



## **Report on Needs Assessment for Khushi Home for Girls, Okhla Ind. Area, “Dil Se” Campaign, Aman Biradari**

*“Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.”<sup>1</sup>*

The following report abides by the principles of the above extract and is a step towards realizing this right for children. This report is a review of the Needs Assessment surveys conducted by Music Basti in the Month of May 2010. The needs assessment surveys form a vital part of the annual evaluation cycle at Music Basti. In an effort to fulfill Music Basti’s goal to promote the right to expression for children, needs assessment surveys are aimed at understanding the dilemmas confronting the children, in this respect, at Khushi Home for girls; how have their voices been suppressed? In what aspects of their lives do they exhibit inhibition? These are some of the questions the needs assessment is hoping to answer.

In this, the first round of phase one of the needs assessment, the survey was carried out in the form of an informal interactive discussion. The survey was carried out in two groups; the distinction between the two groups was based on their educational backgrounds, hence the first group (30 children) consisted of those enrolled in bridge courses conducted at the Home by Aman Biradari and the second group (10 children) consisted of school going children. A list of questions pertaining to their lives at the Home and school were put forward for discussion as well as questions relating to an assessment of their interaction with Music Basti projects. Lastly, questions relating to their knowledge of current events were asked. With the second group of older children, an arts exercise was also conducted: The children were asked to express in any art/craft form of their choice (drawing, writing, cutting up pictures and images from magazines/newspapers), values they feel society and their community would like them to have as they grow up. In a separate column they were asked to do the same, only this time they were asked to express their own autonomous desires and values.

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<sup>1</sup> See **Convention on the Rights of Children, article 12**, "*what rights?*", [unicef.org](http://unicef.org)

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The members present at every needs assessment were part of the Music Basti Management Team i.e., Faith Gonsalves (Project Officer), Ushinor Majumdar (Program Head), Ishani Butalia (Volunteer Manager) and Sikandar M Kumar (Program Head). The assessment was carried out, independent of the staff members at Khushi Home. They were briefed about the nature of the workshop and given a summary at the end. The arts exercise was looked over by *Baby Ma'am* at Khushi Home for Girls

### **Summary of the sections of the Needs Assessment**

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School Life:<sup>2</sup> As mentioned above, the children at Khushi were divided into two groups based on their educational background. The first group, of thirty children, is enrolled in the bridge courses conducted at the Home, and thus the questions pertaining to school life were omitted. Their approach to schooling, however, was received: they were all unanimous in their opinion that school education is extremely important in life. They said that school education would support them to 'become someone'.

The second group, of ten children, is enrolled in Balwanth Rai Mehta Memorial School in various grades<sup>3</sup>. The group was quite assertive about the fact that the teachers in the school show no bias towards specific students. At school, they are exposed to music, arts and crafts and computers; they feel that all children do not get adequate opportunities in these extra-curricular activities. On further elaboration, however, they stated that this probably stemmed from a lack of initiative of the students to make use of these opportunities. The older children in this group felt that they were confident in clearing up their doubts relating to schoolwork. The younger children in this group expressed a little intimidation in clearing doubts. The group felt that there was no gender discrimination in schools, in fact, if there was, it was in the favour of girls. The children felt that both formal education in schools and informal methods such as music and dance are both important to their lives. However, they agreed amongst themselves that formal education is more important.

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<sup>2</sup> All records of names, grades they are in at present, study and play times etc. can be found in the Needs Assessment Form (Khushi-May2010) and (Khushi2-May 2010)

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 2.

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Home life: The children in both groups felt that they receive adequate playtime. The first group gets roughly, 5 hours of playtime in the afternoon and evening. The second group, despite a rigorous academic curriculum, feels they get enough playtime. Both groups are unanimous in their opinion that there is no need to demand more.

The children in both groups feel comfortable reporting emergencies and conflicts to Usha didi and Purusha didi; although, they are more comfortable with the latter.

The children in the second group enjoy being at school more than being at home. They feel that when they are school, time seems to fly, a feeling that they like. Some said that being at the Home makes them nostalgic about being in their 'real' homes. This feeling is worst at night.

Community and awareness: The first group of younger children, said they found watching the news boring. However, when the conductors probed into their knowledge of current events, they seemed to be quite knowledgeable and up to date. Ironically, the second group of children that attends school had a tougher time discussing current new events with the conductors.

