

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP....

TOWARDS SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.....

Annual Report 2012-13



REFLECTIONS.....

Our work at Mahita continues to seek lasting solutions that would help our children thrive. As another year passes by, our programmes strive to provide answers to problems that our communities face. In this Endeavour, we are indebted to many individuals and organizations that trusted us through collaborations, partnerships and support without which we would not have succeeded.

On behalf of the Mahita team, I would like to thank the Government - every official who facilitated our work to make an impact in the lives of children and their families; sponsors - for financial and technical support without which our mission will remain an impossible one; every staff member and volunteer of Mahita who walked the extra mile to bring smiles in the lives of people; and the community of people whom we serve without whose support, this journey will never be so meaningful.

As you read through our 2012-13 annual report, I would once again thank everyone who supported our work in many ways and promise to work hard to make the world a better place for our children. Meanwhile, I request you to keep the communities that we serve in your thoughts and prayers.

Currently Mahita is operating in four Urban Areas of Hyderabad focusing Families from Construction Workers, Muslim Minority Communities and tribal communities of Adilabad District, each unique with its problems. At present it is partner with Save the Children, DKA Austria, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Child Line India Foundation, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, UNICEF, Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), India, and Global Fund for Children. Our fruitful and encouraging partnership with ACCENTURE, HSBC and many individual volunteers supporting the interventions of the organization to reach more and more communities for collective action.

On behalf of Mahita Team;

Ramesh Sekhar Reddy.P

Program Director

MAIN FEATURES OF THE YEAR 2012 - 13

The start of Mahita dates back to the early 90's when a group of young and motivated people came together shouldered the responsibility of impacting the lives of the poor. Since then, over 100,000 individuals and their families have benefited through the programmes and policies of Mahita. Currently, Mahita implements programmes to transform the lives of minority communities in Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy, and the rural/tribal community in Adilabad and Nalgonda districts.

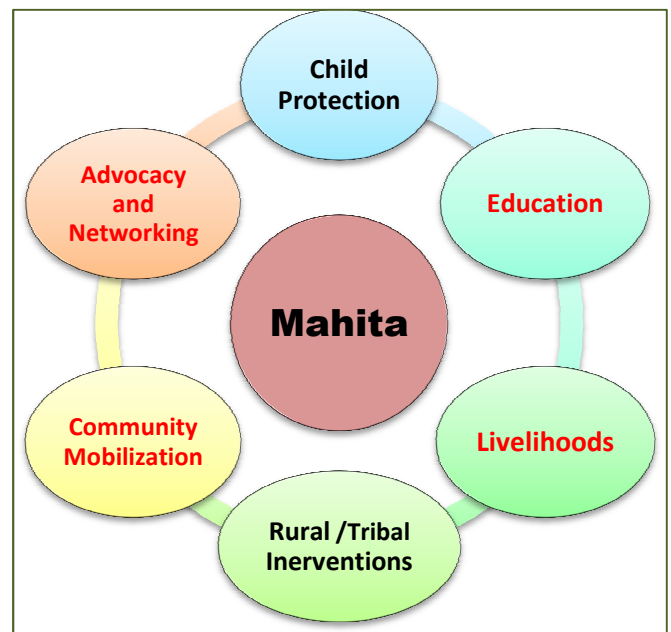
As entering in its 18th year Mahita subscribes to the right-based approach and strongly advocates the participation of the communities in the process of this transformation. Across Mahita's programmes - gender is the common thread, children the heart and girls the core. Interventions of Mahita have planned on five strategic areas i) community mobilization ii) Building capacities of Civil Society Organisations and NGOs iii) Developing linkages with government officials iv) Bringing various stakeholders on to a common platform through creating space for wider discussions and finally v) networking and advocacy. These strategies have been adopted with a core objective of ensuring active participation of all stakeholders in view of protecting the best interests of the children through effective implementation of the children programs and policies.

As a small group of individuals, Mahita grown up became a Resource agency in gathering information on children issues at both state and national level, and has been disseminating it to various stakeholders in the society.

It is an achievement of conducting various studies and evaluations of the projects and programs carrying out by both NGOs and government. An analytical study on Functioning of Child Welfare Committees across the state and disseminate the report to the concerned officials fill us with a great spirit to do such in depth studies in order to promote constitutional bodies like CWCs/JJBs etc.

SSA has nominated Mahita as one of the Member for State Level Core Committee for Amendments in State Rules of RTE Act has been constituted by SSA. The Core Committee has done an extensive exercise and provided various inputs for the amendments of RTE State Rules.

Mahita initiated CHILDLINE operations in Adilabad this year - an initiative for protection of children's rights in the district. CHILDLINE 1098 is a national 24-hour emergency phone (toll free) and outreach service for children in need of care and protection. The programme identified 20 categories of children as vulnerable and in need of care and protection. Over 10,000 individuals were provided information about this service and 34 children were provided assistance during the first six months





