



A SEEMA ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12



“Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but to touch his imagination and enthuse him to his innermost core.” — Maria Montessori

“It has been almost 15 years since our first day of school. When our Education Centre began in December 1997, we had not imagined all that it would grow up to be.”

— Dilbur Parakh, Chairperson, Aseema Charitable Trust

From a tiny class of 18 children to multiple centres reaching out to 1364 children — so much has changed! And yet, so much has remained the same. We are still as excited at every new accomplishment our children make. We still believe that they learn best when they are intrigued and challenged. And we are even more convinced that there can be no compromise on quality and no substitute for perseverance.

Over the past year, we have been able to strengthen these beliefs and consolidate our work across schools in Mumbai and Igatpuri. We have also been able to reach out to more children by offering educational guidance to other organizations working with similar communities. There are now young minds in different parts of the country learning ‘the Aseema way’ — exploring their own potential and nurturing a love for learning.

It is extremely rewarding to see the little ripples of change created by this work. Each time a child asks an insightful question, pushes herself to do better or shows compassion and kindness beyond her years — we are filled with joy and renewed zeal. We welcome you to look back on some of the special moments of the year of 2011–12, with us.



MCGM School Projects

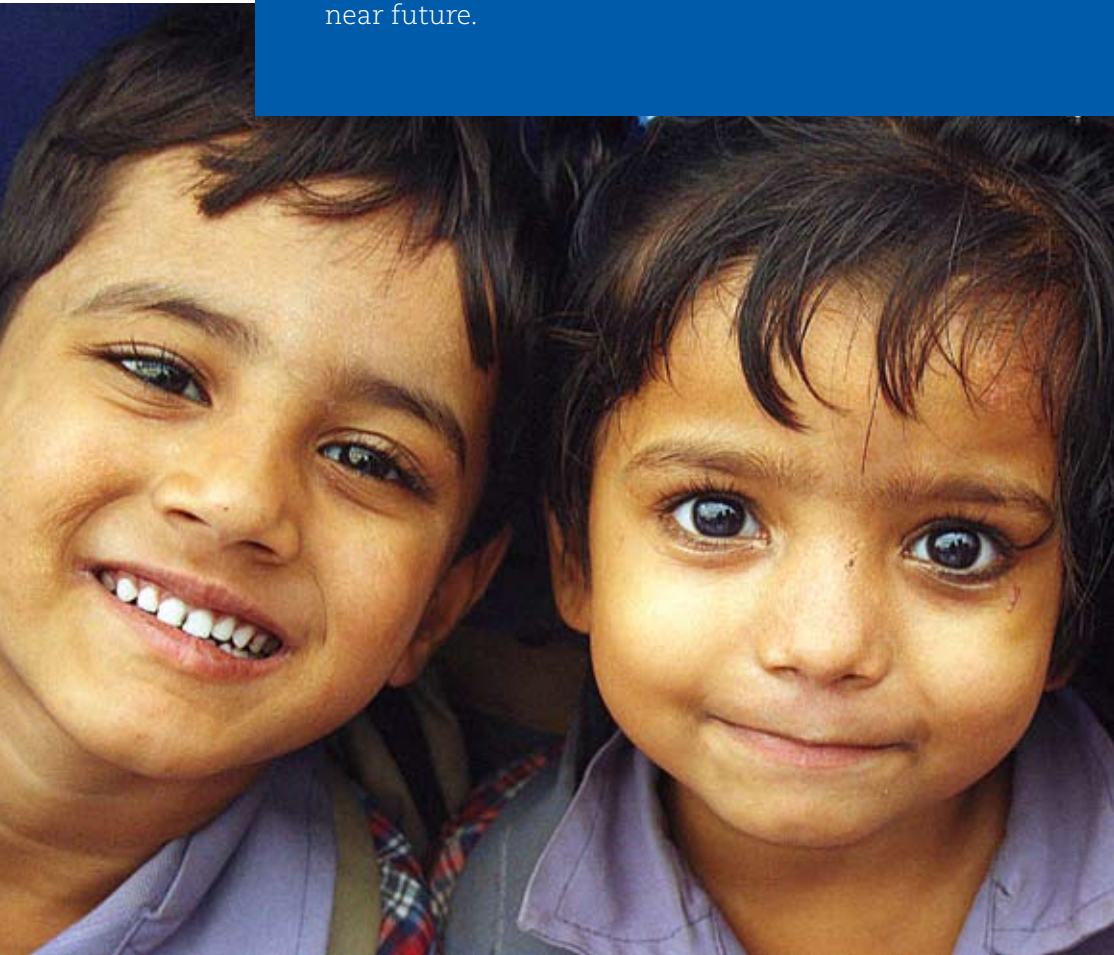
This year, we have continued to work with the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) with the aim of improving educational facilities available in public schools. In addition to working directly with three schools in the city, we have also worked closely with senior officials in the MCGM to develop more favourable educational policies. These policies will impact lakhs of children studying in MCGM schools and are expected to be finalized in the near future.

