



Enabling children & youth with 21st Century skills & competencies to be better prepared for life.



Fly Higher - FHI Promoting Weekend Volunteering

It's safe to say, we've come a long way. Who would've possibly thought? The thought of two like-minded strangers' fortuitous meeting in the streets of Bangalore, in itself a cocoon, unfurling into a vast, beautiful family helping able children leave their cocoons to bloom and fly higher. What better way than to enable young minds to bring the best out of themselves in a search for making a change in the community?

November of 2018, Srirampura, Bangalore, a humble yet fruitful beginning. An event for 30 primary school girls kicked off a wonderful mission of helping children bring to reality their ambitions and dreams for the future. These weekend events saw the creation of a platform where students, graduates and working professionals from different walks of life would eventually come together to shape the aspirations and talents of children with the learnings from their experiences and backgrounds.

Not long after, FHI conducted its second event in Jalahalli, Bangalore with 50 volunteers! This common ambition and wavelength not only brought them together during events but also helped them create indestructible bonds for the future extending into their social and professional lives. The passion of our still nascent family of volunteers and the radiant innocence of the children proved to be rather infectious as FHI saw chapters being opened by volunteers themselves in Delhi, Chennai and towards the end of 2018, being a nationwide tightly knit family over 15 cities across India!

Our family of over 1700+ volunteers now spanning across 31 cities helps bring a difference to the lives of over 6500 children across the nation. We strive to give wings to children by instilling the crucial fundamentals of having a balanced and successful life; life skills. Sticking to our roots, Fly Higher organizes themed events across the country during weekends focusing on a particular life skill, all inculcated in children in the form of games and fun activities, leaving both a lasting impact and a personal touch. Our events are realised through our volunteers and coordinators' hard work and coordination behind the scenes, before and after events.

As humanity slowly sees the gruelling pandemic out, our desire to reconvene and conduct more events grows stronger by the day. In hopes of further developing this beautiful relationship of synergy between the volunteers and children to further our goal of enabling the young generation, we gauge the motivation behind the volunteers' participation in weekend volunteering and look back at some beautiful moments from their time with the children in events.

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Weekend Volunteering

Weekend volunteering, in Fly Higher's context, occurs in the form of one or more events conducted per month in cities nationwide. These events are conducted in the form of themed projects identifying a series of fun and developmental activities focused on instilling life skills in underprivileged children housed in various schools and orphanages, all with the careful consideration discussion of our coordinators and volunteers.

Our volunteers have and continue to be the building blocks and driving forces of FHI and its goals. From establishing new chapters in cities, volunteering and leading events to partaking in activities like blogging & participating in online events, our volunteers form the quintessential part of it all. They are the torchbearers. The harbingers of change.

Volunteering, even by dedicating time for an event once a month, is an experience both special and personal. Weekend volunteering is a convenient opportunity for one to feel like a hero, bringing about social change and personal rejuvenation. An escape from what most would consider a mundane lifestyle, committing oneself to such events allows the inflow of fresh perspectives and information of the issues concerning a different environment altogether.

There are a plethora of benefits this brings to people, from developing social sensitivity, a sense of gratitude and collaboration to improving self-esteem among several other aspects. Weekend volunteering also enables a test of oneself in an environment different from their usual, acting as the window to what's beyond their bubble and strengthen their link with the marginalized community and volunteers from other backgrounds.

In this newsletter, we wish to dive deeper gauging the motivation and experiences of our weekend volunteering program. Through a small case study, we intend to capture this by understanding what it means to them, why they do it, make note of their feedback and lessons from their experience as a whole.

Through our learnings, we intend to focus on satisfying those motivations through different types of volunteer activities & approach while taking the goal of FHI forward.



Our Process

The Theme

Nationally, a theme is decided for each month focusing on a specific life skill

STEP
01



STEP
02

Guidelines
A document with theme guidelines and suggested activities is prepared

The Date

Event date is fixed and a partner school/orphanage/shelter/home is approached

STEP
03



STEP
04

Coordination
National-Regional-City-Event Coordinators engage with the volunteers to take up activities and responsibilities

The Big Day

Event conducted! Life skills instilled through various activities.

