



MOUNTAIN CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

Annual Report

2015-16



The Mountain Children's Foundation

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Executive Summary 2015-2016.....	6
2015-16 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITES	8
CHILDLINE – 1098 AN EMERGENCY HELPLINE FOR CHILDREN.....	8
CRY PARTNERSHIP ON CHILD RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION	11
MCF/HIMMOTTHAN: Central Himalayan Education Initiative.....	15
MCF SANITATION PROGRAM in Pithoragarh and UdhamSingh Nagar.....	17
ECHO – In Partnership with Leaf Bird Foundation Bageshwar.....	18
PABAM MAGAZINE	19
GUIDESTAR TRANSPARENCY BADGE	19
Child Advocacy at the National Level	19
Finances.....	20
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	21
MEETINGS, NETWORKS AND OUTREACH	22
Media Coverage.....	24
CONCLUSION	25
ANNEX I: BOARD AND GOVERNANCE / YEAR 2015-16	27
ANNEX 2: INDIVIDUAL DONORS.....	28
ANNEX 3: My Visit with Mountain Children’s Foundation.....	29
ANNEX 4: Case Studies.....	30

INTRODUCTION

No development effort can succeed without the active engagement of the people it seeks to serve. Yet that key ingredient is frequently neglected in well-meaning efforts to “bring” development to marginalized communities. But the top-down, outside-in model of development is fundamentally unsustainable.

The MCF seeks to invert the traditional model in favor of change that grows from the bottom up and the spreads from the inside out.

Why mountains, why children?

As India leaps forward, its rural mountain communities continue to fall behind, hampered by lack of investment, viable economic options, and access to resources in the remote areas where people live. But the greatest handicap to these communities is a pervasive and debilitating sense of helplessness brought on by the belief that they cannot change the forces of corruption, apathy, and greed that rob their villages and steal their children’s futures.



Village Soong – Vikas Nagar Ghat Chamoli

The problems are widespread and deeply rooted:

- Teachers who draw generous government salaries but don’t bother to show up for class;
- Poorly equipped and inadequately staffed schools;
- Villages that still lack water, electricity, roads, and health care even as the government vaunts its investment in rural development;
- Forests rapidly receding under the onslaught of ever more people relying on them for fuel and fodder;
- Water sources drying up from neglect and overuse;
- Extensive migration to the cities in search of work, which tears up families and destroys the social fabric of the community; and, increasingly,
- Natural disasters that shatter lives, homes and livelihoods.

In the face of these daunting challenges, we believe children—with their energy, idealism and inherent rebelliousness—are the best hope for change and development. With their deep belief in fairness, young people have a passion to change the world for the better and—more importantly—still believe they can!

Moreover, the children:

- Know their community and the people in a way that no outsider can easily achieve.
- Have the ability to influence their parents and families within their homes on a constant and ongoing basis: Adults in the community listen more attentively to messages coming from their own children than from the government or other outside organizations.
- Have an enthusiasm that is contagious and difficult to resist: Even the crustiest government official finds it hard to turn down a request from a group of children.
- Have unparalleled energy and the time and courage to take on issues that most adults would find intimidating or unsolvable.
- Are driven by idealism and, unlike most adults, do not filter their actions through fears of “who might get angry with me if I do this?” or the self-serving “what’s in it for me?”

Yet even as young people under the age of 25 continue to grow as a share of India’s population, little is being done to guide their energies in a positive direction.

The Mountain Children’s Foundation (MCF) was established in 2003 to tap into this energy and help rural communities help themselves. Over the past thirteen years, we have demonstrated repeatedly that children can catalyze dramatic and lasting change. Moreover, adults are so pleased with the positive change they see in their children as a result of their participation in the MCF, they often are more open to other things we propose. As a result, the changes in the community are holistic and pervasive and therefore more sustainable.

HOW WE WORK: THE MCF’S UNIQUE MODEL

The MCF works by helping young people see themselves as agents for change in their community.

We do this by establishing *bal sangathans* (children’s groups) at the village level by first gathering the community’s young people and asking them about their concerns and what they would like to change. Through games, activities, and discussion, MCF facilitators then talk to the young people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the community. It’s like turning on a light: children who were previously aimless and uninterested in studying or helping in their homes suddenly become passionate agents for change and often are more engaged in all aspects of their homes and schools.

The most active children in the *bal sangathans* range in age from 10-17. But, frequently, younger children will tag along, and they, in turn, grow into strong, committed members of the *bal sangathans* themselves. We have also seen young adults, who left the village to work elsewhere, return and mentor their old *bal sangathans*. We strive to ensure gender equity and inclusion of children of all communities, religions and socioeconomic circumstances in the group and in our discussions while forming the *bal sangathans*. In fact, we often see more girls than boys participating in and leading the groups and we have started seeing the children begin to take on issues of caste discrimination within their villages.

VISION AND MISSION

We believe that real and lasting change can only grow from within the community. We seek to invert the “top-down, outside-in” model of development.

The MCF works to:

- Enable children to become committed, effective citizens who, through collective action, build a foundation of trust and respect for one another and become agents of change in their communities.
- Create spaces for child participation wherein the individuality and rights of the child are respected:
 - By working closely with the government and its agents to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programs designed to help and serve children,
 - By nurturing communities which give children opportunity to develop to their full potential, and
 - By identifying and removing obstacles to such growth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2015-2016

The 2015-16 year was marked by significant growth in the MCF's work. We expanded to a new area in Uttarakhand while also establishing our credibility as an organization and consolidating our role as one of the primary advocates for mountain children. Major milestones include:

NEW INITIATIVE IN GHAT, CHAMOLI

We launched a new program in partnership with Himmotthan/Tata Trust called the Central Himalayan Educational Initiative, which took us to 20 villages in the Vikas Nagar Ghat Block in the District of Chamoli.

GUIDESTAR INDIA BADGE

Integrity and transparency have always been important principles in our work. This year MCF applied for and received the Intermediate Level GuideStar India Transparency Badge, which provides a public recognition of our efforts to be transparent and accountable in all areas of operations including accounts and processes.