Santacruz (W) Municipal School



At the Santacruz (W) Municipal School we have our youngest and oldest children busily engaged in work. Our Pre-Primary Section caters to children from 2.5 to 6 years of age while our Secondary Section has classes from Standards VIII to X.

In the Pre-Primary Section, 202 children learnt through the Montessori approach to education. This approach allows them to work with educational material that is scientifically designed to meet their developmental needs. The teacher in their class acts as an observer, facilitator and guide and allows each child



Pali Chimbai Municipal School

to learn at his/her own pace. As the children discover new skills and knowledge for themselves, they are encouraged to develop independence and learn more.

Our children in the Pre-Primary Section had a meaningful year with field trips to a park, fire station and biscuit factory as well as several occasions to experiment and try new things. Weekly pottery classes were added to the curriculum and were almost therapeutic in nature! Fun activities such as non-fire cooking, a 'graduation day' party and celebration of festivals made school a richer experience.

In the Secondary Section, more classes were added to accommodate the growing number of children. 92 children were enrolled in the English medium section and an additional 700 children from the Hindi and Urdu mediums were offered Computer and Science Laboratory lessons.

As the children worked on projects, engaged in debates and discussions, they grew in confidence. At an interschool Science Exhibition, they presented a model on healthy heart habits while on Creative Writing Day, they wrote and read literary works on a range of topics. Our teachers too participated in exhibitions of teaching aids and were invited to conduct a virtual class on Mathematics for children of all MCGM schools.

Our second batch of children appeared for the S.S.C Board Examination and secured a 93% result. They are now preparing for college and work placements. The children of our Lifeskills programme secured jobs in various companies and local businesses and have begun contributing to their family income. They continue to visit our school and are role models for their younger friends.



The Pali Chimbai Municipal School — Aseema's first MCGM school project — continues to reach out to large numbers of children. This year, 575 children were enrolled in the school in Standards I to VII. With a student teacher ratio of 20:1 in the Lower Primary and 35:1 in the Upper Primary, we were able to offer more focused attention to the children.

New initiatives such as our Project Ringtones introduced the children to technology in education. Our young boys and girls

Kherwadi Municipal School

have been practicing programming skills and are learning to develop their own computer applications.

Sports were given greater emphasis with more varied games being played in the school. Interclass and interschool cricket, football and volleyball tournaments were organized with great enthusiasm. Five of our judo champions also participated in the Junior National Selections and two of them bagged gold medals.

The curriculum was developed further and enriched. Through the Activity Based Learning approach, children learnt about faraway galaxies, prehistoric eras and present day environmental issues. Each subject was brought alive and linked to the other in a seamless manner. This was evident at the school's Annual Day function where children as young as 6 years of age enacted the story of evolution with much excitement. They were most happy to be invited to a local radio station to talk about all that they had learnt.

The year ended with a fun filled Summer Camp where workshops on Language, Mathematics, Dance, Art and Sports enthralled the children.



We began our second year in the Kherwadi Municipal School and saw a significant increase in enrollments. With 347 children, the school had classes from Pre-Primary to Std. V. An additional batch of classes was added to maintain an optimum student teacher ratio.

As the standards of learning improved, the children began to think, question and seek out new learning. They organized their first Annual Exhibition of Students' Work and proudly showed

visitors all that they were doing in class. The children blossomed in an environment of love and support. They were encouraged to believe that they have tremendous potential and the capacity to do remarkable things. Inspired by this faith, the children participated in 'Design for Change', a global movement, which provides an opportunity for young people to express and implement their ideas for a better world. After much introspection and debate, the students chose the theme, 'Parental role in creating and maintaining a positive home environment'.

