

COVID RESPONSE

ANTARANG



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

No one left behind

Overview

Antarang Foundation works with young adults, aged 14 to 28, from marginalised communities to facilitate equity in careers and employability.

It works with government schools, local government, employers and communities. The focus of its work is on enabling career awareness, skill development and access to career opportunities that promise social and economic mobility. It primarily works in cities of Mumbai, Udaipur and Pune.

Majority of Antarang's primary stakeholders were displaced and/or severely impacted by the pandemic and lockdowns. Many children in government schools started returning to their villages and other states. Only 40% of the students in government schools remained in Mumbai and 50% of the students were contactable.

Students in government schools are typically 5 academic years behind expected learning levels. The pandemic threatens to leave them significantly further behind.

Antarang worked with government to reach all the student families, making close to 10,000 calls in the 2 months at the beginning of the lockdown. They communicated the board exam results of the children, encouraging the parents to bring back the children to enroll in 11th standard.

Loss of livelihoods was a major setback for families. They were struggling with loss of income and also beset by fear of travel and forced quarantines. Fifty percent of the families that Antarang worked with, reported zero income up until August 2020.

Antarang, after a careful scenario planning in March 2020, decided to raise additional funds for Covid relief. Their strong financial planning and position helped them retain all their people across all programs. Antarang worked to ensure wellbeing of their employees, given the toll the pandemic was taking on mental health.

It distributed ration to the needy over two days. It worked with another Ashoka fellow's organization, SNEHA, and the government to reach relief material to the adversely affected slums, like Dharavi, that were containment zones.

Antarang distributed internet data top-ups to its students even before the lockdown began. This would ensure they had access to services that would be reachable only through online channels during the lockdown.

Antarang worked with Ashoka from the beginning of the pandemic. Ashoka launched the COVID relief directory in April 2020 where Antarang was able to share the kind of help they needed. This helped them provide relief and essential services to people in their areas of work.

LONG TERM SHIFTS

Humans of technology

Antarang plans to continue with a hybrid model through micro-classrooms, combining physical and digital channels. Content and curriculum delivery will continue online with options for students to meet career facilitators at community hubs. It has launched a career counselling chatbot for students of 10th and 12th standards. Digital classes and phone calls to students continue as well.

Antarang has redesigned its work to embed its offerings into the government schooling system, becoming a part of the life-skills curriculum. It is working closely with the governments of Maharashtra, Tripura, Jharkhand and Karnataka.

During the recovery phase Antarang focused on generating livelihoods. It opened its placements to students as well as their family members. It launched 'sponsor an intern' campaign to raise funds for SMEs to hire interns, generating about 100-115 internships per month. This scheme continues.

The pandemic shifted demands to different sectors and Antarang adapted to work on placement in ed-tech, banking & finance and health sectors. Antarang recognised the potential to increase employment opportunities for young women during the pandemic. It worked on creating tele-calling opportunities that women could fulfill working from home.

Conclusion

The pandemic has made Antarang extend itself to create new models of work and reach new people. Its hybrid model, with digital and physical formats have the potential to keep their work alive in times of crisis and extend their outreach.

Equally important, for stakeholders of Antarang, is to retain the human connection in their work. Physical access to people will remain as important as digital channels.

