

## **Mithra Foundation**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2006-07**

“Mithra” means Friend. The friendship, equality and fraternity are the basic principles on which Mithra initiated its programs in the slums and pavement of Bangalore City. Since 1995 it has operated in the northeast part of the city, covering a population of around 60000. Mithra faces its failures among the families, women and children but also feels proud of its achievements.

**What is Mithra Foundation?** Mithra foundation is an independent, secular, voluntary organization working both at micro level with the urban poor and at macro level with the local government, national & international agencies.

**The Genesis:** Mithra foundation was started in 1992 by Dr. Joe Rosario based on the experience of his PhD thesis. He worked with the poor children living in Srirampuram slums. He witnessed that these underprivileged children are denied of basic rights and are susceptible to all forms of abuses. On account of this, their developmental process is affected including their learning ability. So Dr. Joe Rosario along with few more doctors from NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences) initiated a program for the slum children called “cognitive skills stimulation”. By this the children are trained to acquire the foundational skills to cope with demands of life and become active partakers of their own development including their early education.

Mithra foundation was registered in 1995. The aim is to empower the most vulnerable people and facilitate their struggle against poverty, failures, injustices and exploitation. The focus groups are the migrants settled in the slums. Among these slum dwellers, women and the children are given priority.

**People reached:** Mithra’s programs are of community based. It believes that unless the people are accompanied, the help being extended will never be sustainable. Mithra works in the following slums.

- Jeyanthinagar, Gajendranagar, Naganapalaya ,K.G. garden, Sathyanagar,
- Byapannahalli, Vijinapuram, Kothur, Mokkauttamanagar, Muneshwarnagar, Kalker, Eranipalaya,

### **SLUM-BASED ACTIVITIES**

There are currently twelve slum communities in which Mithra is engaged. For each of these activities Mithra’s staff goes to the people and works with them. Some of the field-based activities are:

1. The pre-schools called Cognitive stimulation program.
2. Supplementary Education for a wide age-range of children
3. Community programs: Children’s Day, Anti-child labour day, Human rights day, Women’s day etc.
4. Relief and rehabilitation of the disabled children by animators.

5. Educational or recreational activities for the child workers.
6. Running of alternative school for the underprivileged.
7. The women's sangam in action
8. Microcredit, enterprise.
9. Vocational skills trainings in tailoring & garment finishing, Computers etc.
10. Pre-primary Teacher's training.
11. Rehabilitation of the Tsunami affected families.
12. Human Rights Education program, Karnataka.

### **The children's programs**

Mithra's educational program for the children consists of:

1. Pre-school program in the slums for 4–6 years kids.
2. Supplementary classes for older children in all the slums. (6–15 years).
3. Education of the child Workers. (6–15 years)
4. Alternative education for the underprivileged – Primary school.
5. Support to Girl children and Dalit children

**The pre-schools:** This is run in all nine slums by the part time teachers who are trained by the nursery teachers program. In addition Mithra organizes regular training for these teachers on every Saturdays. In addition they had rigorous 3 days trainings, three times in this report period. These trainings play vital role in equipping these teachers to handle the children.

The fixed syllabus is drawn, updated from time to time and implemented by the staff. Each slum center of Mithra is located either in the middle of or adjacent to the slum. The classes were run for 15 to 25 children in the age group of 4 to 6 from 9 am to 12 noon. It was followed by mini meal for the kids, which is a crucial factor for their total development. The teachers, who managed these classes were Nesam, Vanitha, Julie, Pushpa, Manjula, Selvi, Sheela, Queenie, Amili, Anitha, Usharani.

**Problems faced:** Every new mother is required to be taught about the need for foundation programs for learning than just teaching something like, songs and alphabets. The creative methods of learning make the cloths of the child dirty and their inclination to continue such activity at home brings some resentments. Teachers had to spend much time to explain this regularly to new mothers. The teacher's time is consumed also in reeducating the mothers on 'learning by doing.' The water play and mud games especially irritate the mothers.

The mothers tend to drop even very small children in the centers. Despite repeated refusal to enroll them in the class, they force these children into the class.

Because of booming export and IT industries in Bangalore, recruitment of teachers for pre-schools had become a Herculean task.

