

Concept Note

Early Childhood Development Programme for Children Belonging to Marginalised Families

Context

UNESCO defines early childhood education and care as the “holistic development of a child’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing”. A child’s earliest years present a window of opportunity to address inequality and improve outcomes later in life. Academic evidence from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), shows that students who participated in **early childhood development (ECD)** for more than one year achieved higher scores in standardised mathematics tests at age 15. Access to ECD further limits the development of competence gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children.

Improved cognitive development, better schooling outcomes and increased lifelong productivity are just some of the potential benefits from ECD programmes. When paired with proper nutrition, the returns from investments in children’s early education can be leveraged to reduce intergenerational transfer of poverty, improve gender outcomes, as well as translate into better health and fewer illnesses, preparing the child to become a productive citizen.

According to Census 2011 data, there are 164.48 million children of 0-6 years of age in India. The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2010** guarantees children their right to quality elementary education. ECD is not recognized as a compulsory provision by RTE, but RTE urges states to provide free pre-school education for children above three years. Despite the recognition of the importance of ECD by the Government of India, the **challenges in implementation remain**. There are still substantial numbers of children not enrolled in preschools. Even in elementary education, while there is a significant rise in enrolments, the dropout rate continues to be a matter of concern, with dropouts being highest in the first two grades of elementary schooling. Learning assessments also show that literacy skills are poor in early primary grades. This points to the urgency of helping children, particularly from first generation families, develop adequate school readiness through a good quality ECD programme, to enable them to make a smooth transition.

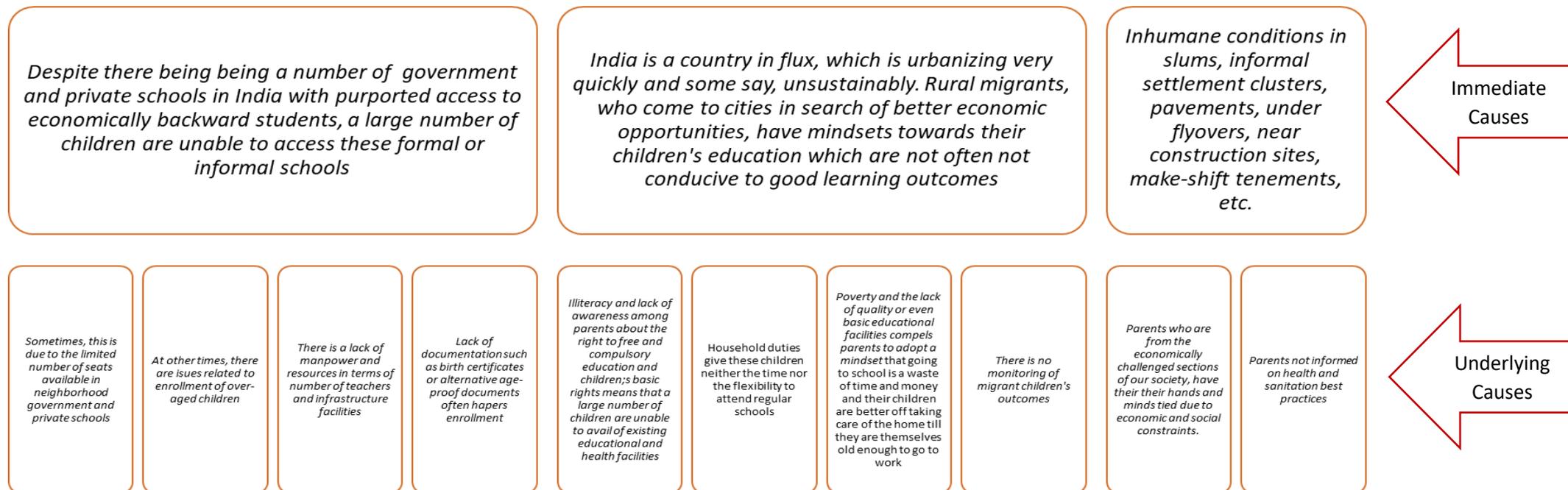
Along with ECD, a primary focus of our work at Sunaayy has been **women led growth and empowerment**. Our service delivery model has continuously focussed on training and creating an able force of female teachers at each of our centres, and periodically ensuring that their level of knowledge and skills is at par with and even better than some teachers in formal educational institutions. This is critical because a strong body of evidence, particularly from developing countries like India, shows that having strong female role models in the teaching staff and in educational management roles, as we do in Sunaayy, is positively associated with education outcomes, especially girls’ educational achievements.

