



Howrah, India

Samaritan Mission School (High)

Tackling deprivation in a slum community



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL**
Overcoming
Adversity



TEMPLETON WORLD
CHARITY FOUNDATION



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL
PRIZES**

Table of Contents

- 02 — Introduction**
- 03 — School Profile**
- 04 — Context and Challenge**
- 07 — Expertise and Approach**
- 10 — Outcomes and Results**
- 12 — Key Steps**
- 14 — Advice and Guidance**



The background image shows a school building on the left with a sign that reads 'REBECC SAMAR'. In the foreground, several students are practicing archery on a grassy field. One student in a blue shirt is in the middle ground, and another in a yellow shirt is in the foreground, both holding bows. The scene is set outdoors under a clear sky.

Introduction

Samaritan Mission School (High) is a school located in the Tikiapara slum in Howrah district of West Bengal India. Tikiapara has long been prone to poverty, inadequate sanitation, overcrowded households, poor health, and domestic violence, and is vulnerable to natural disasters. For many years, education was dismissed within the community as families prioritised earning a wage, often asking their children to work alongside them. The school introduced an effective education based on integrating technology, encouraging self-learning, and self-reliance.



Profile:



Country:

India



Region:

Howrah



School type:

Private school



Location area:

Urban



Student population:

2000+



Prize Category:

Overcoming Adversity

“The children who never dreamed of getting out of the slum, now they’re going to England. Within a class, a transformation can be visible.” – Mamoon Akhtar, Founder, Samaritan Mission School (High)



In-depth look

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

Samaritan Mission School (High) is run by the Samaritan Help Mission, a reputed NGO engaged in the all-around development of community people, especially children. The school came into being with a vision to address the community's prevailing issues through education and holistic development.

The school was founded by Mamoon Akhtar – himself a school dropout – with the idea of making students self-reliant and have a future-focused mindset. Beginning with just 6 students in a 600-square-foot room, the school began to grow as it accommodated more students who were at a high risk of dropping out of formal education. The initial fee was 5 Rupees a month, though the school now charges 200.

“The purpose is to ensure that no child leaves education because of money,” said Akhtar. Now, the school has become an English medium higher secondary institution with 2617 students and 82 teachers.

The school believes that technology can introduce students to a wider number of subjects and allow them to experience alternative contexts. Technology, therefore, bridges the learning gap and encourages self-learning. This learning is multi-faceted and often involves students being exposed to the wider community through school trips to banks, post offices, municipal offices, primary health centres and other public service offices.