**Supplementary class for the school going children of the slums:** The poor and the underprivileged living in the slums are all migrants. Their spoken languages are different. Their education in the new land is a challenge to them. If given some support in their academics and other area they tend to continue their education in a smooth manner. Mithra did this service to them and the community response was good.

The educated youth in the vicinity had come forward to take up this part time assignment. The classes were run from 4.30 to 6 p.m. imparting languages like Hindi, Kannada, English were the major tasks.

By this the drop out rate is reduced. Emotional and behavioral problems of them were diagnosed and helped. Health facilities were given. Enhancement of their motivation to study took place. Above all children were given opportunity to express their extra curricular talents. Around 230 children in the age group of 6 to 16 benefited from this. The big success of this year's Summer Camp was because of this program.

In the month of June and July 2006, books, notebooks and school bags were distributed to the children in all the slums. This was well organized by the mothers of the slums. Due to shortage of funds this was restricted to 130 children who were regular, exhibited progress in their academics, special children left in difficult circumstances, girl children and Dalit children.

Health camp was organized for them and certain health issues had been identified and helped. These children in respective Mithra Slum centers celebrated Teacher's day, children's day, Christmas and Ugadi. They gave presents to teachers. Shared their experiences at their schools. It was unprepared and spontaneous. It was closed with cultural items and distribution of sweets.

### **Education of the child Workers. (6–15 years)**

Mithra considers child labor as a disgrace to any community and one that needs to be eradicated. Due to the untiring efforts of various actors, including NGOs in India, the Government of India has promulgated the law banning child labour. It is now a crime to employ children in India. This is a big success of the campaign and advocacy being undertaken by various NGOs including Mithra. The network of NGOs dealing with child Rights feel very much rewarded by such a move by the government.

In addition to this, efforts by Mithra to motivate the mothers to educate their children have been bearing fruit. Increasingly the children from our slums do go to schools. However there are instances of children, especially in the age group of 12 to 14, being pulled back by the employers for their needs. Mithra is watching this. Actions are restored to save such children.

The teachers of Mithra and the government schools go for regular school enrollment campaign in the slums. The bigger children who had dropped out or never been to schools are given additional attention and support to pursue their education.

Few girls have gone for tailoring trainings in Mithra. Eight of them were sent for sort term courses in catering, office maintenance, bookbinding and some boys have opted for vocational skills and so Mithra helped 11 such boys to acquire skills for livelihood.

The families of the child workers are part of Mithra's fold. They were financially supported to face the loss of income from them.

Increasingly the number of child workers has come down and the credit goes for the efforts put by the field staff of Mithra. The number of child workers made use of Mithra's interventions in this report period is around 42. This figure used to be 480 in 1995, 225 in 2000, 185 in 2005, and 57 in 2007.

The child labour camp had become quarterly program instead of monthly feature of earlier days. In April, July, September and December child Labour camps were organized wherein 28 girl child workers and 19 boys took part in this. Under the leadership of senior staff Queenie and Mani classes and demonstrations were given on creativity. The child workers made models with waste materials. The regular teachers of Mithra School and the teacher trainees were also involved in these camps. They were highly impressed by the presentation and the input sessions of child workers in the discussions.

**Disabled children:** Some of the children and adults found in the communities where Mithra works are given support for their medical and educational needs. Around 13 of them were given assistance. Three were referred to the government hospitals for correctional surgery. Two girls had been admitted for higher class and being supported by Mithra. One child of 12 years had been helped but of no use. It is pathetic to see the child as well as the helpless mother Anthoniamma still smiling.

**Scholarships for the children:** Scholarship for Dalit Children: Mithra's concern for the underprivileged is further sharpened by the fact that Indian Society is torn into pieces because of the prevalent caste system. This caste structure further marginalizes people by separating them into different classes. Thus Mithra's educational program for the children is complete only if the segregated / excluded category of the society namely the untouchables are specially taken care of. In specific terms Mithra has extended its special educational support to 26 such most deserving children.

These children are given full support to pursue their education in an undisturbed manner. If the family hurdles, financial crunches, physical tortures are removed these children can exhibit a tremendous amount of learning capacity.

These children are studying in different schools, They are closely monitored, their teachers, parents, peer group mates are interviewed to ensure that they are leading a healthy life and study well. The dream of Mithra is that they are going to be entitled with good and higher education that they would have secure future.