We have continued to recruit teachers from within the same locality as the students to invoke a sense of responsibility, attachment, bonding, and nurturing qualities. Our teachers-in-charge and project coordinators focus on better administration and academic programme delivery through collaboration with parents, most notably the mothers of our students. Through sensitization and continuous engagement with the parents of our students, our teachers provide the crucial link that Sunaayy has with the communities wherein we operate. Maternal influence has been found to be one of the leading factors over whether children stayed on at school, went on to complete their education, and for social mobility for the family.

Where We Come In

Sunaayy Foundation is a Non-Profit Organization that was founded in May 2009 in the Vasant Kunj Area of New Delhi, India. Sunaayy adopts an issues-based approach to focus on a **critical development challenge**, an issue that we aspire to tackle in the medium to long-term, namely – **Addressing the poor education, health, hygiene and nourishment outcomes of children from underprivileged and marginalized households.**

We have developed a **problem tree** to help us understand why this development challenge persists and the shape it takes in the contexts that we work in. We found **immediate causes** that were the proximate or nearest triggers of our critical development challenge, offering the most direct explanation for why it exists, as well as **underlying causes** related to the choices made by people in response to the immediate causes, as well as policies, laws and regulations.



Our Strategy for Intervention

Sunaayy Foundation, with its extensive experience of 10 years in ECD, intends to intervene with a **cluster-based strategy**. A cluster can be defined as a JJ cluster or slum or similar place with high concentration of marginalised families, who cannot provide for early childhood development. The key is to create model cases in the clusters and then disseminate the cases for replication by a larger number of community-based organisations for improved outreach and impact. Sunaayy would address each of the challenges through soft and hard interventions involving workshops for sensitization, establishment of pre-school centres (make-shift with smart classes) and providing linkage with formal educational institutes.

Sunaayy has charted out a **solutions pathway** which is a map of a sequence of positive changes and interventions that would address the causes behind the critical development challenge, and in so doing have articulated out programme **Theory of Change**. This is an articulation of our service delivery model:

Sunaayy's Impact:

Empowering children from marginalized and underprivileged households with a childhood replete with nourishment, health, hygiene and education through a multi-grade sustainable learning system in a safe environment

Our Key Outcomes

Filling the gap between what the Right to Education Act aspires to be and what the ground reality is

Our Key Outcomes

Improved education, nutrition, and health results for children of migrant and marginalized households

The Desired Output

Improved information amongst parents (of migrant and marginalized households) on rights based entitlements

The Desired Output

Improved documentation for over-aged enrolment and enrollment of migrant children

The Desired Output

Increased classroom attendance and better classroom performance leading to higher transition to formal schools

The Desired Output

Well-trained and motivated teaching staff

The Desired Output

Reduced economic burden on households and health risks in children

Activities Under Each of Our Desired Outputs

Improved information amongst parents (of migrant and marginalized households) on rights-based entitlements:

- 🦋 Disseminating information about the importance of sending children to school
- 🦋 Improving awareness of their children's Right to Free and Compulsory Education
- 🦋 Urging parents to send their children to government schools or Sunaayy centres to start with

Improved documentation for over-aged enrolment and enrolment of migrant children:

- 🦋 Fostering a dialogue with local school authorities to ensure that no child is turned away due to absence of birth certificates
- 🦋 Help households with alternative age of proof documentation

Increased classroom attendance and better classroom performance leading to higher transition to formal schools:

- 🦋 Outdoor centres with outreach to out-of-school children and first-generation learners who would otherwise slip into illegal child labour, drug addiction or other vices
- 🦋 New teaching methods - storytelling, puppet shows, and interactive activities to improve student engagement and participation in class
- 🦋 Improve child socio-economic awareness using innovative techniques, which leads them to influence their families to send their siblings to our centres
- 🦋 Curriculum that focuses on Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) to increase discipline and self-confidence amongst children
- 🦋 Set-up of virtual learning centres and SMART classrooms whereby for remote skilled teaching delivery

- 🦋 Set-up of mobile education units for areas where centres cannot be established
- 🦋 Mentoring both parents and students for entrance exams and interviews

Well-trained and motivated teaching staff:

