

Model for Factory / Community Crèches and Training for Personnel

Manufacturers Meet

Date & Time: July 3, 2015, 10:30 am to 1:00 pm

Venue: United Theological College, Millers Road, Bangalore

Organizers: Cividep India

INTRODUCTION

Cividep India held a manufacturers' meet on 3rd July 2015 to discuss developing a model of childcare which is compliant with legal requirements and easy to establish and manage, while meeting the childcare needs of the workers adequately. The meeting also considered the Stakeholder Working Group on childcare in the garment industry, and its relevance to manufacturers' needs in terms of information and guidance on setting up and managing crèches. Planning orientation programs for garment factory personnel responsible for the management and functioning of crèches was also on the agenda.

Ten participants from garment manufacturing companies in Bangalore, including medical officers, welfare officers and Human Resources (HR) and compliance personnel attended the meeting. Those present were Mr Kantha and Ms Veera Reshma D'Souza from India Designs, Mr Rangarajan from Texport Overseas, Mr Jagadisha and Ms Abhaya Kavya from Aditya Birla, Ms Shahataj Unnisa and a teacher, Ms Renuka, from Sunrise Fashions (Bhartiya International), Dr Latha from Laguna Clothing, Ms Afia Hasmi from Gokaldas Images and Ms Alphonsa John from Suvastra India.

Parvathi Madappa of Cividep gave a short introduction to the project, and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to exchange ideas about improving childcare facilities and revive the working group on childcare. She spoke on the importance of early childhood care for the welfare of children and legislation that addressed factory crèches.

PRESENTATION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDCARE

The purpose of the project is to set up functional, high-quality model crèches at the four factories surveyed, which will serve as a sustainable childcare model for other factories. Parvathi presented some of the research findings and recounted stories to illustrate her points.

Those present were asked to share their thoughts. One participant stated that the company was interested in upgrading existing childcare facilities, but structural problems were coming in the way of quality. They expressed interest in what a model crèche looked like, especially the play area, which is absent in most factories. The focus on production means that the childcare facility is among the company's last priorities.

Nevertheless, it is true that childcare facilities at factories have improved vastly over the last decade. Laws regarding compliance have played a major role in this

transformation. However, the mental development of the child is neglected. There needs to be a change in teachers' attitudes, and this can be achieved through training and awareness-building.

There is a lack of trained teachers for the crèches. It would be ideal to be able to employ teachers who had received balasevika training on how to organize and run crèches. The Factories Act stipulates that a nurse with hospital experience be employed, but no qualified nurse is willing to take up this duty at a factory. The idea of forming a group to employ trained balasevika teachers on the basis of vacancies came up.

HR personnel need to interact more often with teachers. There is a need to monitor crèches continuously. An orientation for factory management and HR personnel would be a step forward.

Another point that came up was the lack of space in Bengaluru factories, which makes it difficult to provide playing areas. Factories in the city need better planning and construction. Safety and hygiene is also a concern, and one welfare officer was of the opinion that mothers need to be given information on the topic. For example, workers often bring their children to the crèche when they are running a slight temperature, which puts other children at risk of infection. Cloth diapers, which crèche staff are unwilling to clean, are stored in bags for mothers to take home. This poses a health risk.

Many were of the opinion that distance is an obstacle, since workers are not willing to travel far with their children even if the factory provides transportation. Where there are joint families and in-laws, workers prefer to keep their children at home. Mothers are sometime unwilling to bring sick children for a medical check-up because they wish to avoid losing a day's pay, or because the production pressure is too high.

Different arrangements for children of different age groups need to be made. Infants require care that is very different from what a 5 year old requires. With regard to maternity leave, the ESI Act would allow mothers to extend their leave, as women often ask for an extension after the legally stipulated paid leave of three months.

Cost is another factor. One factory had been told that the monthly cost of running a crèche would be between Rs 9000 and Rs 12000 per child. A financially sustainable crèche model is desirable. One of those present had calculated the cost of running a crèche, which was much lower than this figure.

There is a lack of infrastructure and capacity to take in children who are of school-going age and who need to spend half a day in the factory crèche.

PRESENTATION ON A MODEL CRECHE FROM NASERBALI GLOVES

Parvathi Madappa gave a presentation on the features of a model crèche, which had been successfully set up at the factory of Naserbali Gloves, a member of the previous working group. The company took part in a consultation on childcare in 2012.

