

MAHITA - ANNUAL REFLECTIONS



2016 -2017



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*“If you can't fly, then run,
If you can't run, then walk
If you can't walk, then crawl
but whatever you do,
You have to keep moving forward”*

-Martin Luther King Jr.

With the completion of another year of Mahita, we take the opportunity to share our journey which all of us at Mahita embarked on with much commitment, passion and the zest for learning. The journey was marked by many achievements, challenges, new initiatives and learning's which we hope would be able to guide us in the coming years. This year, Mahita completed 23 years and we cannot but help ourselves thinking of our humble beginnings which date back to the year 1993-94, when a group of young professionals came together to address these issues of the vulnerable, especially children and women. Since then, Mahita emerged as an Action group which has constantly grown leaps and bounds in its impact across various geographies in the state of Telangana. Through the years, we have had wide accessibility to communities, government stakeholders, NGOs, INGOs, academic institutions and the larger civil society institutions working in the development sector.

The year 2016-17 has been a very busy and highly productive for us at Mahita! We've been tirelessly fortifying our focus on children and their rights by addressing some critical areas through various community collectives. We looked hard at the work we have done in the two and half decades; what we have learned about children and about the effective ways to change their lives. Looking back to a couple of years interventions in the field of child rights, capacity building and community empowerment, Mahita had emerged as an action group with wide accessibility to community based structures and largely Civil Society Organisations in the States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Perhaps, this rich networking experience of Mahita leads for another exciting programme on behalf of Girls rights exclusively in both the States through Girls Advocacy Alliance. Currently, Mahita has diversified its geographical reach to 6 Districts of Telangana and 3 Districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The interventions of Mahita in the areas of child rights protection during the last year are the remarkable achievements and with a lot of visible impacts made in the lives of vulnerable children and their families. The organization has worked with multiple stakeholders: governmental bodies, media, private sector, international and national NGOs and multilateral organizations to create a platform and an understanding towards the marginalized and voiceless section of the society.

Mahita has always believed and pioneered networking and alliance building amongst NGOs as well as the government bodies would be crucial in pursuing development endeavours. Networks link local efforts for more effective lobbying and advocacy and provide venues for the exchange of experiences and resources. The year was filled with numerous instances wherein we strengthened our networking across all the implementing programs, with the larger Civil Society Organizations and government stakeholders so that together we are able to have a larger and sustained impact in the lives of those from the most vulnerable sections of our society.

Taking back from the rich experience of Mahita with committed team members working with Organisations and the year 2017-2018 will be a more exciting year and plan to initiate a lot of Research Studies in both the States for policy changes for the lives of Children. Mahita also undertook activity to build a knowledge bank on Child Protection Issues within the organisation and has been undertaking lot of internal capacity building for the team members. Our extensive experience of working on children's issues has allowed us to garner equity as a child rights expert. This puts us in a unique position to effect change through working with the highest levels of government.

On behalf of Mahita, I am very thankful to; Team of Mahita, Board Members, Donor Agencies, Supporting Agencies, Individuals, Volunteers, Corporate Agencies and Government Departments, being a part of our journey, we hope this can continue to make a difference together.

Ramesh Sekhar Reddy.P
Program Director

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR 2016-2017

Mahita has established itself as an organization with a lot of commitment towards facilitating the rights of the children and marginalized community with a lot of accountability and credibility. The Organisation has worked with multiple stakeholders; government, media, civil society organizations, private companies, national and international NGOs to create a platform and an understanding towards marginalized and voiceless section of the society.

The pioneering work of Mahita continued this year as well, with 9 projects and spread across 72 Mandals, 599 Habitations and covered in 4 Districts of Telangana State. Numerous issues have been taken by the organization and trying to reach the most marginalized communities for facilitating their rights. The following are the visible and milestone achievements of Mahita for the year 2015-16.



Reached **58617** children in urban slums of Hyderabad for facilitation

Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) campaign with the support of UNICEF and Govt of Telangana



Through **ECCD**, education and nutritional food was provided to the children in the age group of 3-5 years from migrant construction families



Assisted in the rescue and provision of safe shelter to **500** vulnerable children through Childline 1098 in the district of Adilabad.



2250 Child Labour rescued and mainstreamed into schools and another 3150 out of school children



Renovation/Construction of **369** Toilets in 47 government schools of Hyderabad which ensured in continued education of 12545 children.



300 Out of school adolescent girls were linked to secondary education through distance education mode.



3320 Adolescent Girls and 115 Young Boys received Job Oriented Vocational Training



2450 Adolescent Girls and 50 Boys linked to Employment.



696 Livelihood Units were supported to enhance their family income.



626 families benefitted from awareness campaigns on Fluorosis and facilitated government linkages.