FCRA RENEWAL

MCF also received its renewed FCRA registration certificate under the Foreign Contributions (Regulations) ACT, 2010, which permits the MCF to receive donations from outside India. This year MCF renewed the certificate online.

NEW WEBSITE

An updated and improved website at www.mcfglobal.ngo has been created through the Tata Trust. This website is created on the WordPress format, which should make it easier for our team to maintain the site while providing a more mobile-friendly experience for users.

In addition to these new initiatives, the MCF successfully continued our work on the following programs:

- MCF CHILDLINE: An emergency helpline for children.
- MCF CRY: Child participation, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition.
- MCF Sanitation program: Sponsoring a sanitation program with GRAVIS and NGVSS.
- PABAM: MCF's monthly magazine which documents the children's activities.

- ECHO Program: An educational program in partnership with Leaf Bird Foundation in Wachham.

As always, child rights and child participation remain a key focus of our work, with the MCF offering information and support around numerous issues such as child rights, child participation, education, gender equality, sanitation and hygiene, environmental mindfulness and stewardship, and the Right to Information Act.

2015-16 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

CHILDLINE – 1098 AN EMERGENCY HELPLINE FOR CHILDREN

For the past six years, MCF has been a partner with [CHILDLINE](#), a project of the government of India to provide an emergency helpline for children in distress. The 1098 hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week by MCF CHILDLINE team members who go out at any time of day or night to aid children who are lost, in need of medical care, or in danger of harm or exploitation. The team also provides information and referral to services as well as counselling, emotional support and guidance. Due to the team's tireless outreach efforts, we have seen a steady growth in the use of the helpline, which now averages between 180-200 calls per month, resulting in about 30 active cases each month.

The CHILDLINE project spans a variety of state and national laws and policies and the MCF team must often work closely with various government departments to obtain the necessary services for the children including shelter, medical care and—when necessary—aid from the police. This year, MCF CHILDLINE responded to a total 422 children in the following categories:

- Medical: 10 cases.
- Shelter: 15 cases.
- Restoration: 3 cases.
- Protection from abuse: 173 cases.
- Sponsorship: 60 cases.
- Referred by another CHILDLINE: 6 cases
- Missing children: 104 cases, of which 78 children have been successfully returned home and 26 have been given shelter in homes.
- Parents asking for help: 25 cases.
- Emotional support and guidance: 26 cases.



Madras Colony – Discussing Rights

Furthermore, MCF CHILDLINE conducts daily outreach in different areas of the city to combat begging and child exploitation and labor, promote health and sanitation, build trust between street children and the police, and educate the community on child abuse, child rights and other issues. To this end, the team distributed pamphlets and posted stickers in public places about the emergency 1098 helpline, child rights and the anti-begging campaign. The team also organized a monthly open house in various locations such as the railway station, bus stations,

auto stands, shelter homes, religious places, markets, and slums so children can learn about services available to them and access education and other alternatives to begging.



Shatri Nagar – Play on Child Labour

MCF also conducts activities in slum communities in several parts of the city to teach the children about sanitation and hygiene, good and bad habits, and child rights. Drug use is high in these communities, even among the children, and MCF has organized anti-intoxication rallies in the slum communities of Sapera Basti and Shastri Nagar Basti to generate awareness about harmful effects of substance abuse. And in Bhramawalla Khalla, MCF invited an expert from Jagriti

Organization to sit down and talk to the children about substance abuse.

The MCF team also taught the children of Azad Colony, Jhuggibasti, Chamanpuri, Bhramawalla Khalla, Race Course C Block, Madrasi Colony, Shastri Nagar, Muslim Colony and Sapera Basti (all slums in the Deharadun area) about sanitation and hygiene by using interactive SARAR tools¹, and conducted sanitation rallies in some of these communities.

To celebrate World Day to Prevent Child Labour (12th of June 2015), children from Shastri Nagar put up a very dramatic and true-to-life play on child labour. The Secretary of the District Legal Aid, Kudeep Sharma, and the Child Welfare Committee Member, Kiran Ulfat, and 100 children participated in the event.

The MCF CHILDLINE team generated awareness on child rights and child protection with children in both government and non-government schools. The team also created awareness among the children on “good touch and bad touch” with the help of the CHILDLINE’s animated, child-friendly video, [Komal](#).



Celebrating 21st May with Shastri Nagar Children

¹ SARAR tools were created as part of the SWAJAL program and use flash cards to teach concepts of hygiene and sanitation. SARAR stands for self-esteem, associative strengths, resourcefulness, action planning, and responsibility.

This year the children from our two urban *bal sangathans*, Shastri Nagar and Sapera Basti (both slum communities in Dehradun), celebrated MCF's founding anniversary on 21st May 2016. During the event, the children sang and danced and talked about the changes they had seen in themselves and their friends over the year.

For the past three years, MCF CHILDLINE has partnered with Aasara Trust on an anti-begging campaign that offers children alternatives such as education and food while also teaching the community that giving money to children in the street perpetuates cycles of poverty and begging rather than helping children. As a result, about 12 children now come by themselves to school and Aasara now has got several of the children mainstreamed into government schools.

The MCF CHILDLINE team also conducted a "Masked" Outreach to generate awareness of the harm caused by giving money to children who are begging. The team was helped by three volunteers from NMIMS, Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, in Mumbai.

CASE STUDY: ANTI-BEGGING CAMPAIGN



Wearing brightly colored plaster masks and holding large placards with anti-begging messages, the MCF CHILDLINE team enacted a skit at intersections around the city. While cars were waiting at traffic lights, team members approached motorists asking for money and, when it was given, returning it and pointing to their placards where they had written slogans such as "Give education not alms - giving alms is ensuring child trafficking." This outreach was very well

received by the motorists. – *Prateek Pathak, a NMIMS volunteer who participated in the project.*

SURVEY OF CHILDREN'S HOMES IN UTTARAKHAND

All homes that provide shelter to children in Uttarakhand must be registered under the Juvenile Justice Act and meet the requirements set out by the Act. However, there is little information available about these homes. To help fill in the gaps, MCF was selected as the State Coordinating Agency by CHILDLINE India Foundation to survey the children's homes and shelters in the state of Uttarakhand. The survey is supported by the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and the Department of Women and Child Development. MCF conducted the survey in all the Uttarakhand districts except Dehradun, where MCF is a CHILDLINE Collaborative Partner, to avoid any potential for conflict of interest.