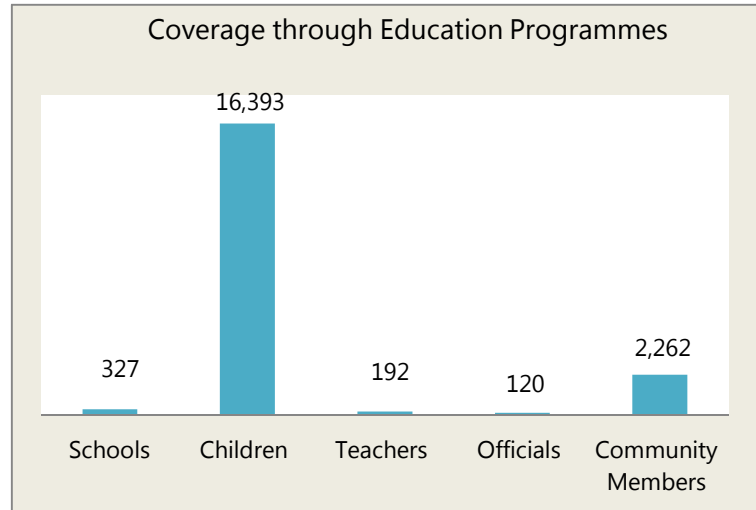
Towards facilitating Educational Rights



Child Resource Centers

The educational interventions are towards bringing the working children, child labors and other school dropout children to the manifold of education, through active involvement of State Education Department, Teachers unions, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, Community members, Teachers and children.

These interventions were floated through establishment of Community Learning cum Motivational Centers, within the access at their neighborhood. In this effort MAHITA has remarkably succeeded in bringing back many school dropouts and working children to the formal schools. These centers are instrumental in carrying our other community level interventions. The approach is multi pronged with initiation of Child Resource Centers.



Apart from 262 Children got the scholarship and 61 Adolescent Girls from Social Excluded Communities have been linked to AP Open School Examinations through sponsorship for continue their education through SSA and other agencies. Total Children enrolled in to Elementary Schools: 799 and 68 children have been linked to AP Open Schools

Outreach of Resource Centers

Parameter	Outreach
No of Resource centers	20
No of children trained	4000
No of schools liasioned with	100
No of slums covered	86

With close interaction with Anganwadi Centres in the project Slums, the project team able to motivate the communities and facilitated the discussions with them in the AWCs. Due to this 1677 Children have been enrolled in to AWCs in the project area.

Creating awareness on services availability in AWCs are creating good impact among the communities for using the services. Due to the regular interaction and constant meetings with community the communities are utilizing the services from the AWCs.

Development of workbooks to enhance learning levels of children

In the process of strengthening the initiatives of the Child Resource Centers, the organization has developed strong linkages with government departments like State Education Research and Training Centers (SCERT), Rajiv Vidya Mission (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), District Education Officers and teachers. This has resulted in timely support and resource mobilization for the Centers. As suggested by the teachers and SCERT, Mahita has developed three workbooks for Environmental Science, Urdu, and Mathematics which have been field tested in the government schools by the resource team before being published.



Digital Learning - an Innovative and new Feature

A new initiative and innovative feature of the project is the introduction of Digital Learning. The Resource Centers are now well equipped with computers so that children get an exciting opportunity to understand their lessons through this new medium of learning. The software covers the subjects of EVS, Mathematics, Urdu, and English. The lessons are followed by exercises that come in various forms such as 'match the following', 'fill ups', drawings, shape identification, and multiple choice questions.



A success story of improving learning levels

Zeba represents the fear taking place in a child during the transition period of learning from the primary to secondary level. In class 5th Zeba was good at studies but when she reached her class 6th some unknown fear gripped her; may be the new atmosphere of the school, the new teacher and new students all put her in defensive mode.

She retracted herself from everybody and started neglecting her studies. To the extent that she felt very nervous to read the test paper let alone answer them. She was brought to the center by her class fellow and after attending the classes at the resources centers she overcame her unknown fear and was so not only able to understand but was able to answer them correctly. After attending classes she was able to regain her confidence in herself.

Strengthening School Management Committees

In order to thrive for the better implementation of RTE act 2009, Mahita put much focus on empowering the School Management Committees both in Ranga Reddy and Adilabad districts. In this regard Mahita has done constant interactions with the members of School Management Committees in both the districts. Mandal level and school level meetings and capacity building programs have been carried out to familiarize them with their roles and responsibilities as prescribed in the act and state GOs 130 & 41. Mahita has been developed IEC material like posters, brochures, pamphlets and booklets on RTE Act, 2009 and the new structure of SMC as per new guidelines. Mahita also planned to mobilize these SMCs and Child Protection Committees in to Mandal level Forums to initiate collective action for the effective implementation of the children acts and rights. The capacity building programs also help the SMCs in conducting regular meetings and facilitating School Development Plans.



Key educational outcomes during the year:

- Communities abreast with their roles and responsibilities for effective implementation of Right to Education (RtE) Act;
- Children's groups formed to facilitate their participation in effective implementation of RtE Act;
- Inclusive and child-friendly education promoted in Narnoor Mandal of Adilabad district;
- Children accessing educational entitlements like scholarships, free books and uniforms etc.;
- School Management and Child Protection Committees promoted;
- Resource centres and libraries set; and
- Strengthened coordination with government departments.

