



GROWING HAPPINESS
GROWING HOPE

“Gardening makes me happy. This garden has been the best teacher I have ever had.”

Shailesh, Age 17

Resident of an Observation Home in Mumbai





Shailesh had never known what it meant to be happy. Trapped in the cycle of drug use, theft and violence, his life was a series of disappointments. After many run-ins with the police he ended up in the Observation Home. Weary, sullen and disinterested in life, Shailesh was reluctant to talk or cooperate with anyone.

Until we took him to the garden! And sure enough, the healing magic of earth and fresh air did the trick.

Shailesh found his nurturing side. And with it a new sense of purpose as he focused on learning to grow – his plants and himself.

Today, Shailesh has a dream for his future.

He is just one of the many children with whom we work closely in gardens built and managed by children in some of the most difficult places to live – children's institutions.

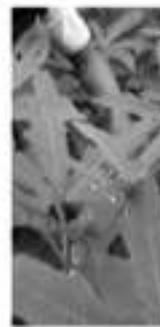
Gardens are a Little Bit Like Life

They need:

Planning
Patience
Attention
Teamwork
Tenderness
Hard work

We learn:

Soil preparation
Germinating seeds
Sowing
Watering
Fertilizing
Using pesticides
Harvesting



Gardens can be Transformative

BEFORE	AFTER
Children are kept locked up with few opportunities to be outdoors	Children are not only allowed outside, they are allowed to get their hands dirty!
Limited numbers of children are involved in any meaningful vocational or employment related activity	Children gain practical knowledge on planning and actually growing a garden, that can lead to future employment opportunities
Little attachment and no sense of belonging or ownership in the institution	Taking responsibility for the plants enhances bonding, helps children to feel like they own something
No opportunities for children to use their energy creatively and productively, nor for them to express feelings of caring and nurturance	Garden works as a therapeutic space for children to channelize their energies more constructively thus reducing aggression and self injurious behaviour
Children display an inability to plan for the future, impulsive behavior, difficulty working in a team, diminished sense of responsibility	Children learn patience, sharing, working in teams and trusting one another, being responsible

A group of children and an adult are sitting on the ground in a garden. The children are wearing blue and white uniforms. The adult is wearing a pink shirt and black pants. They are surrounded by green plants and a brick border. In the background, more children are sitting on the ground, and there are trees and a building.

Opening up about one's past, and imagining a different life is much easier to do once children can stop fighting, resisting, being scared and defensive. We need children to frankly share their stories so that we can understand how to help them have a safer future.

Children in institutions have almost always been through severe trauma of some kind. Over here they have to learn so many hard lessons – to cope, to trust, to love, to laugh and most importantly, to have hope.

The Garden's Other Lessons



Using natural farming methods inculcates a heightened sense of caring, respect and appreciation for the environment. It explains the impact of human behaviour on the planet and its resources. Our gardens have been created by transforming an unused piece of land, recycling organic waste to build the soil and restore its fertility.

Children build the garden beds, plant the seeds, care for the seedlings, fertilize, pull weeds, and harvest, all with minimal help from staff. They learn how to solve problems on their own not only in the garden but in life as well.



In the garden we can interact with the staff more frequently and openly than before - **Dipu Kushwsaha**

Along with the children we also take part in gardening which helps us talk to the children. Gardening has helped children to develop leadership qualities - **ON Tripathy, Matron**

Gardening has given children an avenue to spend time outside, so they are happy. It has given a space for us to mix with them easily and openly. Gardening has developed a sense of sharing and of helping each other - **Hamid Khan, House Master**

Though I have been here for six months, it doesn't feel so long as I keep going out to the garden. When people from outside come and appreciate our garden, we really like it - **Michael Kherwar**

It used to be dirty here. After we started the garden, it's clean and we like it as we get a chance to come out in the open - **Sanni Baiga**





In the garden time slows
down.

You feel
wet earth,
warm sun.

You hear
birds, bees,
your friend's laughter.

You see
seeds grow,
time pass,
your whole life.

In the garden you are
patient,
gentle.

You breathe,
you bloom,
in the garden.



We are indebted to our supporters and friends who contribute to this effort with their money and their time.

Like us they believe that children who have suffered untold grief and trauma, who have endured abandonment, exploitation and violence, and who live daily in distress, need more than anything to heal.

Gardens give children this opportunity.

Your support can change a child's life.