QUALITY INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR CHILDREN AND ALTERNATIVES (QICC&A): MAHARASHTRA (JAN 2002 TO DEC 2002)

AN OVERVIEW:

The campaign on the QICC&A, initiated by CRY nationally and supported by Saathi, Mumbai at the Maharashtra State level, is an initiative in collaboration with the State Department of Women and Child Development. It aims at ensuring quality care in residential institutions for children and in facilitating family-based and community-based alternatives for social reintegration and de-institutionalisation.

The campaign aims to reach out to nearly one lakh children in 750-odd institutions (govt run / govt aided / private trusts and voluntary organisations) in the State, catering to children from birth to 18 years of age. The campaign endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, and believes that every child has a right to a family or a family-like nurturing environment. It also believes that the State is responsible for the protection of children in the absence of any family or with families in distress and that the civil society is an equal partner in the process. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000, reinforces the role of the State as the guardian of any child in its custody.

The campaign has spread its roots to the entire State of Maharashtra, with the initiation of regional networks on the issue. Mumbai, Pune, Konkan, Thane, Nagpur, Nasik, Amravati and Marathwada, have responded to the initiative with great enthusiasm and have initiated processes with the child care institutions. The initiative was launched at a State-level consultation with 175 representatives of government and non-government organizations from all over the State.

Vision of QICC&A

"that all the institutions in the State have to be reached out to, that every child in the institution will have the right to desirable standards of quality care and that every child will have the right to be in his/her family or have family-like options for his/her growth and development"

"that the State will hold the primary responsibility for the same and the civil society will play a supportive role"
Broad focus areas

- Ensuring quality care in residential institutions for children
- Facilitating family-based and community-based alternatives for social reintegration and de-institutionalisation
- Prevention of institutionalisation

Objectives

- Creating public awareness and generating mass opinion on the issue
- Data-base building
- Training of different cadres of staff within institutions
- Direct intervention and demonstration of models of quality care
- Advocacy and influencing public policy
- Ensuring children's participation

The campaign, now a year old, envisages a strong statewide network to implement its objectives and reach out to thousands of faceless children living in the institutions.

THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA:

The child care residential institutions in the State for children in need of care and protection and for juveniles in conflict with law are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Women and Child Development. The department functions through the following structures: Secretariat at the Mantralaya to look into policy matters and the Commissionerate at Pune to look into the implementation of policies and programs. The Commissionerate is further divided into divisional offices, headed by divisional officers. The State is divided into six revenue divisions: Mumbai (including Konkan and New Bombay), Thane, Pune, Marathwada, Nasik and Nagpur (including Amravati). The divisional offices are further decentralized through district offices headed by district officers. There are 35 districts in the state of Maharashtra, and each district has child care institutions and organizations offering non-institutional services.

The Department governs the functioning of **450-odd residential care institutions catering to about 30,000 children** (the lists for this are available with the department). NGO-run shelters and other residential care programs, running up to other **250-odd institutions** are not enlisted or governed. Non-institutional care programs and services implemented by the department through government and non-government organizations are enlisted under the **CARA**
guidelines. **Data on the number of children, programs being offered, profile of children and so on is however absent.**

With the drafting of the Juvenile Justice Rules for the State in September 2002, the department is now engaged in the process of implementing the changes as per the rules, however systems for recognition and certification have not yet been set.

Other residential child care facilities run in the State, governed by other departments are as follows:

- Department of Tribal Development: **1100 tribal ashram schools**
- Department of Handicapped Welfare: **500 residential schools**
- Department of Social Welfare: **2500 educational hostels**
- Department of the welfare of SC/ST/NT/ OBC: **677 ashram schools**

(the break-up of number of children is not available for all the services)

**The year that was: 2002**

Some of the major achievements of the year were:

- **Collaborative support of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra: Good rapport with the government system: the Department of Women and Child Development and its bureaucracy**

- Joining of Raveena Tandon, a film actress, as an icon for the campaign, undertaking a visit to two state-run child care institutions