**Alternative school:** The main premise of this venture is the provision of and access to quality education as the fundamental right for every child. Mithra's alternative school for the underprivileged is presently catering education to 200 children in the classes of pre-primary to VIII grade. The State syllabus is being followed. The children are given not only the basic education but the vision of empowerment is being imbibed in different ways.

This year many North Indian Children from Rajasthan, Gujarat, and U.P were admitted to our school. The Standards were from L.K.G –VIII std. The strength of our school is 200 in the beginning. The school primarily caters to the underprivileged children who are also first generation learners.

The school has been managed by a team of committed and well-qualified teachers. They are Usha, Latha, Lakshmi, Kalam, Kaleshappa, Rajeeve, Komala, Meena, Sandra, Geetha, Ganga and Annie. In the beginning, our children struggled to cope with their studies; but our teachers worked hard and brought them up to the average level for their age group. The Subjects taught were English, Kannada, Hindi, Maths, Social Studies, Environmental Education & Science, and also Computer.

Monthly assessments, as well as major exams were conducted regularly to test their academic performance. For weak students, coaching classes were organized on a short-term basis. After the First semester exam we gave marks cards and also prizes to the best students in order to encourage other children also to study well. The prizes were for academics, good behavior and above all for the children in distress. This means due to adverse socio-economic background and distress in the families, children could cope with the studies and managed to secure reasonable marks. This we do recognize in our school.

Santhkumar, Santhoseh and Durgesh all lost their fathers in an untimely and unnatural manner.

Children were also given dance, music, Yoga, drill, Art. These programs were managed by part time teachers... dance class by Mr. Krishnan, yoga class by Mr. Basha, Martial art — karate classes by Krishnan, Music classes by Ms. Julie, Drill & band training by Mr. Mahadeppa, Art classes by Mr. Saravanan and Ms. Queenie. These classes were given regularly as part of the timetable every day between 2.15 to 3.30 pm.

**Computers:** This year we also opened separate computer room & there are new computers purchased to train children. The students from IIIrd to VII std are given classes on basics by Bagya and lakshmi

**Library:** We also opened library room with a reading room. Teachers go to library every evening to refer books. Students were also taken to library often & every Saturday from 10-30 – 11-30 they were provided with books & reading practice was given in the class. Our volunteer from Australia, Sonia Dempsey, prepared the reading room. She has done the decoration and made it very conducive for the children and teachers to sit and read books.

**Indoor competition** like Debate, Quiz, and Singing were conducted for the children. Kalam was the person responsible for this and made programs very interesting.

#### **Special events:**

1. Bag Distribution: — On 12<sup>th</sup> June School Bags & Lunch kit were distributed to the children. It was sponsored by Indian Overseas Bank. The children were happy to receive not only the bag but also a kit containing plastic basket, pencil box, tiffen box and water bottle.
2. Visit of international members: Subud members from 20 countries came to visit the school on August 12<sup>th</sup> and the children gave a cultural Program.
3. On 5<sup>th</sup> September the Teacher's Day was celebrated in a meaningful manner. On 15<sup>th</sup> November, children's Day with our guest Raphael bate.

15<sup>th</sup> august, Independence Day, 23<sup>rd</sup> December Christmas day.

4. Health camp on Eye Examination by Sri Sai Hospital on 17.11.06 & from Chandragiri Charitable Trust has vaccinated Hepatitis 'B' on 6.1.07.
5. Picnic: — Our children were taken for picnic to Bannerghatta & Cubbon Park on 9.12.06. Four teachers accompanied them.
6. **Inter-school Event:** State level yoga championship & Interschool & college level competition was held at New Baldwin School. Our School students 11 of them participated & won the certificates & medals.
7. **Garden Project:** The children were initiated in the Mithra School garden Project. The guidance was given by Mani and Kalam. The purpose was to instruct the children to have a school with garden. In the month of August we started gardening class for V, VI, VII Std Students. They planted Coriander, Chilly, Tomato, Onion, Tulasi, Rose plant for the first time. After some time, when chilies & onion grew well they cleaned the other part of land & planted bean, Balsam, Capsicum, Peas. They planted small sticks to support Pea plants. Children enjoy doing this. Some children like Harinath & Bupender stay after the school hour & pour water to the Garden. Priyadharshini and Usha showed much interest in this and had been awarded.