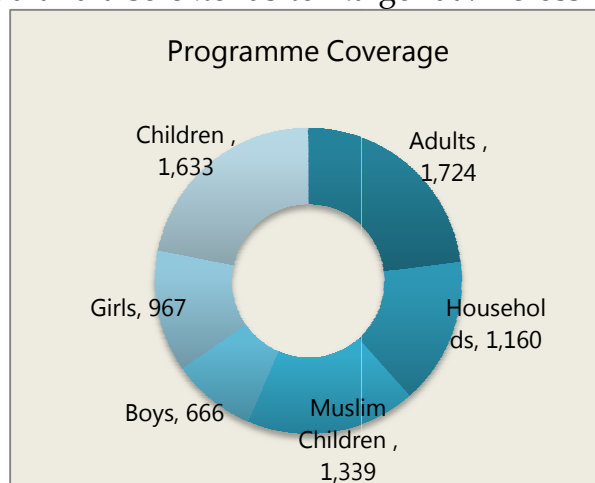


INTERVENTIONS TOWARDS CHILD PROTECTION



Promoting Protection Rights of the Children

Mahita's work for the protection and care of children continues in the three districts of operation - Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Adilabad and also extends to Nalgonda. Across programmes, Mahita recognises that children are at risk of exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect; and interventions are designed to facilitate an environment that fosters their growth and development. During 2012-13 Mahita has collaborated with parents, communities and community leaders, teachers, women groups, civil society, government and most importantly children themselves to create a caring environment in their communities that helps in realizing the full potential of all children.



The strategic focus of Mahita for the year has been to synergize the strengths of the various child protection schemes like ICDS, ICPS Right to Education (RtE) Act for the benefit of children. Mahita partners with the government to implement these flagship programmes targeting vulnerable children and developed a model which addresses vulnerabilities of children.

Child Protection Committees

To ensure the safety of children in their local environment, Mahita took the initiative to form Child Protection Committees (CPC) in all 30 slums of Hyderabad. The mandate of the committee is clear - ensure children in the community lead a safe and healthy childhood, and prevent and protect from every form of child abuse. The local CPC comprises of 20-25 members including local basti (community) leader, corporator/ward member, Anganwadi worker, local elders, religious leaders and doctors/lawyers. For every 20 households a volunteer is selected whose responsibility is to ensure children from these households receive adequate support if required. Some of the important problems identified and addressed by the members of the last one year include:



- ❖ Enrol school-drop outs back in schools;
- ❖ Advocate abolishing child labour;
- ❖ Prevent child marriages; and

- ❖ Safety of girl children – provision of infrastructure like toilets in schools; and prevent harassment by eve teasers.



In Hyderabad, Mahita is strengthening the voice of excluded children especially girls coming from the minority community. In 30 slums, Child Protection Committees are initiated and strengthened to work closely with other community structures to ensure higher enrolment and retention in Anganwadi Centres (children below 6 years) and Government Schools; ensure access to free text books, scholarships and other entitlements.

As the CPC Members and SMC members are very articulated and strong enough to facilitate the dialogue with the elected representatives and provide the space to the children to interact with Minister and MLAs on issues related social excluded communities.

Mahita is also planning to prepare Demand List from each slum and would like to use as this in the next Assembly Elections in 2014 as a demand of charters from the Community on Children from Social Excluded Communities.

Children Clubs:

After recognizing the need for providing a platform for children to express themselves, Mahita has identified and strengthened Bala Sanghas or Children Clubs. These clubs facilitate the transformation of children into advocates of their rights and entitlements. They engage with teachers, parents, community members and local government representatives to articulate their issues through meetings, representation and using theater as a medium of expression. A governing committee is elected comprising of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and general body members. Each club has 25-45 members, depending on the slum. These clubs have a current membership of over 1,500 children and the federation of these clubs is also actively working.



Suggestion Boxes housed in each school provides children an opportunity to anonymously express about complaints which are sensitive in nature. The Child Club members and the school Headmaster go through these complaints on regular basis and

based on the gravity of the complaint, they are referred to the local Child Protection Committee for action.

Child Club Members along with the Child Protection Committee meet the 3 MLAs from Charminar Constituency, Bahadupura Constituency and Asifnagar Constituency and submitted a memorandum. The child club members and CPC members presented the existing situation of education in these three mandals.

Md Mahfooz – Learning by doing:

“My parents always wanted me to study and become something in life but never gave an ear to my parents’ words, as I was not interested in studies or to help my father, says Md. Mahfooz”. “My family moved from Delhi to Hyderabad over a period of decade, because of family problems. After coming to Hyderabad, I started helping my father in his business of stitching leather bags which is not regular.

It was in 2010 in the month of September, he came to know about the centre run by Mahita and enrolled himself to learn computer – DTP. After completion of his DTP course, he enrolled himself in the stitching course so that he will be helpful in his father’s business. Lot of counseling has been done by the staff to make him realize the fact and importance of education. It was then Mahfooz, decided to enroll in 10th standard as a private candidate. He is now very confident and hardworking. He also helps his father in his leather business, after his college hours. “I am surprised to see a change in my life the way I am pursuing my education and also in the vocational training. My immense thanks to Mahita because of whom my life style and attitude has changed says Mahfooz”

Mahfooz is now confident in moving ahead in life and achieve his goals; he also has become a role model to his younger brothers so that they will also realize their dreams and achieve their goals. “Now my goal is to complete my education and start a firm of software. Yes, I can achieve my goals and move ahead in life says a confident Mahfooz”.

An effort of Child Club

Child Participation at a very different level, as a group of articulated Child Club Members who in turn are transformed as Child Rights Activists lobbying with the Government for their school infrastructure facilities where 349 children are studying in a rented building without any basic amenities...an issue taken by the Child Club Members who had a taste of bureaucracy in various levels. The “**Surajmukhi Child Club**” members gave representation to the district collector who summoned to SSA/RVM officials to resolve their problem immediately.