Their parents too joined in the school activities with enthusiasm. In keeping with the Right to Education Act, they formed a School Management Committee. This Committee is now a strong body that educates parents about children's rights, networks with local authorities and promotes the cause of education. A survey conducted by another NGO noted that this school was perhaps the only one in its ward to successfully implement the regulations of the Right to Education Act. As part of Project Umeed — a collaboration of NGOs working in the area — the children could avail of health and other facilities in the school. They also enjoyed their field trips to INS Vikrant — an aircraft carrier of the Indian Navy — and their 'Fantasy Flight' over Mumbai on Children's Day.



Support Centre

The Support Centre continued to offer after school activities to the children. It reached out to 49 children through a programme focusing on Language, Mathematics, General Knowledge, Value Education and Creative Thinking. A student teacher ratio of 12:1 ensured that each child received adequate time and attention.

The Support Centre also acted as a link between our ex students and teachers. Several of our students were helped to pursue higher education in reputed colleges such as Jai Hind College, Sophia College, Mithibai College and others. One of them was awarded a full scholarship to study filmmaking at Whistling Woods International — a well known film institute in Mumbai.

The children acquired additional skills through creative workshops planned during the year. A residential art workshop on self portraits was organized in Igatpuri. In Mumbai, a workshop on the style of French artist Matisse was accompanied by a demonstration of musicians playing the harp, guitar and tabla. Another noteworthy project was a collaboration of our young artists with author Zena Sorabjee. As the children worked on illustrations for her book on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they learnt more about their own rights and responsibilities.



Education Centre for Tribal Children

Our Education Centre for Tribal Children is nestled in the hills of Igatpuri, a town in Maharashtra. In the village of Jambhwadi, the Sitabai Kavji Mengal Anganwadi set up by Aseema offered Pre-Primary education to 27 children. In the remote village of Awalkheda, our newly constructed Education Centre held Pre-Primary and Primary classes for 77 children.

The children learnt through the Montessori approach and mastered complex concepts through simple activities. Art, yoga, music and dance were incorporated into the curriculum as well. Special training was organized for teachers and children to introduce English through audio-visual aids. Five of our children also appeared for the National Institute of Open Schooling Level A Mathematics Examination and passed with excellent grades. This examination is equivalent to Standard III of other schools.

Through community engagement initiatives, we learnt of the struggles and concerns of the people in these villages. The region suffers from acute water shortage in spite of heavy rainfall as there is no provision for water harvesting. As a result, the villagers, who depend largely on agriculture, have minimal livelihood and are deprived of their most basic rights. The local municipal body has now proposed to set up a solid waste management facility or garbage dump in this remote village. The proposed site is in close proximity to village wells and violates the regulations of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board. The villagers have been protesting against this fervently and Aseema is supporting them in their demand for their rights.

As we continue to work with the children in our two centres, we understand the importance of a good education. Our hope is that these young children will grow up to be agents of change for their villages and lead the way to a more empowered community.

Community Work Centre

Our Community Work Cell supported the children by creating strong links between their homes and the schools. Regular home visits and continuous dialogue helped them convey the importance of regular attendance to their parents. This resulted in an average attendance of 78 % across centres in Mumbai and 62% across centres in Igatpuri. Prompt follow up was done for any child who had been absent from school and health concerns of the children were attended to in a timely manner. In addition, detailed case studies were prepared on every child to help our teachers understand their students better.

A school bus service was organized to encourage children to reach school on time. This service was of great help to families with young children. 237 children used the school bus and took great pride in riding in it every day.

Through the Umeed project, our team reached out to staff of ICDS Anganwadis in Bandra East and conducted capacity building workshops. They also organized sessions for parents on topics such as the Right to Education Act, Low Cost Nutrition, etc. A workshop on stress management was conducted for students appearing for the S.S.C Board Examination and was much appreciated. In Igatpuri, our Social Workers aided parents in procuring birth registrations for their children. These community work initiatives helped Aseema forge a stronger bond with the children's families and increased parental participation.

