



HELLO!

Hello and a warm welcome to the latest issue of Street Life, your Toybox magazine.

First of all I want to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you for the incredible support we have received in response to our Easter appeal. At the time of going over £115,000, helping to provide life-saving items such as food parcels, clean clothes and warm blankets as well as hygiene and first aid kits to help children living on the streets. These items have been an absolute lifeline for our project workers who, as the pandemic restrictions have eased, have been able to return to their work out on the city streets.

I am also pleased to share that at the end of March we finalised exciting plans to expand our birth registration project in Guatemala later this year. This is thanks to the overwhelming response we received from our supporters at Christmas. With this extra funding, our partners say that they will now be able to undertake around 1,000 more registrations in 2021. The additional funding will not only cover the legal costs associated with the registrations, it also means the team can run community awareness campaigns and deliver mass registration events across the country. We are so truly grateful for the support you

have shown, which will ensure that even more children are given the life changing gift of a birth certificate.

Inside this issue of Street Life, you can find out more about a fantastic initiative we are supporting in India which uses sport to reach vulnerable street children. Sport is widely acknowledged as a powerful development tool, with the ability to bring about lasting and positive change - not only in the lives of individuals, but also to their communities.

Through our work with street children over the years, I have witnessed how sport has the incredible ability to both reach and engage children living on the very fringes of society - those who are often completely

disengaged from education and everyday life. Inside you can hear about how we are supporting street children to develop core life skills through sport and informal education. The Sports for United Resilience (SURE) project based in Delhi focuses on

working with street and working children to increase their potential to improve their lives and overcome their daily challenges, while also enabling them to enjoy play and keep themselves healthy.

14-year-old Pinky, featured on the cover of this issue, is one of six children. Due to her family's difficult financial situation, she has never been able to attend school. Over the years life has been incredibly hard for Pinky. Her family originally moved to Delhi in search of work and have only been earning a small amount through casual jobs. At the start of the pandemic, Pinky's father was sadly involved in an accident which required medical assistance. The family had to cover the cost of his hospital treatment, putting



them under even greater financial pressure at a time when they were already struggling to make ends meet. To ensure Pinky and her family had enough to eat during the lockdown in Delhi, Pinky would often have to stand for hours in long queues in the hot sun to receive food handouts supplied by the government. With her father unable to work at this time, Pinky began working in a shop to help provide for her family. Pinky has been attending the SURE project for almost two years and says the best thing about being involved is learning lots of new things through games and sports. When asked about her hopes for the future, Pinky says she wants to change the outlook of people towards girls and their oppression of them – this is an issue that she says sees affecting girls and women in her community. Her involvement in the project and the life skills she is learning will undoubtedly help her with this ambition.



Thank you so much for everything you do to support our work and for helping us to reach children and young people like Pinky - particularly at this time as our partners work tirelessly alongside children whose lives continue to be significantly impacted by the pandemic. I really hope you enjoy this issue of the magazine.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynne', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Lynne Morris, CEO



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www.toybox.org.uk



SKILLS FOR LIFE

In the Spring of 2019, Toybox began supporting our partner, CHETNA, in India with a new project based in Delhi. The Sports for United Resilience (SURE) project currently works with around 400 vulnerable street children aged between 12 and 16, supporting them to build core life skills through the medium of sport. During the sessions, children can interact with each other and project staff in a safe environment and learn to play sports such as Kho Kho (a traditional Indian game of tag), Kabaddi (which combines characteristics of rugby and wrestling), and other traditional Indian street games and cricket.

Developing core skills

For street children attending the project, engagement in sport brings real benefits and offers a door to a future full of hope and possibility. As well as supporting a child's physical and mental well-being, their involvement in team games and the supporting activities help them to develop life skills such as effective communication, self-awareness, decision making and personal resilience. As many of the street children are unable to consistently attend school, or indeed

may never have been to school, the project also supports them with basic reading and writing skills. The sessions are held outside of school hours to make sure that they are not seen as an alternative to school.