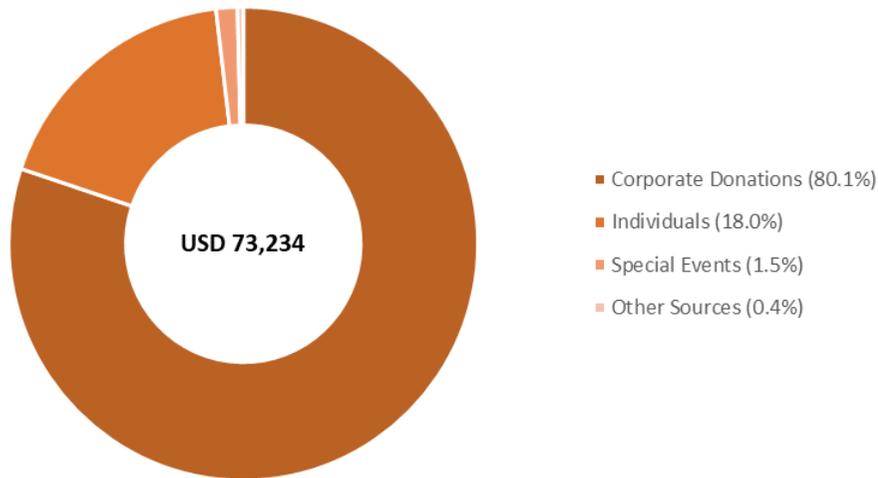
- 🦋 Recruitment of teachers from within the same locality as the children to invoke a sense of responsibility, attachment, bonding, and nurturing qualities
- 🦋 Teacher training and mentorship programmes to promote interactive learning, efficient classroom management, improving the curriculum and better program delivery
- 🦋 Teacher training, not only for better education delivery, but also to make them capable for student and parent counselling on several issues like gender discrimination, substance abuse, child labour, etc.

Reduced economic burden on households and health risks in children:

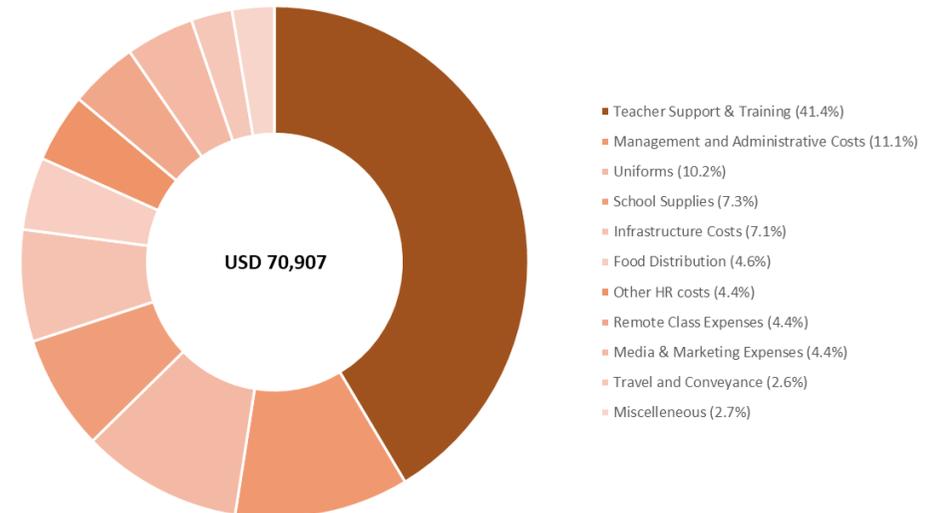
- 🦋 Provision of freshly cooked and nutritious breakfast and lunch to each student, which also acts as a behavioural stimulus to maintain regular attendance
- 🦋 Distribution of freshly cooked hot food and warm blankets
- 🦋 Curriculum includes best practices in health, sanitation, and guidelines to prevent communicable and non-communicable diseases
- 🦋 Conducting workshops at regular intervals on topics such as – health and safety, anti-substance abuse, gender and social equality, vaccinations, and medical check-ups
- 🦋 Pre-school day-care centres which provide mothers with the choice of working which will increase family incomes