The team gathered data to help evaluate whether the shelters met the requirements of the Juvenile Justice Act for children’s homes, observation homes, special homes, adoption agencies and homes under the Ujjwala and Swadhar programs.

The survey was detailed and time-consuming. Several homes fell short of the required standards and there were some homes operating as shelters that had not even been registered under the Juvenile Justice Act. The survey also revealed that three districts in Uttarakhand—Bageshwar, Chamoli and Rudraprayag—do not have any approved shelter homes for children. The analysis of the data will be carried out by CHILDLINE on a national level and the information will be shared thereafter. Each survey team consisted of three NGO representatives and one government official either from the Department of Social Welfare or the Department of Women and Child Development, who was nominated by the district magistrate of each district. MCF also coordinated the teams and the overall effort in Uttarakhand.

BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN CHILDREN AND POLICE



Children tying the *Dosti Band* to SSP – Sadanand Daate

Mistrust of police and other authority figures often prevents street children from seeking help when they are in trouble. To promote a more positive relationship, the MCF CHILDLINE team celebrated *CHILDLINE se dosti* week from 14th - 20th of November 2015. As a way of increasing trust and communication between the children and police, children from the slum areas of Shastri Nagar and Madrasi colony tied friendship bands on some senior police officials.

The campaign also enables the team to share information about the program and the 1098 hotline with police, child welfare officers and other officials.

CRY PARTNERSHIP ON CHILD RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION

Now in its fifth year, the MCF-CRY partnership seeks to increase child participation and support young people in improving their communities using health, sanitation and nutrition as the avenue for engagement. As a result of this project, children in these communities have taken the lead in planning and implementing activities related to child rights, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition.

Sixteen *bal sangathans* across 16 villages have more than 500 active members who have racked up achievements ranging from getting more toilets built to better educating their peers and the elders about hygiene and healthy nutrition. In the process, they have gained leadership and communication skills and a whole new confidence in themselves. At the same time, as the adults see the tangible results of the children's efforts, they have come to understand how children can be change agents within their communities.



One of the high-scoring families in the Healthy Home Survey

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRESS IN 2015-16

The children's efforts and advocacy have resulted in measurable changes:

- 1,124 waste receptacles made in 16 villages.
- 19 new toilets made this year, which, combined with the 180 built over the past 4 years, means the children are responsible for nearly 200 new toilets being built in their villages despite the fact that MCF-CRY did not spend any money on construction or materials.
- Participation for children in village discussions: For the first time, the children of *bal sangathans* were allowed to attend the village panchayat meetings, where the village leaders discuss issues of concern to the community. This was an important acknowledgement by the adults that the children had earned a place in community decision making. In the meetings, children put forward their request for the building of toilets, the need for drinking water in schools, birth registration² for the children who were not able to avail of the camps that were held earlier, and space for their children's groups to meet.

² Most births are not registered at the time the child is born so children have to get a birth certificate through an often slow and cumbersome "delayed registration" process.

HEALTHY HOME AND SCHOOL SURVEYS

Once again, the children conducted healthy home surveys in each of the 16 villages. A total of 1,416 children and adults participated, including ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers, anganwadi workers, ANMs, ward members and the village pradhan. Over the years, these surveys have increased awareness of and adherence to healthier and more hygienic practices in homes and throughout the village.

A new process this year was the introduction of the Healthy School Survey. The children surveyed different classrooms and students and reviewed the cleanliness of toilets and eating spaces, including the hygiene practices of the *bhojan mata* who cooks their midday meal. The survey was conducted in seven schools, with 263 children and adults participating. One immediate impact of this initiative was that the principal of the junior high school in Papdiyaan Village got dustbins for each of the classes in the school. Furthermore, the children now wash their hands before eating lunch, keep their fingernails trimmed, and try to keep the classrooms tidy. The *bhojan matas* are now ensuring their kitchens are clean and some even wear an apron and cover their hair with a scarf that they were given.



Students present their fingernails for inspection during a Healthy School survey.

NUTRITION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The children of *bal sangathans* also organized nutrition *melas*—public events for the entire community with food and activities—during which the children talk to the community about the importance of nutrition. With the help of the nutrition posters and charts produced for the project, the children discussed commonly consumed foods and their nutritional value, with a focus on the healthy development of children. In October 2015, Patrick Bocco of CRY America visited the MCF. He traveled to Dungakhet, where he interacted with the children and attended their nutrition *mela*. On returning to the US he wrote the children a letter, which we published in the June issue of *PABAM*.³

Anganwadi centers provide important early childhood education services and resources to the community. Because children's groups can help promote awareness of these services within the community, the children visited the anganwadi center in their villages to learn more about the

³ Annex 3 Letter from Patrick Bocco

six services it is supposed to provide, the nutritional value of the food offered there, and the nutrition needs of young children.

TREE PLANTING

Last year, MCF has provided each of the children’s groups a tree to plant in their village. Inspired by this, the *bal sangathans* from the 16 villages decided they would raise money to purchase trees to plant around their villages. They collected Rs. 480, which enabled them to buy 23 fruit and fodder trees with help from the MCF. This inspired the village pradhans to obtain an additional 4,000 trees for the community and the children through the government’s Harela program. In January 2016, community leaders obtained another 500 peach and apple trees for the children.

MCF’s small initiative has now gained its own momentum, driven by the children themselves, and has created a new interest in reforestation within the entire community.