Addressing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality

The project also runs self-defence workshops for girls in partnership with the Delhi Police. Sadly, discrimination and violence against women and girls is endemic across Indian society at every level. Data released by the National Crime Records Bureau highlights that in recent years there has been a marked increase in gender-based violence and harassment in India, with crimes against women and girls showing a worrying upward trend. To add to this, being street connected increases a child's chances of becoming a victim of violence and abuse so self-defence workshops can play a key role in helping girls to protect themselves while also helping to build self-confidence. Alongside this initiative, the project also specifically focuses on promoting gender equality with boys at the project who

learn about inspirational female leaders and their positive impact on society. Gender equality is also at the core of project, providing equal opportunities for girls and boys to mix, participate and lead the activities.

Adapting during the pandemic

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown in Delhi in March last year meant that the project had to quickly adapt many of their activities, with sports clubs and informal educational support moved online for several months. During this time the project focused on meeting the immediate and most pressing needs of the children who rely on the casual jobs to earn a living. They knew that they would be unable to fully engage with the project at time when everything was shut down and the city's informal workers (who already live a hand to mouth existence), were suddenly left out of work with no guarantee of when they would start earning again. The project distributed emergency food parcels, hygiene

kits and stationary supplies along with play equipment including skipping ropes and balls to support the children to stay physically active.

The team also developed a series of online videos for the children and supplied them with mobile phone top-up credits, so they could access these and continue to learn life skills, as well as basic Hindi, English and maths remotely. This approach also meant that our street educators could check on children's progress and wellbeing. In cases where children attending the project lacked access to a mobile phone or the internet, other children from the project acted as a link between staff and the children.

With the easing of restrictions in India, many of the project's activities have been able to start again face-

to-face with precautions in place. The team continue to closely monitor the situation, adhering to the latest government guidance. As well as the sports and games, the project also delivers monthly support meetings. In these sessions children learn about their rights and can talk about any problems and issues that are affecting them at that time.

The meetings have also provided an opportunity to ensure that the children know about the key preventative hygiene measures to keep them safe during the pandemic.



MEET MOHINI

15-year-old Mohini lives with her family in a large slum settlement in Delhi. When she was around 12 years old, Mohini was forced to leave school due to her poor health. Without the daily interaction and structure of school, Mohini spent her time at home, undertaking chores and helping to supplement the family's income by assisting with her mother's clothing repair business.

When the street educators from our partner first met Mohini she was very shy. The team told her about the SURE project and asked her if she would like to join but Mohini declined, saying she was too busy at home and didn't like to play. However, the team persevered and when two girls from Mohini's local community started attending the project, they began to share what they had been learning and the skills they had developed. Over time, Mohini became interested in games and sports and eventually decided to join the project along with her friends.

Mohini has now been attending the project for almost two years and during this time her interest, confidence and skills in sport have deepened, so much so that she was recently selected as the leader of the Kho Kho team. She has also encouraged many of her friends to attend the project too.

Around the time of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown across India, Mohini's community began to feel very unsafe. In a short period, there were reports in her community of a murder of a young child, a six-year-old girl being harassed and an attempted kidnap of a group of children. As a result, community members became anxious and stopped their children from going outside to play. This situation made Mohini feel both angry and scared – she was furious that she felt the elders in her community were not paying enough attention. After talking to her parents, they reported the cases to the police and a complaint was filed. As a result of Mohini's actions, the community has been better guarded and more street lighting installed. Since then, according to Mohini, there have been no further cases of kidnapping or harassment.

From a previously shy and hesitant teenager, it's clear that Mohini has really grown in confidence since joining the project, so much so that she decided to speak out against the crimes that had been happening in her community. "Mohini has become a warrior of her community. She is praised, loved and appreciated by everyone for her bravery." - CHETNA staff member.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Warm clothes including jackets, body warmers, trousers and socks were distributed to children at the project to ensure they were able to keep warm during the winter months.
- Project staff collected and updated the Aadhar (Identity) cards of 350 children, ensuring that they were able to access emergency government support through the pandemic.
- A total of 180 girls from the project participated in the self-defence training workshops. The sessions were facilitated by street-connected girls who had previously participated in the self-defence classes.



