



OUR SUCCESS STORY

Inclusion
Jan 2019

Dear Mercy,

We, at Oasis are committed to working in an inclusive, integrated, empowering and comprehensive way, so that all people experience wholeness and fullness of life. To see that mission accomplished in Borivali, Mumbai has been our greatest joy in 2018. With our phase out of Borivali complete, we are entering this new year with memories of the hard work done and the happiness we enjoyed at Borivali.

An unconventional beginning

“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members” – Coretta Scott King

Of all the communities we have been working in since 1994, Borivali, in Mumbai is a unique one. It is the only neighbourhood where the residents themselves approached us to start our work there. In 2010, two migrant families played a key role in helping us establish our centre there. We identified various needs and an opportunity to holistically develop the community and its people.

We began our project in 2011 after conducting an extensive baseline survey of 170 families across various lanes in Borivali. Even though the slum was in a no-development coastal regulation zone, there were 1000 families spread across 14 lanes.

In the first two years, we focused on health and education through life skills, basic literacy, and tuitions for women and children. Over time we added vocational training, advocacy, counselling and life skills to our intervention.

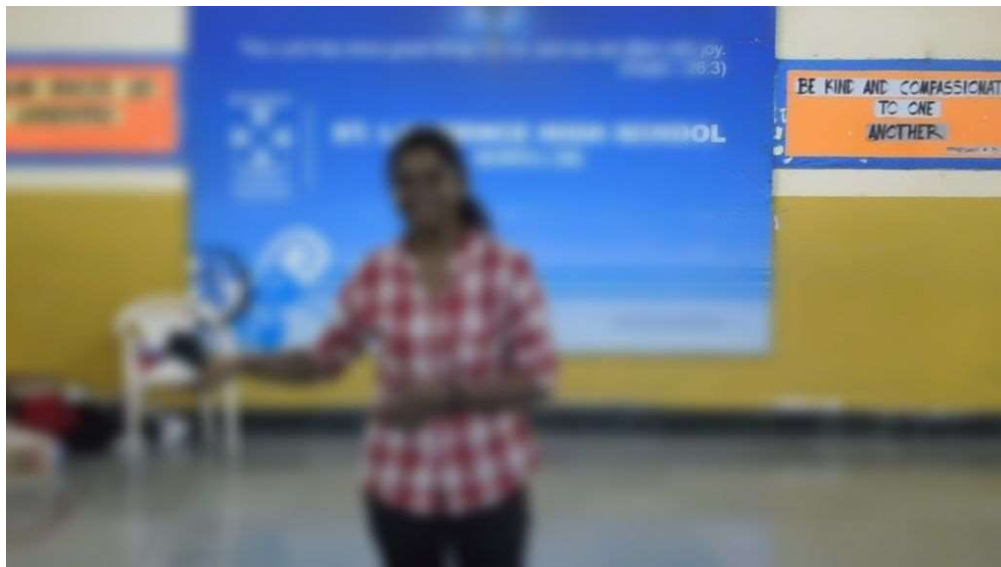
In the past eight years, our work in Borivali has been successful solely because of the interest of the residents. Their level of participation in our programmes indicated that the community is ready to take charge of their own development from here. While we are stepping out, we will continue to guide and support them through various initiatives that

will build their capacity to address the issues and concerns that might arise in their neighbourhood.

Sulekha Thapa
Regional Head – West

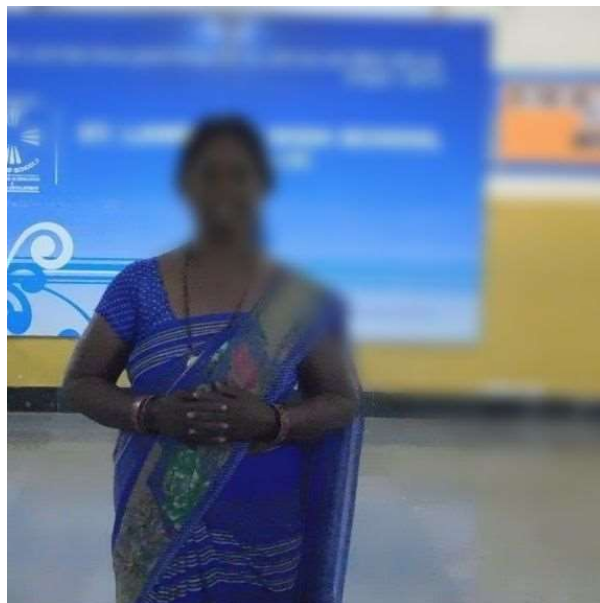
A testament to freedom

Poonam, from Borivali, was eager to work and support her family. Her father was the sole breadwinner and she wanted to make life easier for him. While looking for a solution, Poonam's friend introduced her to us and now she is making the best of her life.



