

## BAL SHRISTI



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## Greetings from Mumbai Mobile Creches!

When the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic started to settle down in May 2021, and travel restrictions were eased, we started running our programmes virtually. Then, from September 2021, we resumed normal operations. Initially, teachers visited centres twice a month, and September onwards for six days a week. Both parents and children were very excited to meet our teachers and have the centres running again. Children from the Balwadi and After School sections were taken to the centres in small batches. All Covid-19 protocols were adhered to.

To start the virtual learning programme, our teachers contacted parents through cell phones and told them how to impart development skills to their children. Other regular activities such as the distribution of cooked meals, snacks, rations, and education materials, had begun. Monthly height-weight measurements, were carried out and monitored regularly. Toy and book library activities were held twice a week. Routine immunisations began when the municipal health post personnel resumed their work. At the community level, we resumed our monthly Chai-Pani meetings—the informal get-togethers where parents, other community members and teachers come together to openly discuss a critical issue. We also brought professionals to perform lokdoots (street plays) in order to spread awareness about Covid-19 safety amongst the construction site workers. Book Week and Breastfeeding Week also witnessed enthusiastic participation by the community members.



## MMC's Reach till December 2022:

- Through our four existing models, we were able to reach 2828 children.
- We operated 20 Day Care Centres (DCC) (including two slum centres and two Brick Kiln Centres), 9 Mobile Bus sites, and six Child Care Centres (CCC). Three sites were covered through our Community Outreach Programmes.
- On average, our DCCs benefited 1033 children across 16 construction sites monthly, 85 children across 2 slum sites, and 17 children across 2 Brick kilns. Our Care on Wheels- Mobile Bus programme was able to bring education to 110 children across 9 construction sites every month.
- The total number of vaccinations conducted at the DCCs and Mobile Bus Centres were 960, and 52 respectively.
- The total number of doctor's visits conducted at the DCCs and Mobile Bus Centres were 310, and 31 respectively.
- Through 341 Chai-Pani meetings, we were able to reach 581 parents on an average, monthly. We covered a wide array of topics such as adolescent health, malaria, anaemia, school enrolment and awareness about child rights, identity documents, and the importance of breastfeeding, parenting practices etc.

# Notes from the Field

## Bal Palika Training Programme

Our Bal Palika Training (BPT) programme teaches women to provide holistic care to children and positive parenting practices, thus making them agents of change. This year too, BPT programme continued digitally. It started in August 2021 with 34 women from underprivileged communities, 9 from construction sites and 25 from other marginalised communities.



## 12th Annual Book Week

We celebrated our 12th Annual Book Week in the second week of November with great enthusiasm. The theme was 'खोज खोज में नयी सोच' (into the world of discoveries through learning). The older children had interactive sessions with teachers about the lives of eminent Indian authors and illustrators. Stories, games, arts and crafts were used to help younger children discover something new about themselves. Professional storytellers enthralled the children.



Parents were encouraged to read at least one story every day to their children. We concluded the week by exhibiting the beautiful artwork made by the children in a number of centres. Parents were also invited. The highlighted books at the week were - भुक्कड कटेरपिल्लर, मेरा खच्चर डण्डा है, बीस कचौड़ी पूड़ी तीस, केरल के केले. In all, 1253 books were gifted to children to encourage their love for reading and to enable to have books at home.

## Vaccination drives for the construction workers

In India, vaccination drives began on 16th January 2021. It was practically impossible for construction workers to use the Co-WIN portal for booking vaccination appointments due to little or no internet access. Furthermore, many workers were reluctant to be vaccinated because myths and misinformation were rife. From June 2021 we ran a programme to dispel these falsities and encourage people to be vaccinated and by November 2021, more than 2800 workers on our construction sites had received at least one dose of the COVISHIELD vaccine.

## Abacus Training

The abacus is a very useful educational tool to foster early brain development in children.