CHILD RIGHTS



Parents and community members understanding child rights

Because the concept of child rights—that safety, education, a birth certificate are an entitlement, not a matter of fate or luck—is still novel to most mountain communities, changing the paradigm remains key to our work.

This year, MCF organized a meeting on the topic for parents and other adults including anganwadi and ASHA workers, the village pradhan, and ward members. The facilitators and children used illustrated books to explain

and discuss child rights. More than 200 adults and children participated in these meetings.

MCF/HIMMOTTHAN: CENTRAL HIMALAYAN EDUCATION INITIATIVE

MCF has launched a new program, the Central Himalayan Education Initiative, in 20 villages of Vikas Nagar Ghat block in District Chamoli. This three-year program, in partnership with Himmotthan Society, Dehradun, will focus on improving the quality of education, starting with early childhood development in 20 villages. To support this project, MCF has established a new office in that area staffed by 11 full-time and 6 part-time employees.

MCF began the project by working with the children to establish a children's group or *bal sangathan* in each of the 20 villages.

A total of 627 children (354 girls and 273 boys) are involved with the *bal sangathans*, which meet at least once a month, but sometimes more frequently in their village.



Dhadeshwar Mahadev Bal Sangathan Dhargaon gets its own office

STARTING WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

MCF has also conducted a baseline survey in each community with a special focus on the anganwadi center. Anganwadis, which provide pre-primary care and education as well as nutrition for children aged 3-6, are intended to serve as a nexus of health information and services in the villages. Unfortunately, due to lack of oversight and participation by the villagers, anganwadis are often poorly run, with few children attending.

To change this dynamic, the MCF team provided a three-day workshop on early childhood care and education for anganwadi workers by trainers from Anjanisain Paryawaran Vidhyalay, in Tehri Garhwal, which is known for its work on child-centered education. As part of the training, the team distributed Teaching/Learning Material (TLM) kits to each anganwadi. The impact is already visible as the anganwadi workers are using the materials, games and action songs with the children.

MCF has also been conducting meetings with *mata samitis* (mother's group responsible for monitoring and supporting the anganwadi), School Management Committees (SMC) and community-based organizations (CBO) on a quarterly basis and sensitizes them about their role and responsibilities with regard to the anganwadi. As a result, the *mata samitis* are now

attending the anganwadi meetings, and anganwadi workers are also inviting the MCF team to their meetings.

CHILDREN AS CATALYSTS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The newly formed children's groups have also been rallying the community around issues of hygiene and sanitation as well as supporting the anganwadis.

Seven of the children's groups⁴ have succeeded in negotiating with their communities and obtaining a room where they can hold their meetings. Three of them have also made a dustbin at the meeting venue. In addition, Udan Bal Sangathan in Sung village organized a sanitation campaign in which they cleaned up the village and roads with the help of the community.

All the bal sangathans also receive *PABAM* magazine every month so they can learn about what children around the state are doing and share their own stories.

To further generate awareness, the MCF team brought Mr. Ram Lal and Mrs. Dhanjeera to conduct puppet shows in 18 villages. The children and the anganwadi workers helped spread the word and ensured a greater turnout of the community members to watch the puppet shows, which conveyed the following messages:

- Government schemes and public properties were designed for the benefit of the community and the people should utilize them.
- Members of the community—through school management committees and the *mata samitis*—need to ensure that schools and anganwadis function well.
- Children, especially those aged 6-18, should also be involved in the betterment of the village and participate in the activities conducted by their bal sangathans.
- Children of the 3-6 age group should be registered in and attend the anganwadis.

The MCF team regularly interacts with ICDS officials, ICDS workers, village representatives, C.B.O. members, Gram Panchyat representatives, school teachers, ASHA workers and other organizations working in Ghat. Although the program has only been in place for 9 months, these efforts have borne fruit and there is a visibly greater level of trust within the community of the MCF and its work. MCF's core team in Dehradun reviews the program on a quarterly basis and provides ongoing training and support to MCF Ghat staff.

⁴ The names of the children's groups are: Dhareshwar Mahadev Bal Sangathan in Dhargaon village, Nanda Devi Bal Sangathan in Kurud, Saraswati Bal Sangathan in Sainiti, Bhagwati Bal Sangathan in Mathkot, Shiv Bal Sangathan in Narangi and Balampa Devi Bal Sangathan in Kumjug.

This program has enabled MCF to expand our reach to a new, underserved area and we hope we can leverage our work there to provide greater resources and support for the children and their communities. For example, the MCF team carried out an additional survey on the status of water and sanitation in the region for Himmotthan, which enabled MCF to get an E-WaSH program for the villages that will provide toilets and water filters in the anganwadis.

MCF SANITATION PROGRAM IN PITHORAGARH AND UDHAMSINGH NAGAR

MCF has partnered with GRAVIS in Pithoragarh and NGVSS in Udhamsingh Nagar on a child-centered sanitation and hygiene program.

Involving 335 children in 5 villages in each district, these initiatives took place in the same areas where we had earlier carried out a program on disaster mitigation, enabling us to build on what the children's groups have learned and done so far. The two-day workshops provided an introduction to the concepts of sanitation and hygiene followed by the children going into the community to conduct healthy home surveys.

These programs were funded by MCF, but even with the small amount of money we invested in these programs, we have already seen significant dividends in terms of changes in community attitudes and practices⁵. An additional benefit of these small programs was to help keep us connected with two of our partner organizations in those communities, build on the investment we have made in the children's groups there, and keep the children plugged into the MCF.

DHARCHULA, PITHORAGARH

In partnership with Gravis in Pithoragarh, MCF organized sanitation awareness programs in five villages for children, parents and community leaders.

Through these programs, the children and the community learned about the importance of hygiene and sanitation and identified problems in their community that they wanted to address—such as lack of toilets in the village, lack of water and toilets in schools, shortcomings in personal and domestic hygiene in their villages. They also learned about child rights and child



Cleaning up in Village Kalika in Pithoragarh

⁵ Please see Annex 4: Case Studies

participation. With this knowledge, they began conducting healthy home surveys, and getting their families to create proper garbage receptacles and build toilets where those were lacking.

