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MUMBAI MOBILE CRECHES NEWSLETTER

BAL SHRISTI

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Foreword

In the last six months we have seen considerable growth and development here at Mumbai Mobile Creches (MMC). Since April 2016, we have opened two day care centres and two builder-run child care centres, operating a total of 36 centres. Apart from providing care to over 1,000 children, from infants to 14 years of age, every month, our teachers and staff members conducted over 140 *chai-pani* meetings and held 28 *lokdoos* (street plays) on health, hygiene, education, and other important topics, and reached over 3,500 parents and community members. We organised regular doctor visits and specialised health camps (eye, ear and dental) for over 1,480 children. Also, our CEO, Ms. Vrishali Pispati, spoke at the International Conference for Transforming Education for Children and Youth, held in Ahmedabad, on issues pertaining to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the context of migrant children.

As in the previous year, we continued to focus on our Child Care Centre (CCC) model, where the builder takes ownership and full responsibility for ensuring that all children living on the construction site are safe, healthy, and educated. MMC acts as a knowledge partner and guides the builder in the process of setting up the centre and thereafter assists in the supervision of the centre. Between April 2016 and September 2016, we oversaw eight Child Care Centres, reaching over 350 children living on construction sites in Mumbai and Nagpur. In the coming months, we plan to further the visibility of our organisation within the builder community as we continue to motivate builders to adopt the Child Care Centre model.

By the Numbers

Operated **20** Day Care Centres on construction sites

Reached over **3,500** community members

2 Brick Kiln centres, **2** Slum centres

through **28** Lokdoos

8 Child Care Centres

Conducted more than **140** *chai-pani* meetings

4 Mobile Bus-Education sites

37 specialised health camps were held, which
benefitted over **1,480** children

A sharper vision for a brighter future!

Suhana*, a bright young girl from Assam, lives with her family on a construction site in Mumbai, where her father works as a carpenter. While regularly attending the local municipal school, she enjoys spending the other half of the day in the after-school support classroom at the MMC centre.

Poor vision in childhood can affect school performance and can have an adverse impact on learning. Refractive errors can be easily diagnosed and corrected with eyeglasses. However, lack of information, prohibitive private health care costs, and an already overburdened public health care system make it difficult for migrant families like Suhana's to access medical care in urban areas like Mumbai. Therefore, as part of its preventive health programme, MMC organises eye check-up camps at day care centres in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, and Thane. In the weeks prior to the camp, our day care centre teachers and supervisors work with the community to educate children and their families about the importance of vision screening. At one such camp held at an MMC day care centre, Suhana was diagnosed with a refractive error. The ophthalmologist prescribed glasses and eye drops for Suhana. Recognising the financial barrier in purchasing spectacles, MMC worked to ensure that glasses were delivered free of cost to Suhana at the centre in two weeks. Initially, she was reluctant to wear the glasses, but with time Suhana realised that the glasses allowed her to enjoy her two most favourite activities, art and drawing.

Now, Suhana's mother happily reports, "*My daughter's complaints of frequent headaches have reduced considerably.*"

* The name has been changed to protect identity of the person

Notes from the Field

Summer means ...

Summer is a time for fun at the MMC centres. To engage children during the school holiday month of May, 2016, we organised two major events at our centres – *Shramadaan* and *Khel Mahotsav*.

Shramadaan, which emphasised civic responsibility among children, was celebrated in the first two weeks of May. This year, the theme was “Saving Water”, and our teachers discussed with the children the importance of water and the various ways in which water can be conserved at the centre and at home. Apart from projects related to water, the children also participated in activities like spreading awareness in the community about the need for separating wet and dry garbage, making dustbins for dry and wet garbage, making newspaper bags for their parents, making nests and feeders for birds, and planting seeds.

Khel Mahotsav was celebrated in the second half of the month of May with different indoor and outdoor games, such as kabaddi, badminton and tug-of-war. Through all these fun games, the children learned important life skills, like team building, leadership, patience, and body-mind coordination.



