**Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation joins hands with HMD Global to enable online education for children through Nokia smartphones**

*The initiative aims at enabling online education for underprivileged children across rural areas and urban slums, survivors of child exploitation, as well as for first-generation learners of the Banjara community in Jaipur.*

*The donation of new Nokia smartphones, worth over Rs. 1.65 crores, is expected to benefit over 6,000 children across 6 states and 1 Union Territory in India – Delhi, Karnataka, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand.*

**INDIA, 11 March 2021 –** Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation (KSCF), founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, and HMD Global, the home of Nokia phones, have come together to enable online education for underprivileged children in India. As part of this initiative, over 1,740 new Nokia smartphones worth over Rs. 1.65 crores would be distributed to children across rural areas and urban slums, survivors of child exploitation, as well as the first-generation learners of the Banjara community.

The phones have been donated to children who are beneficiaries of two flagship social interventions of KSCF:

1. **Bal Mitra Gram (BMG)**
2. **Bal Mitra Mandal (BMM)**

In addition, the phones will also be distributed to the residents of Bal Ashram, a long-term shelter home near Jaipur for child survivors of exploitation, run by Bal Ashram Trust (Trust), a sister organisation of KSCF. Also, the phones will be given to first generation learners of a Banjara community which lives near the Bal Ashram. Children of this community are presently receiving non-formal education in the 11 Banjara Educational Centres run by the Trust.

The donation across these programmes will benefit over 6,000 children belonging to marginalized families across Delhi, Karnataka, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand, whose education was disrupted due to the closure of schools on account of the pandemic.

**Impact of Lockdown due to Covid-19 and Economic Disruption on Poor Rural Households with Special Reference to Children: Study by KSCF**

During lockdown, KSCF conducted a study on ‘Impact of Lockdown and Economic Disruption on Poor Rural Households with Special Reference to Children’. During the study, a primary survey was carried out with 53 NGOs working with children across the country, and a survey of households from rural areas of five states of India – Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

85% of all respondent NGOs and 89% of NGOs working on the relevant themes (Education, Poverty & Livelihood) felt that school dropouts were likely to increase in the post lockdown period. Also, during the household survey, six percent of the respondents reported that due to their poor financial condition they would not hesitate to withdraw their children from school. Another 14% household respondents stated that they were ‘not sure’ as to what they do. Hence, potentially school going children of 20% households were at the risk of dropping out from schools.

Speaking about the initiative, **Sri. SC Sinha, Chief Executive Officer, KSCF** said:

“*Closure of schools due to lockdown has affected adversely, the access to education of the poor and the marginalised children the most. The education of these children has been disrupted completely as due to non-availability of smartphones, they are not able to access online education. These children having nothing to do may go astray, many of them may become child labour, and some may even get trafficked. Thus, many of them may not go back to school once the schools reopen. Such children, once they have smartphones will be able to access online education and get reconnected with their schools. These phones are likely to be a source of empowerment for them. Once the children are accustomed to the use of phones for educational purposes, they are likely to continue using them for greater learning even when the schools reopen*.”

**Sanmeet Kochhar, Vice President, HMD Global** said**:**

*“When it comes to driving positive social impact, education and skill development for the youth, has always been a key focus area for our CSR efforts in India. Our efforts towards education take inspiration from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) focused on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. We believe that smartphone technology contributes to SDG 4 by enabling unhindered access to educational content, anytime, anywhere.*

*Hon’ble Prime Shri Minister Narendra Modi recently mentioned, that in order to build an ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’, the Indian youth needs self-confidence, which is directly impacted by their education and their skills. We believe that India’s youth should have access to opportunities to educate themselves. Technology is a great facilitator to make this possible.*

*Through our association with Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation, we are keen to play a part in helping our country’s underprivileged children and youth realise their self-confidence through undisrupted access to education.”*

**About Bal Mitra Gram (BMG) and Bal Mitra Mandal (BMM)**

Bal Mitra Gram is a transformative grassroots solution to complex and inter-related problems and issues which adversely affect the protection and well-being of children in rural areas. The programme promotes the best interests of children through child-centric community development. It empowers children to take democratic action to secure their rights by formation of Bal Panchayats (Child Council) and enables parents and other stakeholders to stand up for the rights of the children and build a protective community. It also ensures enrolment of all the children in schools and their access to quality education. A BMG thus creates a safety net around children to protect them from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

The Bal Mitra Mandal programme is an adaptation of the principles of BMG in the urban slum communities.

**About Bal Ashram Trust**

Bal Ashram provides rehabilitation facilities for children who have been rescued from the trap of child labour, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. Many of these children are enrolled in government schools and are receiving formal education. Bal Ashram Trust also runs 11 Banjara Educational Centers in Alwar and Jaipur district of Rajasthan, where more than 400 children continue to receive non-formal education and freshly cooked nutritious mid-day meals. These children belong to the Nomadic Banjara Community and are the first-generation learners. The Banjara Education Centres prepare children of Banjara communities to get linked with mainstream education.

**Nokia smartphones for education across BMG, BMM and Bal Ashram**

KSCF will provide Nokia smartphones to the members of Bal Panchayats of the villages and urban slum communities where the BMG and BMM programmes are operational, after loading relevant educational apps. The phones will be provided to the children only with the consent of parents and the Bal Panchayat members will ensure that all the children in their community derive educational benefit from these phones. KSCF will also provide training to all the children who are given the smartphones on handling them and accessing educational content online responsibly and safely.

Additionally, KSCF will provide Nokia smartphones to children living in the Bal Ashram rehabilitation centre and also to those children who studied in Banjara Education Centres and have already moved to, or are in process of moving to formal education.

**ABOUT KAILASH SATYARTHI CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION**

 Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation (KSCF), founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, envisions a world where all children are free, safe, healthy, in school, and have the opportunity to realise her/his potential. Our mission is to end slavery and child labour and ultimately end violence against children.

 To make our vision of a child-friendly world a reality, we are scaling Mr. Satyarthi’s almost four decades of work at both the grassroots and global policy level. His lessons learned guide the foundation’s work to engage children and youth as part of the solution, build greater collaboration between governments, business and communities, ensure effective national and international laws, scale know-how and successful practice and create partnerships with key stakeholders.

 For more details, visit our website: <http://satyarthi.org.in/>

**About HMD Global**

Headquartered in Espoo, Finland, HMD Global Oy is the home of Nokia phones. HMD designs and markets a range of smartphones and feature phones targeted at a range of consumers and price points. With a commitment to innovation and quality, HMD is the proud exclusive licensee of the Nokia brand for phones and tablets. For further information, see [www.hmdglobal.com](https://www.hmdglobal.com).

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