Capacitated **352** NGOs on Child Marriage, Child Trafficking and their Institutional Policies.



Strengthened **140** Child Clubs and 90 Child Protection Committees on Promotion and Protection of Child Rights.

THEMATIC INTERVENTIONS - 2016-2017



EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION





The **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** project was designed to cater to the needs of children of migrant workers, who are currently working in the construction sites, in the bustling Financial District of Hyderabad. The deplorable living conditions in these sites, is especially damaging to the children, whose physical, social and cognitive development is unfortunately at a much higher risk.

The project thus aims at mitigating the prevalent vulnerabilities, by providing early childhood care and education services, nutritional supplements, immunization and healthcare to children in the age group of 0 - 6 years from economically deprived families, whose parents work at construction/building sites in the city. It also aims at enrollment and continuation of primary education of children in the age group of 6-14 years.

Given that the children attending ECCD centres are first generational learners, a method of learning which is child centric, Teaching and Learning Method (TLM) was developed; which has been pivotal in engaging children and thereby helping them cope with their inherent challenges.

TLM is helping children to learn in a novel and enriching manner; almost 282 children have improved their learning curve especially their communication and social skills through this intervention. The play way approach of the TLM is keeping children to be physically active and is assuring a well rounded physical, social and cognitive development. The project centred it's attention at the Smooth transition of children (6-14) into primary education schools from the ECCD centres.

Involvement of the parents and the larger community in the well being of the children was encouraged by the ECCD staff and the medical practitioners. Especially, the ASHA workers in collaboration with Mahita staff has strengthened parenting support to promote children's learning and development in the community through awareness sessions.

They were educated on various health and hygiene practices, that could ensure the complete well being of the family, as well stressed on the need for the registration of child births. In the project area, 223 births were registered owing to the focus on the issue. Institutional delivery amongst the pregnant women was another area which made a profound impact due to continuous awareness created by the ASHA workers.

SNAP SHOT OF THE PROJECT:

- + 10 ECCD centers is seen to drastically improve the cognitive, physical motor and social development of the children from Migrant Construction Labour Families.
- + A total of 282 are receiving nutritional support under the purview of the project.
- + 278 Children successfully mainstreamed to schools from ECCD Centres
- + Reached 300 above children through Immunisation and Health Check-ups

SPECIAL INACTIVATED POLIO VACCINE CAMPAIGN



On June 7, 2016 Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (VDPV) Type 2 was detected in a sewage sample collected on May 16, 2016 from an environmental surveillance site in Hyderabad city of Telangana state. Hence, immediately after the notification of the VDPV2 event, a rapid field investigation was conducted in Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy districts by Telangana Govt, World Health Organization (WHO), National Polio Surveillance Project (NPSP) and UNICEF with close support of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Mahita, given its presence within the community in Hyderabad City, was one of the four NGOs that was selected to facilitate the immunization drive in 6 mandals of the city. Survey was conducted at various locations, to determine the number of eligible children for immunization. Health workers and Mahita staff visited households and informed people about the special drive and appealed to vaccinate children between the ages of six weeks and three years old as a prevention mechanism.

Mahita staff was also instrumental in sensitizing the parents, to the need for immunizations especially since the drive was conducted during the month of Ramzan, which made parents hesitant to permit their wards to be immunized. Through active Community Mobilization strategy, Mahita provided Special Inactivate Polio Vaccination to 58,617 children in 6 Mandals of Hyderabad City.



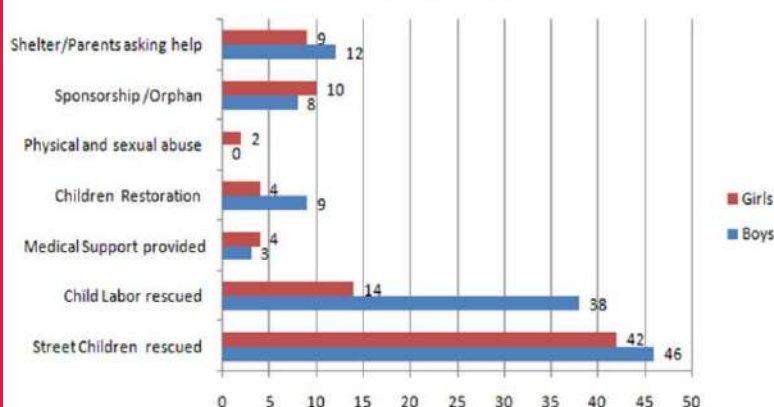
CHILD LINE- 1098 IN ADILABAD



Child line is a national, 24 hour, free, emergency phone outreach service for children in need and care protection. Mahita hosts the CHILDLINE network in Adilabad with a focus on a wide variety of vulnerable children including street children and youth living alone on the streets, runaway children, child labourers working in the unorganized and organized sectors, domestic help, especially girl domestic workers, children affected by physical / sexual / emotional abuse in family, early child marriages and children in need of emotional support and guidance.

