

Prayaas

Endeavours of Mitra Foundation



Oct 2014

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SARVE BHAVANTU SUKHINAH

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Sustaining the beginning

by Premkumar Vadapalli

Welcome to the second issue of our Prayaas. This issue reflects the last seven months of our efforts and shares some insights that we will be taking forward as we continue on this journey. Having begun with Jeevan Shakti Fund, we have our second initiative Jana Sahayog started.

We have been able to sustain our first initiative Jeevan Shakti Fund. We went from supporting 3 families to working with 8 additional families at this time, and are hoping to be able to take up support for few more families in this financial year. We thank all of the donors to the Jeevan Shakti fund, both old and new, for their support and their confidence in us. We had our first Jeevan Shakti Manch, on Sept 21st, a forum for Well-wishers, beneficiaries and volunteers to interact. It was a very enriching session. You will read more about it and some of our takeaways from this interaction in the article "In the voice of the beneficiaries" by Trupti Godbole and Sarita Kotagiri. We also took time to review our progress and look for our learnings. This is captured in the article "Reflections" by Anindya Saha and Kiran Godbole.

From the start of Mitra Foundation, we had intended it to be a platform to enable ourselves and others around us to be more effective in giving back to the society. To this end we had envisioned it to operate multiple funds, each with a well-defined objective, operating guidelines and set of volunteers. Each initiative is to have a

management committee, donors committed to the initiative and targeted funds collected. We had started with the Jeevan Shakti fund, and now expanded into our second fund.

Jana Sahayog fund has been started with the intent to encourage and provide a channel for the different residents of LBS Nagar, the area we live in, and surrounding areas, to share their well-being with others in the area, those who are in need of it. We hope it will enable us to do some good work in and around our community, as well as, become a model for similar work in other urban communities. You will read more about the objectives, and initial activities of this fund in "Start of the LBS Nagar – Jana Sahayog" by Premkumar Vadapalli and Manish Choudhary.

While we have intended Prayaas as a way for us to communicate with our donors and well-wishers about our work and progress, we feel the need to have a more frequent and active interactions you all. Towards this end we have setup a facebook page for Mitra Foundation. We request you to look for it at https://www.facebook.com/mitrafoundation_trust and like it. We will be posting frequent updates of our activities for your benefit, as well as provide visibility into upcoming events so that you can look to participate.

We are committed to making a difference to the lives of as many people as we can, and are thankful for your continued confidence ■

Mitra Foundation has been working with Karunashraya Hospice Trust to get in touch with terminally ill cancer patients whose families are in dire need of some support.



Karunashraya recognized Mitra Foundation's efforts during their 15th foundation day celebrations on May 1st, 2014.

Member of Jeevan Shakti Fund Management Committee receiving the memento

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Jeevan Shakti Manch

21st Sept 2014



All the adult beneficiaries sharing their experiences and drawing inspiration from each other. The donors and volunteers also participated in the discussions.



Volunteers discussing goal setting and planning with the elder children



The younger children being engaged in craft



Volunteers for Jeevan Shakti Fund

IN THE VOICE OF THE BENEFICIARIES

by Trupti Godbole & Sarita Kotagiri

Sunday, 21st September, dawned with a cloudless sky and even the faintest traces of dark clouds glittered with a silver lining. On this day, Mitra Foundation hosted the first Jeevan Shakti Manch, a forum for all the stakeholders of this initiative to meet each other, to interact and to share their experiences. The objective was to give an opportunity to all the well-wishers of Mitra Foundation to meet with the beneficiary families and for the beneficiary families to meet and draw inspiration from each other's experiences.

During the program, some of the beneficiaries shared their experiences about their interaction with Mitra Foundation and the impact it has had on their lives. A few of the testimonials have been recapitulated here.

Ms. Bindu, a counselor at karunashraya expressed her thoughts about her experience with the beneficiary families before they met Mitra Foundation members and after Mitra Foundation extended their support to these families. In her words, "I am very happy to see these people speak so confidently today. I have seen them before and now. There is a lot of change in them."

Farheen, while expressing her gratitude, said, "I am thankful for the groceries that were provided to us. I am also thankful for the payment of the school tuition fees for my daughter Faseeha."