**Parents and teachers meet:** The teachers make it a point to meet the mother's of the child regularly. Organized meetings for the parents were held twice this year. It was with overwhelming response the mother's participated. The parents shared their grievances as well as the teachers expressed their expectations.

**Teachers' report based on regular observations.** Each teacher writes the report of her pupil every month. The report covers different aspects of the child, Social, psychological, personal, academic, financial, family stories, community related matters, Interaction with parents & teachers etc) Since it is the monthly feature, the teachers at times feel lost to write much. They are given guidance and assistance to express them by enhancing their vocabulary level. The Volunteers Sonia Dempsey from Australia and Raphael played a very supportive role in this task of teachers. This reporting is also training for the teachers.

**Government Collaboration:** The Karnataka Government is toying with the idea of adopting a new language policy by introducing both Kannada and English at the primary school stage. At the same time they try to enforce that Kannada should be the major medium of instructions in private schools like Mithra. On account of this the schools that got recognition after 1994 are in a dilemma to follow the government norms.

Under the proposed policy, Kannada will be taught from the first standard in English-medium schools, English will be taught from the first standard in Kannada-medium schools and Kannada will become a compulsory subject from the third standard in linguistic minority schools, Minister for Primary and Secondary Education Basavaraj Horatti told presspersons here on Wednesday.

Mithra follows the state syllabus and collaborate with the local government. We participate in all the activities of the government such as census taking flag demonstration, media works recommended by the education department of South Zone of Government of Karnataka.

The Flag days were celebrated with the local government by which our children also sold the flags and raised funds for them. This was in the month of November. In February 2006, three

teachers went for the census with the local government staff. It was a hectic job for them to complete.

**Sports:** Out door competitions like kabbadi, throw ball were conducted regularly.

**Teacher trainings:** During Dasara Holidays teachers had training for three days. The topics were learning by activity, creativity in learning & child development. The Resource people were Mark Sagayam, Sumathi & Chithra from Deepika School.

Mr. Raphael Bate from France conducted live projects for the teachers of Mithra School, regarding Gardening, creative teaching and integration of subjects by this live projects. He spent one week in training of teachers in the month of November 2006. He taught about the live project. He gave each teacher one topic & asked them to plan for the project. The project work started on 17<sup>th</sup> November, there were four sessions. Each session took place on Saturday. The teachers were asked to choose a theme and make a separate project with illustrations

**Holidays: -** Christmas Holidays From 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec \_ 1<sup>st</sup> Jan

Dasara Holidays From 30<sup>th</sup> Sep – 9<sup>th</sup> Oct

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 06 there was a bundh so our School was closed.

On Nov 1<sup>st</sup> we had holiday for Rajothsava

On 2<sup>nd</sup> Karnataka declared Holiday.

On 6<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Feb There was a total Bundh on Kaveri River dispute between tripartite States in South India. We declared Holiday.

### **Women's program**

The savings and micro credit are quite common in any women's group in India. In every slum where Mithra operates this has become routine affair. In each slum 12 to 24 women members regularly meet, get trained, pool their savings, and share these resources among themselves for productive purposes. This programs in the slums have grown but not easy to manage. The women's groups are active and fairly cohesive but at the same time quarrels over the loan allotment.

The trainings and meetings: This is done both at bi-monthly basis at slum level — every third month at cluster level and twice a year for all together. Around 45 women were trained in basic skills and psychology. Some of them were given programs in reproductive health. Occasionally debate is conducted on crucial issues like HIV, education for their children, Employment issues.

**Women's day celebration:** This is not a mere celebration of their empowerment. But it is a process exercise for them as well as for the staff of Mithra to discover and rediscover their growth over a period. 108 women took part in this on 8<sup>th</sup> march 2007. This was organized with the help of Social Work Postgraduate students from local colleges. The program went on for four hours in Mithra school premise.

**Micro enterprises:** Three to five from each group have utilized it for various reasons. Some of the needs were: To avoid taking loan from money lenders, to educate their children, to establish petty shop, to buy flowers for rotation of sale, for mobile tea supply in the construction sites, for tender coconut sale, for mango season etc. This has liberated them from the clutches of the moneylenders who squeeze them with very high interest. Because of Mithra's assistance they escaped this ill treatment by men in the slums.