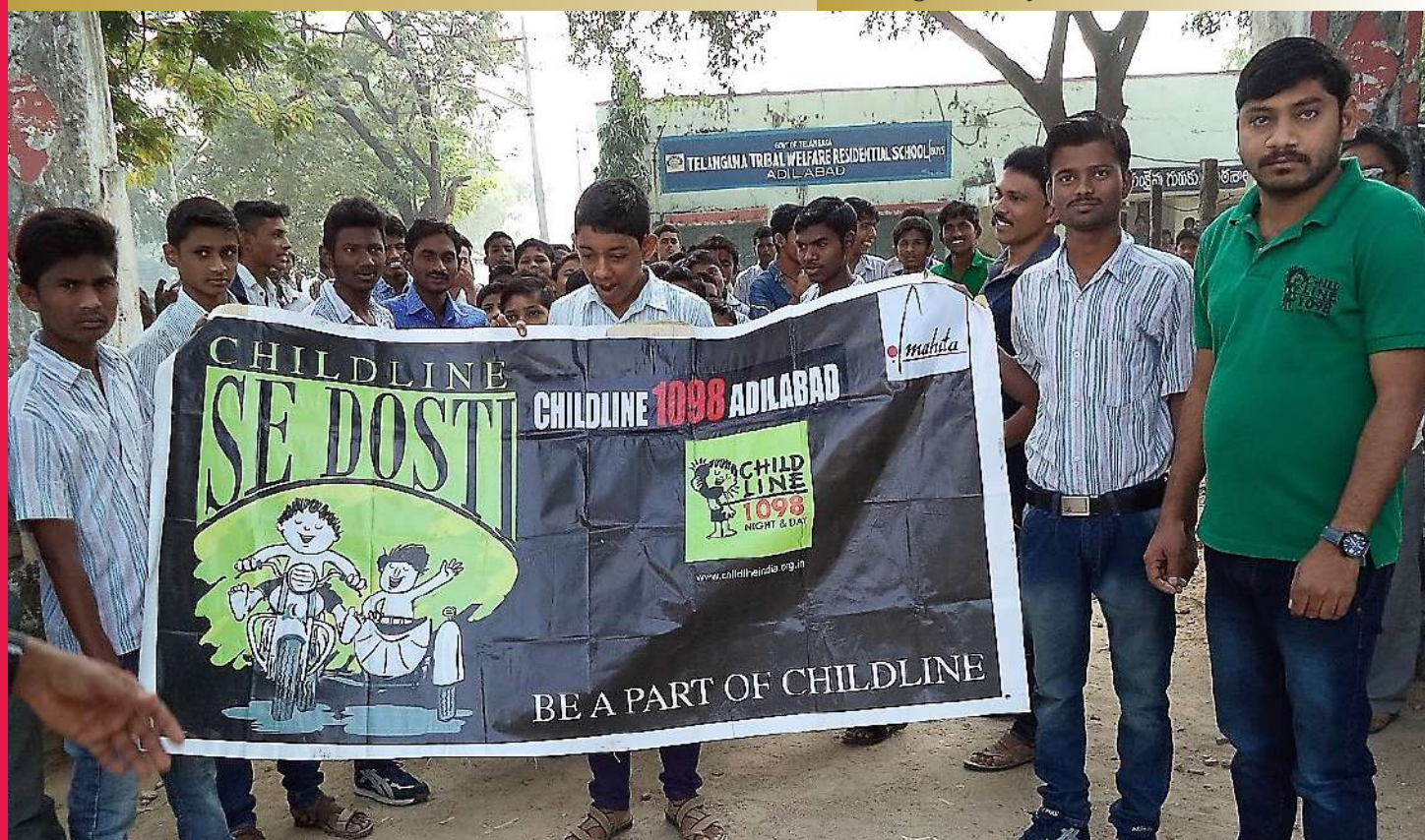
Every year the Child Line in Adilabad is reaching around 500 children in vulnerable situations in the district. Cases were referred to the concerned district departments such as the Women & Child Welfare Department, Labour Department, Education Department and the Police.