Shahid, son of Mobin Taj, mentioned, "I was about to give up studies. But thanks to Dr Hanifa who continuously spoke with me, I am now able to continue my studies." He feels grateful for the fees paid for his education and also for the timely and continuous counselling by Dr Hanifa, one of the trustees of Mitra Foundation.

Prashanth who lost his wife to cancer, mentioned that after being helped by Mitra Foundation members, his life is now a little better than what it was before.

Roopa, who was very emotional while expressing her gratitude, said, "I gained

courage and confidence. I am happy to know that somebody is there to take care of the kid's education."

Nirmala, wife of a terminally ill cancer patient, mentioned that, "Dr Hanifa examined me and gave treatment after which I am feeling better and healthy. I got courage to face the situation. Our relatives did not help. So, felt confident that someone is there to support us. However, there are misconceptions among people about the disease due to which they do not support. These misconceptions need to change."

Meenakshi and Ravi's son expressed his gratitude towards Mitra Foundation for helping out with his education expenses, which now allows him to pursue his education further. He was very happy about having been given a chance to continue with his further studies which would not have been possible without the support of Mitra Foundation. Mitra Foundation wishes this young lad a very bright future in his life.

Parimala, a young hardworking lady recently lost her husband to oral cancer. She along with her mother-in-law and two small daughters are trying hard to bring life back on track after the tragic event in their life. Parimala who became very emotional expressing her thoughts said, "I gained courage and support after meeting with the Mitra Foundation members. I am going to learn tailoring and going to work hard to support my life. I would like to thank Mitra Foundation for their help and support." Her mother-in-law, an old lady with immense concern and care for Parimala very emotionally mentioned that after her son's death, it was the first time that Parimala had had a full meal after many days, during the lunch arranged on the day of this event.

Mitra Foundation is very happy to know that the help from Jeevan Shakti Fund is positively helping these families to slowly, but steadily crawl back to normalcy after having lost a near and dear one to the deadly disease or in case of some, trying to lead a normal life along with taking care of a terminally ill cancer patient ■

Reflections

by Anindya Saha and Kiran Godbole

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

— Albert Einstein

It is almost a year since the inception of Jeevan Shakti Fun and this was the right time to reflect upon what we had done so far and what we could have done differently and how we can incorporate them in our organizational work for the future.

We had started by working with 3 families. In one of the families, the father passed away, and the mother needed a source of income. But she had never been out of the house much. As indicated in the last issue, with much persuasion we had facilitated the mother's four month tailoring course, but were not quite sure she would start earning. This was after 10 months of working with her. We felt we were not able to make much headway. However, during the Jeevan Shakti Manch, we were told by the councilor of Karunashraya that she would not had expected this person (mother) to have come this far. She saw a difference in her confidence level as well. And from Oct she had started cooking lunch for a few and start earning. Similarly, we had encouraged and supported the son of another family to continue his 10th, which he has successfully cleared and joined in PUC. He has also managed to find a part time job while studying. These small successes were a reaffirmation that our efforts are making a difference. But there are learnings.

As discussed in the last issue, we had realized early that providing sustenance is an integral part of supporting the beneficiaries. The intent of providing the groceries from our perspective was to enable the beneficiary families to cope up with their loss and give time to recover. A further learning has been that it is important to tie this support to a clear commitment from the beneficiary to find avenues to sustain themselves. We need them to realize that this is temporary and that they need to put efforts to start earning their livelihood with our support.

We had started with an objective to serve families where the sole breadwinner has succumbed to cancer. But we had taken up some cases where both parents were working and wife had passed away. we found

that it was the mother of the family who had succumbed to terminal cancer while the husband was still employed and earning. Although help to these beneficiaries was still justified we felt the need to, keep focus on impacted single breadwinner families. And for those that we have already engaged with we will limit to helping with children's education.

There were instances where the family had taken huge loan towards the treatments and found themselves in debt later with a struggle to repay it. This was a big burden for the families to carry forward. Unfortunately, giving loans to individuals was strictly beyond the charter of Jeevan Shakti Fund. We had looked around for alternative channels, that we could guide the beneficiaries to for such support, but without any luck. The best we could do was to provide some relief through some individual contributions. We still have to find a scalable solution to this challenge.