STEP
05



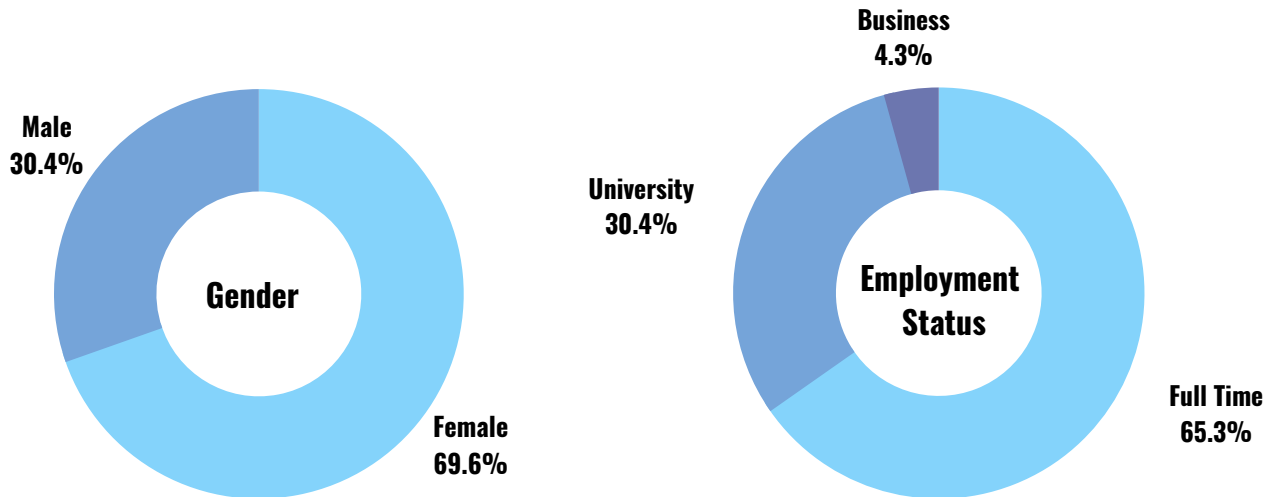
STEP
06

Feedback
Feedback is gathered from children, schools and volunteers and data is recorded.

Mini Case Study on Weekend Volunteering

Methodology: For this activity, we reached out to our veteran volunteers spread across the country. We ran them through a series of questions covering their experiences, stand-out memories and areas FHI has room to grow in. Further feedback was captured in the form of survey responses. Our case study comprises of three main aspects:

1 Volunteer Profile



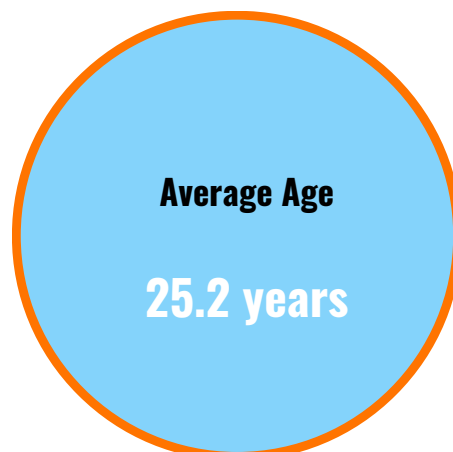
From university students to doctors, dance instructors to physiotherapists, our events have brought people from all walks of life, who despite being different in their background, schools of thought, age and profession among other things, unite together for the common goal of making children's futures brighter. We are delighted to present the diversity of our nationwide family.

Industry/Education

IT Marketing Dietitian Physiotherapy Student Dance Choreographer
Architect Interior Designing Accounting and Taxation IT Services &
Consulting Fashion Sustainability Ecommerce Paramedical Hospitality
Teaching Design Public Health Masters Market Research Culinary
Master in Computer Science Chartered accountancy M.com

Location

Cuttack Mumbai Pune Jodhpur Kochi Tirupati Bangalore Katihar New Delhi
Chennai Kolkata Jammu Bhubaneswar Pondicherry Visakhapatnam Mysore



2 Volunteer Interviews

We believe that improvement and learning never ends. Conducting interviews with our volunteers gave us a wonderful opportunity to catch up and reminisce about the wonderful time we had during events. Parallely, it enabled us to learn about their standout memories, learnings and their feedback; helping us gain insight and oversight about our operations and room for improvement. We share with you bits of the exchanges we had reaching out to our veteran volunteers. The following highlights glimpses of the fruitful and heartwarming interactions. Our volunteers have been the torchbearers of change, themselves.

Q1) What made you want to volunteer for FHI?