Children (0 to 14 age group) Rescued



SNAP SHOT OF THE PROJECT:

- ✦ Stopped 48 Child Marriages in the District with the Support of District Child Protection Unit, Police and other relevant Government Departments
- ✦ 1497 Children reached in the District through Open House Meetings.
- ✦ Interacted and created awareness among 10000 mixed group people during UNCRC week celebrations. During UNCRC week organized painting, elocution, essay writing, games and other competitions were conducted for children.
- ✦ Convergence with line departments like police, revenue, ICDS, ICPS, DLSA, SSA, Education department, Railway, RTC, & NGOs, Youth groups, volunteers, KGBVs and print & electronic media
- ✦ CHILDLINE got wide spread in the district. Formation of 36 Ward level child protection committees in Adilabad town. CHILDLINE Team got appreciation from the collector for timely response on the child marriages during the review meet organized by the DC.



EDUCATION TO EMPOWERMENT





SNAP SHOT OF THE PROJECT

- ✦ 440 children from 17 AWCs are being prepared for school and 215 children were transited from AWC to primary school successfully.
- ✦ 784 children were newly enrolled in schools and 40 % retention rate increased than the last year.
- ✦ 424 School Management Committee members trained in turn they have played very crucial role for smooth running of schools,
- ✦ The Mobile Resource Centre (VAN) reached more than 1000 children in 25 Government Schools.

A strong education system is the cornerstone of any country's growth and prosperity. Over the last decade, India has made great strides in strengthening its primary education system and has been able to achieve over 93% enrolment rates among primary-school-aged children with little difference by gender. However, the learning outcomes of India's children show little progress. The number of students completing their primary education with inadequate numeracy and literacy skills is startling.

The Education to Empowerment project, intends to focus on bridging the gap by improving the quality of education in pre-primary, primary and elementary levels, as per the provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

The project is implemented in 17 Anganwadis and 34 Schools in Narnoor Mandal of Adilabad District. In urban areas of Hyderabad District, Mobile Resource Van covers 10 schools and 10 worksites. The core area of the program centres on building a strong community by strengthening school and community relationship which has been able to create safe, friendly and conducive environments for children in the project areas.

The program focuses on stakeholder engagement especially with the district administration. To this end, we have formed and trained 34 School Management Committees (SMCs) in our project schools with the support of district education department. They have also been trained to strengthen and build capacities towards creating a safe, friendly and conducive learning environment for children. The enrolment in the schools has increased by 40% through regular interaction with SMC.

Early Childhood Education approach in 17 anganwadis in Narnur Mandal of Adilabad district, focuses on making children school ready and smooth transit to primary schools. Retention of children in schools at primary level is a major component of the program. Strengthening capacities of the teachers and Anganwadi workers under the program, towards child friendly pedagogical and innovative approaches created a lot of impact. About 50 % of the Anganwadi Workers are demonstrating the effective teaching learning skills such as usage of TLM material, activity based teaching methods. This has given a major boost to the social and cognitive development of the children in the Anganwadi centres.

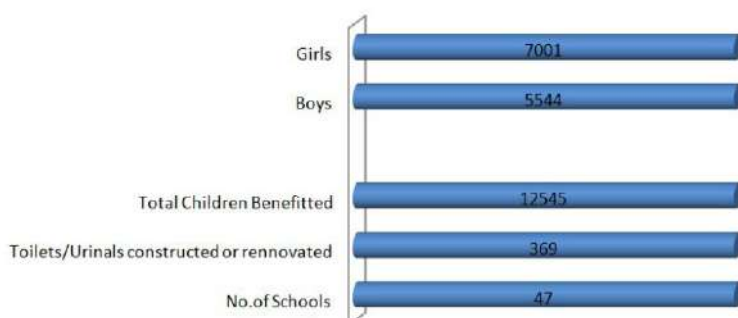
CREATING SANITATION FACILITIES IN GOVT SCHOOLS



Multiple studies have shown that lack of toilets is one of the prime reasons for the dropout of children, especially the girl child from the school system. The aim of the project is to address the negligence of sanitation facilities in the government schools, from 5 villages and 30 slums of Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy districts in the state of Telangana. This would be done by creating sanitation facilities for children, studying in 47 schools in the project area, through the renovation of toilets as well as increasing awareness on sanitation, hand washing and good hygiene practices.



School Sanitation



The Sanitation Project focuses more on improving the infra structural facilities on the components mentioned below and Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) Awareness in Schools and Communities for improving the overall conditions of seventeen government schools in Ranga Reddy and Hyderabad Districts. Through this programme, Mahita constructs and renovates sanitation facilities in government schools that helped in

increasing the enrolment rate, especially among the girl children.