CHILDLINE

CHILDLINE work for the protection of the rights of all children in general. But our special focus is on all children in need of care and protection, especially the more vulnerable sections, which include a wide variety of children like Street children and youth living alone on the streets, Child laborers working in the un organized and organized sectors, Domestic help, especially girl domestics, Children affected by physical / sexual / emotional abuse in family, schools or institutions, Children who need emotional support and guidance etc.

The total number of calls that is received by CHILDLINE is divided into 5 major categories of calls: intervention calls, follow-up calls, did not find calls, information calls and 'others'. The first and last are intervention wise categories and others are again further sub-divided into numerous categories.

In the current system followed, Intervention done is the basis for classification. It may happen that a child calls complaining of depression and sickness but upon intervening the range of assistance covers not just medical but food, and access to shelter. So in such cases multiple interventions are recorded for the same case.

Many children were contacted Child Line and got benefited on various ways. Lot of awareness programs also conducted by Child Line to aware the people about the about the availability of the child protection system like child line which will support them in rescuing children in difficult circumstances.

Impact/outcome of CHILDLINE

The outreach of the child line is beyond our expectations and goals, as many children were rescued and restored with their families. An intervention in preventing child marriages is also a great achievement of child line. Around 12700 people got message about child protection issues through participating in awareness programs conducted by Childline team.



Community mobilization

The strong community mobilization will develop the ownership rights among communities and the communities will raise their voices for getting their entitlements.

The intensive community mobilization activities towards linking the excluded communities to existing programs for availing the various government programs have been given good impact this year also. This include to linking to the Children and Adolescent Girls to Health Services and facilitating for Self help group members for availing the loans from Banks and AP Minority Corporation etc., The yearlong community activities have facilitated the community for utilizing the various government programs. 625 SMC members have been oriented from 28 Government Schools.



- As the RTE ensuring the role of School Management Committees for effective implementation of the law therefore strengthening SMC is a very important issue for advocating and protecting the educational rights of the children particularly children belongs to the the socially excluded and Mahita would like to strengthen this process in the coming days.
- We could see a parallel connection between the continued efforts for mobilizing the communities from excluded communities on child rights. And to the increased level of understanding on the rights of children developed across the community members. The teachers and officials have reflected a decrease level of corporal punishment in schools. The involvement of the children in activities of the schools, parents-will, to send their children to the schools has raised
- As Mahita has very good rapport with State SSA Officials, we are raising this issue in many forums and in an optimistic way, this problem will be solved very soon; government orders to select/elect all the SMCs again, is an encouraging factor.

Besides mobilizing and strengthening SMCs, as part of community mobilization, mobilizing the people is done in two ways, one is in the form of Child Protection Committees and another one is mobilizing children in to groups like formation of children clubs. Around 65 Children Groups have been formed in 70 government schools by involving the children in Hyderabad district and 50 children groups in Adilabad district. Skills on communication, leadership and group management apart from sensitization on child rights were provided for these children group members.





TOWARDS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES

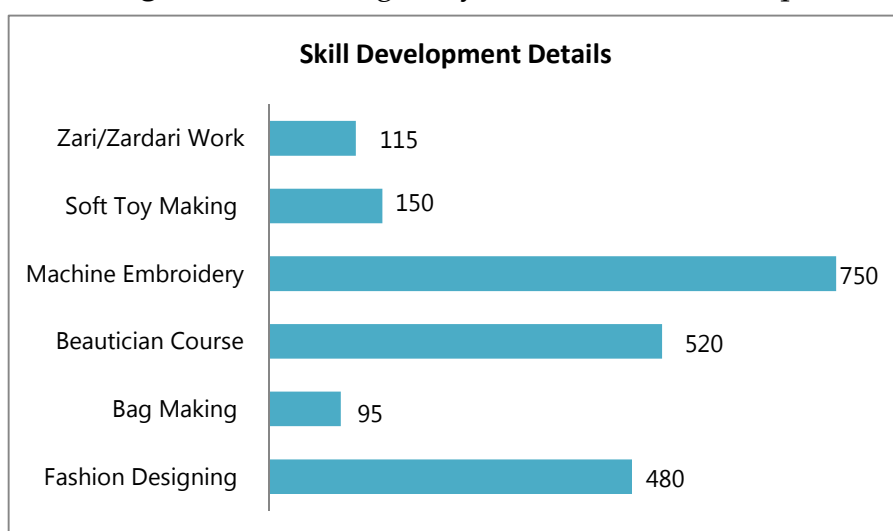


Livelihood and Skill Development Initiatives

The livelihood and skill development initiatives of Mahita aim at developing skills and link them to appropriate livelihoods. The initiatives are aimed at the youth from the slums of Hyderabad especially young Muslim women who are embroiled in social and cultural milieu that makes them socially and economically dependent on their men. Bringing these young women to the skill development centers is half the battle won. For this, Mahita teams constantly work with the community and religious leaders, parents and other influential opinion leaders to share the message that women's economic independence will in no way defy the cultural ethos of these communities.

Establishment of vocational training centers: During the year, Mahita has set up five

livelihoods and one computer training centre in the project area. Trades with good market value are selected, trained by experienced and qualified instructors and certified by Jana Sikshana Samastha (JSS) – a government body. Parents and local leaders are invited regularly as



part of the community engagement process. For better employability, participants are encouraged to pursue formal education through distance mode, for which Mahita imparts soft skills and language development skills. During the year, around 2,100 girls were trained.

