opportunities demonstrate the principle of Education, Training, and Information. The Children's Development Khazana enables children to understand savings and financial responsibility. The interconnected functioning of CDK, CHSC, and Cooperative Learning illustrates Cooperation among Cooperatives. Above all, whether encouraging a peer to improve personal hygiene, promoting healthy eating habits, or ensuring every child gets their right to play, the children consistently demonstrate Concern for their members and Community.

Through these experiences, I have come to understand that the cooperative principles are not merely theoretical concepts within Butterflies. They are lived, practiced, and reinforced every day through the actions, decisions, and relationships of the children themselves. My journey with Butterflies has taught me that children are not just beneficiaries of programmes but active agents of change. These experiences have enriched me both personally and professionally and will remain some of the most valuable lessons of my social work journey.

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What if during your hygiene check-up you find that a child is not maintaining clean nails or is not coming to the contact point in clean clothes? What would you do?

09

SECTION D · STORY 09

Social Work Practitioner

NARRATED BY
Sharfe Alam

This narrative is about my experiences as a social work practitioner. I joined Butterflies in 2010 as Child Rights Advocate at INA contact point where the target group was rag picking children and adolescents working at shops in INA market. These children were involved in work related activities that helped them earn some money, as they were supplementing the family income of their family living in villages as well as they had to meet their survival needs in Delhi.

The independently living adolescents had friends in the neighbourhood and some of them were substance users. They were influenced by their peers to purchase drugs and try it out, as they were earning, they had money to buy drugs and slowly got addicted to substance use. Continuing education, studies did not interest them. During an outreach programme, I met a boy who was hooked on to substance use, every day I sat with him, listened to his fears and slowly encouraged him to join our education class. Initially, he resisted but one day he came and asked me to teach him the alphabet, that moment was unforgettable for me. Over time he left substance use, started studying and later enrolled in NIOS. Saving his life was my first experience.

Later, I shifted to Yamuna Bazar in 2016 as Child Development officer and a new contact point was established, where children lived independently in a poor neighbourhood, which lacked basic amenities. The contact point was a safe space for children where they could rest, eat, and learn. At the contact point, there was a girl named Lazeena, who never read a story, poem or lesson aloud to her friends. She was one of the quietest children. She always sat at the back of the group, listened carefully, but never raised her voice. Reading in front of others made her very scared.

She was an introvert who kept to herself, she did not join in conversations but would listen to what others were saying and only answered when someone asked her a direct question. Every day, she watched her friends' read stories, solve problems and share their ideas. Slowly, she began to feel different. After almost six months of joining the education classes, her feeling of shyness started to go away. She became a little more confident. Then one morning, she did something that surprised everyone. She stood up and said, today I will read the story. She read and her voice became stronger and clearer. All the children listened carefully, that moment was not just reading a story, it showed her courage. Her confidence gave hope to others. The contact point became a place where every child's voice was important. Her journey proved that with patience and encouragement even the shy, introverted kid can become self-confident.

After working at Yamuna Bazar for four years, I started working at the Kashmere Gate contact point in 2019.At Kashmiri Gate I met children who were mostly working at shops. They had little time for studies, but I taught them whenever possible and enrolled a significant number of children in National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) so they could study flexibly. Over time more than seventy children continued their schooling through NIOS. I remember one boy named Chand who worked at a tea stall. When Chand used to live at the market, he did not maintain proper cleanliness, after encountering Butterflies, he realized the importance of personal hygiene and subsequently began keeping himself clean. He had a problem with his leg and less vision in one eye; both conditions were by birth. Butterflies helped him, took him to the government hospital, but unfortunately there was no treatment to cure his ailments. Despite these challenges, Chand never gave up on his dream of studying. Every day after work, he came to the contact point to prepare for exams. His courage and determination inspired other children. They saw how, even with difficulties, he did not give up but diligently pursued his studies. Slowly, more children joined the group, encouraged by his example.

Later, he joined the BSCC (Butterflies School of Culinary and Catering) course and completed it successfully. This gave him new skills and confidence. He did not stop there he continued his education through NIOS. After completing the BSCC course, he worked in BSCC for about two years and then after reconnecting with his family, he returned to his village. He showed that nothing is impossible if you have the will to learn. Seeing his success gave a great sense of satisfaction.