The programme further raised awareness about hygiene practices among schools teachers, students and School Management Committees. Apart from the construction of toilets and renovation, the project is also supporting for the formation of Wash committees in all the schools and subsequent training is provided to the committee members. This includes appointing one person over a period of 1 year to maintain the toilets and helping children to use them.

SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS





Adolescence is an age of opportunity for children; however, it is also a period which is marked with major vulnerabilities, especially for girls. These vulnerabilities for girls translate into issues like early and forced marriages, trafficking for various commercial and sexual purposes, loss of livelihood etc. The most common and far impacting of these vulnerabilities is girls dropping out of school education once they hit adolescence age.

To address this issue, Mahita has taken a programme to facilitate adolescents girls who are school drop outs from disadvantaged families and helps them pass 10th class examination through Telangana Open School Society (TOSS) to improve employability opportunities.

The pilot project intends to provide 300 out-of-school adolescents (15-18 year age group) with scholastic support and non-cognitive skills to prepare them to meet the challenges of adulthood from a position of strength. An open school learning pathways to secondary certification is leveraged through four local resource centres.

Adolescent Girls Collectives (AGCs) has been established to discuss issues relating to health, protection, self-help and employment opportunities. Career guidance & life science training is being provided to 483 adolescent girls. The project is working on developing networks with the local factories and establishments to identify employment opportunities and skills required to connect the girls to employment post qualification.

The most significant impact of the project was widely observed in the attitudes and behavior of the parents of not only the enrolled girls but also on the parents of non-enrolled girls. The parents are highly appreciating the intervention and are encouraging their girls to continue their education. Most of the parents have expressed that had it not been this centre, their children would not have the possibility to pursue their education.

SNAP SHOT OF THE PROJECT

- + Total number of Adolescent girls enrolled and attending classes – **326**. Out of this **300** girls linked to Open School Examinations.
- + Sensitized **600** community members on the importance of Girls Education. Formation of Adolescent Girls Groups with the membership of **480** Girls (Both the Centre and outside girls) and trained on Life-skills.
- + Developed Bridge Course Material in English, Urdu and Telugu Languages and provided all the 300 girls.
- + Through Community Outreach programs, the project reached around **533** adolescent girls and created awareness life skills

JOB ORIENTED VOCATIONAL TRAINING



The increasing proportion of youth, in India's population, is certainly a demographic dividend for the country. It has been estimated that 70 percent of Indians belong to the working age group. However, if untapped and untrained, the same dividend could lead us to a much distressing situation as an economy. Circumstances such as these, time and again, bring to light the increasing need for quality vocational training that guarantees employability.

The 'Saksham Youth Economic Empowerment', project was launched in Hyderabad to address the issue at hand with a stated goal of providing employment opportunities, guided by the principles of decent work to young men and women from poor and disadvantaged communities, through Job Oriented Vocational Training (JOVT). It was envisaged, that this effort would reach out directly to 150 youth, aged 18-29 years from backward communities in the Old City of Hyderabad. Women, given their historical susceptibility to



subjugation, accord a deeper focus under the initiative. This would help them to become representatives of a gender just society and gives them the independence to self-realization.

The project successfully gave JOVT to 210 youths (125 young women & 85 young men aged 18-29 years) from poor families living in urban disadvantaged communities, to access formal job employment residing in Yakutpura, Bahadurpura, Charminar, Bandlaguda and Asif Nagar mandals of the Old City of Hyderabad in the areas of Communication Skills & Personality Development and Sales & Marketing. Of the total 210 youths, 76 young women and 68 young men have been placed in different sectors. Their profiles include Sales & Marketing professionals, Beauticians, Tele Callers, Data Entry Operators, Front Office staff and Packing Assistants in supermarkets among others. 61% of Girls and 80% of Boys are still continuing and helping their families.

The outcome of the intervention has been largely encouraging. The hitherto indifferent attitude of the community towards the girl child has changed for the better. Despite the non-achievement of the target, there has been far reaching impact on the overall situation of girl youth. Their financial dependence has reduced and they have begun to contribute to the family income. This has particularly benefited BPL families. They have also begun to participate in financial decision making. The trainees have also become more self-confident and have developed budgeting skills. Most important of all, the social image of the girl child has received a fillip. It is hoped that these change would last over time.

SKILLS TO SUCCEED - ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



Adolescent girls are at the last rung of the social ladder. They lack access to financial capital, have limited opportunities to gain education, knowledge, and skills that can lead to economic advancement. Young girls and women especially in the old city parts of Hyderabad, even today face restrictions on their physical mobility around the town, given the gender and societal norms, that dictate the role of girls and women in our communities. It is expected that girls would confine themselves in their households and any kind of income generation should be confined in the walls of their homes or a certain prescribed physical territory.

