



COVID-19: VOICES FROM INDIA



In face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Scort has reached out to Young Coaches all over the world to give them a platform to share their experiences and challenges.

India, 16. June 2020

In 2013 and 2014, the FCSA educated 29 Young Coaches in Mumbai, India and conducted a Follow-up in 2018. India's cities are highly populated and following guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus is challenging. Three Young Coaches – all working with kids in the slums of Mumbai – told us about their experiences and how they support their communities in the time of COVID-19.

“The moment the OSCAR Foundation had started distributing food to those in need, many others – seeing our work – also started to distribute food.” Young Coach Govind from Cuffe Parade, a slum in Mumbai, tells us. He is very excited his actions have inspired others to support his community. Under normal circumstances, he works as an executive assistant, managing OSCAR's Young Leader's Programme. They use football as a tool to deliver education and life skills sessions to children and youth, with the goal of creating role models in their community. Govind found his passion for football through OSCAR and has become a role model for many children. Now, he passes on his passion for the sport to kids who are growing up in a slum just like he did.

India, one of the most populated countries in the world, has implemented restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus after the first COVID-19 cases had been reported. This includes school closures, no public transport, and closures of restaurants and non-food shops. As many of those living in slums are working in the informal sector and on daily wages, the consequences of the lockdown are an extreme challenge. Many people are now left without an income and unable to support themselves and their families.

Young Coach Amruta, who is currently not able to do her volunteer work as she is writing on her PhD thesis, worries about the children. As they live in a slum, she knows they struggle with a lack of food and a lack of space: “The houses are too small, so the children can't stay at home and have to go out”, she tells us. As a physical education teacher, one of her main concerns is the children's physical and mental health, because “being home will not make you fit”. As children have a lot of energy, staying at home in a small space is particularly challenging for many.

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© Govind: Distributing food packages to families in need



Gulafsha, who founded her own NGO “Dreaming in a Slum”, lives in Dharavi, one of Asia’s largest slums, home to around one million inhabitants on only 2.2 km². Due to its densely populated areas it is categorised as a hotspot, which means the whole area has been sealed off by the government. “The major concern is that we know that people are suffering, but we cannot help them.”

Despite the lockdown, Gulafsha is trying to make herself useful where she can and organises food packages for the girls she usually coaches on weekends. This is what she can do at the moment, as all sport activities are banned. Her focus now is to be a good role model and teach children how to abide by the government guidelines.



© Gulafsha: Distributing food packages



“The houses are too small, so the children can’t stay at home and have to go out. I am concerned about their physical and mental health.”

Despite the challenges the Young Coaches and their communities are facing, the overall atmosphere seems to remain positive. Maintaining a positive outlook is integral, especially since adjusting to the government guidelines is particularly challenging in a slum: as not every household has water access to cook or wash their hands, many locals are forced to queue in the street for the communal water tap, and thus violating the official guide-

lines. “So, you see, social distancing is near impossible here”, Govind explains.

“The police are very strict nowadays. Especially, in our slum community”, he tells us. “They are patrolling regularly and if local residents are caught in the streets, the consequences can be severe.” Gulafsha had similar experiences. One morning a local vendor was beaten by the police after she bought bread from him.

Apparently he did not have the permission to do so but did it nevertheless. The Young Coach understands the difficult position the police are in, but also the situation of the vendors.

Even though the Young Coaches’ focus has shifted to food distributions and staying healthy, their activities are not forgotten: To keep in touch with the kids, Govind and other coaches from the OSCAR Foundation have started to send daily workout instructions to kids, “but most children do not have smartphones. When they do, however, there is a great response!”.



“Stay safe. Try to help others, but make sure you are safe first.”

The strategy now is to collect the phone numbers of the parents and convince them to let their children use their phone for educational purposes. In her position as a physical education teacher, Amruta teaches her students through live-stream classes. While she is glad, she can keep teaching her lessons, she is looking forward to going back on the ground.

Gulafsha is also considering starting to use online education as a way to offer activities to children. But for them, the immediate

challenge is still COVID-19 and to support their community while looking after themselves and their families. As Gulafsha puts it herself: “Stay safe. Try to help others, but make sure you are safe first.”

We thank all our Young Coaches for their ongoing commitment and work during this time! #TogetherWeInspire

For more information on the project in India: [click here](#).



© Amruta: Online lessons with her students