



Report on Needs Assessment for Qutab Home for Boys, Mehrauli, "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."¹

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 at Qutab Home for boys, in this respect; 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. 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.

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, in the presence of the Mr Nisaar, the head staff member of Qutab Home, who was present throughout the duration of the assessment. Mr Nisaar also intervened to help clarify certain questions and provided help. His presence, however, may have influenced certain answers by the children.

¹ See **Convention on the Rights of Children, article 12**, "*what rights?*", unicef.org



Summary of the sections of the Needs Assessment

*School Life:*² The group discussion was carried out with 17 children, out of which 8 were enrolled in bridge courses conducted at the Aman Biradari homes and the rest (9) attended Katha Public School in Govindpuri. This group, unlike in Khushi Home for Girls, was not divided on the basis of educational background.

The children in this group were divided on the question of whether teachers showed bias towards students. Some of them replied 'no', others believed that teachers appeared to focus more on the intelligent children who seem likely to score well in exams. As far as extra-curricular activities are concerned, children attending school are exposed to cooking classes, vocational training, and painting. Music and theater classes are only held when a function is approaching. The children felt that those pupils who seem to be more talented at extra-curricular activities are given more attention. On the whole, the children felt confident clearing up doubts, and asking for help from the teachers. One, however, said that he felt scared, lest the other children in the class make fun of him. The children felt that school education is extremely important in their lives. In their opinion all advice imparted by grown ups is important as perhaps it will be of some use in the future. One child, however, said that he felt angry and enraged at advice given by grown up's. They feel that extra-curricular activities such as dancing and music are also extremely important for them, but not as much as school education.

Home Life: The children in this group feel that they need more time to play and gym. One child said that he had asked more play time when he was a resident in the Shastri Nagar home: he did not get it. This is an extremely positive reflection of the capacity of children in Umeed Home to realize their freedom of expression and their autonomy with respect to authority figures.

While answering the question, "do you feel more comfortable at home or at school?", they invoked the metaphor, "there is shade in school and heat at the home". They were all unanimous in their opinion that they were happier at school, because: at school time passes away quickly and at home they get bored, and also in school they get to interact with children from different sectors of Delhi.

² All records of names, grades they are in at present, study and play times etc. can be found in the Needs Assessment Form (Qutab-May2010).

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (IDEA)

162, Ward No. 3 Mehrauli, New Delhi-110030

Phone: 9818453347/26181508 E-Mail: musicbasti@gmail.com



The group stated that they were very comfortable approaching all members of the staff in the event of an emergency, and there were health workers present at the Home if they were needed. Nisaar, Sanjay and Minto Bhaiya, are the staff members they turn to in the event of a conflict and they are very comfortable with each of them.

Community and awareness: None of the children in this group watch news on the television, however, most of them said that they read the newspaper. A brief inquiry into their knowledge on current events revealed that they were up to date with the entertainment and sports news items such as the Shoaib Malik-Sania Mirza marriage, and India's defeat in the cricket match the day before. They were also extremely vocal about the dangers and damages of pollution.

To questions relating to things about the world that perturb them they stated: pollution, Cancer stemming from Cigarette smoking, Addictions of all kinds, criminals, inflation, homelessness and MCD (sarkari) clearance of 'illegal' homes, hoarding of wealth (the rich should try and help those who are not as privileged as them), and natural disasters such as the Bihar floods.

The group was extremely vociferous about the fact that the youth of India have a huge responsibility in affecting change, because if they make an effort to change things, the elders in society might learn from their example and get involved as well. They would like to rid the world of: addictions, Bribery, price rise, pollution, poverty and disharmony and hatred. They would like to open rehabilitative homes for the homeless (like Aman Biradari has done) and lead cleaning drives in Delhi.

Feedback for Music Basti

The group was 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.

They were divided on the question of how much they had learnt from Music Basti workshops. Music Basti's interaction with the children from Shastri Nagar, who had been moved to Umeed has been for a longer period of time, which might explain this division. The children were able to repeat lesson structures utilized by Music Basti previously to the conductors of the needs assessments. Most of them could relate to the Kabit song



they prepared for the 30th of April 2010, however, they did not know it was a Kabir song. They felt the meanings of such songs have some functional use in their lives and are as important as the knowledge derived from mathematics.

They would like Music Basti to teach them more folk songs from around India and from Kabir. They would enjoy learning Bhangra songs, Bollywood songs, Shastre sangeet and qawali/sufi songs. They were extremely excited to learn some rock songs, but most importantly songs in English. All the children in the group said they enjoy performing on stage and would also love to learn writing their own songs and putting them to music.

Conclusion: General Recommendations and Follow-ups

The major thrust of the needs assessment abides by articles 12³ and 25⁴ of the *UN convention for the rights of children* and article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Freedom of expression)*⁵. The needs assessment conducted above, is itself a step closer to realizing these rights (especially the right to expression) for the children at Umeed Home for Boys. 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.

³ 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.

⁴ See **Convention on the Rights of Children, article 25**. It states, “Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full,” Ibid.

⁵ 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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- 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.
- The dichotomy between the will to affect change in society and awareness of current events is very large with this group in Umeed Home for Boys. The energy the children exude, in their interest in social development, however, can be brought into perspective through a practice of discussing news items relevant to their areas of interest, with regard to social change. Perhaps, a current news item can be singled out for discussion with the group of boys as a brainstorming session to see what ideas they can come up with for their involvement in alleviating that specific problem. (For e.g. if a report on pollution problems is present in the newspaper, this issue can be discussed with the children to see how they feel they can lend a hand to alleviate the problem. Perhaps, through designing posters? Or putting up a show to create awareness of the problem in the community? Song writing can be promoted in this endeavour as well.)
- In the context of the specific curriculum for Music Basti, a few follow-ups need to be highlighted: 1) The children in this Home seem to be keen to learn English songs. Their proficiency in English is not known, but the singing of songs could enhance their ability. 2) More songs from Kabir need to be incorporated in the lesson plan. Their meanings repeatedly told, perhaps through story telling. 3) Look to contact folk artists of various kinds who sing in different languages (if possible). 4) 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.

Sikandar M Kumar

Program Team Head

Music Basti

Integrated Development Education Association

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www.musicbasti.org