

SPORT AS A DEVELOPMENT TOOL IN SOUTH ASIA

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Context- Needs to be addressed

India is the world's second most populous country, with a population of 1.03 billion. Over a quarter of these people live in absolute poverty on less than \$1 per day and 40% of the entire population is under 18. Rates of unemployment and unequal income distribution are amongst the most pronounced in Asia and India faces many challenges in terms of child development (for example, 47% of children under three are malnourished).

The target communities for this project are in Mumbai and its outlying areas. Mumbai alone generates 38% of India's GNP and the opportunities for employment and perceived higher standards of living attract hundreds of economic refugees into the city every day. This places a huge strain on the city's infrastructure and resources. Families often experience disintegration and children are regularly abandoned or encouraged to earn money on the street. This has led to 7.5 million people living as slum dwellers or on the streets of the city (World Health Organisation statistics).

Children living in this way are exposed to a myriad of problems, including health problems, lack of food, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and prostitution. Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. They are frequently unable to access basic human rights, such as an education and the right to protection from abuse and exploitation.

Aims

Magic Bus is creating a programme that enables the most marginalised children in Mumbai to access their rights and integrate into mainstream society. It will achieve this over an eight year cycle, by working in the communities around Mumbai and in partnership with 15 other child-focussed NGOs, government schools and community leaders, to develop protective life skills through a programme of sports, outdoor and creative expression. It is developing a personal and social education curriculum, activities and training manuals for 3 different age groups of children from the street and slum communities, rescued sex workers, those in bonded labour and children in remand homes. Magic Bus works on the premise that a more holistic approach to development is often more relevant and effective for this audience and overall competence in the following areas can create both happiness and success:

- Physical* – prevention of chronic diseases, hygiene, HIV/ AID's awareness counselling
- Emotional* – Improves self confidence, reduces crime, smoking and drug abuse,
- Cognitive* - Improves learning and academic performance, high school attendance
- Social* - Relationships, respect, sharing, cultural/religious resolution, gender equality
- Spiritual* – Self concept, community concept

Project objectives

- 1) To deliver essential life skills to 25,000 children per year in the next four years, across three age ranges, by participating in Magic Bus curriculum of sports and outdoor activities, health and sex education. This will be designed to alleviate the children's problems, reduce the risk of such children entering negative life situations and increase their ability to integrate into mainstream society. From work completed over the past six years, Magic Bus has evidence that children who have passed through this programme have improved in many life skill areas and are better equipped to deal with the challenges they face in life. Additionally, many children have been supported to find work and successfully integrated into mainstream society.
- 2) The provision of a weekly sport programme for every Magic Bus child. This includes provision of a safe environment, transport, equipment and nutrition. In addition to the weekly mentoring through the sports programme, sports teams are being developed in the evenings.
- 3) Working in partnership with 15 other local NGOs, 3-day residential camps are run at the Magic Bus centre, outside the city to conduct outdoor adventure (hiking, canoeing, raft building, rock climbing and ropes courses), creativity sessions, including drama, plays, games and songs, painting and creative arts, debates and discussions. 128 of these trips are scheduled per year, catering for 50 children per trip

- 4) 50 partner NGOs, government schools, child development agencies, educational bodies and other key actors working with children will access training from Magic Bus on the concept of play/recreation as life skills development tools, share on-going research findings and disseminate information.
- 5) To be 100% self-sustaining at the end of each 5 year period. This will be achieved through a Management Development Centre currently being constructed at the site of the children's facility, which will be used by corporations for team building, meetings and conferences. Magic Bus has also just launched an affinity credit card in Mumbai.
- 6) Corporate/community partner worked-based learning programmes. Magic bus has been successful in formalising over 20 relationships in the community that commit to training, job shadowing, apprenticeships and employment of its youths. This number is set to increase as the number of its graduates increase. In addition Magic Bus aims at training approximately 70 youths each year for its own programme, through its mentoring programme and hospitality training at its residential centre.

Local implementing partners

Magic Bus has been working with children in and around Mumbai since 1999. It was formed with the original goal of giving children a break away from slum and street dwelling life, through the provision of recreation and learning opportunities, which enabled participants to learn more about themselves and their environment. The reputation and scope of the work rapidly grew, and Magic Bus was formally registered as a not-for-profit organisation in India in February 2001 and has since become a respected NGO working in the local community, having obtained grants for its work through the World Bank Development Fund and many highly regarded trusts and foundations.

Monitoring and evaluation

Currently Magic Bus is investing over 50% of its annual programme budget in researching a need-based curriculum and validating its work. Using Action Research to work on a pre-assigned group of between 300 –500 children, we are testing activities against hypotheses and documenting the results. The basis of this work will form our programme in our expansion other cities.

Programme Development Outputs

- A printed research document for each year of all the three module programmes
- A printed curriculum for each year of all the three module programmes
- Trained technicians for each of the three module programmes to act as trainers for new centres
- Training material for mentors, teachers, NGO's and community leaders
- Business model document that details operation, fund raising, community resource building for replication.

The Future

In addition to its module programmes, Magic Bus has started working directly in state run schools and directly with the marginalised communities it intends to work in. Through these mechanisms it currently plans to reach hundreds of thousands of children in multiple locations across India.

Lacking benchmarks, we have 'learning by doing' and understand the following

- Magic Bus is unique in its vision of offering at-risk children in South Asia a non formal, non educational, development platform over an extended period
- Whilst Magic Bus recognised the importance of education, for many children formal or informal education is not an option (bonded labour, rescued sex workers, migrant child workers)
- Magic Bus has identified that most organisations (including its partners) take responsibility for only part of a child's life and invariably young adults are offered little support after leaving primary support structure.
- Intervention at a young age is vital (we've tried and failed without it!) however Magic Bus have started to focus on the integration of these marginalized children to mainstream employment and training opportunities
- We have developed an award-winning community mobilisation programme for funding and volunteerism that makes these children and young adults assessable and acceptable to the general population.

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