

Learning In Fellowship Together: My LIFT Journey of pursuit of better

Knowing yourself and being the best version of yourself is the true wisdom - Surja, LIFT Fellow,
Batch of 2022.

LIFT is the platform that has given me power to uplift myself and become the change for many like me. The experiences as a LIFT fellow will always stay close to my heart and all the people who supported me throughout the year in this fellowship.

I feel blessed to be a LIFT fellow. The very thought that this has been curated exclusively for young persons with experience of care makes me feel proud that I was part of this. It also gives me a sense of responsibility that being the first of its kind, I along with my other fellows need to work hard on making it successful, not only for myself but for all future care leavers.

LIFT helped me grow in every field be it professional or personal. It empowered not only me but other Fellows to act as change-makers and bring the change in the care leaving situation in India.

This blog is a reflection of my transformation and lessons learnt as a LIFT fellow of the first batch. The full one year journey has been a year of working on my ideas, with the focus of creating visibility about care leavers and self growth. Driving the initiation of the care leavers network in the state of UP, with the help of mentors, advocates and the members of state UNICEF office in UP has been my biggest learning experience. Having studied in a Hindi medium school, it was quite a challenge for me to work on the reporting and write the articles in English. But considering this fellowship as my training ground, I started to organize sessions with care leavers and for the Delhi care leavers network and other care leavers from all over India and all this inspired me to do more.

Slowly and gradually, with skills development courses provided by Harappa and my fellowship mentors, and consistent reporting on time, I started building command in English and wrote my very first blog beautifully, that was read by more than 10000 people. My write ups received a good and encouraging response on Youth Ki Awaaz. With support from my mentor, I polished my writing skills and this gave me the zeal to write more and more.

On a personal level, I have been an introverted person since the beginning of the fellowship. But with responsibilities given to me, my leadership skills started building up and I started conversing with other fellows regularly. Today, I feel I have become one of the most vocal fellows of the first batch of LIFT fellows. I am able to anchor webinars and workshops with peers and experts and speak up at any forum. In the last one year of this fellowship, i have not only reached out to children in care homes but also reached out to those who have left care in the entire state of Uttar Pradesh. I have been able to form a network of care leavers from Gautam Budhh Nagar districts of the state, UP with more than 20 members. Not only did I connect these

CLs to each other, but I am also able to reach out to individuals to act as mentors for these youth in their journey of life. I learnt to be consistent in my work.

LIFT is a platform which led me to embrace the challenges of my life as an opportunity for self growth and transformation. This opportunity supported me and brought the best version of myself and overcame insecurity. LIFT has shown me to find my purpose in life, for my own growth as well as others by being a voice for care leavers. Through LIFT, I learned to live a full and balanced life that leads to better research creativity, motivation and emotional stability. I got amazing mentors, who guided and encouraged me. When I was facing any challenge, mentors were there to put me on track.

Ultimately LIFT helped to be kinder, get spark ideas, offer insights and help in the journey of other care leavers. I feel supremely fortunate to be a LIFT fellow, to give back and make friends with many peers for life. I feel part of a family now, that is mine and made by me. I get to know about the local, national and global care leaver's network through this fellowship and I got a chance to represent myself on various platforms which helped me become a more confident person. I have now started taking my own decisions and am able to communicate well with people and guide care leavers like me. I feel more purposeful in life now. I will remain a champion of and for care leavers in India always!