

Site Visit Report

Priya C. Bhat

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1 Site Visitor's Information

Name: Mrs Kumkum Kansal

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2 Visit Information

Date: September 23, 2006

Name of Project: Maharashtra Ekyavardhak Mandal Vidhya Mandir
(MEMVM)

Address : 4/1 Tilak nagar, Chembur-400089

Name of the Trust running the project: Maharashtra Ekyavardhak Mandal
Trust

Project Supervisor: Mrs.Shelar

Contact Number: +91 22 5626 8766 (o) Available between 12:00 noon to 6:00
pm IST on all working days.

Clerk: Mrs. Gargy

Contact Number: +91 98698 44347(m)

3 Surrounding Area

The project caters to the slum dwellers in the Tilak nagar, Chembur and Kurla areas of Mumbai (harbor line). In most families, the men works as a daily wage worker and the women work as household helpers (Bais). The community comprises of both Hindu and Muslim families. The economic condition is generally very poor; some families find it hard to even shell out the Rs 15/- per month fee to this project. But for this project, most of the children would possibly have had no education at all.

4 About the Project

The project is conveniently located from were most of the children live and is also access able by bus. The school was established by Maharashtra Ekyavardhak Trust in 1972 with the help of grants from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to educate the children in the neighboring poor localities.

4.1 School Building

The school building is an rented MHADA accommodation with a monthly rent of Rs. 400/- payed by BMC. It is basically a single story structure but two temporary rooms have been added on the second floor. There are nine class rooms, three toilets, one staff room and about 900 square feet of open space which can potentially be converted into playground. The building is in urgent need of overhaul due to the following reasons:

1. The quality of construction of the school is sub-standard and has further deteriorated over the past few years due to the constant flooding in Mumbai.
2. The divisions for classrooms are made of wood panels which are do not obstruct noise.
3. The building roof is made of metal sheets, covered by clay thatches. This makes the classrooms become unbearably hot during the summer and leak water during monsoons.
4. The toilets do not have running water, which makes them unusable for most part.
5. There is a open drain running through the building that needs to be closed urgently.

The school runs in two shifts, morning 7:30 to 1:00 classes are held for the secondary and higher secondary students whereas in the afternoon, from 1:00 to 6:00 classes are held for the primary students. Currently the request for financial assistance to Asha has been made by the people running the primary classes of the school.

4.2 Library and Computer Room

The collection of books that the school had got was damaged in the floods in July 2005 . The water logging caused severe damage to the metal cabinets too as they have started to rust and fall apart. Presently the school has a couple of shelves of books that are used by the teachers and students. There are two computes that are used to teach the make the students computer literate.

4.3 Meals

Recently BMC has started sending meals for the children to be given to them during the afternoon recess. This usually comprises of vada-pao, Khichdi, glucose biscuits etc.

4.4 Playground and Games

The building has about 900 square feet of area within its compound which as of now is covered with stones and gravel. There is however a public park very close to the building where the children usually play during their games-class. There is no additional infrastructure for games.

5 About the Staff

The school has eight teachers, one head-mistress, one clerk and two peons. All the staff is payed by BMC. The medium of instruction is Marathi and the school follows the Maharashtra Board of Education. The teachers are qualified and quite motivated to make a difference in the life of these children. For example we heard about many instances in which the teachers had payed the fee of the children from their own pocket. When the afternoon meal plan by BMC was not in place, teachers used to get snacks and food for the children to eat.

The school also has some support from the local community and other (un-professional) social workers. During the Ganpathi Mahotsav, a Ganapathi Idol is placed in the public park outside the school and the proceeds from that are donated to the school. Social workers have donated school bags, clothes, pens and chappals to the children. But all said and done, the school and children are still severely lacking in even basic facilities

6 About the students

As mentioned before the children attending the school are from the neighboring slum areas. Currently the school has 348 students in all, 180 boys and 168 girls in the primary. Every year about 70 students pass out from primary into secondary, of which about 40-50 students and up taking the matriculation exam. The attrition rate is higher for girls in the higher classes because of family pressure, early marriage and other such reasons.

So far the school has produced many success stories. Many students from the project have gone on to complete diploma and bachelor degrees, some with state scholarships. The families of students are generally very keen to keep the children in school as far as possible as, for most of them, this is the last hope to a better life.

7 Financial Information

The school has made an appeal for financial assistance, how much ever possible to overhaul the basic facilities. We have asked the project supervisor to make a detailed list of requirements along with the money required for each head. This will be provided to us shortly.

8 Final Notes

This is a project that has managed to survive and make a difference in very incliment conditions in the past. Right now, the infrastructure seems to be falling apart and any sort of help that can be provided would go a long way helping the children studying there.

9 Photographs



Figure 1: Third standard children in their class room



Figure 2: Children in class



Figure 3: Children from class 5 in their class room



Figure 4: Staff room



Figure 5: School yard



Figure 6: the two rooms on the first floor