



DUS BY DUS – An update



Pooja and her 2 month old baby sister Durga are just two of the newest children to join us on the way to 'Dus by Dus'!

Earlier this year, we launched our ambitious plan of reaching of 10,000 children a year by 2010, Along with expansion, our aim is not only to strengthen the services that we directly provide through our centres, but to forge new partnerships that ensure that essential government and other services reach this vulnerable population of construction workers and their children. This issue highlights some of our efforts in both our grassroots work and advocacy.

Since April 2008 we have opened nine new centres, our daily attendance has increased from 991 to 1420 children, and we have sensitized more builder's associations and government officials. Furthermore, our Board of Directors is also thinking beyond 2010. With help from Mr. Paresh Vaish from Boston Consultancy Group, the board is attempting to articulate its long term vision and goals and develop a strategic plan to achieve its aim of supporting every child on every site to be safe, healthy and educated. We are also using this opportunity to introduce our new and improved logo – we hope you enjoy this issue.

INCLUDING CHILDREN ON CONSTRUCTION SITES .

A FIRST FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S ICDS PROGRAMME

For the very first time, children on construction sites will benefit from the government's Integrated Child Development Services programme (popularly called the "anganwadi" programme). Three teachers and helpers appointed by the ICDS will join our staff on three construction sites in ensuring that children receive maximum care.

This innovative project which will be piloted on three construction sites ensures essential government services reach these children. It is the result of a four way partnership between the ICDS, MMC and two other NGOs, Bhavishya Alliance and Nirman, and is specially designed to include vulnerable groups that are currently not included in the ICDS's reach. The MOU signed in late August was the result of tremendous effort by all partners, and an extremely supportive role played by ICDS senior officers.

Under the new partnership, ICDS will be responsible for running the balwadi section of the centre, while MMC will run the crèche and older children's programme. In fact, in one centre, the ICDS had hired one of our ex-trainees as their anganwadi helper! Bhavishya Alliance will support centres with part funding, and Nirman will help to set up a women's self help group on site that will eventually take charge of providing the centre's food and taking on leadership roles in their communities. The second centre has already tied up with their local municipal hospital to provide monthly healthcare for the families on site.

By combining our strengths, we hope that this will be a partnership that can soon be expanded to other sites across the city and state in helping to reach out to even more children in need!

COLLECTIVE EFFORTS AND A LOT OF HARD WORK. At the beginning of the year, there was an average of fifty children attending our Evershine centre daily. There were several families who did not send their children and also a fair number of children were working outside the site. Our staff knew they had a difficult task ahead and set their year's attendance target to increasing the number of children attending by 50%. We decided to get the Project Manager involved. Through a combination of meetings with their parents, the staging of street theatre and cooperation with the Evershine site staff, the number of children going out to work was first gradually reduced and then stopped entirely. It was an extremely challenging process spread over several months and involved a great deal of work, dedication and sensitivity by all involved. Today more than one hundred children attend every day – and we continue to monitor the children to ensure that no one goes back to work. Child labour is not an easy issue to resolve and we are thankful for all the help that we received to overcome various obstacles. But this success has demonstrated that both consistent community work and the cooperation of the project site staff are equally important in making a difference in changing the children's lives.

CHILD TO CHILD – NEW FRIENDS AND NEW EXPERIENCES! In an exciting new



A student from Fazlani Academie examines his stick puppet with his partner from MMC Agripada

initiative, Mumbai Mobile Creches has expanded its 'Child to Child' programme in partnership with Robinage Children's Newspaper and the Fazlani L'Academie Globale (FLAG) School! The 'Child to Child' programme was first started in the 1980s as a way for older children in MMC centres to share their skills and knowledge, especially around health and hygiene, with their younger siblings.

Now the programme has been expanded to include children from other schools. Our children will be teaching the FLAG kids puppet making, Madhubani and Warli art and in return the FLAG children will teach the MMC children basic computer skills and craft. The programme is a fantastic way to bring together children from very different backgrounds teaching them valuable life lessons and creating friendships. In fact, in late September, 30 children from Ecole Mondiar school also participated in this project.

Robinage has also sponsored 10 of our children to participate in the Mumbai Marathon and 22 of the children and teachers from FLAG school will run along with us!

Ganpati Bapa Moriya!

OUR CHILDREN CELEBRATE GANESH UTSAV

On the 4th September 2009, Mr. Sachin Deshmukh and Mr. Mahesh Shetty from Neptune Constructions generously sponsored an event at their site for 450 children from all our centres to celebrate the Ganesh festival. The children put on performances, danced to the music of a DJ, watched a magician perform and had a delicious lunch. When Deputy Police Commissioner Harish Baijal and film actor Jackie Shroff showed up, the children were absolutely thrilled. We hope many builders take a cue.



SOME PROGRESS ON THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ACT

One of the most important and challenging tasks for MMC is to bring our message to the institutions that are responsible for addressing the rights of the workers and their children. While the Construction Workers Act 1996 provides certain rights for the labourers, it has yet to be ratified by Maharashtra State.

A positive breakthrough is that a welfare board for construction workers is now being set up and ratified by the Chief Minister. The state advisory committee still needs to be set up to administer it. Mumbai Mobile Creches has met the Labour Minister and we have requested that we be a part of this committee to ensure that the children's rights are not forgotten. Moreover, we are also working closely with the labour department and recently, a circular was distributed reiterating that on any site where there are more than 20 women employed there should be a crèche. Now our next challenge is to ensure that this is actually implemented.