In COVID-19 during those difficult days, the children helped each other, shared food (during Covid Butterflies served cooked meals to children and families in all our contact points), supporting friends who fell sick and encouraging one another to continue studying even in the toughest conditions. During COVID, I also noticed something heartwarming, a group of children came together to make masks at the contact point. Children received small pieces of good quality cloth from Butterflies and used them to make masks. They stitched masks with simple materials.

After making the masks, they distributed them to people in their neighborhood, especially to those who could not afford to buy one. They did this to help protect everyone from the virus and to keep their community safe. It was a small but powerful example of teamwork and care. Even though they were just kids, they showed a strong sense of responsibility. They supported each other and helped save lives in their own way.

Finally, in 2023, I started a new contact point at Dayal Singh Camp. Here children not only studied but also practiced cooperative learning, becoming examples for others. They helped each other, took responsibility for one another and grew together. In the beginning it was not easy to form cooperative groups, children were not ready to sit in groups and study. It took time but once they understood the effectiveness of cooperative learning they began studying collaboratively. During examinations children studied collectively sitting in groups and supporting one another without discrimination. Every year their academic performance has improved.

Last year, 92% of children moved up a grade and this year 96% to the next level. One group of senior girls began teaching younger ones after finishing their own homework, helping them with their studies and homework. During home visits parents shared that their children were making them aware of how to maintain hygiene at home.

At DSC (Dayal Singh Camp) there is a child named Sujit who is part of a case work with the social case worker. Sujit often behaves in a disruptive way and finds it hard to adjust with other children. He interrupts activities and struggles to follow instructions. Even though this is challenging, the team continues to support him with patience. The social case worker and facilitators try to guide him; they encourage him to build positive relationships and slowly learn how to take part in group activities. We believe that with time, individual case work sessions, care and encouragement, Sujit will learn positive ways to express himself and adjust with his peers.

I have also seen children perform on different platforms. Their confidence has grown so much that they now stand proudly in front of audiences. Parents have become active, in every meeting around 40 parents participate and share about their children's academic performance.

Children also continue to raise their own issues in Bal Sabha meetings. The Small Bal Sabha is a monthly meeting where children come together to talk about their problems and find solutions. It gives them a chance to speak, listen to each other and make decisions as a group. Through this process, they learn important democratic values like participation, equality, cooperation and responsibility. Bal Sabha continues to give children opportunities to practice these values. It helps them grow into confident and responsible individuals.

This is a very good example, when children brought up the issue of cleanliness at the contact point. They noticed that the space was sometimes littered with plastics, used bottles, paper bags, making the ground (space) untidy and it affected their activities, children discussed it among themselves.

A group of them volunteered to take responsibility as Cleanliness Monitors for the week. They agreed on a simple rule that they will not use paper, plastic bottles or bags. These items often get torn or thrown around and contact point look messy and unhygienic. This decision showed how children can practice democratic participation in everyday life. They identified a problem, shared their views and agreed on a solution that worked for all. Each Bal Sabha becomes a lesson in problem solving and practicing democratic values, helping children grow into active and responsible members of their community.

Every contact point has shown me changes in children's lives after adopting the cooperative learning approach. Sometimes the changes are small, like behaviour improvements at Kashmiri Gate and sometimes changes are big, like academic progress and stage performances at DSC. These experiences prove that when children are given guidance and a safe space (contact point) they can share their thoughts, views, without fear, and be motivated to work towards achieving their goal in life. Butterflies play a significant role in supporting children to bring positive changes in their lives.

Every contact point has shown me changes in children's lives after adopting the cooperative learning approach.

10

SECTION D · STORY 10

Chandra Bhan Maurya

ROLE

Programme Officer, Education

I have been working as a Program Officer with Butterflies for the last three years. During this time, I have had the opportunity to work closely with children and adolescents and to understand different cooperatives at Butterflies such as the Children's Development Khazana (CDK), Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC), and Cooperative Learning.

While working with Butterflies, I have realized that CDK, CHSC, and Cooperative Learning are not just activities. They are processes that help children and adolescents become active participants in their own lives. Through these initiatives, children get opportunities to recognize their abilities, take part in decision-making, and learn and grow together with their peers.

Through CDK, I have seen children develop financial responsibility, decision making skills, and sensitivity towards other children. Children are not only learning how to save money, but they are also learning how to use shared resources responsibly when someone is in need.