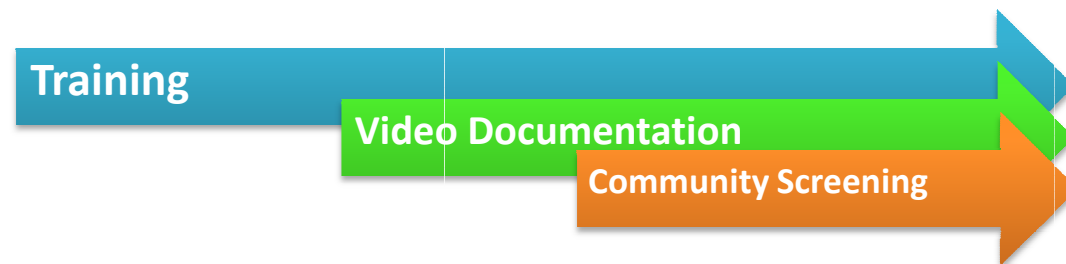


Empowering young girls through train them in Digital documentation

Video Documentation - Digital documentation of social issues

The objective of the Mahita Community Video Unit is to video as a medium to bring about development in the community and enable women take up videography as livelihood opportunity. Participatory approach for videography is adopted, which has a set of techniques that involves a group or community in shaping and creating their own films. Mahita empowers women by not only training them in videography but also motivating them to take it up as a career and livelihood option. Here, video is used more as a tool for development than just a mere compilation of visuals and audio activities.

The work of the Video unit of Mahita can be divided in three major parts.



Training: The video training of the first batch started in January, 2009. In the six months of video training, trainer from an NGO 'Video Volunteers', trained the girls from the Asifnagar mandal in Video, Audio and photographs. The main motive was to encourage girls to use video as a livelihood option and also to capture community issues with much ease unlike any outsider. Also, it aimed at empowering the women from the old city as most of the time women prefers to stay at home and are not accorded much importance in decision making.

This year, around 50 girls were trained and Mahita is planning to spread the video unit to the rest two mandals where Mahita works and in this regard, very soon trainings shall be taken up with a batch of 25-30 people, collectively, from all the three mandals.

Video Documentation: The trained girls along with Mahita team produced documentaries, introductory videos, dramas and other forms of fiction, case studies and digital photo stories. This year, a total of 20 videos have been produced in various genres.

Public Screenings: The video unit screens the video made on community issues in various community meetings and other public gatherings. Every month around 5 community screenings are done. It also includes the major public gatherings in the city, outside the community. Through these gatherings Mahita wants to make the burning issues loud and clear to the community.



RURAL/TRIBAL INITIATIVES



Empowering rural/tribal communities through multiple interventions

Objectives of Mahita's Rural and Tribal Programmes:

1. Implement interventions in rural areas through access to education, entitlements and livelihoods programmes;
2. Empower tribal communities through an integrated development programme;
3. Develop skills of rural and tribal youth.

The yearlong interventions carried out in Adilabad district not only supports education for all children, but also improving economic resources of the communities through Mathota program. It left a significant impact on the lives of the children in the project area. The systematic approach of the interventions generated lot of awareness among the SMC members. To enhance the learning levels of the children a Child Resource Centre has set up in Gadhi Guda government school. The teachers and senior students are becoming as part-time faculties in the centre which is an encouraging factor. The centre has been provided with 2 computers by the organization. Around 250 children are utilizing the centre activities.

Significant process of building the capacities of Government School teachers on activity oriented teaching methodologies, CCE, child right, positive discipline mechanisms and right to education act, apart developing good rapport with the teachers and teachers unions. The interventions directly and indirectly involved 228 teachers in the Narnoor mandal.

The Interventions have not only facilitated the educational rights of tribal children but also provided the organization and its team an insight of the activities and its impact on the lives of the children in the remote areas of the tribal region. The experiences and learning's of Mahita from the process and outcomes of the project stressed on the need of follow-up as well as up scaling and replicating the same for outreaching more number of children and schools.



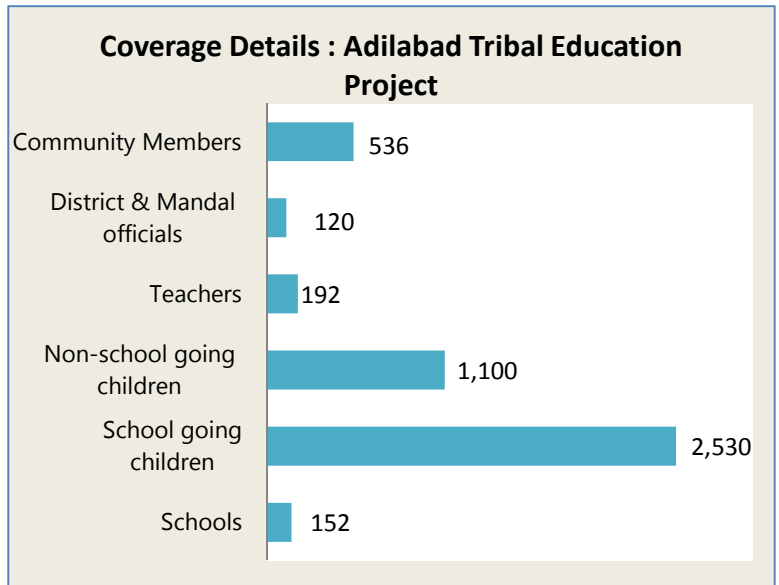
Apart from this the initiatives have facilitated a link at the District Level with other NGOs, District Child Protection Units and SSA Officials for discussing about the district level children issues and schools. The interventions on child labor and children's education have not only enrolled 750 children in 45 primary schools and also mobilized the community members and PRI members towards children's education.