In one village, Naya Basti, the children organized a *bal mela* that honored an elderly teacher who had recently passed away, enabling them to raise funds for the event from her family and friends. In this *bal mela* the children participated in sports, a drawing competition and a general knowledge contest. The children drew charts providing information on healthy habits such as hand washing before eating, toilet hygiene, and keeping food uncontaminated. They also depicted the activities carried out by their *bal sangathans* such as building individual and collective dustbins/waste receptacles, constructing toilets, personal hygiene, domestic hygiene, and the cleanliness of their surroundings.

KHATIMA, UDHAMSINGH NAGAR

In partnership with NGVSS, MCF conducted a survey in five villages to establish a baseline of the existing conditions of sanitation. They then organized a workshop in which the children and adults gathered to discuss issues such as waste management, toilets, personal hygiene, and keeping one's surroundings clean.



Training in Tedaghat village Udhham Singh Nagar

From this launching point, the children stopped throwing garbage on the ground and encouraged others to do the same. Now they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. The children of the five villages have dug seven garbage pits for village waste and made 29 cardboard dustbins in their schools. They have also got officials to repair broken toilets in the schools and conducted healthy home surveys. Most importantly, they engaged and negotiated with their parents and community to improve the village.

ECHO – IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LEAF BIRD FOUNDATION BAGESHWAR

Building on our two-year partnership with the Leaf Bird Foundation, MCF once again conducted an education program in two schools of the Wachaam village in the Kapkot block of Bageshwar, which has been hard-hit by floods and landslides. This year's program spanned four weeks in each school and provided wide ranging enrichment on art, native flora and fauna, language, and civic engagement. For the civic engagement program, the MCF team created a sanitation module to help the children understand hygiene and healthy habits, and created and supplied

the materials and provided training to the facilitators who taught the children. Schools in both Sarni and Khati have sanitation maps of the village.

PABAM MAGAZINE



MCF's colorful, glossy monthly magazine, *PABAM*, remains a key aspect of our work by connecting the children to one another and helping them feel part of something that is bigger than just their village. In November 2015, we printed our 150th issue of the magazine.

Published

continuously over the past 13 years, *PABAM*

connects children from

far-flung



villages to MCF and to one another. Serving as a forum for children where they can share their views, stories and experiences, each issue of the magazine documents the children's activities, photographs, letters, and artwork. *PABAM* inspires and motivates children from urban areas to remote rural villages. A quiz about Uttarakhand that is included at the end of every issue has proven to be very popular among children and adults alike.

GUIDESTAR TRANSPARENCY BADGE

This year, MCF was awarded [GuideStar India's transparency badge](#), which recognizes organizations for transparency and accountability in the public domain. To earn this badge, MCF had to present a large amount of data and documentation for review by GuideStar India. The MCF team has always been committed to maintaining the highest level of integrity in our work, so it is gratifying to receive public confirmation of these efforts.

CHILD ADVOCACY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

MCF is active in policy discussions at the regional and national level because child rights, safety, and health and well-being cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Furthermore, MCF's child-centered

approach gives us a unique perspective and the ability to better articulate the needs and concerns of children in mountain communities and around the country. In 2014, MCF was elected a member of the board of the National Action and Coordination Group to End Violence Against Children (NACG-EVAG) and now serves on the organization's executive committee.

MCF also heads the child participation committee for NACG-EVAG and helped coordinate and plan national-level training for children in Guahati Assam in June 2016 on a child-participation based program to end violence against children. This involved working with facilitators from around the country to create a program that would bring together children from different parts of the country to discuss violence against children under five themes (child marriage, child labor, child sexual abuse, corporal punishment, and child trafficking) to help the children understand the issues and give their input on what the problem were in their communities and who could help address the issues.

In an example of effective cooperation between the NGO and government sectors, the NACG-EVAG executive body, including MCF, were a part of the organizing team created by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to host the South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children's (SAIEVAC) 4th Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi (9th to 11th May 2016).

FINANCES

In 2014-15, MCF saw significant growth with the launch in July 2015 of the Central Himalayan Education Initiative in Chamoli, which increased our income by 205% and our expenditures by 119% over the previous year. This is a three-year pilot project.

Our existing multi-year projects, CRY and CHILDLINE, have provided considerable stability to the MCF in recent years and we now have the beginnings of a small corpus fund that enables us to carry out smaller initiatives of our own.

While project funding helps cover the costs of activities and personnel for our work in the field, we are grateful to **Indians for Collective Action (ICA)**, for ongoing support of our general operating expenses. This covers costs of running the office that are not supported by other project funds and provides MCF with needed flexibility and stability.

However, we do need to continue to diversify our funding streams in the coming years because the loss of any one of these major programs could greatly disrupt our ability to continue our work.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The MCF team now consists of 26 staff members and 6 volunteers.

With the support of the Central Himalayan Education Initiative in Chamoli, we have opened a new office in Vikas Nagar Ghat, staffed by 17 people.

MCF is involved in a continuous process to build capacity and instill a strong understanding of the importance of child-centered and child-driven development in each member of the staff. In addition to training related to their specific project, all MCF team members participate in trainings on communication, leadership and working effectively with children.

In addition, to better provide for our staff, we registered MCF under the Employee Provident Fund in January 2016. The provident fund provides life insurance and, after 10 years of continuous service, employees become eligible for a family pension upon retirement. In April 2016, we registered MCF under the government's Employment State Insurance Scheme, which provides medical care in selected hospitals.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The MCF model is grounded in working with locally based partner organizations. This enables us to reach into remote communities across the state, areas where we do not have the resources to go on our own. Moreover, by partnering with local organizations, MCF is able to build an ecosystem of collaboration where organizations can share expertise and resources to attain common goals. Even as MCF benefits from local organizations' knowledge of and trust within the community, MCF's child-focused approach has led many of our partners to more actively engage children in their own work.

