



समवादा

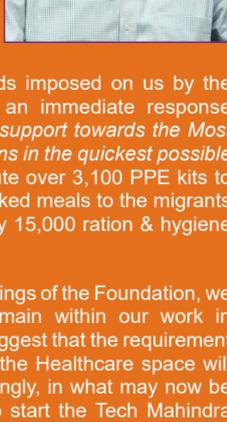
Issue II

KEYNOTE

Dear Friends,

The second edition of **Samvaad** was all set to reach you on 25 March 2020. And then, the world as we knew it, changed. Some would say, forever.

I write this on Day 29 of the lockdown. These have been an extraordinary four weeks for us at the Foundation – none of us in the team have met each other, and yet we seem to have come together as never before. We have redesigned the way we work, repurposed our projects, and redeployed our resources to meet the demands imposed on us by the pandemic. In quick time, we came up with an immediate response mechanism with the stated goal, *‘To direct the support towards the Most Vulnerable Population Segment in urban locations in the quickest possible time.’* To this end, we have managed to distribute over 3,100 PPE kits to state government hospitals, provide 38,600 cooked meals to the migrants and daily-wage earners, and disseminate nearly 15,000 ration & hygiene kits. And we know that we have only just begun.



Nearly five years ago, in one of the strategy meetings of the Foundation, we had decided to focus on the Healthcare domain within our work in Employability. There was enough evidence to suggest that the requirement for well-trained paramedics and technicians in the Healthcare space will grow significantly in the years to come. Accordingly, in what may now be seen as a prescient move, we had decided to start the Tech Mahindra SMART Academies for Healthcare as a step to ramify our skill development program. Today, when the COVID Warriors in healthcare are fighting the battle for us, we are proud to have contributed over 700 of them through our Academies. This, then, is the cover story for **Samvaad** this time.

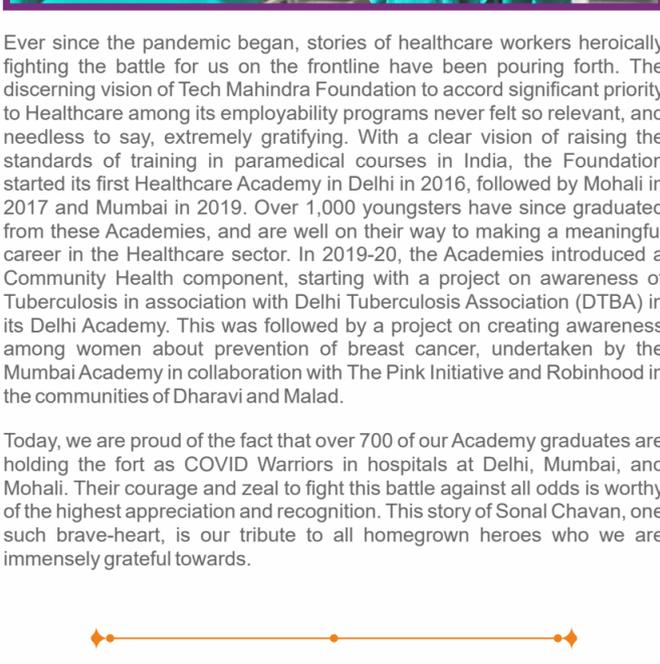
The battle against the dreaded virus will be a prolonged and painful one. It will take a toll not just on human lives and livelihoods, but also on the emotional well-being of many. The Foundation intends to address this in the months ahead in its programs, and to do this, we were fortunate to have begun an association with the Centre for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics of the Emory University a few months ago. This association has brought the Centre’s much-acknowledged Social, Emotional, and Ethical Learning curriculum to the Foundation – more about this in one of the stories of this edition.

Like everyone else, we have also been engaging with our colleagues on video calls since the lockdown began. In one such video call with my team, a team member remarked, *‘even with the lockdown when there is no field activity possible, we are working with the spirit that the show must go on.’* Yes, go on it will – in fact, I am confident that at the end of it, we would emerge in an emotionally stronger and more empathetic world.

With best wishes for the well-being of each one of us.

