

MITRA-
Collective of
Children of Sex
Workers



Key Achievements 2016-17

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN OF SEX WORKERS

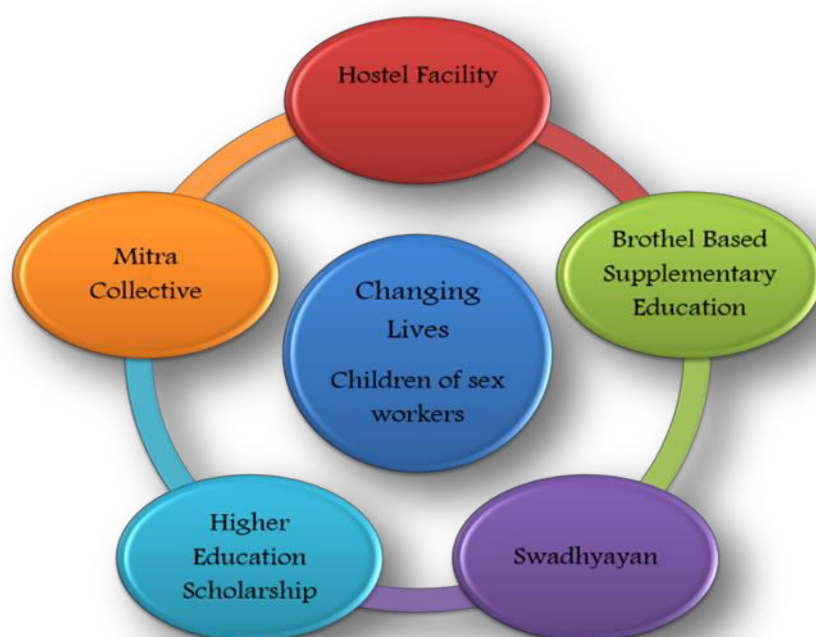


Figure 1. Towards a Holistic Approach - Empowering Children of Sex Workers

Children of sex workers often face problems in adjusting within the regular schooling system. The lack of an adequate learning environment, discrimination from teachers and other children are most common reasons that children are disinterested in studies and eventually drop out. SANGRAM's strategy to empower children of sex workers focuses on increasing their self- confidence, providing them safe spaces to share their issues, ample opportunities to participate in social engagements.

- A. Ensuring that the mothers in VAMP have **access to a learning environment for their children**, which includes nutrition, tuition, strengthening communication and literacy skills. SANGRAM in partnership with VAMP and Mitra run a hostel for children of VAMP. Currently there are 38 children in the hostel with residential facilities for schooling at the nearby semi private school. Regular care takers and wardens provide daily care for the children. Regular tuition classes are held on a daily basis for the children every evening where basics of formal schooling are imparted. Regular medical care and a nutritious balanced diet is also provided. Children take part in various school competitions; e.g. speech /debate, sports, essay writing, poetry, cultural activities. The tuition teacher in charge of the hostel regularly visits the school to assess the performance of the children.
The hostel also received formal registration by Central Child welfare committee in 2017. Routine visits are planned by VAMP and Mitra members in rotation to the hostel to review the children's performance. They give their feedback in Coordinator's Monday meetings.
- B. Many mothers in VAMP are reluctant to be separated from their children and there are many children who are too young to be in a residential facility. Hence they stay with their mothers in

their homes and in the brothels. These mothers also request that their children be supported in their education. Hence, SANGRAM and Mitra developed **brothel based supplementary education** in three brothel areas in Sangli, Miraj and Karad for around fifty children. Three adult children of sex workers have taken the responsibility of tutoring them.

- C. Over the years, SANGRAM has recognised that children who are approaching state level examinations (Secondary School Certificate -10th and Higher Secondary Certificate -12th) need additional support in preparing for state examinations. Hence, children who are high school drop outs or in the 9th standard are pulled out of public schools and provided specialised educational support for two years under the **SWADHYAYAN School System** so that they are able to participate in competitive exams. Currently, 10 children of sex workers are being supported under the Swadhyayan school education system. Each subject being taught by special teachers. Most of all are school dropout children. So, they have not completed their formal schooling appropriate to their age. Efforts are taken to teach basics of subject like Marathi, Hindi, English and Maths.