Most of our partners are small organizations with limited resources and find it difficult to sustain a program without funding or active support. But we still believe this is the most effective way for MCF to extend our reach into distant rural areas. Unfortunately, many of our largest projects have chosen to work only with MCF, requiring us to increase our own staffing and limiting our ability to support our partners.

However, to the extent our resources allow, we are trying to nurture some of these partnerships and, in the past year, we have collaborated with GRAVIS in Pithoragarh on health and sanitation, with NGVSS in Udhamsingh Nagar on child rights, hygiene and sanitation, and with Leaf Bird Foundation on education, sanitation and disaster management.

MEETINGS, NETWORKS AND OUTREACH

Over the past 13 years, MCF has become an important resource on children's issues in Uttarakhand with government agencies, funding organizations, and other NGOs seeking our input on the needs of children in mountain communities.

We take seriously our role in bringing the voice of the children into development forums and other discussions that would affect their lives and futures.

To this end, members of the MCF team attend statewide and regional meetings to share our experiences, expand our knowledge base, and meet and network with other organizations and individuals. This year's meetings and trainings were:

- Aditi P. Kaur attended a meeting on the 1st of June 2015 with Dr. R.P. Singh of Quality Council of India about MCF and also gave a presentation about MCF's work.
- Deepika Panwar represented the MCF at a meeting on the 30th of July 2015 with the Women's Commission on sexual harassment policy. MCF has its own sexual harassment policy, which has been in place for three years.
- Aditi P. Kaur, Sudhir Bhatt and Dwarika Prasad Nauni conducted a two-day training for 27 children and facilitators on the Right to Information Act (RTI) for the Himalayan Environment Studies and Conservation Organisation (HESCO). The meeting took place from 26-27 July, 2015. The children brought forward a range of issues that they hope to address with RTI, including water pipes not being fixed after the pipes break during the rains, the monkey menace, no toilets in the school, no anganwadi in the village, bridge, low voltage, no birth registration.
- On the 23rd of September Sudhir Bhatt and Aditi P. Kaur participated in a Hans Foundation state-level meeting to explore the foundation's strategy for Uttarakhand.
- On the 27th of November 2015 Aditi P. Kaur attended a national-level meeting organized by IACR to give feedback on the National Action Plan for Children.
- On the 7th of December Aditi P. Kaur 2015 attended the Room-to-Read stakeholder program.
- On the 28th of Feb 2016 Aditi P. Kaur and Sudhir Bhatt attended the GuideStar India training program and subsequently applied for the transparency badge.

- On the 28th and 29th of April 2016, Sudhir Bhatt, Deepika Panwar, Amit Chhetri and Hemant Dhiman trained children from two schools supported by Room to Read on child rights and child participation.
- On 15th to 16th May 2016 Sudhir Bhatt and Pritam Panwar trained 42 children from PAPN Himanchal Pradesh on child rights and child participation.

MEDIA COVERAGE

NEWS

Young RTI warriors from the hills

Rural children have shown remarkable interest in the Right to Information (RTI) Act, according to a report from the Mountain Children's Foundation (MCF). The report, titled 'Young RTI Warriors from the Hills', highlights the growing awareness and active participation of children in the RTI process across various districts in Himachal Pradesh.

The report states that children are increasingly using the RTI Act to seek information about their schools, health centres, and local government services. They are also participating in RTI campaigns and rallies, demonstrating their understanding of their rights and the importance of transparency in governance.

The MCF has been instrumental in educating children about the RTI Act through various initiatives, including workshops, training sessions, and the distribution of educational materials. The report emphasizes the need for continued support and resources to empower these young warriors and ensure they can effectively use the RTI Act to address their concerns and improve their communities.

गांव हो हरा-भरा, बच्चों ने दम भरा

हरैला अभियान को सफल बनाने में बाल पंचायत भी जुटी, बच्चों ने शुरू की है 16 गांवों में योजना

हरैला अभियान को सफल बनाने में बाल पंचायत भी जुटी, बच्चों ने शुरू की है 16 गांवों में योजना। इस अभियान के अंतर्गत बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में हरैला रोपण कार्यक्रम शुरू किया है। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में हरैला रोपण कार्यक्रम शुरू किया है। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में हरैला रोपण कार्यक्रम शुरू किया है।

हरैला रोपण कार्यक्रम का शुभारंभ किया गया। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में हरैला रोपण कार्यक्रम शुरू किया है। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में हरैला रोपण कार्यक्रम शुरू किया है। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में हरैला रोपण कार्यक्रम शुरू किया है।

देहरादून, सोमवार | 24 अगस्त 2015

अमर उजाला

सपेरा बस्ती के बच्चों का संडे सफाई के नाम

देहरादून। बच्चों के लिए खेले का मातृघर बन-दे, लेकिन सपेरा बस्ती के बच्चों का अंतरा दुःख यह है, यहाँ के बच्चे हर सडे को पूरे बस्ती की सफाई में जुटे रहते हैं। जिसमें हर कोई शामिल है।

सपेरा बस्ती के बच्चों का अंतरा दुःख यह है, यहाँ के बच्चे हर सडे को पूरे बस्ती की सफाई में जुटे रहते हैं। जिसमें हर कोई शामिल है। सपेरा बस्ती के बच्चों का अंतरा दुःख यह है, यहाँ के बच्चे हर सडे को पूरे बस्ती की सफाई में जुटे रहते हैं। जिसमें हर कोई शामिल है।

पहल: पर्वतीय बाल मंत्र बच्चों के सहयोग से ग्रामीणों को कर रहा तालाब, पोखरा का अस्तित्व बचाए रखने को जागरूक

तालाब बचाने नन्हें हाथों से 'भगीरथ' प्रयास

पहल: पर्वतीय बाल मंत्र बच्चों के सहयोग से ग्रामीणों को कर रहा तालाब, पोखरा का अस्तित्व बचाए रखने को जागरूक। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में तालाब बचाने के लिए जागरूकता अभियान शुरू किया है। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में तालाब बचाने के लिए जागरूकता अभियान शुरू किया है।

बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में तालाब बचाने के लिए जागरूकता अभियान शुरू किया है। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में तालाब बचाने के लिए जागरूकता अभियान शुरू किया है। बच्चों ने अपने गांवों में तालाब बचाने के लिए जागरूकता अभियान शुरू किया है।

हिन्दुस्तान • देहरादून • खनिवार • 16 जनवरी 2016 • 04

मुक्त कराए सात बाल मजदूर

देहरादून। प्रशासन, कम विभाग और पुलिस ने सात बाल मजदूरों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है।

बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है।

देहरादून, 16 जनवरी 2016

दैनिक जागरण

3

मुक्त कराए सात बाल मजदूर

देहरादून। प्रशासन ने गौरीद गढ़ और पट्टनगर क्षेत्र के पांच प्रतिबंधित क्षेत्रों से सात बाल मजदूरों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है।

बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है। बच्चों को मुक्त कराया है।

हिन्दुस्तान

देहरादून • खनिवार • 06 फरवरी 2016

जागरूकता

पर्वतीय बाल मंत्र की ओर से कुम्हारों को दूध में भीषण मानने वाले बच्चों की शिक्षा के लिए जागरूकता अभियान चलाया गया। बच्चों को जागरूकता अभियान चलाया गया। बच्चों को जागरूकता अभियान चलाया गया।

बच्चों को जागरूकता अभियान चलाया गया। बच्चों को जागरूकता अभियान चलाया गया। बच्चों को जागरूकता अभियान चलाया गया।

CONCLUSION

With our new initiative in Chamoli, in addition to our continuing work in Pithoragarh and Udham Singh Nagar, this year has been a year of growth for MCF. We have reached deeper into underserved areas and added new activities and areas of focus.

As always, our focus has been advocating for and facilitating child participation at every level, from the home to the village and up to state and national policies that affect children. And the results speak for themselves.

Everywhere we are working with children, we can see the transformation they are creating in their communities. And these are not just small changes: For example, when we came into the Horrawala area with the CRY program five years ago, birth registration rate of children between 0-18 years of age was 17.2 percent. But because of our work to educate the community and mobilize the young people to address the problem, the birth registration for that age group in these communities is now 74.77 percent with the 0-5 age group at 92.83 percent, even though it is no longer a major focus of our efforts there.

Similarly, MCF gave the children 16 trees to plant in 2015, and now the children are asking their village leaders for more trees. In 2015-16, they managed to get more than 4,000 trees for their community. And if any child even thinks of dropping out of school, the children inform us and start trying to find solutions for those children.

Our six-year partnership with CRY on hygiene and sanitation has indisputably demonstrated how significantly children can effect lasting and sustainable transformations. Not only have the children achieved remarkable changes in behavior, they have got toilets built (without any monetary investment from CRY or the MCF), planted trees, and much more. **But the greatest transformation is in how the community perceives the children—and how the children see themselves.**

The community, having witnessed the impact of the children's work, has started inviting them to participate in village governance. The entire dynamic of the village and how young people are treated and perceived has been shifted through this project. Because of their successes, the children and the community now feel empowered to continue their current efforts and take on new challenges.

And while children in rural communities remain our focus, our partnership with CHILDLINE has enabled us to reach marginalized children in urban areas as well. The needs of urban slum

children are significantly different from those of children in remote mountain villages. Yet, through the same principals of child participation and engagement, we are able to connect with these young people and help them make positive changes in their lives and communities.

Through our new partnership with Himmotthan and our expansion into Ghat and Chamoli, we are expanding the focus of our activities to include early childhood education and help communities improve their anganwadis and the quality of care available for the youngest children. But once again, the program theme (in this case, anganwadis) is the vehicle for engaging the children on a wide variety of issues—such as health and sanitation, community building and civic participation—while developing their leadership and communication skills and instilling in the community the values and habits of child rights and child participation.

At the same time, we have continued to be a voice for the children at state and national-level policy discussions—always advocating that children be allowed a greater role in shaping the policies that affect them. We have also achieved important organizational milestones this year—renewing our FCRA registration with the Indian government, receiving a transparency badge from GuideStar India, and increasing our training capacity by venturing into more online and remote training.

All of these accomplishments speak to our continued and growing legitimacy as an organization, a representative for young people, and a resource for improving the lives of mountain children.

ANNEX I: BOARD AND GOVERNANCE / YEAR 2015-16

Name	Address	Name of Father/Husband	Gender	Occupation	Designation
Ms. Aditi P Kaur	63- A Vyom Prasth, G.M.S Road Dehradun, U.K.	D/o Capt. Joginder Singh	F	Gender Specialist/ Social Worker	President
Mr. Sunjoy Joshi	C II – 81 First Floor South Extension Part II New Delhi	S/o Late R.L Joshi	M	Director Observer Research Foundation	Vice President
Ms. Khila Bisht	R-11/187, New Rajinder Nagar Ghaziabad, U.P.	W/o Mr. Bhavesh Sharma	F	Writer/ Social Worker	Secretary
Mr. Sudhir Bhatt	63- A Vyom Prasth, G.M.S Road Dehradun, U.K.	S/o Late Govind Ram Bhatt	M	Social worker	Treasurer
Ms. Kiran Ghosh	24 Rajender Nagar Kaulagarh Road Dehradun, U.K.	W/o Late Mr. Manus Ghosh	F	Teacher	Member
Mr. Sajikumar S. R	Sajibhawan P.O. Maravanthuruthu Dist. Kottayam, Kerala	S/o Mr. Raghavan Nair	M	Accountant / Social worker / Entrepreneur	Member
Mr. Cyril R. Raphael	59/1 Vasant Vihar Dehradun, U.K.	S/o Dr. Stephen C. Raphael	M	Ex Secretary SBMA; Social Worker	Patron/ Member
Mr. Mathew Cherian	Y- 57 Haus Khas, New Delhi	S/o C. Cherian	M	Executive Director HelpAgeIndia	Member
Rev. Dr. John Chakkanatt, CMI	Bishop House P.O Box 1 Kotedwar Pauri Garhwal, U.K.	S/o Sri C.U. Chacko	M	Director Sadharmayam Research & Dialogue Centre	Member

ANNEX 2: INDIVIDUAL DONORS

With the support of following individuals we are able to carry out our programs. We thank them for their trust and support to MCF.