Counselling Centre

Additional Counsellors were appointed to work with our children this year. An environment of confidentiality and trust was created and the children were helped to understand and cope with their emotions. Children with learning difficulties were also identified and efforts were made to address their specific needs. In addition, group sessions on Relationship Education, Anger Management and other relevant topics were conducted.

Our teachers too benefited from their interactions with a senior Psychotherapist. Through weekly discussions, they were helped to cultivate a more sensitive and perceptive approach to their students.

Training Centre

A new initiative this year was the setting up of our Training Centre. This Centre was created as a response to requests made by other organizations working with children of similar backgrounds. Aseema was invited to conduct assessments of their projects and make recommendations for training and support. This year, our trainers worked with staff of four different projects — two in Kanpur and two in Mumbai. Each of the organizations was helped to critically assess their projects, evaluate existing capacities and recognize gaps. Their teachers were then trained in our approach and were helped to make their classes more meaningful for the children.

Through this initiative, we have been able to reach out to children in many more communities.

Product Division

Our Product Division had an extremely successful year and earned their highest revenue so far from the sale of products inspired by our children's art. The beautiful paintings created by the children of Aseema Room 13 — our art studio — were



exhibited and sold at the Cymroza Art Gallery in October 2011. This Exhibition was attended by artists, art connoisseurs and supporters of Aseema. The beautiful images from these paintings were also featured on a summer collection of clothes by designer Anita Dongre. These colourful clothes are now available at 'Global Desi' outlets across the country.

Several new products were introduced such as laptop bags, boxes, table top accessories, etc. The Aseema products can now be ordered on our website. Each sale takes us one step further towards our goal of quality education for all children.

Staff Development

Each year, we have new people joining our team at Aseema. They come to us with fresh ideas and great energy. As they add value to our work, they also learn our organization's values and approach. Ongoing training programmes are therefore conducted to orient them to Aseema.

This year, the focus of our training was on Activity Based Learning. Through intensive in house training, our Lower Primary teachers were empowered with new skills and knowledge. We also had several workshops conducted by visiting trainers and experts in the field of education. Topics such as Understanding Adolescent Psychology, Non Violent Communication and Classroom Management were well received. Our Sports team spent a week learning under the excellent tutelage of Sports instructors at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education in Pondicherry.

We were fortunate, once again, to have some dynamic, committed and spirited volunteers join our team. They shared their time and skills with generosity and grace and made a real difference to our children's lives. Aseema would not be the organization it is today without the wholehearted contribution of these volunteers and staff members. A big thank-you to all who are with us, as well as to those who we lost this year — Thrity Dolykuka, Asma Bhatri, Bella Albuquerque, Sitabai Mengal and Biharilal Chandak. They will always be a part of our fondest memories and will hold a special place in the Aseema story.

Future Plans

In the year ahead, we look forward to setting up of additional classes at our Secondary Section in Santacruz and at the Kherwadi Municipal School. We will also be developing a well equipped Library for children of all mediums of instruction at the Kherwadi Municipal School. We hope to nurture a love for books and a passion for reading among all our young children.

Our Activity Based Learning approach will be extended to Standard VII and a well equipped Resource Room will enable the children to work with interesting educational material.

Our community work initiatives will expand to meet the changing needs of the families we interact with. By empowering the families — particularly the women — we hope to create a more positive environment for our children.

As our Training Centre is strengthened in the year ahead, we will be able to offer more support to other organizations working in the field of education. We are confident that through this training, more teachers will begin to see the limitless potential of each child. More children will discover that school can be a magical and joyful place. We will then have taken yet another step towards creating a world worthy of our children.

A summary of the funds received and expenses incurred in the year 2011-12* is shown in this spread.