I remember one incident very clearly. A child needed a train ticket to travel to his village in Bihar, but he did not have enough money to book tickets. He applied to CDK for an advance of Rs. 2,000. A CDK meeting was organized to discuss his request. The meeting was attended by the Advance Committee Members (ACM), Child Volunteer Manager (CVM), and Assistant Child Volunteer Manager (ACVM). They listened carefully to the child's situation and shared their views.

During the discussion, the children thought very seriously and responsibly about the issue. They tried to understand why the child needed to travel and how they could support him.

The child explained that his family was planning to travel to their village in Bihar to attend a close relative's wedding. After discussing all aspects of the situation, they collectively decided to approve the advance request so that the child and his family could travel home safely.

Watching this process made me realize that CDK does not only teach children about saving and financial management. It also helps them learn democratic decision making, understanding the needs of others, and taking collective responsibility. The children showed that they could make thoughtful and sensitive decisions and support a peer in need.

Through the Child Health and Sports Cooperative (CHSC), children have made health and sports a part of their daily lives. They have become more aware of health-related issues and are learning discipline, teamwork, and leadership through sports. Many children now take responsibility for including their peers in games, forming teams, and managing activities. This has strengthened their leadership and teamwork skills.

One important impact of Butterflies' cooperative processes is the development of collective thinking and teamwork among children. I have seen children start thinking not only about their own needs but also about the well-being of the whole group.

A good example of this can be seen in Priyanka Camp. The children there did not have a safe place to play. They identified this problem together and decided to work collectively to solve it. They selected an open space nearby that was covered with thorny bushes and grass. For an entire week, the children worked together to clean the area. They removed the bushes, cleared the ground, and made it suitable for playing.

Through this process, the children not only worked hard physically but also learned how to plan, divide responsibilities, support one another, and work towards a common goal. As a result of their collective efforts, they created a clean and safe playground for themselves.

This experience showed that when children are given opportunities and trust, they can find solutions to their own problems. They also learn that working together can bring positive changes that are difficult to achieve alone.

Cooperative Learning has made the learning process more participatory and democratic. Children are not only learners but also teachers for one another. They help each other, share ideas, and make learning more enjoyable in groups. This process has increased their confidence, communication skills, and respect for one another.

I remember a learning session where a few children were struggling to understand basic multiplication concepts. Instead of explaining everything myself, I encouraged children who had already understood the concept to work with their peers. One child patiently used stones and bottle caps available at the contact point to explain multiplication in a simple way. The other children quickly understood the concept because it was explained in a language and style they could easily relate to. By the end of the session, the children who had initially struggled were confidently solving problems on their own. This experience showed me how children can become effective teachers for one another when given the opportunity and support.

Bottom of Form

I have also seen many children change over time. Children who were once shy now speak confidently at meetings, participate in decision-making, and take leadership roles in activities. Many adolescents have become role models for younger children as they pursued their higher education. They have developed a stronger understanding of their rights, responsibilities, and their role in the community.

In my experience, Butterflies' cooperative processes do much more than teach skills.

They give children opportunities to take responsibility, make decisions, support one another, and become leaders in their own communities. Over the last three years, I have seen children take ownership of their learning and development.

These experiences reflect Butterflies' vision of child participation and child leadership in a very meaningful way.

In my experience, Butterflies' cooperative processes do much more than teach skills.

SECTION D · STORY 11

11 Children Helping Children: A Journey of Transformation

NARRATED BY
Ashish

"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."

I am Ashish Chandra Nandan, working as a Programme Officer (Children's Cooperative) at Butterflies since June 2022. I joined Butterflies after completing my Master's in Social Work from Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi. My role involves facilitating life skills sessions and training programmes for children and adolescents, focusing on financial management, leadership, communication, and personal development. I also support child leader elections and knowledge-building activities that promote participation, responsibility, and democratic decision-making among children from marginalized communities.

A Children's Cooperative is a child-led group where children come together to support one another, learn new skills, save money, and make decisions collectively. Built on the principles and values of cooperatives, "children helping children," it ensures that every child has an equal voice and opportunity to participate. At Butterflies, the Children's Cooperative is much more than a savings programme. Through democratic elections, Bal Sabha, General Body Meetings, and cooperative learning activities, children develop leadership, communication, teamwork, financial management, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.

Currently, Children's Cooperatives operate at ten locations in Delhi and are also implemented in Uttarakhand through an out of school programme implemented with government partnership and in Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Nepal, Ghana and Madagascar through associate organizations.