- I got to know about FHI through social media. As I enjoy spending time with kids and I had volunteered earlier for similar organizations, I wanted to find out more about FHI and be associated with it. After getting in touch with the core team in Bangalore, a group of friends and I got together to start a team for FHI in Mumbai. I was also a City Co-Ordinator for FHI for 6 months and it brought me closer to the core team and FHI's core values. -- **Prachi, Mumbai.**
- I'm an architect by profession. I've gotten to meet many different types of people from different backgrounds. Through people from rural areas, I understood the core problems a majority of the people in our country are facing. I got to know that there are so many people in society that do not get the conveniences we take often for granted, we are very privileged. Through FHI I try to contribute to society. A way of helping and guiding them, so that one day they can actually be someone they aspire to be. -- **Devashree, Pune.**

Q2) How does weekend volunteering work well for you?

- I would like to put it this way, it's a good thing that I get to do something different and impactful on a weekend instead of my usual routine. When I like something, I give it my 100%. These events on a weekend help me divert all my efforts to something I love so much. -- **Punit, Jodhpur.**

Q3) How convenient is it to work with FHI?

- The team at FHI does a good job planning the events. Care is taken to ensure it is all very well organized and executed. Everyone gets a chance to contribute. Everyone helps. It's a great show of teamwork. And this entire experience to some extent enhances our skills as well. -- **Akanksha, Delhi.**

Q4) What do you enjoy about your volunteering with FHI?

- The energy at FHI is infectious. Although there is an age gap for me, when all the volunteers get together as a team, interactions are very easy and casual. To add to that, the kids really respect and adore you. Their satisfaction and smile bring us all together. -- **Dheeraj, Bangalore.**

Q5) Have you learnt anything new during your volunteering/gained any new skills?

Management skills and the art of coexistence with different kinds of people. -- **Pankaj, Hyderabad.**

Q6) What is one standout skill you acquired from this experience which you can use elsewhere?

- I must admit FHI helped me bring out my leadership skills. I didn't know I had it in me, in fact, I was lacking confidence in my initial days. As and when I took up more responsibility and attended more events, I got more confident. -- **Afshin, Mumbai.**

Q7) What is your understanding of the events conducted by FHI? What does FHI want to achieve through this? Why do you think these events are important?

- When you say life skills, it's the basic ability to put yourself out there and deal with real-life scenarios. Schools don't focus on that. They surely prepare you academically, but they do not put the time and effort into making you a good person. Some of the activities at FHI like communication skills, thinking out of the box, and critical thinking are all superb ways to teach them those essential skills. Through all those interactions and activities, they get to learn from us, and we from them. -- **Aparna, Bangalore.**



Afshin, Mumbai



Shilpi, Jodhpur



Devashree, Pune



Prachi, Mumbai

2 Volunteer Interviews continued

Q8) Is there a memory from your time as a volunteer so far that stands out for you?

- There was this time when we had been to YMCA Boy's orphanage where we had organized a Xmas party for the children. We had taught children to make Christmas cards for their caretakers and friends. At the end of the event, a young boy walked up to me and handed over a card that he had made, and wished me Merry Christmas. This gesture is etched in my memory. And to make it even better, when we had gone to that school again after a few weeks for a plantation drive, he still remembered me and that he had made a card for me. -- **Prachi, Mumbai.**
- What touches my heart the most is when at the end of every event, kids walk up to me and ask "Didi, aap fir kab aaoge?" -- **Afshin, Mumbai.**

Q9) What difference (in your understanding) are you making to our members/ beneficiaries?

- I feel like I am getting reminded that there's hope and humanity. We collectively feel that we are not the only ones but a whole group of people who are willing to make a difference. -- **Ranjana, Kochi.**

Q10) Would you recommend volunteering with FHI? If yes, why?

- Yes, absolutely. Children are the biggest hope of every generation and they deserve all the help and support in the world. -- **Payal, Hyderabad.**

Q11) Did it match your expectations? Do you think things could be better? If so, what?

- FHI is doing fine. Even in the pandemic year 2020, they ensured the volunteers stayed connected and had something to learn, from the comforts of their homes. I hope to see more of such sessions in the future as well. -- **Aparna, Bangalore.**
- Maybe the frequency of the events can be increased once we resume. Or have some online sessions with the kids until then if the logistics permit. -- **Akanksha, Delhi.**
- We should conduct activities that are follow-ups from the previous events. Kids always learn and come up with questions. We should help facilitate that by going deeper into the topics that we introduce in the previous sessions. Have an activity as a 'fun exam' where there is a recap of the previous event lessons. So that instead of it just being a fun activity, it can help for longer retention. -- **Shilpi, Jodhpur.**

Q12) Why do you invest time volunteering on the weekend vis-a-vis doing something else?

