

Project MedRangers

Sustainable Development Goals that the project addresses: Goal 3: Good Health & Well-Being; Goal 4: Quality Education; Goal 5: Gender Equality; Goal 10: Reduced Inequality; Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the goals

Aim of the Project: Good health and well-being for all: Combatting medical malpractice through education and improving health outcomes in 5 villages in the Mulshi/Kolvan Valley.

A human-centered, self-sustaining project model: A human-centered approach (by using design-thinking techniques, being inclusive of the stakeholders during the solution creating, testing, getting feedback, improving and implementing processes of the project) will be used to create a self-sustaining project model (the aim is that it will eventually operate independently of us). Instead of a paternalistic approach, *we use scientific and legal education to empower and equip people to make independent and informed decisions about their health*. This encourages people to suspect medical malpractice, combat superstitions and take a second opinion from doctors. We facilitate external training for ASHAs for *sustainability*, thereby strengthening 'the people' and 'system'.

Disease-prevention workshops: By running Disease-workshops, we intend to raise awareness on the causes, symptoms and preventative measures of diseases that are rampant in the valley (eg. Dengue: many villagers do not know that Dengue-carrying mosquitoes breed and lay eggs in containers of clean water; Anaemia - the prevalence of this disease is high among villagers, yet its characteristics aren't widely known; as we discovered in a survey among villagers, many of them had symptoms which could suggest anaemia).

COVID 19 response: With COVID-19 pandemic new challenges arose in the access to medical information. We created an informational graphic which would catch the attention, yet show important reminders about the way in which it's necessary to behave during a coronavirus outbreak. By means of social media we could access villagers without creating additional danger. Another session included workshops for staff living in villages regarding COVID-19 vaccines - how do vaccines work, what are the types of vaccines and how they can access vaccines.

Informational videos: As pandemic made it impossible to interact directly with villagers, the information had to be passed by means of social media. We prepared videos which could be sent through private passages to ASHA workers as well as villagers. We prepared a video about diabetes - causes, symptoms and prevention as well as about healthcare schemes. The latter aimed to inform about available governmental schemes, what they cover and how to access them.

Helping ASHA workers: ASHA workers are primary medical contact for most of the villagers, but the pandemic creates new challenges we aimed to help with. In order to get a sense of a real need of ASHA workers we prepared and conducted via phone surveys regarding their work and their needs. Results allowed us to better understand their necessities. Next we contacted an NGO which was ready to conduct external training for them about primary help for COVID-19 patients. Lastly, we prepared a fundraising campaign in order to get an amount needed to conduct the training.

First Aid Training and Practice: Provide villages with first aid training and practicing first aid drills in order to better enable people in the valley to provide medical aid to one another during times of need and emergencies (when medical facilities such as ambulance and field workers get delayed).

Improving menstrual hygiene in the valley: Use different mediums (workshops, street plays, etc.) to educate people in the Mulshi-Kolvan valley about menstrual health. Provide pads at subsidized rates to improve menstrual hygiene in the valley. Enabling access to existing Government resources: Find and align relevant existing government schemes relating to health with our project in order to further our aims, mobilise more people and raise more funds.