Making nests and feeders for birds

Sustaining a Change

At MMC, we recognise the value of providing quality ECCE for all children, the delivery of which requires skilled professionals. Hence our training programmes equip women and men to provide such child care in diverse settings. Our Bal Palika Training (BPT) holds the flagship position in our efforts to create qualified child caregivers. In August, 2016, 24 women (among whom nine were from construction sites) graduated from our yearlong BPT programme. Ten trainees have already been selected as teachers, centre officers, and centre supervisors at various organisations working in the field of ECCE.

As we felicitated the graduating team, we also welcomed the new batch of 38 trainees for our 2016-17 BPT course, among whom 12 are from the construction site community. MMC also facilitated the opening of bank accounts for 37 of its trainees.

Additionally, we also conducted a 26-day Bal Vikas Sahyog training for 14 community members, in collaboration with another NGO, with the objective to empower women with skills to start home-based crèches.



BPT graduates for the year 2015-16, felicitated in August, 2016

Health Focus

Doctors visit our centres every week, and in the last six months nine dedicated doctors made over 365 visits to monitor the children's health and to attend to those who were sick. We also organised 37 specialised health camps for the children at our day care centres.

In the last six months we conducted:

- ✓ **16 eye camps**, where over **570 children** were screened for problems related to vision or other underlying eye conditions.
- ✓ **19 ear camps**, attended by over **870 children**, were held to identify ear infections or other ear-related clinical conditions.
- ✓ **2 dental check-up camps**, reaching out to over **45 children**.
- ✓ Apart from the children's health camps, we also organised **2 general health camps** through which health services were provided to over **200 community members**.



Eye-camp for MMC children

Joy of Parenting

In collaboration with the Association for Early Childhood Education & Development (AECED), MMC held a workshop on the “Joy of Parenting”. The first phase of the workshop was held in April, 2016, which was followed by the second phase in June, 2016, and MMC facilitated sessions on several topics, such as behavioural issues in children, the health and nutritional needs of children, promotion of children's self-esteem, and orientation to the requirements of children with special needs. A total of 43 participants, including teachers, counsellors, and professionals who deal with parent-child interactions, attended the workshop. The participants also learnt how to use the Learning to Play Calendar (developed by the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre in Toronto, Canada, and adapted by Bala Mandir Research Foundation in Chennai) and enhanced their knowledge of topics related to multiple intelligence, effective parenting, the role of the father in parenting, and children's academic readiness.

New Initiatives

Taking Art to the Vulnerable

Art, craft, and puppetry have always been an integral part of MMC's culture and curriculum. Art not only helps in the development of children's imagination and creativity, but it also helps in enhancing their motor and problem-solving skills. This year, we decided to take an additional step and took our art programme to the children living in government-run homes in Mumbai, who need extra care and protection. Through 20 art-and-craft sessions, we reached out to over 370 children from one such children's home. These sessions included creating wall hangings, painting activities, making puppets and other decorative articles using paper and jute. The children were very excited about attending these sessions, and demonstrated their knack for art and craft.

MMC goes Digital

After setting the stage last year by purchasing hardware and training the teachers on basic computer applications, this year we went ahead with the customisation of digitisation software. The application will help us in monitoring and evaluating our programme in real time.

Virtual Journeys

On 23rd June, 2016, the children from our Worli centre, who hardly get an opportunity to venture out of the construction site, were really excited to see the Taj Mahal, the wonders at the bottom of the sea, and the surface of the moon, all without leaving the centre. Employees of Google India brought this opportunity to our doorstep, showcasing a virtual journey through a mobile application which they are about to launch. Children were mesmerised and thrilled by this real-time experience of watching these wonderful places through the mobile application on the Virtual Reality headsets specially designed by Google.

Let's Read

In August, 2016, MMC participated in the Let's Read Campaign of the United Way of Mumbai (UWM). Twelve of our day care centres received library bags of 150 books each, suitable for different age groups. The bags were inaugurated at one of our centres in Mumbai Central at a book reading session conducted by Ms. Deepa Balsavar. Books on animals were selected for the reading session, and it was followed by a mask-making activity where children made masks of their favourite animals. We would like to thank Ms. Sangeeta Bhansali of Kahani Tree and Ms. Jayanti Shukla of UWM for taking the initiative to promote early literacy.