Towards providing skill training to adolescent girls a programme was initiated. The primary objective is to work for the economic empowerment of communities by equipping adolescents with necessary knowledge and technical skills that could enhance their employment prospects, which would in turn reflect in improved social and economic status. To that effect, MITHRA programme focuses on intensifying the provision of livelihood skills for adolescent girls.

This has tremendously benefited majority girls in the Old City parts of Hyderabad. It is enhancing the economic empowerment of the adolescent girls by providing a wide range of skill development training programs (Computer Training, Tailoring/Fashion Designing, Beautician Course/Mehndi, Embroidery, Soft Toy making) through 6 Livelihood Centers.

Armed with skills and confidence that comes with the training, some of our girls have gone on to secure favorable employment while others are on their way to set up profiting enterprises. About 2095 adolescent have found employment after the training and earning around Rs. 5,000/- to Rs. 10,000/-.

We have also been able to secure orders for tailoring of school uniforms at the 6 centers. Facilitation of bank



SNAP SHOT OF THE PROJECT

- + A total of 3210 girls enrolled and completed the vocational training
- + 2095 girls have been employed after attaining vocational training in various establishments job/self units and earning salary/income monthly Rs.5000-10,000/-
- + 5 Government School uniform stitching order with 800+ uniform pairs for the Production Unit (3 units) and earning decent income
- + Volunteers from ACCENTURE have been extending wholehearted, unconditional support by handling teaching assignments at the Centres by conducting different kind of events where beneficiaries' participation is more. They have also been supporting school level activities.

loans and working capital for these young entrepreneurs have been a huge task for Mahita staff and much effort has been put in negotiation with financial institutions. The Vocational Skill Training Centers have been collaborating with the Telangana Open School Society and these girls are being prepared for not just Class 10 but also Intermediate and Undergraduate level education through distance mode. As many as 207 girls have registered for these courses. They have also been encouraging their friends to do likewise. This intervention has, in every sense of the word, helped us reach out to the unreachable.

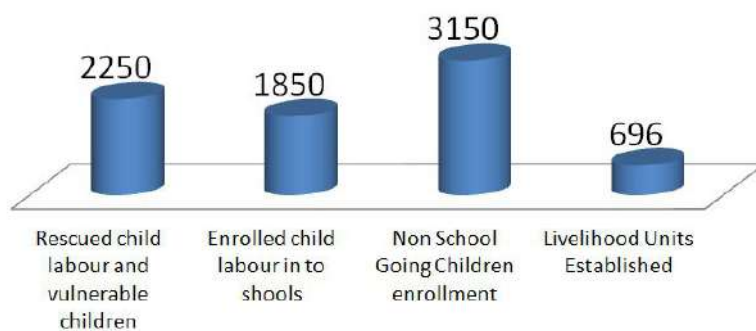
CHILD PROTECTION - ANTI CHILD LABOUR PROGRAM



Child labour is widespread in the state of Telangana, though there have been some subtle changes in the form it takes shape. With nearly 9% of children working in the 5-14 years age group, Telangana ranks 10th among the Indian states with the highest proportions of child workers. In rural areas, females have the highest proportion of workers (almost 11%), while more girls (8.4%) than boys (7%) are child workers. Mahita with the support of Plan India and HDF is implementing a project on prevention, rescue and rehabilitation of child labour and ensures strengthening of educational rights of the children.



Reachout of the Programme



The goal of the project is to strengthen the prosecution, protection and prevention services for children at risk of or subjected to labour or trafficking for labour in Ranga Reddy and Nalgonda Districts of Telangana State. The project spread across 235 habitations in Ranga Reddy and Nalgonda District is working in 140 Anganwadi and 240 government schools. This

includes initiating a lot of community actions and mobilising the children in to mainstream education. The programme successfully initiated 80 Children Clubs and 80 Child Protection Committees and constant training and follow-up is ongoing. Apart from strengthening the community structures, the project is also supporting livelihood units of the vulnerable families for enhancing their family income.

To address the various micro issues at the macro level, the project is also initiating a lot of advocacy and capacity building initiatives for the duty bearers on Child Rights. Every year 300 families were supported through the livelihood units and 90% of the families are getting the benefit for grounding units. Significant and positive stories among the families are encouraging the children to continue their education. The Livelihood Support Units are yielding very good results, creating a positive impact among the target groups. It's not only supporting vulnerable children education but also enhancing the family income process.