STREET

NISHA STREET EDUCATOR FOR THE SURE PROJECT

Nisha has been working for our partner CHETNA for the last four years. "My favourite part of the job is the sport and teaching the children. They want to study but due to the financial crisis they have to work – and sometimes I feel helpless. My greatest achievement is when a child performs better in their life as a result of the life skills we teach. My hope is that the children learn and come forward and that they do something for themselves in the future."

Emily Malcolm, Toybox's Programme Manager for India reflects on how the project has been impacted by the pandemic over the last year:

"The project's sport activities were normally held outside in large groups, however when the first lockdown hit it was necessary for the team to develop games that could be played inside or in a smaller space, with fewer people. When the project activities were taken online, the team found that some of the children initially lacked knowledge and experience of using smart phones to undertake the educational activities. Also, understandably not all children from the project had regular access to a phone, which impacted their ability to participate.

The lockdown and subsequent lack of work in Delhi caused many families in the city, including those with children attending the project, to migrate back to rural areas and project staff have learned that six of these have since got married. The additional financial burden faced by children and their families at this time has meant that some of the children have had to focus their time on trying to earn money and have had less time to focus on their studies or attending the project activities."

Paul Oxley is the Vicar of St Mark's MK in Milton Keynes and a Toybox Ambassador. Here he offers his personal reflection on the incredible role Toybox partners fulfil on a daily basis.

On the 12th February a remarkable woman named Pip Hare crossed the floating finish line of the Vendee around the world yacht race. Revered as being one of the toughest challenges on the planet, the Vendee pits sailor against sea and solitude in a race to circumnavigate the globe single-handedly in a 60ft yacht. Of course, there are idyllic moments of cruising among leaping dolphins through the tropics while watching the sunset...but there is also the prospect of 100 days alone at sea, dwarfed by massive waves, repetitive re-hydrated food and ice growing on your eye-lashes.

After she finished, I heard Pip being interviewed and congratulated by a radio news host. At one point, the interviewer asked, "What was the most dangerous moment?" Thinking for a while, Hare responded, "I guess there was a moment when the rudder broke around Point Nemo."

Now, I'm no sailor, but the rudder breaking anywhere sounds fairly troublesome to me. What makes the story truly jaw-dropping though is to discover where 'Point Nemo' actually is.

It is essentially the 'Oceanic point of inaccessibility', the point in the ocean furthest from land – or help. Hare went on to explain that, "At that point, I was closer to the astronauts on the International Space Station than I was to any land."

Fortunately for Hare, though unable to flag down a passing satellite for roadside assistance, she was tooled with the resources, training and experience to patch up the boat and complete the race.

However, her story got me thinking; what must it feel like to be that far from help?

The truth is, as you know, unfortunately, I don't think this level of fear or isolation is unique to global sailors. And that it is in fact possible to experience Point Nemo despite being surrounded by people.

I imagine a street child experiences 'Point Nemo' as they glance around a bustling and noisy street wondering where they might sleep, how they might eat and if the sensation of safety will ever be something they will experience.

What always strikes me about Toybox's partners on the ground is their tremendous levels of empathy. They all understand what it must be like to be a child who suddenly finds themselves a million miles from help without the ability or resources to fix things for themselves. Inspired by this, they jump in boats and row towards the stricken. To sit together on

the curbside, to help find safer sleeping spots, to play games, visit, provide food, give masks and sanitiser, to apply for birth certificates, to give medical assistance, to ensure access to education and companionship... these are the pre-emptive

miracles of love performed every day in order that no child finds themselves adrift without sight of hope.

To me, each one of these moments (as told throughout this magazine) are jaw-droppingly beautiful and inspirational stories which deserve celebrating.

Toybox produces a quarterly prayer guide. If you would like to join us as we pray for our work around the world, sign up at www.toybox.org.uk/pray today.