- State-level consultation of government and non-government organizations, with 175 participants

- Able to reach to a large number of organizations working and interested in the issue and decentralise the process at the State level
  - Initiation of a state-level network of NGOs and divisional officers of Department of Women and Child Development
  - Identification of divisional resource organizations to decentralize the initiative from the state to the divisional to the district levels
  - Initiation of divisional networks across the State, with the help of the Divisional offices and the divisional resource organizations
• Consultation workshops on the Juvenile Justice Act 2000 and the State Rules 2002 and recommendations to the State on the act and the rules

• Initiation and launching of the first issue of a children’s wall magazine: Hamari Awaz Suno to reach out to about a lakh children in 750-odd institutions across the State as a mechanism to strengthen children’s participation in the process

• State-wide planning meeting to discuss and decide the focus areas for the campaign and plan strategies

• Initiation of data-base building in two divisions: Mumbai and Marathwada

Limitations:

• Bottlenecks in permissions for initiating direct intervention programs
• Inability to demonstrate measurable change
• The initiative has not yet broad based it to institutional care providers on a consistent basis

Learnings:

• Data-base building as an entry point program was not the right strategy. People should know about QICC&A to participate in the data-collection process. They should know the need for the data-base.
• Personality and career development programs could be a good entry point also to win the confidence of the care providers and demonstrate change
• Consistent relationship with the government and information sharing should be regularly undertaken as this helps to crack the ice with the bureaucrats. Conscious public relations strategy was absent
• This initiative is very much the felt need of the institutions and therefore network building should further be strengthened.
The year that is: 2003 (Future Plans)

Focus for the year:

- Increasing the strength of QICC&A through orientation meetings and memberships
- Visibilising the issue and the initiative and building public opinion
- Support in the implementation of the JJ Act 2000 and the State Rules 2002
- Data-base building (making a state-level directory)
- Public relations, political lobbying and conscious advocacy efforts at state and national levels
- Documenting different models of quality institutional care and adopting institutions for demonstration of models
- Structure of the network to be worked out and sustained
- Action researches
- Initiation and strengthening of processes of children's participation

Programs:

Visibility:
- Zonal, district-wise, divisional and state-level meetings on the QICC&A (local meetings on a monthly basis, state-level on a quarterly basis)
- Annual membership of institutions and organizations working on issues related to children in residential care institutions (to be installed alongwith the meetings)
- Conscious media campaign through the press on building public opinion on the issue (through a core group working with the media)
- QICC&A quarterly newsletter for sharing of information with members and other stakeholders (for internal circulation)

Models:
- Meeting with all the funding organizations and donors to discuss the issue and plan programs with their involvement (needs of children in institutions and support to be given by the donor organizations, support for after care programs)
- Looking at after care and rehabilitation of institutionalized children as a model program to be demonstrated in the coming one year
- Documenting ongoing experiments and individual experiences across the state on institutional care and alternatives and disseminating the information to the masses, care providers and the media

Implementation of JJ Act and Rules:
- Creation of simplified material on the JJ Act and Rules and disseminating the information to interested people
• Training programs on child rights and JJ Act at the divisional levels (6 training programs and one state-level workshop) (two in a month)
• Work with the department on the setting up of CWCs and JJBs and implementation of the rules, providing them support and setting deadlines to the implementation
• Workshops and seminars on critical appraisal of the Act and the Rules

Data-base building:
• Mumbai city directory on institutions within three months, Marathwada within six months and the state-level directory within a year

Capacity building:
• Skill training programs of different cadres in care providing
• Training of Trainers at the State-level on issues related to child rights and care providing

Children’s participation:
• Wall magazine to continue, with more processes for children’s participation and making the wall magazine a sustained media activity (four more issues)
• A state-level consultation of children as a start for processes on participation of children in the initiative (in May)
• State-level process with girls living in institutions (as celebration of the girl child week in September)