The 'Tribal Development Project' of Mahita aims to improve the livelihoods in Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh through promotion of Wadis (Orchards). The project is successfully implemented in 'Narnoor Mandal', and in this, 100 acres of land is undertaken for raising Mango and Amla plantation apart from planting other fruit yielding crops with the support of NABARD.

The project faced initial hiccups due to lack of awareness of horticulture crops, increased market rates for digging pits etc, however, these problems were strategically addressed. In second phase organization took up horticulture development in 200 acres.

Following activities were undertaken under the project:

1. Horticultural Plantation and Maintenance;
2. Soil and Moisture conservation;
3. Water Resource Development;
4. Health programmes;
5. Veterinary Camps; and
6. Farmers Training on Natural Resource Management.



Accomplishments 2012-2013:

- Formation of 15 Child Protection Committees in 10 GPCs in Narnoor Mandal
- Formation of 50 Children Groups with the membership of 700 children
- Initiated 1 Child Friendly Corners in 4 Government Schools and 1 Ashrama Pathasala
- The process of identifying non-school going and working children and enrolling them into the formal schools is a going on intensively, so far 515 children have been mainstreamed

Mathota Photo

Impact & Best Practices of the interventions

- Resource Centre: The established Resource Centre at Gadhiguda, is utilized by 350 children in the school and the teachers and community members are appreciating this effort under this project.
- Children Learning Corners: The reading corners created a buzz around the children and all the children utilising the school library books and it's become central point in the school.
- SMC: Strengthening of School Management Committees and preparation of SDPs is one of the best practices in the project. At present, we have successfully initiated in 35 Schools for developing the SDPs is one of the best practice.
- Community support through part of CPC, taking responsibility of identifying existing child issues at their residential areas.
- ICPS: Child Protection Committees has been recognized by ICPS and a list of ICPS members in the project area have been submitted to District Collector.
- Extensive support from government departments and other constitutional bodies like Child Welfare Committees and DCP unit etc in facilitating protection and educational rights of the children





Advocacy and Networking Initiatives



Advocacy/Lobbying and Networking: Advocating the rights of the children and marginalized communities via the medium of workshops/public meetings. Through Seminars both at micro level and macro level brought good visibility to the organization. Mahita is also a leading Networking Agency towards mobilizing the Civil Society organizations for reviewing the important policies and provide the critical inputs to government (Right to Education Act, National Child Policy etc.).

Advocacy initiatives (State level workshops with policy makers and key officials):



Over a decade, Mahita is networking with several organisations and individuals for effective advocacy outcomes. Child Rights, Rights of the Girl Child, Women Rights, Global Movement for Children, Right to Education Campaign, and Say Yes for Children are some of the important advocacy issues that Mahita is involved in. Mahita is also largely networking many NGOs, Networks across the State and playing a key role in the State.

In order to strengthen its various advocacy campaigns on child rights, Mahita took an initiative of forming a State level Alliance

of networks and NGOs involved in the promotion of Child Rights under an informal banner – **Andhra Pradesh Alliance for Child Rights, APACR**. Mahita is facilitating for this Alliance, as Convener, with the membership of 250 NGOs.

Concrete discussions on Grievance Reddressal Mechanism under GO.130 for the effective implementation of RTE Act, 2009:

Mahita has also taken a lead role for formation of State Level Action Group on RTE APACR has developed a clear structure for grievance redressal system from school level to state level through organizing consultation across the state. This structure was widely discussed on state level platform.

As a strategy of lobbying and advocacy Mahita, had developed very strong linkages with Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in the State of Andhra Pradesh.



Mahita Resource Centre

Mahita Resource Centre has helped in networking the AP Alliance for Child Rights (APACR) network in the state. The main focus of the Resource Centre is as follows:

- Information dissemination
- Research and documentation on child issues
- Development of IEC material on update GOs and laws related to children
- Capacity building of Civil Society Organizations on Child Rights;
- Liaising and interface with government programmes and officials;
- Facilitate stakeholder participation and state level consultation on Child Rights ; and
- Strengthen District Action Groups for effective promotion of Child Rights.
- The APACR initiated and continued Electronic Discussion Group is regularly sharing the information on policies, framework, critical analysis/reviews, commission reports, bills on Child Trafficking, Status of Education, Displacement issues, Corporal Punishment, Child Labour Act, etc., with many NGOs/INGOs/Activists, academicians, institutions as a result many of them have expressed their concerns about the issues and shown interest in strengthening the group for further action through their suggestions in the aspects. Information about various Acts and Laws have been translated in to Telugu and shared with NGOs and Networks from State Secretariat.



BALANESHAM
News Journal – Media Tracking
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(A State wide Child Rights Advocacy Campaign)

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EDITORIAL

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Andhra Pradesh Alliance for Child Rights!