### **Vocational Skills training**

Vocational training entered successfully its fifth batch of students in tailoring and Garments finishing. Currently the sixth batch of 17 students is undergoing training. The former students of Mithra are all well placed in the booming garment industries earning a minimum of Rs 3000 per month.

**The computer training** is also going on as usual with 5 students in a batch. Around 25 have been trained in the basics of computers. It is the Mithra school children who are exposed to computers this year.

**The pre-primary teacher Training Program:** The teachers training program is recognized by the central and state governments. The results of the first batch was good. Only one candidate failed. The second batch of 23 is completing their training this month. The third batch is getting enrolled.

Guest lectures — Mr. Mark an expert in early childhood education gave two days workshops on preparing teaching aids. He also stressed the need to use teaching aids during teaching of children. Mr. Raphael a retired professor of arts education gave a series of lectures on how to develop creativity in children through arts. Dr, Rosario gave special lectures on how to identify children's problem and how to help such children.

Teaching practice: The trainees had their teaching practice in five schools, under the guidance of experienced teachers like Ms. Sita, Asha. The importance of activity based teaching and all round development of children had been the focus of this program.

### **Human Rights Education Program – Karnataka:**

In order to restore the human rights culture in our society Mithra has started Human rights education in High school of Karnataka. Presently it is spread in 14 districts covering hundreds of schools. The young generation is given the basic principles, knowledge, and information and exercises in Human rights values that they would become the agents to restore the rights of others especially the marginalized.

On account of this intervention 45000 students were imparted with knowledge and information on human rights. Around 956 teachers have been trained in the subject. There had been an impact study conducted to test of validity of the program. It was discovered that the students benefited by this and showed tremendous interest in the subject. The school authorities reported that this program is necessary and to be made compulsory in all the schools. It is Mithra's pride to report that the State Government of Karnataka has agreed to implement this in 80 government schools on experiment basis.

### **The Highlights of the activities for this period includes:**

- Conducting teachers training in four districts
- Reprinting of Kannada text book of human rights,
- Supplying human rights books to schools
- Establishing audio Video library on Human Rights.
- Monitoring and animation for schools
- Reaching out to new schools
- Presentation of Human Rights education Program to international groups.
- Holding the talks with the local government on Human rights education.
- Managing three inter-school events.
- Conducting meeting of head of the institutions.
- Introducing Student volunteers to the schools for exposure / experiences.
- In-service training in the existing schools.
- Preparation of Impact study.
- Organizing the Human Rights festival with 32 NGOs

**Teachers Training:** The first one in Kolar district for seven schools on 8 & 9 of June 2006. There were 21 participants. The resource team was formed from the local activist, Sudharshan and Sr. Shanthi. Since the Human Rights trained teachers in two schools do the work very enthusiastically, they were also invited to give training to the new teachers.

The second one was conducted at St. Mary's High School, Ponda, Goa, on July 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2006. A total of 102 teachers from different schools in Goa were the beneficiaries of this training.

The third training conducted at St. Aloysius' Middle School, Bangalore, on July 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> was attended by 38 teachers from Bangalore, Chickbellapur, KGF and Bellary. Resource persons for these trainings were Fr. Cyril, S.J., Dr. Joe Rosario, Mrs. Geetha Menon, Fr. Albert, S.J., Mrs. Bella and Mr. Mathew. Topics covered included general introduction to human rights, child rights, women's rights, methodology of implementing human rights education, etc. The sessions were made interesting and participatory by group discussions, case studies and other group works.

The fourth one was in Hospet another training was conducted for five schools. There were 62 teachers and the resource team was Joe, Edwin, Mandhakini and Mathew.

The fifth one was again near Bangalore for the schools of one congregation having schools in Tamilnadu, Andhra and Karnataka. There were 43 teachers, sisters and headmistresses who took part in this three days program from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> October.

**Reprinting of Kannada textbook of Human Rights:** Since we had exhausted the first edition of our Kannada textbook of human rights education, we had to print the second edition of the same to meet the demand for supply to Kannada medium schools. While reprinting the book, efforts were made to update the book and bring about certain changes on par with the English edition of the textbook.