SWADHYAYAN also focuses on building additional skills among the children. For instance children are taught how to operate computers, yoga, opt for various sports, cookery classes and gardening. They are taken for regular visits to local factories; ice cream, chocolate, bakery, milk dairy and also visit to aircraft wing making industry. Children look forward to these activities and there is active engagement from them. On 15th August on account of Independence Day; Swadhyayan students are invited by local schools of special children.

Regular feedback sessions are organised between the teachers, SANGRAM, VAMP and Mitra members. Teachers discussed individual level study performance of each student of Swadhyayan. This individual attention has benefited the children and gradually progress is being observed in their interest levels in education and extra-curricular activities.

The residential facilities, brothel based supplementary system and Swadhyayan are overseen by a team of Mitra members. The teachers and school provide them regular reports and updates on their progress.

- D. SANGRAM has initiated scholarship support program for children who are pursuing higher education. Called the Mitra Scholarship Fund, 7 children were recipients of the scholarship in 2016-17. They are pursuing various education streams such as medicine, engineering, social sciences, social work and nursing.
- E. Providing children of sex workers a **safe space** to share their issues. (Mitra Collective formation). In the last couple of years there has been a gradual increase in the number of children who are wanting to participate in the discussions and in the collective spaces of Mitra. In 2016-17, the MITRA Collective organised numerous programmes to bring together children participating in the holistic well-being program. 21 adult collective members helped to plan and implement these programmes.

i. Early and Child Marriage (ECM)

VAMP and Mitra are tracking how programs are preventing early and child marriage amongst children of sex workers. Members of the collective sought to have more awareness building campaigns and strengthening the work of the Mitra Collective to create awareness and reduce ECM. On monthly basis meeting regarding ECM held with Mitra collective members. The work to monitor ECM indicators is taking place through community level meetings in Sangli, Miraj, Satara and two districts of North Karnataka. Each member took community level meetings to disseminate information on ECM and its impact. 12 meetings have been held with MITRA collective members. 10 Indicators put together by MITRA team to review work regarding ECM. This helped young people to think on issues related ECM and its impact. MITRA team working for the purpose of creating awareness and advocacy with mothers in the community. Mitra members carried out sex and sexuality education classes for adolescent girls and boys.

ii. Summer Camp

SANGRAM in collaboration with MITRA and VAMP collective; organised a 20 day summer camp to keep the children's continued interest in education. These children came together for a camp which included teaching basic level subjects, special lectures and games. 15 children participated in the camp. The summer camp helped to identify more children who were interested in participating in the education programs being offered.

iii. MITRA Awards 2017

Mitra Awards program held at Baljagat, Balajinagar, Kupwad, Sangli for the first time publicly performed a play on negative effects of child marriage in front of an audience. 125 adolescents and children from Sangli, Miraj, Karad, Satara, Nipani (South Maharashtra and North Karnataka) participated in event and ECM thematic competitions. Similar themes will be selected on a regular basis to inculcate learning through fun and games.

Impact

The most visible outcome of the program has been the renewed interest of mothers to ensure that their children are educated and able to access education and work opportunities in future. Currently 125 children are associated with one or the other program being offered by SANGRAM, VAMP and MITRA. Children's sense of discipline in dressing, formalities and manners are appreciated by the teachers. Children are become more social than has been observed previously. Their relationships with other children in schools has also changed. Most of the children are leading various activities in their schools. Mothers are also sharing that their children's behaviour with them is improving. Examination results of children attending supplementary education and in the residential facilities have improved.

There is a perceptible improvement amongst children and a willingness to participate in the education system, go to school and appear for exams. 7 children are receiving scholarship for higher education in various institutions, such as Social work, medical entrance examination, engineering, nursing courses. The results of children opting for scholarship programs with SANGRAM has also been motivational for other children. They are increasingly speaking of the benefits of good education.

The Swadhyayan program has helped 9 children to move towards formal education and SANGRAM hopes that this will reflect in better results in State exams. Teachers have been appointed for each subject and individual attention is given to each child. Regular review meetings of teachers helped assessing progress in study.

Mitra Hostel,Supplimentary Education Class, Swadhyayan Team

Name	Designation
Anil Pandhare	Hostel Tuition Teacher
Ranjana Dhale	Mitra Hostel Admin
Indravva Kamble	Hostel Assistant
Sujata Jadhav	Tuition Teacher
Ganesh Mali	Tuition Teacher
Madhavi Bhide	Swadhyan Teacher
Mahavir Terdale	Swadhyan Teacher
Mayur Abhyankar	Swadhyan Teacher
Mugdha Abhyankar	Swadhyan Teacher