- To go out of my comfort zone. Bring a smile on someone's face and experience the satisfaction I get from it. -- **Aparna, Bangalore**
- Personally, I take a special interest in learning the social and behavioural aspects of children from various backgrounds. I wanted to have a ground-level understanding of how some of these orphanages and schools' function and the role played by the NGOs in helping them. Life-skills also is a topic I strongly feel for and believe must be provided to every young kid. Working for FHI has given me a perspective on all those prospects. -- **Akanksha, Delhi.**
- I would like to put it this way, it's a good thing that I get to do something different and impactful on a weekend instead of my usual routine. When I like something, I give it my 100%. These events on a weekend help me divert all my efforts to something I love so much. I feel like I'm sowing the seeds for a better future in these children and that's what drives me to these events. If even 5 out of 100 things that we say sits in the mind of these children, Eventually this capacity will rise to 10 and so on reaching a point where children are able to grasp all the ideas we impart on them. -- **Punit, Jodhpur.**



Dheeraj, Bangalore



Punit, Jodhpur



Aparna, Bangalore



Payal, Hyderabad

3

Survey Feedback

The interviews were followed by volunteers filling out surveys. Through the data captured, we intend to bolster our efforts and approach in achieving what has always mattered to us the most: instilling life skills and uplifting children in need.

On a scale of 1-10 how much would you rate FHI's weekend volunteering:

9.6

On a scale of 1-10, how much impact do you feel you are making:

8.3

How many new friends and connections have you made during weekend volunteering:

Avg. 8
per person

On a scale of 1-10, how convenient is it volunteering with FHI:

9.5

How many have you/ or do interact on a regular basis outside of FHI:

3-4 on average

On a personal or professional level, on a scale of 1-10 how much impact have you seen from your learnings from weekend volunteering:

8.9

And lastly....

Would you recommend volunteering with FHI?

A 100% of interviewees responded with a YES!



WHAT I DISCOVERED ABOUT MYSELF BY CHOOSING TO VOLUNTEER

Blog by Volunteer Sneha Pai

I joined Fly Higher in February 2020 - just a month before the country went into lockdown. I must have attended just two of their events, and wasn't half as lucky as many others who have savoured the wholesome experience (as shared by some of the volunteers with whom I got a chance to interact with in my last few projects) as an FHI volunteer. By April 2020, just like the rest, we at FHI had also fully switched to virtual working. The FHI team put tremendous efforts in keeping their activities relevant and us connected with our roles and responsibilities as a volunteer. This virtual engagement brought me much closer to FHI's goals and beliefs. Now, I already feel like a part of FHI's core family although I am yet to meet a lot of my fellow volunteers face-to-face.

After working with a corporation for about 10 years, a pleasant turn of events in my personal life urged me to take a break and give volunteering a chance mostly because that is how I could best enjoy the liberty of committing my time and skills towards someone at my will and convenience. And fortunately, I chanced upon FHI. In just a few months of volunteering, one thing that struck a chord with me is how I began treating my work more like a 'labour of love' and stopped attaching it with any kind of reward. It gave me an insight into how I functioned when the element of reward/ gain was detached from a service that I rendered. I slowly began to realize that I did feel more enriched and fulfilled with this small contribution. I learnt that not everything that I do or experience should have to be about how I am benefiting from it. And in hindsight, I discovered how much I have actually gained from this opportunity and in what way. This sense of accomplishment has opened up a lot of new perspectives for me.

Another crucial learning that I gained as a volunteer was the importance of 'community.' This community is us and it can thrive only because of us. If each one of us believed in serving our community in whatever little way we can, it can make a vast difference. When people from different walks of life come together to work in the betterment of their community, each one brings along with them their knowledge, skill sets, and experience which in turn promotes better connection, cooperation, and teamwork. A sincere and successful venture like this builds trust and strengthens the bond of people. Living in a community like this urges one to be kind, compassionate, and look at the world around in a positive light. And this mindset fosters a heightened sense of interdependence within the community which encourages its overall growth. I was happy to be a part of such a committee that was making a difference.

Now when I look back at my one whole year of volunteering, it has been about opening my mind towards a new way of working, contributing my skills, learning new skills, and being there for my team unconditionally. And the lessons I have learned from this approach have made me grow and become more confident. Serving my community and taking responsibility for my actions has been no less than a soul-searching experience for me. And I hope I find the strength to do more.

Newsletter Team
Siddharth Dash
Sneha Pai
Selvalakshmi M A
Kamal Nahar
Krina Brahmhatt
G Krutika

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