**Supply of books** At the beginning of the new academic year itself, text books (both in English and Kannada) were supplied to all human rights education schools as per their requirements. While most of the schools have bought books for each student, some schools, especially economically backward schools, take only a limited number of books to conduct the classes.

Some of the schools also wanted to have notebooks to document their experiences as their homework and groups assignments. Mithra was happy to supply the notebooks and extended to these schools support to buy more materials for the students to read. There were seven English and Kannada journals available those talks about the various Human Rights violations and the steps taken by individuals and groups to combat them.

The monitoring team also made sure that the books were extensively used and shared with other students who show interest but not part of these programs at school level. Similarly other teachers of the schools asked for the book as reference to take value education for higher classes.

**Establishing audio Video library on Human Rights.** This was the hectic job, which took most of our time. First we had to visit the places where these films are available to buy them in bulk. A small team was formed to collect the list of films available at various sources. The contacts were made and discussions help with many NGOs to collect the videos. Most of the films were in VHS forms. They were first converted to CDs and DVDs. The small group had shortlist them before we made copies.

The original films were procured and given to the team to go through them for short write up on them. This would help the teachers to make use of them in a more meaningful manner.

**Monitoring** Regular contact with all human rights education schools is maintained by visits, phone calls and letters. Teachers appreciate our visits and they brief us about the progress of human rights education. There is also demand from them for additional publication materials with slogans, pictures or posters, etc., related to human rights.

**Reaching out to more schools** As a result of the trainings that we conduct at different places, we are in touch with more and more Schools and teachers who are interested in human rights education. Two religious congregations, namely, Sisters of Hospitallars, Goa and Sisters of St. Anne's of Bangalore, have shown keen interest to promote human rights education in all their schools. There are seven schools in and around Kolar, Gulbarga that have come part of this fold. Similarly around schools spread in and around Goa, Nilgris, and Northern Karnataka have been agreed to start off this programs in the schools. Two more schools from Kolar have come forward to initiate their education in their school. We are happy that more and more schools are getting involved in human rights education.

**International Seminar on Human Rights** An International Conference of SUBUD was held at Yalahanka, Bangalore, in August 2006. There were 289 foreign delegates from 30 countries in addition to Indian delegates. The students of Human Rights schools also exhibited their talents by performing cultural programs related to human rights. The programs were well appreciated by all the delegates.

### **Holding the talks with the local government on Human rights education**

The present government's commitment to do Human rights education in two districts of Karnataka on experimental levels is fully forgotten. So Mithra has joined with another NGO that impart quality of education to the Government schools, to integrate the principles of Human rights in their training. The dialogue is on with Dream School Foundation. Mithra will join hands with their programs to be part of creating a sustainable social change through education. Since their target group is the government schools, we have decided to take up this.

The efforts are on with local level government authorities to make this possible to organize some events on human Rights and education in their schools. In three districts the present Human Rights schools themselves are instrumental to this initiatives.

**Managing three inter-school events:** The first one was the collection of paper clips on Human Rights violations in regional language. There were 23 schools from the rural areas, which has participated in this.

The second one is the quiz program done by city schools only. The first batch teachers who were trained by Mithra have taken up the assignment with the coordinators. The program called limited number of students (5 to 10) from each school and organized. The prizes will be given during the mega event of Human Rights Day, which will be celebrated on 8th of December 2006. (Friday).

Third one is the closed-ended one-word answer. There were thirty questions prepared which needs to be answered within 20 minutes. This was conducted in November and the answers are just arriving.

**Conducting meeting of head of the institutions.** In the report period there were two such meetings took place. One of the heads of the institutions of St. Anne's Society, which runs 13 schools in Karnataka, attended. They were open to the ideas. There were few schools, which showed much interest, and willing to be part of this year. This also due to the interest and model had shown by our existing schools.

Another group is the chain of schools near Goa. This is actually another State, a union territory; Mithra has started this there.

### **Introducing Student volunteers to the schools for exposure / experiences:**

There are five colleges, which impart social Work as its main subjects approached Mithra for their student's experience in Human Rights programs. The Christ College two students, Bangalore City College seven students, from CMR college two students, from Loren Institute of Social Studies, two students, were placed with Mithra. They were given experience in attending the classes taken by the trained teachers in the schools. Their interaction with the students makes it very interesting and useful for them and for the students. In addition there were four volunteers from France, Australia, Canada and Germany who were given opportunity to work in Human Rights education Program. They are helpful during the inter-school event and the Human Rights festival week.