Individual Donors

- Rosaline & Jay Maloney
- Mamta & Chetan Shrama
- Arjan and Diljit Bijnath
- Aarohi Kritika Joshi
- Kiran Gosh
- Ishita Khanka
- Rishabh Joshi
- Rajesh Dhanda
- Romail Dhaddey and Francis Sweeney
- Julian Leichty

ANNEX 3: MY VISIT WITH MOUNTAIN CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

The following letter from Patrick Bocco of CRY – USA was published in *PABAM* magazine.

Hello from New York.

I wanted to share a picture of the drawing the children were so kind to give me. I have framed it and proudly display it in my kitchen. All my guests always admire it. Please share this pic with the children of me and Samson. Tell the PABAM kids I think of them often miss them and hope to see them on my next trip.



I was so impressed meeting with the children and hearing how committed they were to impact their lives and the communities they live in. The

distances they travel to meet are a testament to their passion. I can see they are true agents of change working collectively. I enjoyed learning about how to eat healthier with a diversity of fruits and vegetables and the vitamins provided from each of these foods. Also how their communities are cleaner now with less trash being thrown in streets but instead placed in dustbins. What a positive impact on the environment.

They are teaching other children and adults to take pride in their communities and themselves. Teaching others better hygiene with hand washing has improved health and decreased the spread of illnesses. I thank the kids for welcoming me and sharing about all the ways they have become powerful speakers and impacted positive change. I loved the acting skits.

Please give my regards to Sudhir and your entire staff.

Best regards

Patrick



ANNEX 4: CASE STUDIES

The following case studies are from this year's initiative in Pithoragarh and Udham Singh Nagar to teach the children about hygiene and sanitation. Even though it was a one-year program involving relatively little investment by the MCF, these case studies show how quickly young people pick up the momentum and how great an impact they can have.

CASE STUDY 1 – TOILET MADE BY CHILDREN'S EFFORT

Nayi Kiran Bal Panchayat, Majhaura, Khatima

After participating in the sanitation program, the children of Nayi Kiran Bal Panchayat organized a monthly meeting. The main issue of this meeting was construction of a new toilet in their local high school, the Majhaura intercollege, which has 800 students and therefore needs another toilet. The students sent an application to the school principal asking that a new toilet be constructed. When there was no response from the principal, the children organized another meeting and asked children and adults to give their views of this issue. After the meeting, the children sent an application invoking the government's Swachh Bharat Mission to the village pradhan as well as the block headquarters. After a month, the construction work began for a new toilet in the school, which is now open for use by the students. This success has greatly inspired the young people.

CASE STUDY 2 – NOW EVERY HOUSE HAVE MADE DUSTBIN

Pratibha Bal Panchayat, Tedaghat, Khatima

During the sanitation rally organized by the Pratibha Bal Panchayat in Tedaghat, Khatima, the children told other people not to throw garbage in open places and explained the health problems caused by litter. Since then, the people of the village have started using dustbins at home. First this happened very slowly, but when the families who have ranked first, second and third in the *Healthy Home Survey* were given awards, others also started using dustbins. Now in the village there is cleanliness in the homes and the roads are much cleaner than before. The children started this mission first at school level, then each member of the children's group made dustbins at home and used them properly.

CASE STUDY 3 – THROUGH CHILDREN'S EFFORTS REPAIR TOILET DOOR

ShradhaBal Panchayat, Bandiya, Khatima

After participating in a sanitation workshop, the children of Shradha Bal Panchayat made cardboard dustbins in each class and also made dustbins in their homes. In this training, the children learned about physical hygiene such as taking a bath daily, brushing teeth, hand washing, cutting nails, wearing clean clothes and cleaning their home and surroundings. Now the children use slippers when going to use toilets and also advise others to do the same.

In village Bandiya, with the efforts of Geeta, Pratibha, Rahul and Vivek from Shradha Bal Panchayat, a door of a toilet in their school was repaired. The children first discussed this problem in their meeting, then they informed their principal. The principal spoke with the village Pradhan about this issue. When there was no progress, the children reached out to the Block Development Committee (BDC) member and the work of repairing the toilet's door was done shortly thereafter. With this accomplishment of children, the parents and the principal are very pleased.

CASE STUDY 4 – MY FATHER LISTENED TO ME

Manisha Bunal Vidhya Bal Panchayat, Naya Basti, Dharchula

Manisha Baunal, the president of Vidya Bal Panchayat shared her story: "I joined the Vidya bal panchayat 2 years ago. Sarita didi [the facilitator] told us that having toilet at home is very important and defecating in open is not a good thing, because flies sit on it and then those flies sit on our food which make us ill. I told my parents to make a toilet in our house so we do not have to go to the toilet in the open. Papa thought about it and he made toilet. Presently we use toilet and we are very happy that we also have toilet. "

FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- **Mr. Kiran Singh from Goti** said: "Since the children got involved with this organization, they have changed. Presently they are concentrating on cleaning like never before and now every house has a dustbin. The children now burn garbage and keep themselves clean. They additionally advised their family members to keep themselves clean too."
- **Village Pradhan of Talla Charchum Mr. Dabla Singh Firmal** said: "The work done in our village by GRAVIS is admirable. Activities done by children, whether the healthy home survey or about sanitation of village, is really appreciable. We will talk about this matter in the BDC [Block Development Committee] meeting and also support and help the children of our *bal panchayat*."
- **Zeneb Salmani from Kalika** said: "Nowadays our kids always talk about their *bal panchayat* and hygiene. They told us and their younger siblings not to throw garbage everywhere."