Poonam's experience in her own words:

Oasis staff guided me to join the 6-month MumBA1 hairdressing course at Borivali. I was always very timid and shy but joining this course has helped me break out of my shell. Travelling in the Mumbai local trains in itself felt like a BIG achievement for me. On identifying my abilities, the course trainer offered me work at her parlour. I had the opportunity to participate in various beauty events across the city. One of the most memorable experiences was when I got an opportunity to participate in a hairstyling competition at Taj Hotel, attended by models and stars. A local newspaper featured a photo of me styling a model and I was beyond thrilled for that recognition. Even now new opportunities keep coming my way and I make the most of it. I'm grateful to Oasis India for giving me this opportunity. This journey has helped me to support my family and also find my passion.



With an unsupportive husband and deep in poverty, Laxmi needed a break-through. When she came to us, we encouraged her to be a part of our local self-help group (SHG) in Borivali but she did not have the initial amount needed to join the group.

A determined heart will always accomplish what is necessary, and that is exactly what Laxmi did. We helped her start a small-scale business of making belt buckles at home, with which she earns INR 5000 every month. Since then, Laxmi has proactively taken part in all our sessions and activities. She has been a regular attendee of the health awareness and life skill sessions, learning about balanced diets, safe food handling, methods of cooking etc. She also helped to organise mass awareness rallies every year.

Laxmi not only changed her family's circumstance, but she played a vital role in transforming the community. Laxmi took up the initiative along with a human rights group to approach the Municipal Corporation office to improve the drinking water facility in her neighbourhood. She has become a local hero for taking up the cause. Laxmi's son has now taken after her, by helping the children in his locality with their studies.

Issues faced in Borivali



Impact

Education



In the baseline survey conducted at Borivali, we found that there was a serious lack of awareness on the importance of education among parents. Many of them who are rickshaw drivers and daily wagers did not pay any particular attention to the early development of their children. The children were often found neglected and unkempt. To eradicate this problem, we began a pre-school where the children learnt social skills like adjusting with one another, punctuality and grooming. This programme also helped the parents become responsible for their child's health and well-being.

To provide supplementary educational support, we began our **after-school programme (ASP), benefitting over 118 students in a span of 4 years.** This improved the grades of the children tremendously since they began receiving individual attention. They also learnt grooming and were often part of important discussions about prevalent issues around them. **We also reintegrated 21 dropouts back into schools through counselling and guidance.**

Skilling



Another major issue identified in Borivali was gender inequality. Young women and girls were denied an equal chance at education, health care and a secure future. For us, changing this mindset was the biggest challenge as an organisation. We created training for women to develop and support their families. Women were encouraged to enroll in our tailoring, employment readiness and hair dressing courses to hone their skills. We also helped them find employment through job placement agencies. **15 women are now working in hospitals and 15 others run small-scale businesses.** Gaining financial stability has given these women the ability to provide for their families.

Health



From children to adults, the slum residents lacked proper hygiene and sanitation. Once a month, we conducted awareness sessions among women and teenagers to expand their knowledge on health and hygiene. **We also organised three medical camps and two major health awareness programmes, benefitting over 1500 people in the past eight years.** This has helped them create a healthy lifestyle for themselves and their families.

Prevention



Although we work towards community development, our key focus is anti-human trafficking. We have **raised awareness on human trafficking with rallies every year.** Our women and children put up street plays and enthusiastically participated hoping that

everyone will learn of this social evil and how to stay safe. In our after-school classes and in four schools around the community, we organised sessions on personal safety to empower children.

Hear from our change agents who have been instrumental in implementing change in Borivali



"I had a lot of dreams for myself but had no direction. Through Oasis India's intervention, I had the opportunity to be a part of the nursing course. Now I am earning very well. I was very anxious that I would be married off early. But this job has given a whole new meaning to life and also the capacity to empower others in my community."

Priti

22, Nurse

"I was very aggressive and short-tempered. I was not on talking terms with my mother. After I became a part of the ASP and life skills sessions I learned the importance of respecting parents, elders and others. I stopped using abusive language and I also learnt to be patient. My parents are very happy."

Anurag

13, ASP

Nothing is possible without a dedicated team. Here are some of our staff's experience working in Borivali:

"I enjoyed working with the children at Borivali. I loved the process of teaching, guiding and challenging them to maximise their thinking ability to make the right choices, and become responsible individuals. Along the way I learnt a lot from them."

Angel
Nurse

"I am happy to see the children from the pre-school growing up so fast and performing well in their studies. It is empowering to watch the women from the tailoring courses boldly start their own businesses in their homes. It is a wonderful feeling to watch someone grow in confidence, skill and knowledge."

Sonal
Project Coordinator

This great accomplishment would not have been possible without the constant support from all of YOU. Thank you for being a part of this journey with Borivali.

Here's to transforming more lives and more communities.

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