**In-service training in the existing schools:** This has become very much a need. As there is an always-new teacher joining schools who is often assigned to these classes. Mithra is never tired of training more potential teachers in Human Rights. There were six Seminarians from the local

Papal Seminary who were taking classes in the schools. They were also given regular input, observation, and classes on how to take classes on Human rights.

**Preparation of Impact study:** The Impact study on Human Rights education is going to be different this year. We are preparing a panel of teachers and students who would join hands with Mithra staff and the external team to do this assignment. Two meetings were held for this. The group is yet to formulate the terms of reference and the modalities.

**Organizing the Human Rights festival with 32 NGOs** Mithra along with like-minded NGOs have organized two days of Human Rights festival in Bangalore. The person behind this idea was Edwin, member of Mithra's advisory board and one of the trainers.

The event was organized at Bal Bhavan, Cubbon Park and called Namma Jathre. 30 of us had been involved in the organization process for the past eight months. Our objective was to communicate and celebrate what we stand for- Human rights." Defending human rights is an expression of hope and confidence in the basic goodness of human nature-and that life must be a celebration for all." To celebrate the concept of freedom, the "**Namma Jathre**" — **A festival of freedom** had a variety of activities and stalls. Free software without patenting; free films, free right-to information-clinic for a corruption-free country. There are painting activities for children along with fair trade and exhibitions. Cultural shows have been organized where different sections from the Dalit community to the sexual minorities are participating. There are films being shown on human rights, freedom.

Several child rights and human rights organizations from Bangalore, including Mithra, organized an event to share information, promote solidarity and to celebrate our work. It was held on November 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2006 at Bal Bhavan, Cubbon Park, Bangalore.

The focus of "Namma Jathre: A festival of freedom" event was to provide a forum to introduce and engage the common citizen on the subject of child rights, human rights and development issues in a 'fun' way.

Mithra put up a stall to display about our work on human rights education with our textbooks, banners, teaching aids, brochures, etc. It was a good experience for students, particularly human rights students and teachers to participate in the programme.

**International Human Rights Day (on December 8<sup>th</sup>)** Since the International Human Rights Day (December 10<sup>th</sup>) fell on a Sunday, the Annual Human Rights Day celebration of Mithra and Human Rights Schools was held on Friday, December 8<sup>th</sup> 2006 at St. Joseph's Indian High School Auditorium, No. 2 Grant Road, Bangalore 1.

The uniqueness of this year's celebration was that the entire program was organized and conducted by the students themselves. Of course, teachers and Mithra gave them all the necessary assistance.

More than 500 students from nearly 20 schools in Bangalore and one school from Mysore participated in this mega celebration. Prof. Ravivarma Kumar, Senior Advocate, High Court of Karnataka, was the chief guest on this occasion. The inaugural address by the chief guest was

**Tsunami**

Most affected areas in Chennai due to Tsunami are Pattinampakkam, Srinivasapuram , Nochikuppam, Kaasimedu, Foreshore Estate. The group members personally visited some of these areas and had collected information and hereby making all possible efforts to solve their problems in the best way possible.

Out of 23 families, the following ten families would get the first support on priority basis. The financial allocation of money will not be to the full as they had requested

**Children's Program:** Mithra's tsunami project covers the educational needs of the children affected by Tsunami. They are totally around 80 students studying in four different schools whose education is ensured in a special way. These students are spread from I to 10classes.

I. There are 30 children most of whom are girls belong to the priority group of Mithra's works of Tsunami Project. All expenses pertaining to their education such as Uniform, books, fees, midday meal, foot wears, and medical expenses are taken care by Mithra. The children of these families are frequently visited and the individual care of each child's welfare is taken care by Mithra. These children belong to the families in Pattinampakkam & Foreshore state(Bhavanikuppam, Srinivasapuram and Kodisai area), which is close to the seashore and was heavily affected by Tsunami. Most of the children are studying in St. Lazarus School, Mylapore.