REACHING OUT TO MORE CHILDREN BUILDER SENSITISATION

In the last few months, seven new sites have been surveyed on which 488 children were found, of these 138 were above the age of six and not attending school. Six new builders have also been sensitised to the cause of MMC. While sometimes sensitisation programmes do not immediately translate into a centre for the children, these are important building blocks in reaching our target of 10,000 children a year by 2010.

INVOLVING BUILDER'S ASSOCIATIONS

At the end of April, a delegation comprising UK government officials spent two days with us as part of the UK Government's Top Management Programme. The delegation met with the BMC Municipal Commissioner and Mr Pravin Doshi, the President of the Maharashtra Chamber of Housing Industry (MCHI). As a result MMC was able to obtain a list of current construction sites from the BMC as well as push the agenda of child friendly construction sites.

MCHI will include MMC in all of its exhibitions and important events and has also sent out a letter encouraging its 700 plus members to open crèches on their sites. We are now regularly receiving calls from builders enquiring about our work!

REACHING OUT TO CHILDREN IN NAVI MUMBAI

- OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH CIDCO

MMC had a twenty year long association with CIDCO, a government land owning agency, and had run 34 centres on their projects during that time. In the last 5-6 years there had not been any centre run on their sites as CIDCO had relinquished control of the projects after selling the land. Now that CIDCO is once again jointly developing sites, Mr Deepak Chopra, the Joint MD and Mrs. Rima Dikshit, the head of CIDCO's Social Services Cell approached us. Mrs. Dikshit is an old friend of MMC and she and Mr Chopra were very keen to have us back on their sites. We are now jointly running centres on two of their sites in Navi Mumbai, supporting 170 children. CIDCO is also planning to make crèches mandatory for all new constructions in Navi Mumbai, a fantastic initiative!

CREATING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

As part of our efforts to reach more children, we are exploring new centre models. For example, although we found very few children on a Lodha Construction's site, Mr Vinayak Dalvi, the CSR head was so keen to support the children that we decided to run a modified centre. The centre will be open for half the day, all materials will be provided by the builder, they will directly pay a teacher trained and recommend by MMC, and we will be involved in regular monitoring. We are very glad to find builders willing to assume more responsibility for children on their sites and developing such creative solutions.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PARTNERSHIPS (CSR)

The support we receive from a number of major companies is strong and varied, and always most appreciated. Our sincere thanks to the following:

- Johnson Controls, HSBC, Syntel, Convergys, Reliance Capital, TATA Communications and Candid Marketing. For volunteering as well as organising wonderful outings and events.

- Gini and Jony (a children's clothing store) who will be donating 1.5% of the proceeds of the sale of their gift vouchers to corporates to our cause.

- TATA Consultancy Services for developing software to help us make our internal systems more efficient.

- Edelgive Foundation for involving Edelweiss employees, especially from the real estate department – to reach more builders.

- Teach India – for placing a number of volunteers in our centres. Two of our amazing volunteers Dharmesh Kambli and Nandini Dhanani were recently featured in the Times of India!

Finally a thanks to visiting architectural students from the USA in coordination with the DY Patil School of Architecture who made a number of recommendations for our centres and designed some space saving toys and teaching aids. Thank you very much to Scott Shall and Peter Bard who coordinated this project.



A special mention for everybody who has supported our milk project. A few months ago, a donor who was providing us with free milk had to withdraw support because of their financial problems. An email appeal sent out received an outpouring of kindness! In a few days we heard our sheriff, Indu Shahani, had stepped forward and organised Sterlite Industries to sponsor the milk at all centres for six months. Next IRB Infrastructure Developers offered to sponsor the cost of a year's supply of milk. And thanks to many friends across the city, we now have enough funding for milk right up to 2010!

FROM CONSTRUCTION WORKER TO MMC TEACHER TO LEADERSHIP FELLOW.

“When I lived on the construction site, I felt like I was trapped in a well. Then, I joined the MMC training programme, and I felt I was stepping into a flowing river. Now that I am a CORO fellow, I feel like I am in an ocean.” Poignant words from Sunita Jha, one of three MMC community teachers who has been awarded a year long fellowship by the Centre for Leadership. This centre is a joint venture between UK based Leader’s Quest and Mumbai NGO CORO and aims to identify and build the capacities of grassroots leaders. Part of a group of forty fellows chosen from across Maharashtra, they will be conducting research programmes about the difficulties experienced by migrants in obtaining ration cards as well as local health services. In return they will hold monthly workshops for MMC’s community teachers and trainees as well as women from various construction workers’ communities in order to share their experiences and help to build a cadre of community leaders from our sites.

STRENGTHENING OUR HEALTH PROGRAMME

As we seek to expand our programme we need to ensure that all of the services provided remain at the highest standard. Denny John, who is a Faculty Member from the Institute of Public Health, Bangalore, has been hired to evaluate and strengthen our health programme. Denny has worked with a number of the city’s leading pediatricians who are part of the Indian Association of Pediatricians (IAP).

Together with our centre doctors we have revised our medication list and are working on redesigning our growth charts and nutrition programme. Denny is also helping us update the health component of our Early Childhood Education training module.