When asked about one thing in the world that upsets them the younger group obviously gave answers that were not as mature as the second group, due to age. They stated heat, ghosts, fights with their friends and interruptions in their playtime as the biggest source of dismay. The second group was slightly more mature in their answers, they noted: the distinction between rich and poor, physical violence, and corruption as their source of displeasure.

When asked about the one thing in the world that they could change, the younger group stated: stealing, bribery, violence of all kinds, gossiping about friends, bullying and alcohol addiction. The older group felt that all the political leaders of India needed to be changed (especially Sheila Dixit), the discrimination between rich and poor should be ousted, ethics of cleanliness should be promulgated in society, and everyone should be made to live in religious harmony.

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## Feedback for Music Basti

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The children in these two groups were well acquainted with the work of Music Basti and could communicate its aims fairly comprehensively. They felt confident that they could recount Music Basti's work to a third party if they were inquired about it.

Songs from Kabir and their respective meanings seem to have made the biggest mark on the children in both groups. They were able to paraphrase the meanings of some songs confidently. The younger group expressed a fascination for the imagery of nature that these songs (trees, birds etc.) evoked and also that they were often in a story format. The older group enjoys the message of 'hope' in Kabir songs. They felt that the songs were relevant to their lives, and also very functional, even if just for playing 'antakshari' at school.

They expressed a desire to learn more Kabir songs, folk songs from various parts of India and Bollywood songs like 'All iz well' and 'Billo Rani'. The children in both groups would like to learn how to write their own songs. A demonstration was made as to how a song is constructed using melodies, time and lyrics and both groups seemed excited. Some of their ideas for song writing topics were: memories (perhaps of a person), friendship, and patriotic songs.



## Conclusion: General Recommendations and Follow-ups

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The major thrust of the needs assessment abides by articles 12<sup>4</sup> and 25<sup>5</sup> of the UN convention for the rights of children and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Freedom of expression)<sup>6</sup>. The needs assessment conducted above, is itself a step closer to realizing these rights (especially the right to expression) for the children at Khushi Home for girls. This last section of the report will re-evolve the questions asked in the introduction and put forth some general follow ups for Music Basti to look into in its program development in the future.

- In the context of formal education in schools, it is a source of joy to find the children vociferously claiming the importance of school education in their lives. It would be productive for Music Basti to acquire course packs and curriculums taught to children in the schools and in the bridge courses as well and engage with it creatively to extend the experience of it. Perhaps, a song can be made from one of the poems in their poetry books. Also, while the children's faith in school education is a source of joy, it is important to encourage 'out-of-the-box' thinking and see how they can creatively engage with the concepts in their textbooks.
- It seems quite unanimous from the needs assessment that the children find news boring. This could have been anticipated, children to find

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<sup>4</sup> See **Convention on the Rights of Children, article 12**. It states, "Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account," Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See **Convention on the Rights of Children, article 25**. It states, "Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full," Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19**. It states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

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news boring and with the second group of children who are enrolled in school, the pressure of academics might not allow them the time to be invested in keeping up to date with the news. However, if current events can be brought closer in line with Music Basti's program development, interest can be encouraged through a different media. Informal discussions can be carried out on topics of contemporary interest in between the Music workshops. The next point will talk about their interest in social change, however, if discussions on news items that have a direct relation to their interest in social development can be made possible, this might have an effect of encouraging their interest in current events. It must be highlighted that in such discussions it is their opinions that are important, the conductors role should be merely to provoke thought, not to instruct.

- The children at Khushi Homes seemed to be most excited by questions regarding social change. Music Basti can use this energy to facilitate them to imagine and construct the new world that they will inherit. 1) Song writing on topics such themes as religious harmony may be quite enjoyable for them. 2) A show in the name of cleanliness in Delhi can be organized, where the children perform a few of their songs, supported by the many bands Music Basti is associated with. 3) A cleanliness drive can also be thought of as an option. 4) Posters can be designed by the kids on themes of contemporary importance and general themes as well: these can range from the duty of politicians during and after elections to cleanliness.
- In the context of the specific curriculum for Music Basti, a few follow-ups need to be highlighted: 1) More songs from Kabir need to be incorporated. Their meanings repeatedly told, perhaps through story telling. 2) Look to contact folk artists of various kinds who sing in different language, if possible. 3) Prepare a few bollywood songs, because music is fun!

The present needs assessment was an attempt to gather the areas children are inhibited in and on what specific issues. This data is the first step towards Music Basti's agenda of nurturing and encouraging the freedom of expression for children.

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