II. In addition to this, Mithra takes care of the educational needs of another 50 children who study in other schools, but affected by tsunami. They are ranging from Std : LKG to Std: XII

Mithra meets all expenses pertaining to their education such as textbooks, notebooks, stationary, school bags, special coaching classes, picnics, aids for creative work, toys for small children etc., These children belong to the schools in St.Antony's, Bon Secures, Santhome High School, St.Raphael's etc., Most of the help is done through their schools.

Their houses are shifted to Thorapakkam, where they were allotted houses by the Govt. of India. The distance is very far from their schools. They find it very difficult to commute from their homes to the schools. Their travel expenses to schools are borne by Mithra. Some of them are offered midday meals in the schools.

### **Issues addressed and the impact experienced**

**Child rights;** Mithra dealt with children belonging to four categories living in the slums and organized programs as per their needs. Their rights have been restored by giving them education, play facilities, better health, opportunities to express themselves, freedom from abuses, basic amenities like food, clothing and shelter and above all conducive family atmosphere for their growth.

**Dalits Rights:** Almost 85% of the families and their children with whom and for whom Mithra operates are the socially marginalized. Their empowerment process starts from the day one contact by Mithra. Today these untouchables have become the most needed and wanted people in the city like Bangalore. The various programs of Mithra for these communities are bearing fruits.

Their rights are restored, in the education of the children, respect for their rights have been explained, and violence against them has been addressed.

**Gender:** Mithra's works among the women have been always for the women in distress. The slum women have been subjected not only to the domestic violence but the abuses in the work

place is also very common. The gender trainings, psycho-legal interventions, micro-credit and enterprises are some of the measures to abate these gender discriminations and restore women's rights. The women in distress are given opportunity to unburden, receive peer counseling, support and debriefing.

The programs of women addressed some of the following issues.

- Land-rights,
- Redress against abuse by husbands or others,
- Financial matters pertaining to loans; matrimonial legal requirements;
- Health support for children or themselves;
- Employment rights; employment conditions and remuneration;
- Basic rights for basic amenities such as road, water and sanitation
- Fight for basic documents such as domicile, birth and caste certificates.

**F. Employment:** Short-term measures to help slum-dwellers to earn their livelihood could have been easy; but Mithra wanted to ensure their sustainable livelihood by giving skill training and up gradation. Mithra gives vocational skills training in tailoring, garment finishing, computers, teachers training and basic skills. Around 110 young adults have benefited by this programs. The employment opportunities have been created for them. They have started their career in a more positive note.

**Training for enterprise.** These activities developed a range of skills:

- i. The process of making the product
- ii. Team-work through undertaking the process
- iii. Basic market research skills: why this product? Which outlets are there locally even if these remain within their own community
- iv. Budgeting skills:
  - a. Costing the ingredients / materials
  - b. Calculating how the process of making their own soap
- v. Negotiation: each member saved a small amount regularly every week. From these joint savings loans were given for such joint ventures.

### **Support received**

- Mithra receives support from all its friends, donors, corporate houses, local communities, visitors, volunteers, staff and the advisory committee members.

- Some of the individual donors have placed their enormous trusts in us and that makes Mithra shine better.
- The support organizations were generous and prompt in understanding our needs and responding to us.
- The work put in by the volunteers and the short time visitors are memorable to us.
- The commitment and the concern for the poor of our staff remain the source of strength.
- The local communities with their limited resource have been contributing for the works we do. This we consider a treasure for Mithra.
- Few corporate houses and their managers have been quietly supporting our children and us. The companies have donated computers. These enhance our image and the children's scope of learning.
- The mind put together by the rich advisory committee members of Mithra is a big mite for its direction, clarity, major decisions and growth.
- The various schools, NGOs, network organizations and the local government are of tremendous help to Mithra for its strong existence among the poor and the needy.

### **Management**

The programs of Mithra are managed by a team of 42 full and part-time staff members, most of who are women. The overall direction is given by the advisory committee which consists of 13 members. The day to day running of the program is looked after by Joe Rosario, the Director of Mithra.

### **Conclusion**

The programs were both regular and of special nature. This keeps the staff and the children alive, active and involved. The organization is grateful to all the donors, well-wishers and supporters without whose help and encouragement Mithra would not have made the empowerment process of the poor possible. The Core Principle of Mithra namely " Developing with and through local people a community programme which will achieve the empowerment of the lowest social and economic groups is being realised with good success.

Bella

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