

Half Yearly Report of the Amba Foundation, Delhi

We received the half-yearly report of the Amba foundation for the first half year 2007. The Amba foundation provides children education and medical services to the slum clusters in Delhi Padparganj. It organises workshops and adult education on subjects as sexual abuse and women's health. Noon is supporting Amba for roughly one third of its total budget.

Education Centre Activities

After the winter break our education centre re-opened in the new year on January 3rd 2007 with the enrolment of children and the planning of the next three months. Because of the exams in March each year, the activities from January to end March focus on studies alone and other activities are low key.

In addition to class work the children are also given work-sheets to practice at home. However not all children are regular with their work sheets and ways must be found to motivate them to do their home-work. "Spelling Contests" and "Number Games" with the children may help to improve their motivation and interest.

Each teacher has 15-20 children in her class which she teaches for 2 hours every day. The children suffer from low attention spans and even small groups seldomly have a uniform level of understanding and intelligence. It is challenging the teachers to provide education to these heterogeneous groups.

During the hot summer months a number of children go away to their villages. Our Education Center was closed for 4 weeks from May 15th to June 15th.

Levels of Enrolment

The level of enrolment of children has been observed to be highest in the months of December and January. They rush to enrol in December to be able to go for the annual outing and picnic, underlining the attraction of this event and the excitement among these poor children for this annual outing!

In January the parents bring in more children for enrolment, especially those attending regular school, since they want to ensure that their children pass the grades and are able to perform in the final exams held in March every year. The education center proves to play an important role in complementing the incomplete training at the government schools.

Our efforts resulted in most of our children improving their grades and performing well in their school exams. However there were some who did not pass the grades, and so our efforts for them continue.

230 children enrolled for the excursion in December. Amba provided education and exam preparation to 180 children that continued classes after the excursion. The vast majority passed their exams; only a few failed in one or two subjects and Amba helps them to prepare for their second chance. This is particularly important as children who fail the exams of grade 6 onwards tend to abandon school and take up casual work with only little perspective of ever improving their situation. After the exams, Amba could motivate 160-170 children to continue their education and to join new classes for the summer.

Learning beyond the Books

The period April to June at Amba is the time for learning beyond the books and teaching the children new skills through playway methods. After the exams, children join their new classes in public school. Amba makes an effort to enrol those children who were not enrolled by their parents. All the children attending our center are given new notebooks and stationery at least once in 2 months to help them cover the cost of education.

In the month of May a community workshop was conducted for young girls and women on "Combating sexual abuse at the community level". Sexual abuse is a very real problem with particular reference to children and women. It is observed that the problem of sexual abuse originates at the community level because both the suspects and the victims are a part of the community. At Amba, the problem of sexual abuse is dealt with both at a preventive as well as at the curative level. Special counselors conducted this workshop and it was well received by the participants.

For adolescent boys in the age 15yrs to 19yrs, a workshop was conducted at our center from June 16th to July 3rd. The workshop was sponsored by the "Young Women's Christian Association" (YWCA) of India and conducted by their special counselors. The participants were encouraged to discuss their emotions and feelings, the confusion and problems they faced at this age and how to tackle them. This workshop was very well attended and the children found it useful.

In April an art & craft workshop was conducted for the children where they were taught to make bags and other useful items from discarded material. A computer workshop was also conducted for the children where they were taught computer basics.

The case of Afzal

Afzal is 15 years old and studies at our center. His father is an autorickshaw driver while his mother looks after a large family of 7. They live in the slum cluster nearby. Though Afzal is a bright boy he was often distractive and would always pick up fights with his friends. We had to counsel him often and it was observed that his grades were also going down.

Afzal attended the workshop of YWCA at Amba. During the workshop he was encouraged to share his feelings and emotions with the counselors.

Afzal's father often beat his mother over petty issues and this use to disturb the boy very much. Being the eldest in the house he would resent his father behaving like this and somehow held himself responsible for his mother's sufferings. The counselors counseled him on how to handle the situation at home and understand his feelings. His parents were also called to the center and given counseling.

Health Center Activities

There are seasonal variations in the number of patients coming at our health center. Generally the beginning of the year i.e. January and February are healthy seasons and lesser number of patients suffer from fevers and ailments. However as the changes in the weather occur infections are more rampant and more patients come to the health center for treatment.

For the period January 2007 to June 2007 over 4000 patients were treated at our health center. The patients come from poor communities living in urban slums around our Health Centre and are treated for a variety of diseases such as fevers & infections, bronchitis, allergies, liver ailments and aches & pains.

During this period, under the government run immunization program over 150 children were immunized against various diseases at our Health center.

All the children attending our Education center are given free medical treatment and care at our health center. A large number of children were observed to be suffering from anemia and stomach worms. All the children were given de-worming medicine and advised on how to maintain good personal hygiene for good health.

During these monthly camps our counselors and volunteers informed the young mothers the benefits of breast feeding and nutritious foods to be given to infants and also lactating mothers. The women were told about low cost nutritious foods and the right way of cooking them.

Patient's Case Studies

Five year old Bhavna was underweight for her age and always felt weak and lethargic. Her grandmother brought her to our health center for diagnosis and treatment. She was being treated by a local private doctor and there was no improvement in her condition. Our doctor suspected the child was suffering from TB. The child was advised to get the TB test done for confirmation. Since the child was from a poor family and had been adorned by her parents we helped her to get the tests done free of cost from a government hospital. The tests confirmed TB, our counselors then helped her grandmother to go to the free government center for TB treatment to enable the child to get free medical treatment for her disease. The child is taking regular treatment and our counselor is in touch with her grandmother to monitor her progress.

Imarana is a young 22 year old woman who often gets minor cuts and injuries in the course of her work. She works as a daily wager with a road construction company. Her minor injuries would often get infested and took a long time to heal. This was causing her lot of pain and suffering. She would come to our Health Center for dressing her wounds and medicines. On closer investigation the doctor suspected that she was suffering from diabetes. The patient was advised to get her blood test done from the government dispensary. Her results confirmed high blood sugar levels. The patient was prescribed medicines for diabetes and advised on diet care and restrictions.