

## **Mumbai Mobile Creche Visit (Jan 9, 2017)**

I visited one of the centers of MMC at a construction site on January 9 along with Ms. Vrishali Pispati (CEO) and Ms. Debdatta Purkayastha (Coordinator for Communications and Grants).

There are about 40 children served at this site. The parents drop them off around 8:30 am and pick them up around 5 PM. They are organized in three separate rooms depending on their age which ranges from 0 to 12, although a majority are below 8. The ones below 6 are taken care of full-time but the others are sent to local schools but taken care of after hours. They are fed bare-bones meals three times a day. Lunch comprises of rice and dal (lentils) which has some vegetables. Mid-day snacks may comprise of an egg or fruit or some other snack. This is primarily due to lack of resources.

MMC operates 31 centers currently, 20 of which are funded fully by them (except for the facility provided by the builder) and the other 11 are funded by the builders but operated by MMC. I've summarized below the key observations based on discussions with Vrishali (CEO) and Debdatta and my observations during the visit.

- MMC continues to be the only NGO in Mumbai that serves the children of construction workers. This is primarily due to the enormous challenges in serving this population and most NGOs have neglected this segment. Also, there are numerous slums and worthwhile causes in Mumbai and other NGOs focus on these needs. Therefore, while there are over 900 major construction sites in Mumbai, only a small fraction of these are served by MMC partly due to limited resources.
- Most builders are reluctant to allow such crèches to operate in their sites for several reasons: (i) they do not want to provide funds or facilities for such services because they don't have to; (ii) even if they are magnanimous, they are concerned about NGOs inviting or attracting the media who might highlight violations of labor and construction laws at their sites. So MMC has to work very hard to convince builders to operate at their sites and to provide facilities and limited funds. Moreover MMC has to ignore violations of construction and labor laws to focus on care to the children.
- Many of the workers work at a construction site only for 3 to 6 months because their skills (e.g. electricians) are required at a specific site only for a few months and then they moved to a new site. MMC may not have a center at the new site. This makes it quite difficult for MMC to monitor and track the progress of the children.
- MMC has been able to ensure that all school going children do attend the local municipal school and provide afterschool stimulation.
- MMC teachers stay with them for decades and there is little turnover. The teacher training program which we funded for many years has been successful and continues to churn out teachers who are used at their centers.
- MMC has been quite successful at raising funds within India as well as abroad and they get about 50% of the funds domestically and 50% from abroad (their largest donor is in the UK). They are hoping to attract more funds from the US. If they attract more funds

they would be able to operate more centers. They are writing grant proposals to attract more funds.

- They have volunteers coming from various corporations and universities in Mumbai to help them at their sites. In addition, they have collaborations with some foreign universities including Columbia and interns visit them for a few months.
- I was very impressed by Vrishali Pispati (CEO). She is committed, articulate and really cares about the organization. She is also building a good organization so that it can function effectively without her involvement in day-to-day activities.