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We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.

Most participating children come from migrant and marginalized families and face challenges related to education, livelihood insecurity, limited access to services, and social exclusion.

One of the most unique aspects of the programme is that children lead and manage it themselves, while my role is to facilitate and support them. I regularly visit different contact points and interact with children during various activities like life skill sessions, General Body Meeting. Through these visits, I have observed that the Children's Cooperative is not only about educating children about financial management.; it also brings positive changes in children's behaviour, decision-making, and sense of responsibility.

As a fresher, everything about these initiatives was new to me. During the orientation, I learned about the basic concepts and activities of the programme. However, I still had several questions and doubts in my mind. One of my biggest doubts was how a 10-year-old child could monitor the personal hygiene of their peers and how such young children could manage accounts and understand financial matters.

My first field visit after orientation was to the Jangpura Contact Point near Nizamuddin Dargah. There, I met Ashad, a 10-year-old child leader. He proudly showed me his Child Health Educator (CHE) logbook and the records of the Children's Development Khazana (CDK), including ledger books, cash books, and passbooks. With confidence, he explained monthly meetings, hygiene check-ups, collective actions, first-aid activities, deposits, withdrawals, and the reasons behind different transactions.

I was amazed by his knowledge, confidence, and sense of responsibility. At that moment, I realized that my assumptions about children's abilities were wrong. I had studied theories of child participation during my academic journey, but at the contact point I saw those theories come alive. Children may not know the terminology of participation, but they practice it every day through leadership, decision-making, peer support, and collective action.

I have also seen how the Children's Cooperative serves as a support system during difficult times. In 2023, a girl from the Jama Masjid contact point was diagnosed with Tuberculosis (TB). Due to financial hardship, her family could not provide the nutritious diet recommended by doctors. She availed an advance from the Children's Development Khazana to support her nutritional needs during treatment. With proper care and nutrition, she recovered and returned to her daily life. This experience showed me how children's collective savings which are deposited in a nationalised bank account can provide meaningful support in times of crisis.

Many children have inspired me personally. One such child is Ambia. I first met her at the Okhla Mandi contact point soon after joining Butterflies. She confidently contested the Child Health Educator election but was unsuccessful. Despite repeated setbacks, she continued participating in elections year after year. She never allowed failure to discourage her. Instead, she learned, improved, and remained committed.

Her perseverance finally paid off in 2026 when she was elected as the Child Health Educator for the first time. Watching her achieve this goal after years of effort taught me a valuable lesson: success is rarely immediate. It often comes through persistence, learning, and the courage to keep trying. Whenever I face challenges in my own life, I remember Ambia's determination and resilience.

Another experience that challenged my assumptions occurred during a Cooperative Learning workshop. We often assume that children from slum communities and low-income families, who struggle with daily survival, may not have opportunities to develop leadership skills. During one session, I noticed a girl who appeared talkative and distracted. I assumed she was not paying attention, while other children seemed more focused.

However, during the reflection session, she confidently explained the concepts of cooperative learning and shared thoughtful insights from the activity. Her understanding was clear and impressive.

This experience reminded me that children learn and express themselves in different ways, and that our assumptions can often be misleading.

Working with Butterflies has transformed the way I understand children and their lives. The biggest change in me has been the journey from sympathy to empathy. Earlier, I felt sorry for children facing difficult circumstances. Today, I understand and respect their resilience, strengths, aspirations, and ability to overcome challenges. Their stories have strengthened my commitment to child participation and a rights-based approach to development.

Through my experience, I have learned that every child possesses unique talents, abilities, and potential. Regardless of their background or circumstances, every child deserves an equal opportunity to learn, participate, and develop their strengths. When children are trusted, supported, and given meaningful opportunities, they often exceed our expectations and emerge as confident leaders and active citizens.

This belief is reflected in the words of John F. Kennedy: “Not every child has an equal talent or an equal ability or equal motivation, but they should have the equal right to develop their talent and their ability and their motivation, to make something of themselves.”

These words resonate deeply with my experiences at Butterflies. Every day, I witness children discovering their strengths, supporting one another, and creating positive change in their own lives and communities. Their courage, hope, and determination continue to inspire me and remind me that every child deserves the opportunity to thrive.



Butterflies

Protecting and empowering children since 1989

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