Highlights from your experiences so far: We aimed to create a bond with local communities in order to make our sessions more engaging and therefore informative. One of the ways in which we achieved that were sessions with elements of theatre, dance and workshop takeaways in Marathi. We conducted 6 off-campus workshops and 2 for staff working on-campus. We actively engaged with two primary schools and the Sadhana self-help group frequently to raise awareness about topics such as heart health, nutrition, oral health, anaemia, COVID-19 vaccines and first aid for anemia based fatigue. On top of that we used online means of communication to contact community members while lowering the risk of coronavirus transmission. We were able to educate through graphics, presentations and videos. We were able to consult with various medical doctors: We visited a hospital in Paud and asked the doctors questions about the availability and quality of medical facilities in the Mulshi-Kolvan valley. We visited Saathi NGO and met with Dr. Arun Gadre, a gynecologist, and an activist against medical malpractice and medical negligence with whom we discussed instances and possible causes of medical malpractice. We visited the Prayas NGO and clinic to get to know more about HIV awareness and treatment in India. Dr. Shirish, a senior researcher working there, told us about the lack of sex education, as well as steps to take in order to maintain mental health. We talked about various topics such as consent and counseling as well. We visited a hospital in Paud and asked the doctors questions about the availability and quality of medical facilities in the Mulshi-Kolvan valley. We express gratitude to [Dr. Gadre, Umra Omar \(UWC Alum/founder of Safari Doctors\)](#), [Katyayni Sethi \(World Bank Consultant\)](#), [Maria Ines \(Member of UWC Board and Medical Doctor\)](#) and [Prayaas \(NGO and HIV Clinic\)](#) for sharing their experiences in the Public Health field. We have connected with Jumpstart Outdoors and Vivo Healthcare, two organisations that will help us arrange COVID-specific ASHA worker first-aid and medical training, bolstering their capacity to help the villagers. The Family Planning Association of India will help us organise Health camps in these areas in the future.

Funds: Transportation to the locations was covered by our school, printing facilities were provided by the school, language support (Translators) were provided by our school, equipment to conduct first-aid sessions and distribute kits.

Outcomes and impact of the project: We actively engaged with two primary schools and the Sadhana self-help group frequently to raise awareness about topics such as heart health, anaemia, nutrition, oral health, first aid for anemia based fatigue, COVID-19 vaccines. We are really happy to say that our workshops reached around 250+ people directly and 800 people indirectly since most people, especially mothers, share their knowledge with their family and friends.

Successes: We successfully conducted education sessions, for which we received positive feedback from the attendees. We also collected information through three surveys for ASHA workers, villagers and Public health experts. about medical malpractice, medical negligence, patient's rights, health care schemes available in Maharashtra and India. We also learnt about methods of improving the healthcare system in India. We managed to contact ASHA workers and try to address their needs. In addition, we collected first hand information from doctors in the local Paud hospital about trends and ambulance services in the area. Moreover, we collected second hand information about HIV awareness,sex education, gender sensitivity, and consent in India. A proof of our education sessions was seen when we witnessed the staff of our school (some of our stakeholders) wear masks and gloves after the announcement of the COVID-19 Pandemic.We successfully delivered first aid training for the Sadhana self-help group, who would like to teach first aid to their friends and family members as well. These practices will help sustain our project. When there wasn't anyone who could present in language villagers felt comfortable with, we used theatre and arts as means of spreading knowledge. After the pandemic outbreak, with the help of stakeholders and social media platforms we managed to contact communities and present information in a digital, yet interesting form. A school extracurricular club, MedSoc, is dedicated to continue our efforts after we graduate, ensuring sustainability.

Failures: Some of the educational sessions couldn't be delivered at the beginning of the pandemic but later we were able to solve this issue. We didn't manage to collect the amount needed to conduct external training for ASHA workers. This is because according to our school rules, the only audience targeted in the fundraiser are alumni, students and their parents. However, we aim to retry this in ongoing months using a different approach to the fundraising campaign.

The knowledge/ learning we gained through the project: We learned about the various forms of medical negligence and medical malpractice that goes unnoticed in day to day lives. While working on this project, we had the realisation that our will to contribute back to the community is not enough. We must work for what is desired by our stakeholders and not what we deem fit for them. When needed, our team has let our ideas go. It has made us aware of our own empathy, and showed us the power of being mindful. We learned how to work effectively and collaborate as a team. We learned about the importance of public healthcare in rural areas. We learned how important reliable information is during the global health crisis. We learned how to overcome challenges using digital skills to access local communities.

The skills gained through the project: creating PowerPoint which were presented in language familiar to the audience, effectively communicating with stakeholders (using online methods of communication as well), basics of the human-centred design approach, video editing, basics of methods of social media marketing in order to raise funds.