It's our pleasure to share with you the July month news bulletin for your reference and feedback. As we shared with you all before, the news Journal is a collection and compilation of children issues reported in various news papers for the month of July, 2011. We feel depressed to share with you the increasing cases of child rights violations across the state impeding the growth and development of the children at very tender ages.

It is a sad state of affairs that the status of girl children are appalling as the alarming trends, like marriage at younger age, child trafficking and violence against children are increasing. The news articles from various news papers indicate that the child marriages are very rampant in East Godavari and Kurnool Districts, thus throwing lot of challenges for civil society organizations and communities on the roles and responsibilities. It was shocking to see that many girls are getting married in the age group of 12-13 years and becoming mothers at a very younger age. In spite of many Acts and stringent laws, such marriages are taking place on a large scale in the rural as well as urban areas.

The news related to protection of girl children such as missing cases, rapes on minors and incidences of child trafficking are among the major news reported in the month of July. Some of the missing children are tracked by the Police and NGOs, however there are many children still living in very vulnerable and deprived situations.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has developed a road map for implementing the RTE Act, 2009 for providing the free and quality education to all the children; however the media highlights the minimum standards of the schools and lack of basic amenities as some of the major reasons for increasing dropout rate among children thus becoming child labour. In spite of the handfull resources for implementation of the Act, the bureaucracy and apathy from the district level officials are diluting the spirit of the historical act. In spite of the ACT being in force for the last 18 months, still majority of the districts have to start initial planning's such as formation of SMCs, School Development Plans, 25% of seats in private schools. Towards, initiating Civil Society Action for effective implementation of RTE Act in the State, APACR is initiating district wise Action Groups on RTE to build and strengthen the process in coming months.

We have tried best to capture the news from the print media across the State, however, some incidents which are published in district and mandal level news papers were not captured. Hence we request you all to share the news your districts.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Child rights Violations



ARTICLES OF THE MONTH

'95% of children under 2 don't get comprehensive immunisation'
Over 50 per cent of children in the age group 0-2 do not receive comprehensive immunisation in the country and approximately 2.7 million children under five do not receive any treatment for diarrhea, a major killer of children.
<http://www.andhrapradesh.com/News/News/Details/Details.asp?NewsID=244444>

Child marriages rampant in Godavari dists
Nearly 400 child marriages were stopped by the authorities. It was in Adoni division in Kurnool district. Officials are worried as shocking tales of child marriages are tumbling out from East and West Godavari districts.
Several girls are getting married by the age of 12-13 years and many of them are becoming mothers by their late teens.
<http://www.andhrapradesh.com/News/News/Details/Details.asp?NewsID=244444>

Andhra Pradesh rights panel bans children's reality shows
The Andhra Pradesh Human Rights Commission on Saturday banned reality shows involving children. The commission was responding to a case filed by several NGOs in April seeking a ban on reality shows involving children, as they were depicted poorly.

Strong Networking (Andhra Pradesh Alliance for Child Rights) – A best example for collective action:

Mahita has rich experience in successful networking and also holding a state secretariat for long time, having a forum of 690 NGOs and Networks, working towards promoting the rights of the children across the state of Andhra Pradesh. During the year many child advocacy activities has been initiated through the networks, among them the most significant are the strengthening of the grassroots level organization to advocate for the rights of the children in their respective areas, tracking of media news and analyzing them to understand the magnitude of violation of the rights of the children has also been one of the significant activities of the organization.

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The key achievements Mahita's Child Rights Advocacy Campaign - Bala Nestham this year include:

- 650 NGOs have been trained on RTE Act and formed as District Level Action Groups;
- 1,190 Child Reporters have been trained in all districts and issues rose by children have been addressed by the authorities;
- APACR along with SSA mapped NGOs to provide SMC trainings in which 600 NGOs across the State were engaged;
- 343 Media persons trained on Child Rights;
- 78 Child Media Reporters have been participated the State Level WASH workshop and provided their inputs and recommendations;
- 4 Children News Bulletins(Magazines) have been compiled at State Level;
- A state consultation process organized by APACR for sending the recommendations to National Policy for Children as well as RTE Central Rules;
- Consultations on Grievance Redressal of RTE has organized in eight districts with involvement of all stakeholders; and
- The SPD of SSA has constituted a core committee for key recommendations on State RTE Rules, as an impact of the State Consultation process on Grievance Redressal Mechanism.



Interface with policy makers/government officials/media

As part of networking and collaborative efforts the organization has been focused on interface with stakeholders across the state besides Hyderabad. The interface with government and civil society organizations on implementation of majorly intended to analyze the existing nature of implementing the process of various child laws of education and protection. The program enriched the process of critical analysis of the status of execution of the provisions of RTE and other laws. With participants from various NGO's, representatives of the teacher's union, officials from SSA and Education department the interface became a wide platform for vast discussions on ensuring the best interest of children in the implementation process.



Public hearings and stop violence against children campaign across the state

Since its inception Mahita has been working for the protection of the child rights. As part of its efforts Mahita has initiated a state level child rights advocacy campaign across the state. Due to the increase in the child protection issues Mahita partners at districts has organized this public hearing and rally events on child issues. These public hearings held in 10 districts with a active participation of 1160 members from different sectors like SMC members, teachers, officials, police, local political representatives etc in the current year.