AWARENESS ON FLUOROSIS MITIGATION



Nalgonda district is the worst hit district in the state of Telangana in regard to areas affected by fluorosis which is marked by the high levels of fluoride (7 mg per litre) in the drinking water. Excessive fluoride intake leads to loss of calcium in the bones and teeth which results in ruptured bone structures. Mahita supported by Manos Unidas proposed the project to provide a practical solution to a decade long endemic problem of Fluorosis and the lack of basic services and their effect on the lives of people in Narayanpur, Nalgonda District.



The burden of inadequate access to clean drinking water along with poor sanitation and hygiene practices falls disproportionately upon women and the girl child. Women undertake the more onerous tasks involved in the running of households; they command lower wages as labour and their voice is limited in decision making.

The project is being implemented in Narsapur block of Nalgonda district wherein mitigation strategies through awareness campaigns and access to safe water and nutrition is being undertaken. In 30 villages water & sanitation

committees formed. About 238 people from 30 village water & sanitation committees have been trained. About 1350 people from 626 families have been linked to safe drinking water.

Collective action is the main key to the success of the project and this has been ensured through social mobilisation, capacity building and ownership building to leverage government resources for the socio-economic empowerment of the tribal community of Lambadas. We have successfully formed one **Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC)** in each village /habitation with community members. Members of the VWSCs have been capacitated to conduct review and coordination meetings and monitor field activities and their implementation in consultation with district administration and public/political elected representatives.

The project intervention successfully developed linkages with the Integrated Child Development Services i.e. Anganwadi Centres to 72 Pregnant women for getting full meal programmes and 84 lactating Mothers and 470 children for getting nutritional food program. Apart from these, 56 Men and 63 Women have been linked to Old Age Pension and Fluorosis pension programs.

The IEC material developed under the project created a lot of awareness among the communities on water, sanitation and nutritional food. The district administration and the local government have appreciated these initiatives. The special days campaigns have created a buzz among the media and the communities. The interventions initiated under the project are happening in a systematic way as designed according to the action plan and creating a lot of government linkages.

GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE



Gender based violence is a reality for girls and women in India in the 21st century. It grossly encroaches upon a woman's right to life, dignity, security, health and her capacity and ability to attain her potentials; yet it continues to be shrouded in the clouds of silence and social acceptance. Two of the worst form of gender based violence in India that girls and young women especially are grappling with is child marriage and child trafficking for sexual and commercial exploitation. In both these forms GBV, women and girls are bearing the burden of these abuses.



The Girls Advocacy Alliance program in India is being implemented in the two states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by Mahita and supported by Plan India. The program focuses on reducing **Child Marriage and Child Trafficking issues, while promoting secondary education and Job Oriented Vocational Training (JOVT)** among girls and young women. The Girls Advocacy Alliance Long term goal is to be able to create a space along with relevant government machineries and the wider civil society organizations wherein '**Equal rights and opportunities for girls and young women**' is a reality in the two states.

SNAP SHOT OF THE PROJECT

- + 352 NGOs / Networks in 9 Districts have been strengthened.
- + 197 NGOs have been trained on organizational policies in 4 Districts of TS and 2 Districts of AP.
- + 186 NGOs create platforms for girls and youth participation for action
- + 352 NGOs / Networks in 9 Districts have been strengthened.
- + 197 NGOs have been trained on organizational policies in 4 Districts of TS and 2 Districts of AP.
- + 186 NGOs create platforms for girls and youth participation for action

While the program will have its impact across all 31 districts of Telangana and 13 districts in Andhra Pradesh, Plan India-Mahita will have a special focus in select districts where there is a high prevalence rates based on various national data. The select districts in Telangana are Hyderabad, Vikarabad, Gadwal, Yadadiri, Sangareddy District and Adilabad. In Andhra Pradesh, we are operational in three districts i.e. Kurnool, Krishna and Visakhapatnam.

The **target groups** of the program include girls between the age group of 11 to 18 years and young women below 35 years of age from economically and socially poor communities (Dalits or Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes). Strengthening the efforts of the Girls Advocacy Alliance, in addressing the above issues, the alliance is promoting active participation and work closely with the **communities (including leaders, local administration, Child Protection Committees, boys and men, women and girls); the government (primary duty bearers), NGOs and private sector**. Our efforts, in the initial period have been concerted in building the network of **352 NGOs** in the 6 districts of Telangana and 3 districts in Andhra Pradesh. The network of organizations is currently being capacitated on the issues of child marriage, child trafficking, secondary education and JOVT, so as to be able to advocate with the district and state administration and the communities on the issues pertinent to GAA.

SUCCESS STORIES

Bushra Begum, a 19 year old resident of Edi Bazaar, enrolled for a fashion designing course at the centre. She belongs to a large family, wherein her father is the sole earner and earns about Rs 4000 per month. With this meager amount, a family of 8 finds it very difficult to manage.