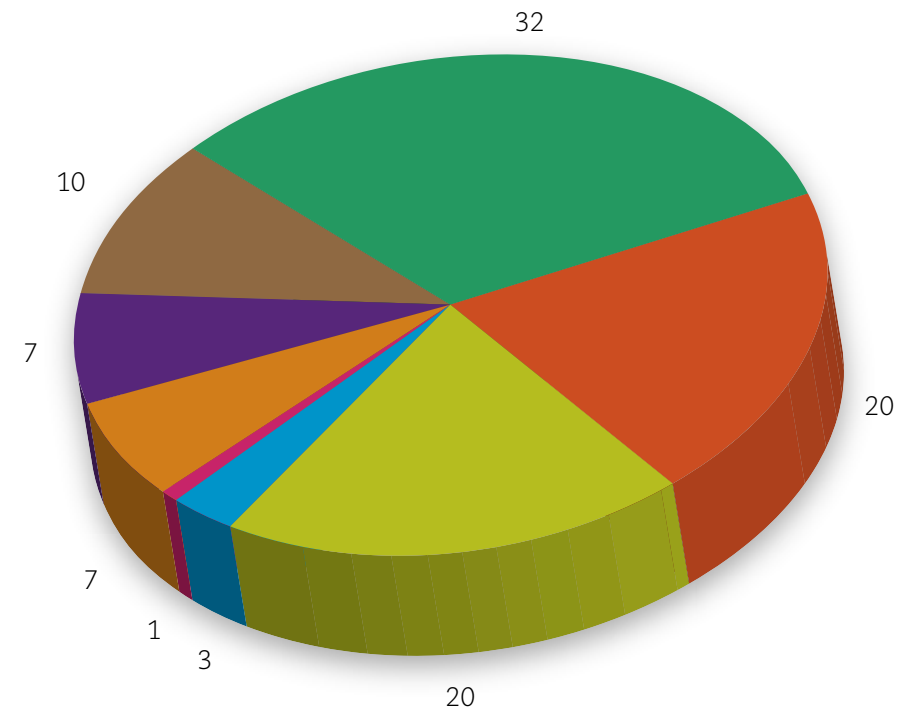
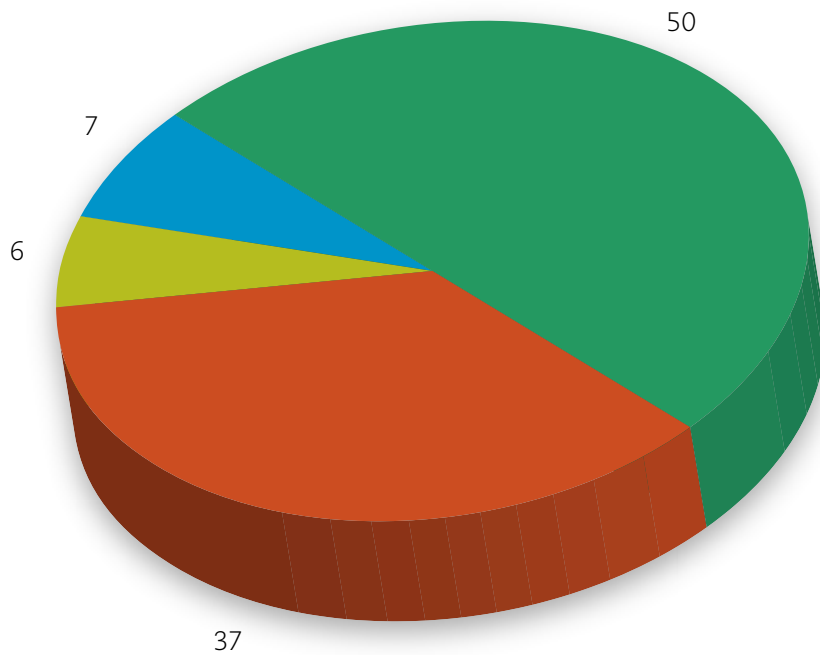
* In 2011-2012, we received foreign contribution of Rs. 1,69,09,368 and utilized Rs. 77,89,546.

2011-12 Donations (in %)

- Donation Domestic
- Donation Foreign
- Income from Investment
- Income from Product Division

2011-12 Fund Utilization (in %)

- Pali Chimbai Municipal School
- Santacruz (W) Municipal School
- Kherwadi Municipal School
- Aseema Support Centre
- Sitabai Kavji Mengal Anganwadi
- Aseema Balshaikshanik Kendra
- Common Facilities
- Administration Expenses



Our sincere gratitude to
our generous donors for
their contribution to our
work.

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NUR
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To donate online, please visit our website www.aseema.org
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