The main objective of the Public hearing is to create a platform for the child to present the grievance, to draw the attention of government officials and other stakeholders on child issues, to make possible solutions and ensure the minimum suffering of the child and to initiate campaign on violence against children in the district. The district judges who participated in the public some hearings suggested that these cases shall be resolved by the intervention of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA). Eminent academicians, advocates, social activists, Govt. officials, representatives of media, CSO's and officials of DCPU, NCLP, SSA, Faith Based Organizations, Police, JJB, and CWC have attended.



Challenges/risks face by the team:

Mahita's core focus group are the children of excluded families such as unorganized sectors workers, rag pickers,, single parents, widows and persons with disabilities, who are miserably deprived of development opportunities, such as education, nutrition, health, hygiene, opportunities of participation.

Due to the sensitivity of the area and mindsets of some of the community members, sometimes creating hurdles. Apart from this, in the process of mainstreaming the children in schools, lack of sufficient classrooms, infrastructure, huge strength of children and negligent attitudes of the teachers has been a challenge, even though the RTE Act implementation for developing the infrastructural facilities in the schools are not favoring and it's not attracting either children to continue nor the parents to send their children regularly.

Due to this, it's very difficult to monitor the children for not dropout from the schools. The non-functioning of ICDS Centers are the great set-back, as we have tried to motivate the parents to utilize the services of the ICDS, especially for the children getting nutrition food and adolescent girls are getting health trainings, but many ICDS Centers are not aware of the local communities and not delivering the quality services. As the Government is very keen to provide the educational rights of the children under RTE Act, Protection rights of the children through JJ Act and right to food for the children below 3-5 years through ICDS Centers, due to the operational problems at ground level the programs are not reaching the communities, the way it should provide the services. However, the whole process of the community mobilization and Motivation, especially the communities and children from excluded communities in the project slums, who are now raising their voices for their entitlements, will be a great opportunity for become of these community members as an active community advocates.

Besides inadequate knowledge and due to the various dynamics and mind-sets among the NGOs, sometimes it's very difficult to bring all these individuals and networks at district level in a common platform which is resulting weak efforts with limited focus covering few areas.

Adopting strategies like efficient networking and constant rapport building with various networks and collaboration and proper communication approaches will help to overcome these challenges. Developing the linkages among the target group is also a strategy to tackle the issues.

FUTURE PLANS

In the coming years, Mahita's focus will be on the following areas, for which we seek your support.

- Based on our experience and body of work, we would like to expand to newer areas and address other development issues. These include child health, malnutrition etc in urban and rural areas,.
- Replicate our experiences in Education, Skills Development and Child Rights in other parts of the state.
- Work closely with the government, to extend technical assistance and sustain existing programs.
- Develop and sustain quality assurance and improvement across Mahita's programs - strengthen monitoring and evaluation including MIS; develop staff capacities; efficiency in programmes etc.
- Work with the corporate sector to improve the quality of our education programs.
- Extending coverage area: The coming year will be another milestone in the history of Mahita, as it is going to extend the geographical coverage to the neighbouring Ranga Reddy and Nalgonda districts, besides Adilabad to reach direct beneficiaries through the interventions of prevention of child labour for trafficking in collaboration with Academy of Gandhian Studies, Human Dignity Foundation and Plan India. As discussions are already on the process with Plan India and other partners to work on prevention of child trafficking for labour in both Ranga Reddy and Nalgonda districts.

Voices from the communities:

Sheikh Rehmat, Teacher Activist, Mahita Resource Centre 2, Karwan

"There is no one who can tell them what they should study and what they can become. My father is a lorry driver, and we - his 4 sons - inevitably became lorry drivers or auto or taxi drivers. His concern was that we should bring in some money on our own irrespective of how we managed our time and being self-employed gave that freedom. Education was the last thing on his mind because he didn't know anything about it. Moreover like most parents he too had his misconceptions about education - "what's point of an education if you remain unemployed after your studies and there are so many like that", was his remark. But I studied till Intermediate in Urdu medium schools. Then I completed my BA and B.Ed from Anwar Ul Uloom College. My Mahita colleagues were my classmates in college and that's how I came to know about Mahita and got interested in the work they are doing. When I told my father of my intention to become a teacher, he didn't say anything except wonder if I would be able to go through it. But I was determined to complete my B.Ed and when I was doing my internship as a teacher, the first day when the children of the class I was assigned to, stood up when I entered the classroom, I knew that I wanted to be a teacher at any cost. The Mahita centre's success has been its ability to draw in the children to the centre primarily because it does not charge any fees, does not conduct any exams and unlike the regular schools, it lays more emphasis on creative and recreational classes too. The teaching methods here are also different from the regular schools."

Case Studies

Zafar is an 18 year-old-boy studying in class 7th. It has been ten years since he visited a school. His parents have been migrating since he was small and this added to his woes as their financial constraints ensured that Zafar stayed away from school and education. The Resource center teacher happens to stay in the same community and having observed him loitering around, persuaded him to join the resources center at the Karwan Resource Center. After initial reluctances he started coming to the RC. Then one fine day he said, "I want to go school but my age is over but I want to study," so he along with the team interacted with the teachers. And finally has started attending classes of 8th (he visits the RC after the attending school) at the GPS Karwan. After four months of follow up, he has started learning and now wants to become an engineer and now has brought 3 child drop out cases and they have been admitted to the Mozamshahi school (in class 6th).

SNAPSHOTS/PRESS COVERAGE OF PROGRAMS