Chetan Kapoor
Chief Operating Officer
Tech Mahindra Foundation

COVID WARRIORS FROM THE HEALTHCARE ACADEMIES



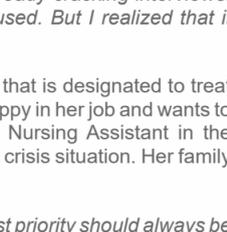
Ever since the pandemic began, stories of healthcare workers heroically fighting the battle for us on the frontline have been pouring forth. The discerning vision of Tech Mahindra Foundation to accord significant priority to Healthcare among its employability programs never felt so relevant, and needless to say, extremely gratifying. With a clear vision of raising the standards of training in paramedical courses in India, the Foundation started its first Healthcare Academy in Delhi in 2016, followed by Mohali in 2017 and Mumbai in 2019. Over 1,000 youngsters have since graduated from these Academies, and are well on their way to making a meaningful career in the Healthcare sector. In 2019-20, the Academies introduced a Community Health component, starting with a project on awareness of Tuberculosis in association with Delhi Tuberculosis Association (DTBA) in its Delhi Academy. This was followed by a project on creating awareness among women about prevention of breast cancer, undertaken by the Mumbai Academy in collaboration with The Pink Initiative and Robinhood in the communities of Dharavi and Malad.

Today, we are proud of the fact that over 700 of our Academy graduates are holding the fort as COVID Warriors in hospitals at Delhi, Mumbai, and Mohali. Their courage and zeal to fight this battle against all odds is worthy of the highest appreciation and recognition. This story of Sonal Chavan, one such brave-heart, is our tribute to all homegrown heroes who we are immensely grateful towards.

A STORY OF GRIT FROM THE MUMBAI ACADEMY

Here is a glimpse of how our healthcare warriors grow to become real life heroes. This is a story of human grit and hard work.

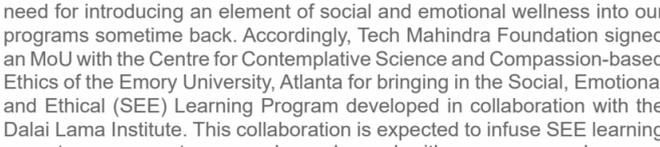
Sonal Chavan, a simple girl from Mumbai’s Sindhudurg district was born and raised in a lower middle-class family. Her mother works as a house help and father as a driver. Her younger brother is still pursuing his studies in school. Shortly, after completing her high school education, owing to the family circumstances her parents had expectations from Sonal to contribute towards home finances. Like her peers, she started planning her career but due to various barriers, Sonal was not able to pursue her dreams. She had an inner zeal to make a mark in life and thus she continued her endeavor to find the right means. She knew that she just needed the right skills and guidance to move ahead. She came to know of the General Duty Assistant (GDA) program of SMART Academy for Healthcare through the mobilizing team. Without losing an opportunity she enrolled herself in the course. With the help of the faculty and placement teams, she was groomed during the on-the-job-training period and prepared for interviews. But initially, she recalls, *‘I remember spending hours practicing interview questions. Once I felt very impatient and demotivated as most of my classmates were already cracking interviews. Whereas, I was advised to keep calm and focused. But I realized that it helped.’*



Today, Sonal is working in Seven Hills Hospital, that is designated to treat the patients affected from COVID-19. Sonal is happy in her job and wants to upgrade her skills so that she can work as a Nursing Assistant in the hospital. She is now a frontline worker during the crisis situation. Her family is proud of Sonal!

‘I want Sonal to take up this job as I believe her first priority should always be patient’s care’ - Sanjay Chavan (Sonal’s father).

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND ETHICAL (SEE) LEARNING



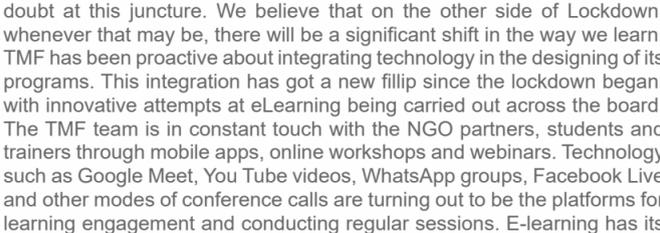
‘Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.’ Dalai Lama

In the precarious and perilous phase we are passing through, the most powerful coping mechanisms are within us: patience, resilience and mental fortitude. Inculcating any of these does not come easy; what it needs is a deeper dive into the subconscious mind.

Not that we had anticipated the Coronavirus crisis, but we did recognize the need for introducing an element of social and emotional wellness into our programs sometime back. Accordingly, Tech Mahindra Foundation signed an MoU with the Centre for Contemplative Science and Compassion-based Ethics of the Emory University, Atlanta for bringing in the Social, Emotional and Ethical (SEE) Learning Program developed in collaboration with the Dalai Lama Institute. This collaboration is expected to infuse SEE learning aspects among our team members who work with young men and women, school students and teachers on a daily basis.