Be part of the system:
• Attend monthly divisional meetings of the department and bring up the QICC&A on agenda of the department
• Work towards replicating the model of child care institutions cell in Karnataka government (exposure visit, documentation and presentation)
• Set up a grievance cell within QICC&A for children and staff rendering institutional care (invite key people on the cell)

Research:
• Action research on number of children in conflict with law under the new JJ Act and implications for services (secondary data within three months and actual assessment within six months- by TISS for QICC&A)
• Need-based and issue-based research to feed into the campaign

Other networks:
• Participate in International conference on children and residential care in Sweden in May
• Represent QICC&A in issue-based networks on child sexual abuse, on trafficking, gender issues, issues of livelihood, etc
Our Partners in the process:

CRY, MUMBAI                      SAATHI, MUMBAI
BAL ANAND, MUMBAI                FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE, MUMBAI
IAPA, MUMBAI                     BALPRAFULTA, MUMBAI
CCVC, MUMBAI                     YUVA, MUMBAI
CWC, MUMBAI                      NAVCHETNA, THANE
SOFOSH, PUNE                     BHARATIYA SAMAJ SEVA KENDRA, PUNE
SAKAR, AURANGABAD               LOK VIKAS SAMAJIK SANSTHA, NASIK
VIDARBHA NGO FORUM, NAGPUR
BAL HAQ ABHIYAN, MAHARASHTRA

ACADEMY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, AMRAVATI

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS LIKE TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, NIRMALA NIKETAN, KARVE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND OTHER SOCIAL WORK COLLEGES IN THE STATE

FUNDING PARTNERS LIKE CRY, TDH, IAPA AND OTHERS

AND DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND ALL INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS OF THE PROCESS
A note on Children’s Participation in QICC&A:

LISTENING TO CHILDREN, ENSURING OTHERS HEAR IT…

Children have their own language to define this world… they see it through their own eyes, feel it differently and they talk about it variedly. They live in a world created by their imagination, their vision……

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 acknowledged this and emphasized on four basic rights of children: survival, protection, development and participation. Right to participation is a fundamental right in the child’s growth and development. It looks at the child at the centre of any development process, defines development as per the child’s perception and directs programs and policies in the best interest of the child. So, when a nation goes to war, it must ask itself the impact of war on children and must deter looking at the life-long consequences on the children’s psyche.

Participation does not mean participation in implementation but it means participation in decision-making, it means sharing of power with children, it means respecting children’s opinions and giving it its rightful space for expression. Empowerment of children through children is the key to their development. Children’s participation must be seen in the broader context of “people’s participation”. The spirit of participation lies in involving the peripheral layer of the development circle; of the weakest, poorest of the poor; “Putting the last first “. It implies children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people. It means involving children in the decisions, which affect their lives, within family, the community and the larger society in which they live.

Children participate in society (in the sense that they are part of it); this has been characterized as "latent" participation (Morrow 2000). However, there are no democratic structures for representing their views and parents are generally assumed to act as proxies for them.

Children are consulted directly about their views, as a guide to social actions, which concern them. Although adults take these views into account, the children are not involved in the decision making.

Children participate in decision making (characterized by Morrow as "active" participation).

1. Manipulation
2. Decoration
3. Tokenism
4. Children assigned but informed
5. Children consulted and informed
6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children
7. Child-initiated: shared decisions with adults
8. Child-initiated and directed

The meaning of children's right to participation needs to be explored in its fullest potential with the active participation of children. It is crucial that we go beyond the tokenism of participation, which is only possible through a process of constant interaction with children and a process of learning by the staff who work with children. Hamari Awaz Suno: a wall magazine by children in residential care institutions is a small step in the direction.