Our Financials

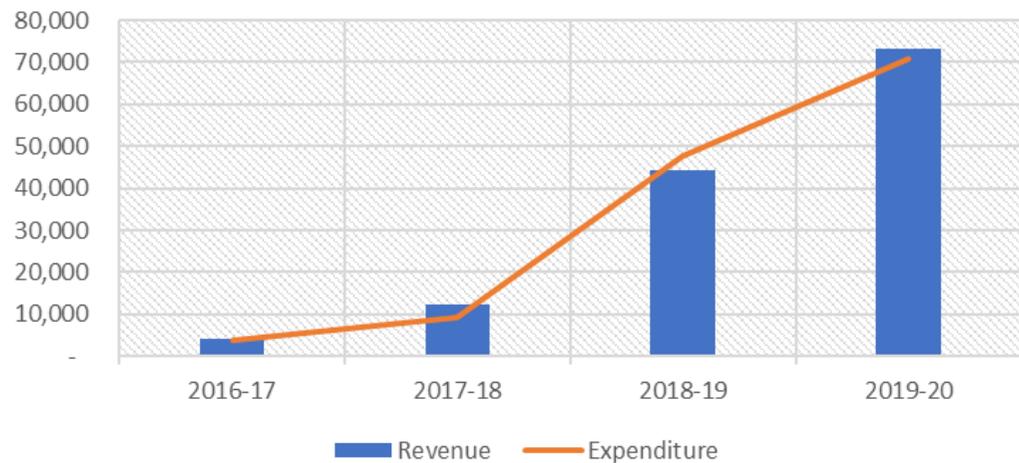
Revenue Summary (2019-20)



Expenditure Summary (2019-20)



Revenue & Expenditure Growth (USD)



Our Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals



Young people who are illiterate lack the means to be able to sustain a living through full and decent employment which prevents them from emerging from poverty. Poverty can influence mental capacities. Our holistic platform connects the economic advancement of our students with improving their care and education.



India is home to a third of the world's stunted children. Malnutrition erodes the physical and mental health of children. The success of the Mid-Day Meal Programme in improving enrollment and retention shows the importance of hunger in determining drop-out rates. The two freshly cooked meals we provide each of our children underscores the crucial connection between proper nutrition and education outcomes.



SDG Target 4.2 pertains to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education, one of the cornerstones of the Sunaayy service delivery model. Due to our interventions, our students are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being outcomes. Furthermore, the participation rate in organized learning in the communities where we work is enhanced due to our facilitation of transition to formal schools.



For education to deliver, it must be inclusive and high-quality. Active efforts to end gender stereotypes must tackle those that limit schooling. The education of women impacts generations. At Sunaayy, we have maintained gender parity amongst our students from our inception. Our empowered teachers are also all women. They provide the close links that we have with the communities in our catchment areas.



Education has helped narrow global income inequality by reducing poverty. In India, a much lower proportion of young people from the bottom fifth of the population attend educational levels above higher secondary, as compared to the richest fifth. Our interventions have continuously strived to narrow this gap between students from resource-poor and resource-rich households.

Volunteerism – The Spirit of Sunaayy

A young boy gets excited about spending his weekend with underprivileged kids, a busy doctor ensures he takes time out to run a temporary clinic for those underprivileged kids, and a corporate executive leaves his meetings and ventures out to distribute food to those kids as the hardship of COVID-19 looms large on the society. These and many more simple, yet outstanding examples showcase how immensely honoured Sunaayy is to associate with several individuals and organizations who have volunteered their time, expertise, and effort to help us grow. In many ways, service volunteering, which goes beyond donations, has been the heart and soul of Sunaayy's existence and growth. The compassion that our volunteers have shown towards the children, their education and health, and the dedication that have shown towards the work that they do with us, is an inspiration for us all.

Our volunteers' diligent, kind and consistent service has been a pivot around which we have strived to expand our outreach and create a significant social impact. In many crucial ways, our continued efforts will be contingent on this bond that has been created between our volunteers, our beneficiaries and the core of Sunaayy's service offering. The troubled times of the COVID-19 lockdown has also seen Sunaayy strive towards mitigating some of the worst impacts on our students and their families, through the distribution of food, rations and other essentials. This has been made possible primarily due to the network and ethos of service volunteering which in many ways, goes beyond the donations, to which we continue to remain grateful.

Our volunteers have been crucial in ensuring that we have been able to provide a quality and holistic education to more than 1000 children, serve over 100,000 meals, and distribute over 3000 blankets and 7, 5000 uniforms. From a batch of 6 children in one centre in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi in 2009 we have grown to more than 550 children who regularly come to 20 Sunaayy centres spread out across New Delhi, Kolkata and Bihar. Our scope of service has also expanded from not only providing a holistic platform of care to our students, equally paying attention to their education, nourishment and health, but also to extend an arm to women from underprivileged households, who now actively contribute to the affairs of Sunaayy, and who take great pride in the work that they do with us.

We cannot emphasize enough how appreciative Sunaayy is of our many volunteers. We need your continued help to make our efforts go even further! Come join this force of volunteers to realize your service potential and witness the positive impact that you can make for yourself. The Sunaayy Human Welfare Foundation, our students and their families will forever be grateful.