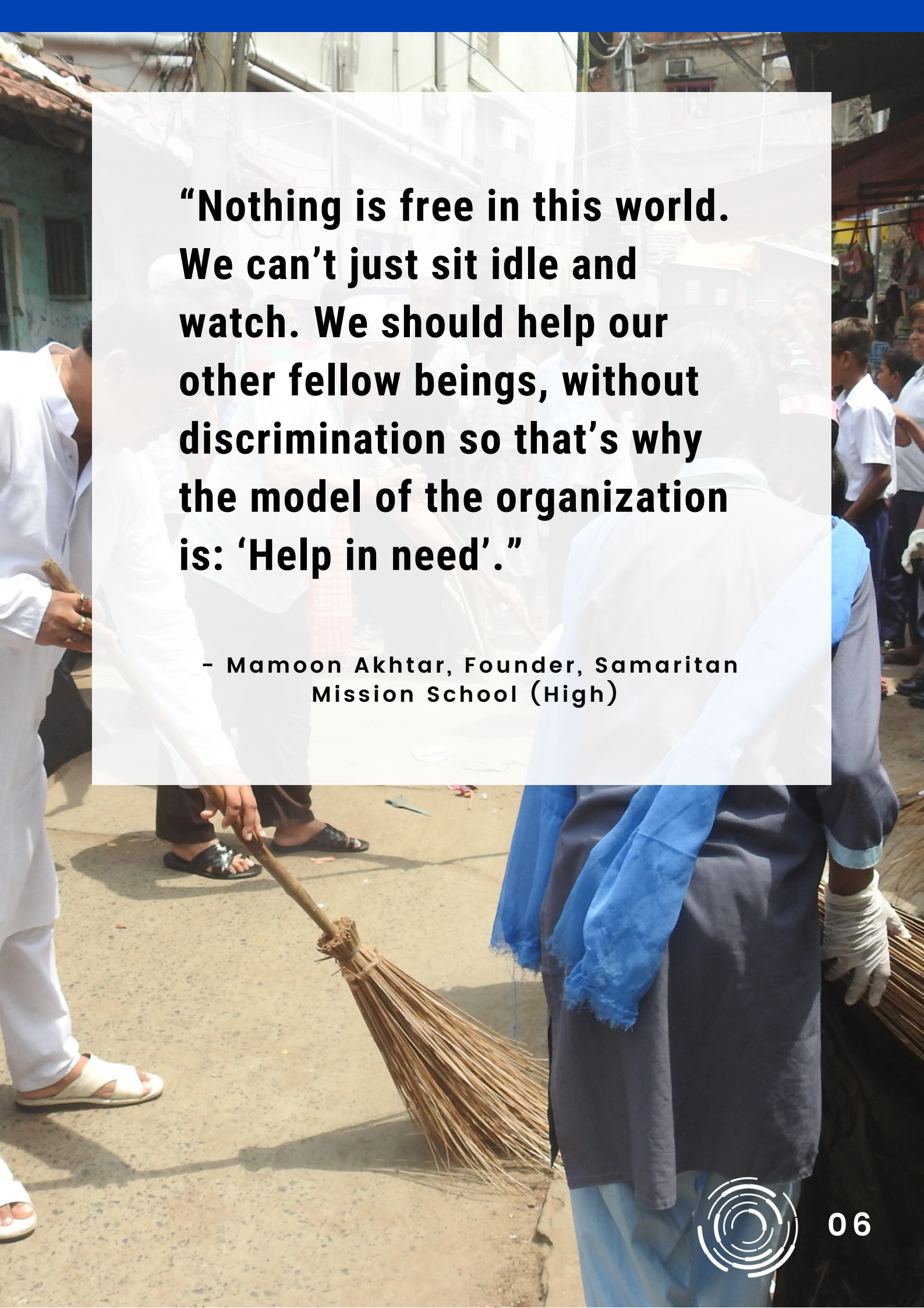


This helps them better understand the different roles in society and pushes them to think of themselves as capable contributors to the community at large.

The school also conducts science workshops, quizzes, and cultural programs to enhance the spirit of learning through co-creation and cooperative learning practices.

One of the biggest challenges came with the religious disharmony that existed within Tikiapara's community, where there was a sense of distance and mistrust, which made it harder for the school to implement some of its projects. Both the man-made and natural hardships within the Tikiapara slum had an adverse impact on the student's education for years. The school's vision was to address these issues through education and all-around development. Samaritan Mission School (High) initiated a dialogue with parents and all other community members to discuss and collaborate on the children's futures.





“Nothing is free in this world. We can’t just sit idle and watch. We should help our other fellow beings, without discrimination so that’s why the model of the organization is: ‘Help in need’.”

- Mamoon Akhtar, Founder, Samaritan Mission School (High)



EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

The first value the school tries to instil is mutual respect and tolerance. “To love another human being who is in need without discrimination,” says Akhtar, explaining that the school was striving for community harmony. “Empowerment process should continue without discrimination, while brotherhood and love should be infused amongst the children,” he said so that the children could one day become global citizens.

The school recognises that it is together that one can achieve their true mission and has made stakeholder engagement a priority from the beginning. Taking initiative through its community development programmes, the school worked to unite people from different socio-economic backgrounds. They also made a concerted effort to get the men involved and helped the slum residents understand the need for communal harmony, as well as measures of survival and the process of development. The school makes sure to identify different stakeholder roles and assigns them their responsibilities.

The school worked hard to ensure everyone performed to the best of their abilities and monitored the stakeholder’s progress from time to time. To address health issues, skill development & livelihood promotion of marginalized communities, the mother organization, Samaritan Help Mission came forward and initiated daycare health centres and skill development programs for vulnerable women as a complementary initiative of the school.

The vocational training focused on matching their core strengths to the most suitable training, such as fashion designing and garment making.



Within that programme, mothers could learn the soft skills to navigate the social aspects of their employment.

Families linked with different government facilities and entitlements to overcome financial barriers which helped their children to access education. As a result, students received scholarships, and parents were progressively able to support the cost of their children's education.

With regard to domestic violence and child marriage, Samaritan Mission School (High) has formed a community development entity with the support of its mother organization. The committee is intervening case to a case basis and plays the role of mediator between the victims and the police. It tried to understand the root causes of the problem and facilitated the respective stakeholders to settle the issue permanently. In the past few years, the rate of domestic abuse in the community has significantly decreased.