But the conservatism of the family does not allow for the women to contribute to the family income by earning a decent income.

It took Mahita staff some time to convince Bushra's father to allow her to enrol in the course. Once she completed the course, she wanted to help her father by augmenting his income, so she convinced her aunt to donate her sewing machine till she can afford to buy a new one.

Today she earns at least Rs. 5000 per month and is a sturdy support to her father, who is happy to have the support from her daughter while also conforming to the societal expectation from him. Acquiring life skills to gain financial independence is paramount for all the girls and women, but more importantly to gain greater self-esteem and control over their lives. This is being truly reflected in Bushra's life; though there is a possibility for more in Bushra's life currently the feats she has achieved is remarkable.

Vijaya Lakshmi, Worker in charge of the Anganwadi Centre in Lokari (B) village of Narnoor mandal, Adilabad district is very popular in the village due to her dedication.

She personally visits the homes of all children aged 3-5 in the catchment area of the Centre to bring them there and prepared TLM for use in instruction. She actively campaigns against child marriage and regularly convenes meetings with adolescent girls, during which she urges to get married only after they have crossed the age of 18. She also highlights this issue during community meetings.

Thanks to the training provided by Mahita. Now, she measures the heights and weights of children that attend the Centre, once a month and arranges immunisation for all eligible children in the village and does good service.

Sheikh Salma belongs to a single woman household and has two siblings. Her mother, sole breadwinner of the family has been selling tobacco leaves and coconut to raise the children. Salma completed 12th standard and discontinued higher education due to financial constraints.

She enrolled in fashion designing course at our centre and started working independently augmenting her mother's income. Simultaneously, she enrolled in the computer course for another six months and did part-time work to balance the family needs. After course completion, she was placed as a data operator in Karvy at Banjara Hills where her shift timings were from 9 am to 6pm. Her mother was very anxious about those timings as the nearby community and society were putting pressure on them. However, timely counselling by Mahita team has resulted in Salma continuing her job and overcoming the societal customs and superstitious beliefs.

Today her younger sister is following her footsteps in securing a livelihood for herself. Salma's younger brother who is in school has found for himself a great female role model. Her mother is very confident that her family can now fend for themselves and a good future awaits them.

Laxmi K (20) was born on February 28, 1997, in Borabanda, Hyderabad. Like any other girl, she was enjoying her childhood life in school with friends. However, destiny was indifferent, she became a victim of child marriage and got wedded to her maternal uncle Shiva Krishna at the age of 15 while pursuing 9th standard. Later her mother demised. She is now sixth month pregnant and already has a two year old baby girl.

In one of the community mobilization discussions, a teacher from Mahita approached and counselled her to continue education. She then started coming to Open School Learning centre since June 2016. She was mentored by teachers and used to bring her baby to the class which eased her complications.

"The teachers were always helpful and taught the concepts very well". She was able to recollect syllabus of subjects studied during the school and connected them in the learning centre. She is happy that this change in her life will help in educating children in future. "I know the importance of education and how important it is to have a good life", she says.



In the year 2015-16, Mahita has manned by a team of 115 committed members, who are experienced social workers and dedicated professionals. Some of its team members are working with the organisation for the past 16 years and secondary leadership is one of the core strength of the Organisation. The team of Mahita is truly the life-blood of the organisation, keep it invigorated and growing.

Driven by Mahita's values and commitment to excel in the field of working with children, the team members served as the backbone of all the projects being implemented by it in partnership with other organizations. Our team is gender balanced and it is ensured that no one is discriminated on the basis of caste, colour, religion or gender. All the organisational policies are in place and lot of vigilance by the core team members for practising the policies such as; anti-sexual harassment policy and child protection policy etc.,

MAHITA has a clear vision and philosophy of developing the second line of leadership, with accountability and transparency in its nature. The organization believes in equal opportunities and decentralized work. The volunteers and the front line staff will be identified and recruited from the same project areas, through a formal appraisal, covering their Educational qualification, leadership and communication skills at the community level. Soon after the identification, a process of induction will be carried out this includes exposure visits, briefing of organizational work and its objectives. Towards strengthening their capacities to make them as the social transformers, regular capacity building trainings on various social issues, education and updates of Government policies and schemes will be provided. The strategy behind this is to bring efficient and effective interventions at the grassroots level through making the coordinating staff and especially the front line workers.

OUR PARTNERS & COLLABORATIONS

The target that MAHITA achieved this year sounds quite stupendous. This could be made possible only because it got significant support from a wide range of partners, donors, and other organizations.

Key supporters(Partnership and Networking)- 2016-17

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