We found a disparity in the school fees of kids of different families. It was an area for them to consider, for reducing their expenses. Toward this, one of the tasks we have taken up is to counsel the families to move their kids to a less expensive school in their vicinity. Many cases other practical conveniences for the family make it a difficult proposition, but we still need to balance the financial burden. We also started to formally send a letter to the principal of the schools where the wards of the beneficiaries are studying, requesting for special consideration to reduce the fees. As an organization we have decided to put an upper limit to the amount of financial help that we would provide per child – which could vary depending on the class of the child (till Class X, PUC and higher).

"When you find your path, you must not be afraid. You need to have sufficient courage to make mistakes."

— Paulo Coelho, Brida

Our relationship with Karunashraya has become pretty strong over this short period of one year. We already feel that there is a need to reach out to other hospitals like

New Opportunities

Since our last update, we have started working with 8 additional families taking the total to 11 families. So far all of the families have been referred to us by the counsellors at Karunashraya, the palliative care center for terminally ill cancer patients.



Few of the recent families we are working with

In all of these opportunities, the family has school going children, whose education needs to be secured to ensure the short term family challenges do not impact their lives. In all there are 19 children that we need to ensure that their education is not impacted.

In few of the families, the parent affected by cancer is still undergoing care. One of the cases involved a Young lady whose husband passed away, and she needs to care for her two children and mother in law. In another opportunity, the mother is undergoing treatment, and the family needs support to ensure the son's education is not interrupted. In couple of families the father is effected with cancer, and unable to work. The mother has to work to take care of the family. We have been involved in covering the school feed due for the children are paid, and providing strength to the family.

Vydehi Hospital, Kidwai Hospital, St John's Hospital and Bangalore Institute of Oncology to serve more such needy families. We hope that this will happen in the coming year as we come to terms with growing our team strength to serve more families ■

Start of LBS Jana Sahayog

by Premkumar Vadapalli and Manish Choudhary

India is land of diversity, and along with it comes the coexistence of this diversity in many forms. One such is the communities in various urban localities. Here we will have the natural collocation of those who are well off, busy in life and able to employ others, and those that provide various services to them. More often than not there is a contrast in the quality of life amongst these two with various shades of grey. While the coexistence is driven by, economic and comfort, interdependence, it also provides an innate opportunity for those that are well off to take an active role in providing back to the others who can benefit immensely from these acts. Those that can, should see this as their responsibility to the families of those that they benefit from in term of services provided. This collaboration, if realized can be a sustainable and scalable model. With an intent to enable this within the locality we live in, Lal Bahadur Shastri Nagar, Bangalore, was started the Jana Sahayog Fund.

The main charter of LBS Jana Sahayog is to encourage and provide a channel for the different residents of LBS Nagar and surrounding area to share their well-being with others in the area who are in need of it. This is to be a locally funded and locally supported initiative for the benefit of others in our area. The focus will primarily be to work through education and health care.

In Education we intend to look to work with the government and other non-for-profit schools in our area and see how we can help them be more effective. We also will look into the area of empowering the youth in our area by counselling those not currently occupied and getting them engaged into vocation trainings towards employment, as well as initiate constructive activities accessible to the youth to engage their free.

Currently we have engaged with the Govt.

Lower Primary School, near Rama Temple in our area to understand the needs, prioritize them and identify ways the local community can engage. We have also engaged with a school run by APSA, an NGO in our area for school dropouts and other rescued children.



Karate class in APSA Dream School happening even when there is rain is rain outside!

In partnership with APSA we are supporting a Karate class for the children of 7th standard in order to improve their discipline as well as their self-defense, since August.

In the area of Health, we will be focusing on preventive health care through health checkup camps, and hygiene awareness drives. To begin with we had conducted a blood donation camp on 7th of Sept, and are organizing a free eye checkup camp soon.

We are glad to see few residents of the area



APSA

Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA) is a rights-based child-centered community development organization. They work towards the development of the community through a systematic process of empowerment. They work in areas of child rights and youth development targeted towards the urban poor and the homeless.

WEBSITE: <http://www.apsabangalore.org/>

joining in, to be an active part of this initiative, and others who are providing financial support. We need more support of volunteers and donors for the School support and Health camps. Please come join us ■

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Angshuman Nayak and

Venkateswara Rao.

We also thank all of our past donors

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