Participants said that they maintain records of children's names, their parents' names, ID numbers and contact numbers, so that they can be tracked easily in case of an emergency. They agreed that it was a good idea to add a vaccination card to the file, since mothers often fail to update the file on the vaccines that have been administered to their children. A crèche or HR staff member can monitor the card and encourage mothers to take their children for routine vaccinations. Public announcements in the factory on the day of an immunization or vaccination drive, such as for pulse polio, would be useful.

WORKING GROUP ON CHILDCARE

Factories are required to comply with the law when it comes to specifications for a factory crèche, but often find it difficult to do so. The previous working group cut down the requirements to create a checklist that would ensure compliance as well as quality. Many factories have experience of running good crèches. It is important to follow their example and learn from their experiences. This would help develop best practices, as well as crèches that met international standards.

It is important to a.) Comply with law, and b.) Follow best practices. The Central government's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy is an example of the best in childcare standards, which State governments need to follow.

Naserbali Gloves, which succeeded in establishing a high-quality functional crèche in two years, is a case in point. It proved that maintaining a functional crèche is not expensive. A sum of Rs 25,000 per month is sufficient for the purpose.

One of the reasons the IT industry grew exponentially was because the first public sector companies had provided social security and welfare, which allowed the children of workers to reach higher levels of educational achievement than their parents. Education and care were thus crucial. Besides companies' own interventions, cooperation between industry, government institutions and civil society (NGOs) was necessary. This would also improve companies' image.

Gopinath Parakuni emphasized the fact that one solution would not fit all, since some factories were located in rural areas, while others were in the city. A working group would be able to make it a priority to discuss what action could be taken.

Some of those present requested to be put in touch with trainers and experts, so that they could organize trainings directly at their factories or in garment industry pockets like Peenya. These experts would train their management and staff, and monitor the crèches periodically to ensure that improvement was continuous.

A new Working Group will meet at periodic intervals to discuss how to take this initiative forward. Individual consultations with interested factories can also be held. The first meeting will discuss the checklist, which will be circulated. One company already has experience of implementing these internally.

Cividep will be contacting other NGOs experienced in childcare, with the aim of working closely with them for trainings of factory management and staff.

The working group will also discuss using public-private cooperation. The labour department and the Karnataka State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights are the relevant authorities in the matter. Once a proposal has been submitted, it may take time for the government to change its directives. Once this has been achieved, the new policy can be adopted by factory managements.

Workers must have the choice of deciding whether they want to keep their children in their local area. Smaller factories must be able to contribute to community crèches if they cannot have one in the factory. The group can work towards this with the government.

One participant stated that a quicker solution was necessary, since public-private cooperation was a long process. CSR spending is increasing. With regard to sustainability, it is important to aim this action at workers and their social welfare. It had been found that in the United States, companies which spend on their workers are fined the least.

ORIENTATION FOR MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING FOR CRÈCHE STAFF

An orientation for the management of factories has been scheduled for August 13, 2015. This will be held for those directly in charge of the supervision of factory crèches, such as HR personnel and welfare officers. Experts from NGOs will conduct the orientation and training. Training for ayahs, caretakers and other staff managing factory crèches will be held at a later date.

In keeping with suggestions from participants, Cividep will consider the option of holding the trainings in or near factories, in areas like Peenya. Invitations will be sent out at the earliest, once the details have been worked out.

COMMITMENTS TO THE WORKING GROUP

1. Kalpana from Madura Coats (Aditya Birla Group)
2. Afia or Harish from Gokaldas Images
3. Rangarajan or a company doctor from Texport Overseas
4. Dr Latha (will check with Laguna before confirming participation)
5. Shahataj Unnisa from Bharatiya Internet (Sunrise fashions) have mailed confirming participation.

MANUFACTURERS MEET – PARTICIPANTS CONTACT LIST

Name & Organisation	Email ID	Affiliates/Suppliers
Jagadisha D S & Abhaya Kavya Aditya Birla (Unit of Madura Coats)	jagadisha.ds@adityabirla.com abhaya.kavya@madura.adityabirla.com	Louis Phillippe, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, etc.,
Shahataj Unnisa & Renuka Bharatiya Internet Pvt Ltd (Sunrise Fashions)	welfare.sf2@bharatiya.com	Suppliers of leather goods, Affilates of Fair wear foundation
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