

Annual Report 2017-18

Executive Summary



The Shram Shakti Report of 1989 brought to light the abject situation of women working in the informal sector, accounting for 93% of the country's female labour force today and, therefore, the urgent need for childcare and maternity support for the women. Mobile Creches (MC) had encountered a microcosm of this issue, that cut across the agriculture, construction and manufacturing sectors, 50 years ago, at a construction site. And now, the SDGs highlight the needs of young children across many goals and targets, prioritising global attention on the fundamental role children can play in the transformation that the world seeks to achieve by 2030.

MC recognised the mother-child continuum as well as the hard choices a woman has to make to balance her roles as mother, home-maker and worker and pioneered a solution that would ensure developmental care and protection to the infants, enable the mother to work (at home or outside), and release the older children to go to school. After 49 years, MC stays committed to ensuring Early Childhood Development (ECD) – by provisioning, facilitating, building capacities for, and influencing the policies, programmes and laws of the land – towards the care, protection, nutrition, health, and early learning for all young children of India.

MC ended 2017-18 with an **income of Rs. 841 lakhs and expenditure of Rs. 849 lakhs**. Institutional donors accounted for 45% of the income (more than half of it from Indian sources) and the day care programme (through multiple partnerships), at construction sites, across eight cities and a few slum settlements in Delhi, accounted for 58% of the expenditure.

In 2017-18:

MC reached childcare services to almost 11,000 children, through its daycare programme at 72 urban locations - 62 at construction sites in Delhi NCR, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Mohali and Chandigarh, and 10 centres in the poor settlements in Delhi.

MC built the capacities of almost 400 childcare workers, across the public-private spectrum, in 13 states in India: as caregivers and day care professionals in 11 NGOs, and as crèche workers and Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) in the government's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) system.

MC partners with several networks especially Alliance for Right to ECD (Alliance) and Neenv, the Delhi chapter of Forum for Crèche and Childcare Services (FORCES), to collaborate on issues of children, education, food security, maternity entitlements (ME), etc. and communicate its message to government at every level. The focus this year was on the working of local governance structures; community participation in monitoring programmes; state regulatory frameworks for pre-schools; inclusion of two years of preschool in the (Right to Education) RfE Act, 2010; and non-implementation of ME.

Today, MC has a footprint in 17 states in India, through partnerships with NGOs, the construction industry, governments, local communities and issue based networks and campaigns. Our partners provide the 'multiplier' effect in our effort to change the lives of all children.

Ensuring quality childcare services

The MC day care model lies at the heart of everything we do and stand for. Protection and care, that integrate interventions in nutrition, health and hygiene, and education and community awareness, address the multi-dimensional needs of the child through an eight-hour programme, six days a week. The central character, who juggles multiple tasks and keeps the machinery oiled and running, is the childcare worker. To sustain impact of the intervention, she enlists support from the parents, community, employers and local state agencies.

Nutritional interventions start with enabling breastfeeding. Age appropriate nutrition, with special diet to those suffering from malnutrition, supported by immunisations, personal and environmental hygiene, help lay strong foundations for health as well as cognition. MC's work over the years has set standards for age appropriate, early stimulation and learning, for the age groups, birth to 3 years (Crèche), 3 to 5 years (*Balwadi*), and 6 years and above (Non-formal bridge course).

Amit walks the talk

Amit (name changed) is a three-year-old child, originally from West Bengal. His parents work as rag-pickers and have an older child who they left behind in their home village. Our staff, at one of our Noida centres, first met Amit's parents when he was two years old and discovered that Amit suffered from severe weakness and could barely walk. MC's staff succeeded in persuading his parents to enroll Amit in the nearby crèche. They agreed, finding the crèche a welcome respite from their tedious work routines.

It has been five months since Amit joined the crèche. With a special diet of egg, banana, and nutria mix, regular massages, pending immunisations, supplements, etc., Amit started to gain weight. He can now walk unaided, and even plays and participates in activities. Recently, he took part in a play! His parents are delighted with his progress.

In 2017-18, MC worked with various builders/real estate developers, at 62 different locations, to reach almost 10,000 children. The partnership models varied: (1) At 13 centres MC worked directly in partnership with the builder to demonstrate the running of a quality centre; (2) At 10 centres the employer (builder) took over complete financial and management responsibilities from MC, after the initial set up and troubleshooting; (3) At 39 locations the services were provided by 11 NGOs, identified and trained by MC. While the funds from the builder are being routed through MC for most NGOs, in two cases the builder is funding the NGO directly. The remarkable feature this year was the predominance of the third model, that accounted for 60% of the children reached.

MC's presence in the urban poor communities in Delhi accounted for our direct reach to another 1,000 children at 10 childcare facilities run by us. MC entered these areas in the mid 70s, with the objective of creating access to childcare services for the poor working woman, through multiple options: crèches in homes, community centres and government run facilities (anganwadis). Today,

MC provides these services to make recommendations to the government based on the practical learnings on the ground. Three of them are demonstration centres staffed by MC's experienced childcare workers. The other seven are community based crèches (CBCs) run by trained community women, who take time away from their day to day responsibilities of home, livelihood and care of the young and the sick, to give timely attention to the needs of young children.

Enhancing capacities in the ECD sector

There are 20 million children living in poverty in India. Taking care of young children demands time, organisation and resources. Who will care for children of poor families, where the woman is always a working mother, and her daily struggles for survival leave little time for her children?

Quality childcare, without investing in a knowledgeable, skilled, sensitive childcare worker holds no meaning for MC. Exactly like quality higher education is a pipe dream without highly qualified teachers. Under the ICDS scheme, the largest programme for children under six years of age, there are 14 lakh functioning Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). We need at least 28 lakh trained childcare workers to run these centres. In India, this ECD resource is totally inadequate, both, in quantity and quality.