**Hamari Awaz Suno**, a wall magazine by and for children in residential care institutions, is a platform for expressions and participation of children. It aims to represent nearly one lakh children in 750 - odd childcare institutions across the State of Maharashtra. The wall magazine is a process to provide space for children to participate in deciding the course of their life and influencing policies for their growth and development. **Hamari Awaz Suno**, symbolized by a logo (a bhonga- a loudspeaker) is a space for children's expressions and opinions on matters concerning their lives in residential care institutions:

- A space where children would define their needs and concerns
- A space to share to their perceptions on quality institutional care and alternatives
- A space to suggest and take action

The wall magazine, say the children, is a platform where they can express their opinions and make their voices heard. It represents the silent voices of nearly one lakh children in 750-odd residential care institutions in the State. And therefore this could be one way of enlisting children's participation in the process of quality institutional care for children and alternatives.

Children in residential care institutions have their own needs and concerns, basic needs, development needs and rehabilitation and social reintegration needs. They have the right to get access to services and opportunities to fulfill these needs. The wall magazine should become their space to think, feel and act; for them to talk about their issues; for them to discuss their fears and concerns and to
suggest a line of action. "The world should know that we exist! That we too are children! That we too have our rights! And that we crave for love and affection...".

Issues like the below mentioned ones are addressed in the wall magazine:
- How do children living in institutions look at their lives?
- How would they define quality care?
- What does development for a child in an institution mean?
- What does the child in an institution feel should be done for its rehabilitation?
- How would QICC&A ensure children’s proactive participation in the process?

PROCESSES SO FAR

*Hamari Awaz Suno* was launched on the 14th of November 2002, on children’s day, in Nasik, Mumbai, Aurangabad, Pune and Amravati. Children pioneering the wall magazine are elated at the fact that they are the torchbearers of the process and that they have put their hearts and mind into the first issue. They claim that this is their attempt to make themselves visible.

The first issue of the wall magazine was an introductory issue, launched from Nasik division, introducing the need for the wall magazine, the process, and the people involved. It launched the concept of the right to participation through poems, stories, drawings and jokes. It appealed to the children in residential care institutions across the State, to discuss and define their needs and concerns, to pen them down in different forms of expressions and to send in entries for the next issue of the wall magazine. The editorial team says that they have launched the first issue to share with other children, the knowledge that they gained as part of the preparatory process and to appeal to the children that they should also make themselves heard. The second issue of *Hamari Awaz Suno*, launched on 30th January 2003, was evolved as part of a two-day residential workshop with forty children from residential care institutions in seven districts of Marathwada reinforcing their right to participation in decisions influencing their lives.

“Addiction is the prime reason for our being institutionalized and therefore that is the central theme of the second issue of the wall magazine.” Ashwini reflects the opinion of all residents in residential care institutions, says “what we miss the most is our mothers’ love and for us, the institutions are our mothers.” When asked, what message you would like to give through this wall magazine, unanimously the group said: communal harmony and environmental protection. Sagar from Naldurga emphasises that ‘Humanity is the true religion and that this will bring peace and harmony’.
Organizations and the government facilitate the process and mobilize children from different institutions into a three-day residential workshop. Children dialogue on their issues and concerns and decide on the focus of the wall magazine. They plan the content, design their own wall magazine, define a theme, give a title and a logo and give different expressions in the form of essays, poems, drawings and so on. They form an editorial team, publicity team and dissemination team, define roles of each team and enlist tasks to be carried forward. They finalise and make the wall magazine.

The children are also exposed to the art of printing, designing, bargaining and other issues associated with the printing of a wall magazine. They are formed into various committees to select the items to be put into the wall magazine (they need to rationalize their decisions), a team to publicise the wall magazine back in their institutions and a team to get feedback from their friends. It is theirs and they own up the process.

3000 issues are circulated across the State, and a representative feedback is taken from institutions across the State. The issues are displayed on the walls for a period of one month and a feedback taken. The attempt is to have a quarterly magazine.

SOME RESPONSES TO THE WALL MAGAZINE

**NGO partners:**
It seems an interesting form of reaching out to children. Children can identify with the process. They feel that it is their own.

**Student social workers:**
We faced a lot of difficulty in convincing children that the wall magazine has been designed by their counterparts in the State. Once they were convinced, they asked: when will the wall magazine come to Mumbai. Some children from Mumbai immediately gave in their drawings and poems as their contribution.