The school has adopted a close, inbuilt monitoring system to manage student grievances. Review meetings among teaching and non-teaching staff take place at regular intervals. A surveillance and supporting committee consisting of Samaritan Mission School members, youth clubs, and volunteers was formed to look after families facing health, food and conflict in the community, as these had a mental and emotional effect on students. To implement the school development plan properly and monitor the entire activities an Education Improvement Committee consisting of senior teachers, school management, parents and local governance is functioning actively.





“We don't admit a child, we admit the whole family. This is how [we] transform the whole community.”

- Mamoon Akhtar, Founder, Samaritan Mission School (High)



OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

Since its inception, the school has had a very positive impact on the lives of its students and the local community. As a result of the programme's success, other schools in the Samaritan Mission School area have begun to emulate the holistic educational and community-focused model. Students, parents, and other community members regularly take part in the different school-organised activities and cultural programmes.

The school also organised different festivals throughout the year to develop and sustain communal harmony among the community members. Irrespective of caste, race, or religion, these festivals are organised on the school campus. Parents and people of different socio-cultural beliefs take part in these festivals and greet each other. The activity prompted mutual respect and harmony among all members of the wider community.

Taking part in these school-led activities has helped develop tolerance and a sense of unity within the community, which in turn has allowed people in and out of the school to work together to recover from some of the typical natural disasters, like cyclones and floods. Community members also took to implementing initiatives that addressed different challenges during the COVID period, like providing food to those in the community, using face masks and sanitiser, and maintaining social distancing.

During the lockdown, a considerable number of families had no access to food and drinking water. The school with the support of its mother organization formed 6 youth groups and created 79 volunteers who took initiative to prepare and distribute meals to these families.



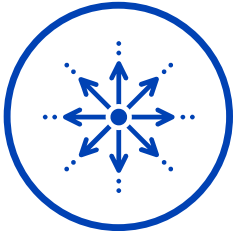
When family members were forced to be isolated, the group members extended their support to take care of the children and helped them to attend school from home without any interruption.

The school was also able to create an even more positive environment for its student and community by addressing issues in group settings. This led to a greater acceptance of other people's religions and a greater understanding of the importance of education. As a result, the school has a student population that is nearly 50% female, with a 98% retention rate, and 100% of students who passed in 10th and 12th grade obtained good scores in their board examinations.

Some of the students have also gone to study abroad in the U.S. and other countries, giving hope to other children from the same background. "The community and its mindset are changing," says Akhtar, reflecting on how the school's efforts have provided children with the chance to better themselves, and that families have become receptive to these opportunities.



Key Steps



OUTREACH ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

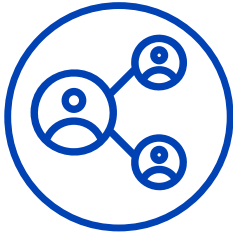
In community meetings at regular time intervals on the importance of education, a considerable number of people changed their outlook on the value of education. With the help of community volunteers, the school's enrolment has increased enormously.



INVESTMENT FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY

Community people stepped forward to build and set up the school. They actively took part in the school development plans and encouraged parents to enrol their children without discrimination.





HEALING SOCIAL DIVISIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Samaritan Mission School mitigated social and religious disharmony by encouraging students to build stronger relationships with others in their communities. Often, they would visit representatives and attend self-help groups to better understand community grievances and, with the help of their teachers, would explore solutions.



MINDFULNESS TRAINING

Students were constantly battling social stress and anxiety. To combat this, teachers were trained to blend their teaching sessions with lessons on self-regulation and mindfulness. The school organised sessions like yoga, free body movement exercises, group meditation games, and workshops. Students were guided on emotional regulation and how to express their emotions clearly to others, managing stress levels, and mindfulness, which ultimately helped them to improve their attention in class.



Advice and Guidance

The school believes that its model is easy to replicate, but it is important to reach the community through a grassroots initiative that specifically tackles the issues impacting them the most. This will help to develop trust and bond, allowing the school to achieve expected outcomes that help to overcome both the school's and its community's adversity.

More information

Download the [SamaritanHelpMission_Brochure](#) and watch the [Samaritan Mission School Video](#)

Learn more about their work by watching their event at 2022's T4 World Education Week: [watch here](#)