Animal masks made by children

Fundraising and Friendraising

Fulfill a Dream

In the coming year, MMC is participating yet again in the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, scheduled for 15th January, 2017, and one can support our cause by buying a bib for the Dream Run (6 km) or the Half Marathon (21 km - timed category). The money collected from the bibs goes to supporting education, nutrition, and health services to children living on construction sites. We thank our friends who have already pledged their support by registering with us.

Thank You!

We are immensely thankful for receiving so much support from our friends -- individuals, organisations, and corporates alike - in helping us build a brighter future for Mumbai's migrant children.

- Architect Ms. Shona Jain for giving us valuable inputs in re-arranging our office space.
- Students from various schools who have been making amazing inputs in helping our staff with data entry and also with centre activities.
- Through painting events, volunteers of KPMG in India and Credit Suisse helped beautify our centres in HCC and Mulund, respectively, creating an enjoyable and stimulating environment which motivates the children to learn and play.
- Mr. Anantharaman for generously funding the core component of our comprehensive programme, our teachers.
- We are truly grateful to Mr. Vineet Dhingra, Dhingra Foundation, and Western Consolidated Ltd., for their generous support in providing *Nimbu Pani* for our children in the hot summer months, and for their contribution towards our nutrition programme.
- Mr. Chandramouli S. Batibrolu, Ms. Hema Sidhhartha Chand, Mr. Rajeev Ohol, Mr. Ankur Bhatnagar, and many others for their generous donations towards our corpus. These contributions have helped ensure the continuity of our programmes and secure MMC's financial stability.
- Dr. Pareshnath Paul for his committed support to our work.
- Our volunteers – Ms. Jane Haseman from the Columbia University CEO Programme, Ms. Sei Chong, Ms. Heena Kapadia, and Ms. Luna Kulkarni for their dedicated volunteering at the office and centres.
- Mrs. Jessica Mahadevan for providing ice cream to children across all MMC centres in memory of her mother, Mrs. Sheila Jacob.
- We thank Asha For Education, the Australian Consulate-General Mumbai, the Bhaichand Mehta Foundation, Child Vikaas International, Coface India Credit Management Services Pvt. Ltd., Comic Relief, the Concern India Foundation, the General Insurance Corporation of India, the H.T. Parekh Foundation, the Impact Foundation, the KPMG Foundation, Mobile Krippen, Owens Corning (India) Pvt. Ltd, Premdhara Strom der Liebe e.V., Our X'mas Fund, the Reliance Foundation, Schindler India Pvt. Ltd., the Tata Capital Housing Finance Ltd, United Way of Mumbai, and the United World College of South East Asia for their support.
- We are thankful to The Breadsticks Foundation and the Genesis Charitable Trust for their very generous support towards our programmes and institutional strengthening to help MMC reach greater heights.
- We thank Give Foundation, Give India, and Global Giving for continuing to effectively facilitate funding for us by providing us access to interested donors, friends, and supporters who donated through these platforms.
- Our Bal Palika Training programme is being supported by the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust (NRTT) under the Teacher Education initiative. We sincerely appreciate this generous contribution.
- We are also thankful to the Maharashtra Chamber of Housing Industry (MCHI) for their contribution towards our corpus.
- We deeply appreciate Eternus Solutions Pvt. Ltd. for their pro bono support in the digitisation project.
- We are truly grateful to KPMG in India, whose members have shown admirable dedication in their commitment to our work over the past years in many ways, by organising a number of volunteering events and fun outings for the children.
- We also thank employees from Nomura Service India Pvt. Ltd, Owens Corning (India) Pvt. Ltd, the Consulate General of Canada (Mumbai), Credit Suisse, Google India, and the JW Marriott Hotel (Mumbai) for volunteering at our centres.
- We are indebted to Mumbai Connexions for their continued volunteering at our centres.
- We thank Renaissance Hotel for inviting our children and organising entertaining activities at their hotel.
- We are thankful to Nomura Services India Pvt. Ltd. and Rotaract Club of Mumbai (Ghatkopar), for donating rain wear and toys to our children.