In its first phase, a team of 20 members from TMF participated in the Facilitator Training & Educator Prep Workshop in February at Delhi and Mumbai conducted by the senior faculty from the SEE Learning team. The participants shared that SEE Learning empowers students to engage ethically as part of a global community and provides educators with the tools they need to support student well-being. The team is also engaged with SEE Learning Global and India team through webinars and study circle, post the workshops.

eLEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC

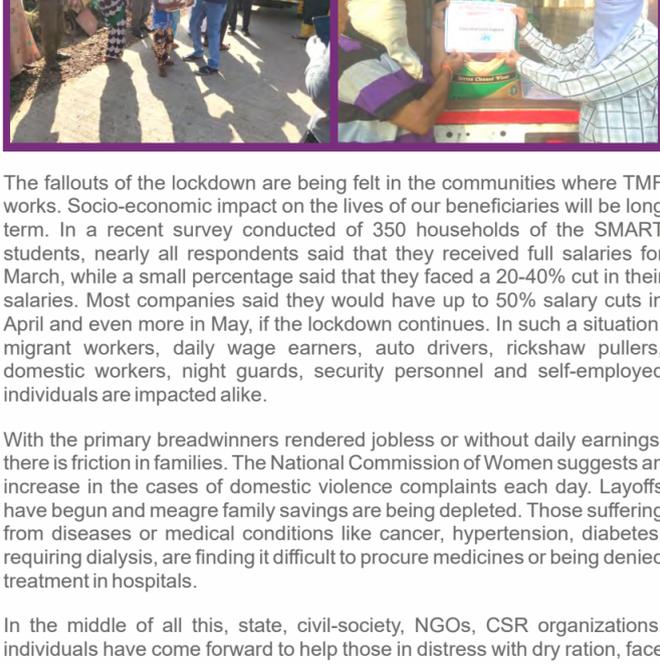


‘eLearning is changing. And, we will see new models, new technologies and designs emerge. So, let’s drop the “e” – or at least give it a new and wider definition.’ - Elliot Masie

The fact that Disruption is a great Teacher has been proven beyond any doubt at this juncture. We believe that on the other side of Lockdown, whenever that may be, there will be a significant shift in the way we learn. TMF has been proactive about integrating technology in the designing of its programs. This integration has got a new fillip since the lockdown began, with innovative attempts at eLearning being carried out across the board. The TMF team is in constant touch with the NGO partners, students and trainers through mobile apps, online workshops and webinars. Technology such as Google Meet, You Tube videos, WhatsApp groups, Facebook Live and other modes of conference calls are turning out to be the platforms for learning engagement and conducting regular sessions. E-learning has its own set of challenges of widespread access to technical infrastructure and internet connectivity. Hopefully in the post COVID-19 era, India will invest proactively in setting the right means for last mile connectivity!

Identifying the impact of COVID-19 on its students and staffs’ mental well-being alike, Tech Mahindra started the **Let’s Talk!! Helplines** for their counselling. It connects them with the Counsellor dealing with issues such as uncertainty, fear, restlessness, depression, claustrophobia and mood-swings. Discussions on maintaining harmony at home, anger management, frustrations, handling work pressure in the absence of help at home are also core part of the counselling.

COMMUNITIES DURING LOCKDOWN



The fallouts of the lockdown are being felt in the communities where TMF works. Socio-economic impact on the lives of our beneficiaries will be long term. In a recent survey conducted of 350 households of the SMART students, nearly all respondents said that they received full salaries for March, while a small percentage said that they faced a 20-40% cut in their salaries. Most companies said they would have up to 50% salary cuts in April and even more in May, if the lockdown continues. In such a situation, migrant workers, daily wage earners, auto drivers, rickshaw pullers, domestic workers, night guards, security personnel and self-employed individuals are impacted alike.

With the primary breadwinners rendered jobless or without daily earnings, there is friction in families. The National Commission of Women suggests an increase in the cases of domestic violence complaints each day. Layoffs have begun and meagre family savings are being depleted. Those suffering from diseases or medical conditions like cancer, hypertension, diabetes, requiring dialysis, are finding it difficult to procure medicines or being denied treatment in hospitals.

In the middle of all this, state, civil-society, NGOs, CSR organizations, individuals have come forward to help those in distress with dry ration, face masks, hand sanitizers. Ration is being given but those without BPL cards/ration cards/identity proofs of another state are not getting these benefits. Many young students we spoke to are getting together resources in their communities and mobilizing help and support for the women, children and elderly. Hence amidst the sordid account of hunger, neglect and dependency, there are certainly flickers of hope.

Samvaad is a quarterly e-newsletter. You can participate by writing an article or sharing your project experiences with us. If you have ideas on what you would like to see included in our newsletter, then we are all ears!

Please e-mail us your thoughts and ideas at samvaad@techmahindrafoundation.org

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