

Lucknow Youth Conference



Group Picture of the Lucknow Youth Conference 2022.

Background

Let's Make A Difference (LMAD) connected with the Sarthak Foundation in October, 2021. This was made possible by Viterra India Pvt. Ltd. - the corporate entity associated with both the organizations for their CSR projects. After understanding the work done by Sarthak for the underprivileged youth of Lucknow, the LMAD family felt this could be turned into an opportunity for collaboration and mutual benefit.

An initial two-day trip was made by two of the Fellows to finalize the venue, caterer and other such necessities. Along with this they also interacted with Mrs Kshama Hastak - the founder of Sarthak Foundation and Mrs. Rakhee Panjwani - the principal of Study Hall Educational Foundation. This helped the team understand the mindset and problems of the participants coming for the conference.



Tanishk and Chirag with Mrs. Rakhee Panjwani.

The Lucknow Youth Conference

The team of six Fellows along with the course convener and two volunteers from Ahmednagar and Mumbai set out to make this program happen from 24 - 27 February 2022. The conference was hosted at the Jaipuria Institute of Management for 303 participants from Sarthak foundation and 24 participants from Study Hall Educational Foundation. One of the highlights was that out of 327 participants 60 percent were girls, this helped the team understand patriarchal problems in this part of society first hand while also sensitizing others about them. Along with this many young muslim men and women also took part in the conference. For the first time LMAD has hosted a conference of this

nature for students from urban poor backgrounds, the whole of this was a true learning experience of hosting dynamic programmes across the country.



Guests, Fellows and a participant lighting the lamp.

The Lucknow Youth Conference began with a short inauguration ceremony hosted by the volunteers. The ceremony was graced by Mr Manek Gupta - MD of Viterra India Pvt. Ltd. and Mrs Kshama Hastak. The ceremony started with the Fellows presenting the iconic Haere Mai dance, followed by the speakers addressing the gathering. Mrs. Kshama expressed how this conference was a long-standing project for the Sarthak foundation; it was a culminating moment for all who were present as this was the largest gathering of students from the Sarthak Foundation.

Towards the end, Mr Gupta spoke about how his first conference in the year of 1999 was a turning point in his life. He urged all the participants to grasp the most they could in the coming three days as the learnings offered by this conference were truly priceless. He thanked both the organizations for making this conference happen for the first time in Uttar Pradesh, in his home city of Lucknow. The last activity for the day was a group discussion in which the participants introduced themselves to their respective group leaders.



Quiet Time and the Conscience Diary are our friends for life - following this core narrative of the IoC-LMAD philosophy, the participants were introduced to the practice of Quiet Time post breakfast on the next day. The first experience of a person sitting alone quietly is an interesting one and this conference was no exception. All of the participants spread out in the campus, peacefully introspecting and writing in their diaries. Following this, they were introduced to the core values of Purity, Honesty, Unselfishness and Love (PHUL). The Fellows added their own learnings of being associated with LMAD and their experience of being a fellow for the past three and a half months. The 'My Vision' exercise was crucial for the students of this background as one of their major concerns was difficulty in differentiating between passion and profession.

Following the same structure, the remaining days had various elaborate sessions based on important aspects of the core values, Quiet Time, career, habits and how discipline stands at the foundation of everything. Another crucial issue of this youth gathering was their relation with their families, which were caused by the economic burden and the inherent orthodox beliefs borne by them.



Takeaways

The team for the Lucknow Youth Conference was limited to 7 in number, but without any hesitation all of the volunteers held group discussions, independently leading the eight groups. The experience was an enriching one for all the volunteers as many participants came ahead and shared. Various participants emotionally put across their problems at home, various social issues causing trouble to them and how through this conference they aspire to improve on these fronts.

Usually in all the conferences hosted by LMAD, the team slowly builds a narrative thus making the participants more comfortable to share. As opposed to this in the Lucknow Youth Conference, the sharing was highly flowing, sometimes stretching to one hour instead of the designated 20 minutes.

Within the timeframe of this conference, the team also got an opportunity to interact with the volunteer team of Sarthak Foundation over dinner and gain insight into their backgrounds and work. The LMAD team also interacted with the local volunteers in the city of Lucknow.



Group Discussion at Lucknow Youth Conference

Conclusion

The conference concluded on a joyous note. Many students from Sarthak Foundation presented the LMAD team with tokens of their gratitude. As the participants mingled with the volunteers after the end of these four days, many of them expressed interest in getting connected with LMAD as volunteers.

“Maine kai baar dusre ke baare mein ye socha hai ki ye kaisa hai aur ye kitne jhoot bolta hai. Par aaj jab maine khud se pucha tab mein sochne laga ki mein khud kitna honest hu?” - A participant

Annexure I

Various sharings from the participants are included in this annexure. Their realizations are a crucial factor towards building a more dynamic programme in the coming future.

1. *“Mein bahut saare jhoot bolti hu. Aaj jo saare topics batae gaye, uspe se mein honesty pe sabse zyada focus kiya hai. Mein mere ek jhoot ko chupane ke badaulat kitne saare alag alag jhoot bolti hu, is darr se ki vo vala jhoot na khule. Magar uske bawajud bhi mere kitne sare jhoot khul gaye hai.”*
2. *“Maine kai baar dusre ke baare mein ye socha hai ki ye kaisa hai aur ye kitne jhoot bolta hai. Par aaj jab maine khud se pucha tab mein sochne laga ki mein khud kitna honest hu? Maine ye cheez realize ki hai ki jaise jaise mein bada ho raha hu, mein zyada jhoot bolne lag ahu, aur mere parents ko bhi ab mujh pe vishwas nahi hai. “*
3. *“Aaj sir ne jo 4 qualities batai, uspe maine socha aur unke baare mein ek ek line likhi hai. For me- purity is a mind without negative thoughts, honest is a person without regrets, unselfishness is a gesture of kindness, and love is a feeling of forgiving.”*
4. *“Mere mummy papa mujhe bahut datt te the. Mujhe hamesha aisa lagta tha ki vo mujhe pyaar nahi karte. Par 2 saal pehle muzhe ek bohot badi bimari ka samna karna pada- hysteria ka. Tab maine dekha mere mummy papa mujhe bachane ke liye kya kya kar rahe the. Unhone mujhe bachane ke liye sab kuch kiya. Hala ki mein ek aise parivar se nahi hu ki mere mummy papa mujhpe itne jyada paise laga sake, meri mummy ne uska sab kuch muzhpe laga diya. Usne uski sari jewellery bech ke muzhe sahi kiya. Toh mein ye samajh gayi hu ki agar niswarth pyaar karna hai toh mujhe mere mummy papa se hi karna hai. ”*