MC pushed the boundaries of its 'training' domain by bringing into its migrant-child fold, children of brick kiln workers; exploring new geographies (Lucknow and Madurai) to replicate its CBC model; strengthening the ICDS in politically and geographically difficult terrains; and leveraging provisions under the law that apply to plantations and factories. MC trainings in partnership with state governments took us to Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. Except for J&K, we have been in the other states for at least two years; sustaining interest has been a challenge in all three.

In keeping with our commitment to building ECD cadres, in 2017-18, MC developed capacities of almost 400 childcare workers for crèches, as day care professionals. This resulted in an outreach of an additional 7,800 children. Our training portfolio comprised many conceptual and practical dimensions of ECD: orientation and crèche management, community engagement, training NGOs to train their peers in supportive supervision, pre-school component in the ICDS, etc.

Influencing policy makers on young child entitlements

"Mobile Creches's approach is not of philanthropy, patronizing charity or even noblesse oblige, for those approaches are antiquated; but simply of the right of an Indian child, no matter where he is born or what background he is from, to care and education." Indira Mahadevan, in Ekalavya, 1973

The 'rights language' in the child sector gained prominence after the UN Convention on Child Rights was ratified by India in 1992. For MC, it has been an article of faith from the very early days. Our interventions on the ground inform collective action, aimed at influencing law, policy and programme, to ensure entitlements of young children.

Policy Focus: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Alliance, a policy network, developed a set of non-negotiable standards to examine the comprehensive set of needs and rights for children, from birth to six years, as well as the institutional mechanisms for effective delivery. These were crucial inputs to the drafting of the legal chapter, for the inclusion of two years of preschool under a proposed amendment to the RTE Act 2010. Alliance members provided inputs on state policies, a framework for regulation of ECCE service providers, and legal entitlements of this age group to the states of Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Delhi and Kerala.

MC strengthens its hands and the voice of the young child by working with partners working on related issues. In 2017-18, MC worked with FORCES, (national body, Delhi chapter), Alliance, the Right to Food (RtF) Campaign, the RTE Forum, Bharath Gyan Vigyan Samithi (BGVS) and women's collectives. On the 'implementation' end of the law-policy-programme spectrum, Delhi FORCES, a network of 43 grass roots organisations, focused on the following: reached out to local MLAs, Councillors and members of the DCPCR and the DCW to put the spotlight on the lack of childcare options in the slums of Delhi; formed 30 Anganwadi Support and Monitoring Committees (ASMCs) in Delhi, a provision under Restructured ICDS, in a bid to involve the community in monitoring the functioning of AWCs.

Alliance chose to approach the implementation issue from a best practices vantage point. To understand the delivery mechanism of ECD services (read ICDS) on the ground, they undertook a detailed documentation of the workings of these 'base units' in Kerala, followed by those in Delhi, Odisha and Jharkhand. In 2017-18, the studies were completed and the findings disseminated to partner organisations.

The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, was the first to recognise that all women require support during pregnancy and lactation. Testimonies, at a public hearing organised by the RtF campaign, have corroborated the non-implementation and the complete inadequacy of current budgetary allocations. This has been communicated to the Prime Minister.

Constructing and sharing knowledge on ECD

In its current strategic curve (2017-22), MC recognises its responsibility and makes a commitment to position itself as a 'knowledge hub' in the field of ECD. Our experience at the grass root lends legitimacy to this positioning and strength to a collective *voice of influence*.

The first issue of MC's journal, *Ekalavya*, came out in 1973 and captured the early learnings, explorations and challenges. The *Ekalavyas* and the Annual Reports, our first knowledge products, reflected our reason for being, our belief systems and the MC modus operandi. We have come a long way since – to map the issues on the ground; document the technical knowhow, protocols and strategies; measure impact of intervention; target our messaging; and make recommendations to fill gaps in policy and programme. To continue to strengthen our knowledge orientation, MC has developed a Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework with indicators to measure outputs and outcomes involving health, nutrition, immunisation, education, and community outreach services.

Our boldest step in 2017-18 was to commit to launching the State of the Young Child in India Report, in March 2019, coinciding with the 50th founding anniversary of Mobile Creches. The first edition plans to cover multiple dimensions, contexts and challenges of child development between birth and six years, with an overlap till eight years. The primary objective of the report is to influence the formulation of policies, laws and programmes that support critical investments and governance structures to ensure the rights of the youngest children.

Building a mosaic of partnerships

MC's partners, listed in a mere annexure to the Annual Report, are the many roots of this 49-year-old tree. A handful of volunteers were the early visionaries and the construction industry a reluctant partner. In 2017-18, MC collaborated with 100 civil society organisations, national networks and academic institutions, 20 developers in the construction sector, 125 individual donors and volunteers, 25 institutional and corporate donors and various arms of the government.

Going forward

2017-18 has been a year of giving wings to the new strategy of MC. This direction can be summed up in three words – partnerships, advocacy and knowledge. Strategic alliances will strengthen the voice of the child, and knowledge, rooted in the ground, will be an instrument of systemic change. We recognise that in these ambitious steps, the people of MC are the greatest strength. We will continue to invest in them, and nurture the 100-strong, committed team at MC.

In 2018-19, the 50th anniversary year of MC, you will hear about the many ways in which we plan to celebrate major milestone, recognise our children, families and communities, and applaud the hundreds of co-travellers who have given generously of themselves during this very enriching journey.

For full details of activities undertaken and audited balance sheet information, please ask for a copy of our Annual Report 2017-18

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