**Superintendents:**
We have displayed it at different places in the institutions and feel proud that our children have done this.
Who are they trying to say: Hamari Awaz Suno? What are they trying to tell us? Do they mean that their voices are not being heard?
Children: (translated from Marathi)

We feel thrilled

We also want to do this from our institutions. We want to be given a chance.

An attempt has been made to know what is going on in our minds

My name has come in this wall magazine. I feel as though my name has come in Lokmat (a regional newspaper)

I cannot believe that this has been designed by my friends

In this competitive world, opinions of children like me are also valued and given space through this poster

This poster should carry our views to all those poor and illiterate people out there on the streets

This poster is a model (Aadarsh)

This poster has something in it to learn, from the youngest to the oldest

We realize that we are no less than the other children

We are orphans and orphans can also do something. This gives us support and an opportunity.

PARTNERS IN THE PROCESS OF WALL MAGAZINE

Sakar is an NGO working on issues related to adoption of children in Aurangabad and is also involved as a resource organization for Marathwada region for QICC&A.

Lok Vikas Samajik Sanstha is a NGO working on development issues and rehabilitation of street and slum children in the city of Nasik.

Saathi is an organization working on economic and social rehabilitation of street youth, in Mumbai. It is the State level resource organization for the campaign on the QICC&A. it has been managing the finances for the first two issues.

Abhivyakti- media for development are the consultants for the process, offering their expertise in children’s art and expressions.
The Department of Women and Child Development and its divisional machineries have been a collaborator in the entire process, lending their official support and their machinery for the process. This in a way ensures the State's mandate to children's participation in the access to their rights for their growth and development.

REFLECTIONS

Different processes apart from the wall magazine need to be evolved. Consultations, workshops, children's committees and the like need to be worked on. The processes need to be made live, creative and constantly evolving. It has to be sustained. The true spirit of participation is way beyond.................. Wall Magazine is only the beginning.

Some other processes being planned for the coming year are:

Theatre workshops with children in residential care institutions:
- Organizing Training of Trainers' workshops at the State-level
- Adopting various institutions and organising children's theatre groups
- Children's Theatre festival at the State-level

Children's consultations:
- State-wide consultation on issues and perceptions of children on quality institutional care and rehabilitation
- Small group district-level meetings with children to organize them into children's committees within institutions
- Training representatives of children's committees
- Consultations on issues of girl children within institutions

Advocating for children's committees in institutions:
- Staff training on child rights
- Support to setting up children's committees
- Implementation of the provision of the JJ State Rules 2002 and the provision therein for children's participation
Budget for the year 2003 (Jan to Dec 2003)

Processes for children’s participation

- Children’s wall magazine
- Children’s consultation
- Girl child consultation
- Theatre festival and processes

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<th>Number of units</th>
<th>Per unit cost</th>
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| Wall magazine             | 6 issues        | 25,000/- per wall magazine for printing
                                                                  10,000/- for launching and distribution |
                                                                  1,50,000/-       |
| State consultation of children | 2 consultations | Rs. 50,000/- per workshop                         | Rs. 1,00,000/-  |
| Theatre processes         | 1 State level Theatre festival |
                                                                  Theatre processes in 6 divisions |
                                                                  TOT on theatre |
                                                                  Rs. 50,000/-     |
                                                                  Rs. 25,000/-     |
                                                                  Rs. 25,000/-     |
                                                                  Rs. 50,000/-     |
|                           |                 |                                                   | Rs. 1,50,000/-  |
|                           |                 |                                                   | Rs. 25,000/-    |
|                           |                 |                                                   | Rs. 25,000/-    |
| Total                    |                 |                                                   | Rs. 5,35,000/-  |

STATE-LEVEL RESEARCH STUDIES

- Research: State-wide research study on situational analysis of residential care institutions and children
- State-wide research study on juveniles in conflict with law, available and requisite infrastructure and magnitude of the problem

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