
SITE VISIT: Child-to-Child Program in India

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Health workers and educators in India have long been receptive to the ideas inherent in the Child-to-Child approach. One reason why Child-to-Child has found such fertile ground in India is that the twin concerns of the program—to promote preventive health care for children and to encourage activity-based approaches to learning—support the goal to design more effective health and educational services throughout India. While Child-to-Child projects are numerous, the programs described in this review include the Mobile Creche in Bombay and the Municipal Corporation Schools project in Delhi.

Bombay's Mobile Creche. Mobile Creche is a voluntary organization that runs day-care and educational centres for the children of unskilled laborers working on construction sites. Throughout the Bombay municipal area approximately twenty creches are currently in operation. The children, ranging in age from infancy to nine years, come from homes with levels of extreme deprivation, where both parents are employed laborers. Thus, older children are entirely responsible for the care of infants and young children. Few of these children have the opportunity to attend a formal school. The Mobile Creche Project was designed to relieve older children of some of this burden and to provide them with the opportunities for cognitive and personal development that formal schools make available to more privileged children.

As a result of the temporary employment patterns, a child's duration within the creche is short, often less than a year. For many of the children this limited period may be their only opportunity to develop, through activity-based methods, basic cognitive competencies and knowledge of simple health practices. Children work together in small groups, using a variety of low-cost learning materials, including workcards, games, and readers. Because the groups are of mixed ages, older children provide much of the formal and informal instruction to younger children. In this way, familiar patterns of child care are simply transferred into the Creche Centres.

Child-to-Child is a learning rather than an outreach project; no systematic attempt is made to use the children as health messengers or change agents. Nevertheless, because of the stress on internalizing learning through activity and practice, outreach is beginning to occur spontaneously. It is obvious that this approach to learning was deeply embedded within the Mobile Creche program before the Child-to-Child approach was formally instituted.

An important feature of the Mobile Creche is a well-developed system for monitoring the impact of its programs through observations of participants' capacities. The social and cognitive progress of each child is monitored and recorded. Preliminary interpretation of this data indicates that the

Mobile Creche is experiencing much success in enhancing the social and cognitive capacities of this hard-to-reach population of children.

Delhi Municipal Corporation Schools. Child-to-Child activities are being implemented in a sample 32 of the 1,500 schools controlled by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). If successful, this pilot program will gradually be extended to include other MCD schools.

Classroom teachers implement the program in standards 4 and 5. During a series of teacher-training workshops, a set of fourteen activity sheets was developed which provides the basic curriculum materials for the program. These activity sheets cover such topics as:

- Accidents: Burns
- Good Toilet Habits
- Environmental Cleanliness
- Skin Diseases and Personal Hygiene
- Good Eating Habits
- Care of the Eyes
- Care of the Tooth
- Prevention of Infectious, Contagious, and Deficiency Diseases
- Anemia
- Diarrhea
- Care of the Sick Child
- Balanced Diet

The goals of training workshops are to provide teachers with guidance and support and to discuss problems encountered in implementing this activity-oriented approach to teaching and learning. In addition to the training workshops, teachers' performances are observed in the classroom setting.

As a supplement to this program, fourteen schools have participated in an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Project. The ECE program targets four and five-year-old children in the two years before they enter primary school. Utilizing activity-oriented approaches to learning, the program attempts to prepare children for primary school entrance. The first graduates of the program are now in Standard 1. Primary teachers are being assisted in maintaining the same activity-oriented approaches used in the ECE program as the children move up through the primary school. Given effective coordination, it is hoped that activity-oriented approaches to learning may be accepted by teachers in all standards as an innovative approach to instruction across the curriculum.

As might be expected, the degree to which Child-to-Child has been accepted by the school administration varies tremendously. In some schools the acceptance is immediately apparent. Walls are decorated with posters, drawings, or charts showing the results of health surveys, and school compounds and toilets are clean. Classroom observations reveal a lively interchange of questions and answers between teachers and pupils, even outside the official Child-to-Child periods. By contrast, in other schools, the Child-to-Child Program is an isolated activity that occurs at specific times and places. Little impact on the school environment can be seen, and

teachers, complaining of unrealistic time-demands, revert to traditional teaching methods as soon as the Child-to-Child activity is completed.

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Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1999.