It helps young children, develop their mathematical skills, visualisation and imagination skills. It works wonders on a child's mental development. It is widely used to improve teaching skills, speed of counting, and accuracy in problem-solving in adults too. Beginning in July 2021, five MMC teachers started learning about the abacus online. These teachers are now imparting their knowledge to children in our Afterschool Support section.

## Ummeed Training

To train our teachers in ways of getting parents to recognise developmental delays in their children, MMC collaborated with the non-profit organisation Ummeed.



Seven crèche teachers, one health organiser, and five supervisors benefitted from the programme. They learned how to create awareness about development delays and the importance of screening. They are also being trained to teach parents simple play activities that address the developmental needs of children, and that promote parent-child communication.



## Inclusive Environment for children with special needs

Karan\*, a nine-year-old child with special needs recently enrolled with MMC's After School Study group in Goregaon. His parents are constantly worried about his wellbeing, and naturally so. Karan has trouble communicating as his speech is not clear. He makes loud sounds to communicate with his parents and siblings. Because of this, none of his classmates were able to understand him and this disturbed Karan deeply. MMC teachers were able to identify Karan's issues and needs. They started engaging him in various activities such as matching pairs, threading pearls, playing with doll house, solving puzzles etc. The teachers are now able to communicate with him well and calm him down when he gets angry. He has started enjoying being a part of all the activities and loves to sing along with his teacher. The teachers also monitor his health regularly through medical check-ups at the centre conducted by MMC's panelled doctors. Because of the exceptional efforts of these MMC teachers, Karan's weight has improved significantly.

\*Name of the child has been changed to protect their identity

## World Breastfeeding Week

World Breastfeeding Week is an annual celebration held from August 1st to 7th, in over 120 countries. The World Health Organisation recommends breastfeeding as one of the most effective ways to safeguard a child's health. This year, the theme for the Breastfeeding Week was 'Protect Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility.' At MMC, Breastfeeding Week was celebrated across our 12 construction site centres. Interactive sessions during the Chai-Pani meetings were conducted at centres with community women.



Doctors, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANMs) from health posts, health workers, and Anganwadi superiors delivered talks on the importance of nutrition and immunisation, for both mothers and children. We gifted fruit baskets and child hygiene kits to the lactating mothers. More than 250 women actively participated in our Breastfeeding Week

## Bal Vikas Sahayog Training

Bal Vikas Sahyog Training Programme is a short-term, capacity-building workshop initiated by MMC, for women from the underprivileged



areas. In July, a 12-day-long online Bal Vikas Sahyog Training Programme was conducted for 15 women from Ambarnath. Most of these women were either ICDS teachers or mothers of the children enrolled at the Anganwadi centres. We covered topics such as the basics of parenting, healthy child care practices, as well as important developmental milestones of children. The training sessions used several audio-visual aids. Participatory techniques like interpersonal communications and experience-sharing were used. All the women received certificates after their training.

## Participation at European Evaluation Society Biennial Conference

A paper entitled 'An Evaluation of a Library Programme Intervention in Enhancing Reading Habits among Children,' was virtually presented at the 14th European Evaluation Society Biennial Conference on 8th September 2021. The paper was based on a study to understand the usefulness of a library programme for children who have been attending MMC's day care centres for six months or more. Most of these children were first-generation learners and therefore, had very little access to reading and learning aids at home. The study proved the effectiveness of MMC's library programme.

# Notes from the Field

## Life skill sessions

To equip children with social and emotional learning skills, MMC collaborated with Apni Shala, an organisation that delivers experiential learning programmes using art, drama, games, and community work. From July 2021, Apni Shala initiated conducting online sessions on life skills with children of the Afterschool Support section at our three centres (Patlipada-2, Vikhroli, and Virar). Several interactive techniques such as focus group discussions, role-playing, and mind mapping were used. Complex topics such as conflict resolution, decision making, self-awareness, and social awareness were also covered through these sessions. The facilitator skilfully engaged the students and the sessions were very fruitful.

## Vote of Appreciation

### Individuals:

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