

MV Foundation

An Evaluation of the programme 'Elimination of Child Labour through the Universalisation of Elementary Education'

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Evaluation Report

Section I: Background and Motivation

This team was commissioned by HIVOS to undertake a review of MVF's programmes, with a special focus on the period after 2000. Previous evaluations were conducted in 1997 and 2000. Since then MVF has expanded its work considerably, and faces different alternative possibilities for its future strategies. This provides the context for the current evaluation.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference require the team to

- a. reflect critically along with MVF on what has been achieved so far and provide MVF with constructive suggestions that it can use in preparing its plans for the next phase of its work
- b. advise Hivos and the MVF-EU donor consortium regarding the strengths and weaknesses of MVF and its programmes, and the implications of these

In particular, attention is to be given to

- i. the adequacy and appropriateness of MVF's organizational principles in this phase of expansion
- ii. the mobilization of community and panchayati raj bodies to further the cause of child rights
- iii. capacity building of MVF staff and volunteers
- iv. the impact of MVF's research and advocacy efforts.

Accordingly, the review is expected to scrutinize

- the consistency between the aims and objectives of MVF, the formulated strategy, and the means employed to reach the aims and objectives
- the extent to which the implementation of MVF's activities has contributed to the achievement of its aims and objectives
- the extent to which the aims, objectives, strategies and activities of MVF comply with development principles on empowerment, gender sensibility and sustainability

Methodology

This review has been based on a 10 day field visit, which included visits to bridge course camps, social welfare hostels, several meetings with community organizations promoted by the MVF at the village, mandal and state levels, interactions with members of the community in several villages, interactions with teachers and students. While most of these interactions were conducted in groups, individual interviews with children, teachers, MVF volunteers, were also conducted.

The field visits included discussions with government officials, representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), political leaders, other NGOs, representatives of the

ILO and other donors in Hyderabad. Intensive discussions were conducted with MVF staff and board members in Hyderabad.

In addition to the observations and data collected through these field visits, MVF provided the team with past annual reports, and other documentation on its work. The team consulted relevant literature relating to the child rights movement.

Structure of the report

This report is presented in four main sections, broadly following the terms of reference. Section I gives the Background and the terms of reference of the present review. Section II provides an overview of the MVF as a movement assessing its aims and objectives and the strategies evolved to achieve them. Section III discusses in somewhat greater detail some of the core issues that emerge out of the basic principles and strategy of the MVF, such as the creation and empowerment of community organizations, principles of expansion, role of external factors, interaction with government, school governance issues, impact assessment and unplanned benefits of the MVF. Section IV consists of the broad recommendations of the reviewers.

Section II An Overview of the MVF

The overview traces the emergence of the MVF as a movement. It briefly assesses the aims and objectives of the MVF and the strategies evolved to achieve them. It also comments on the organizational principles of the MVF, the nature of research and advocacy done by the organization and the manner in which its activities are spreading and deepening.

Emergence as a Movement

To review the work of the MVF is to study one of the most vibrant social mobilizations of recent times in India. During its anti-colonial struggle, India had evolved a glorious tradition of bringing millions of its oppressed people into political action to try and end the life of indignity and misery for its people. In the process got unleashed perhaps the largest mass movement in world history. However, the post independence years saw the gradual dissolution of this unprecedented arousal of people's initiative and the country witnessed, barring a few localized exceptions, a relatively barren landscape in the area of social mobilization for the poor, deprived and the underprivileged. The MVF movement has revived hopes that the days of societal movement for the oppressed are not over. Its efforts at societal mobilization for the most vulnerable section of society, children committed to labour, is reminiscent of the mobilization of the national movement days. In fact the MVF after experimenting with various forms of mobilization has increasingly and very self-consciously tried to learn from the experience of the national movement and adopted strategies and forms of mobilization evolved by the movement which proved very successful particularly under Gandhiji's guidance and leadership.

The M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MVF) established as a trust in 1981, began to focus on the issue of abolition of child labour since 1991. From humble beginnings in a few villages of Shankarpally *mandal* in Ranga Reddy district of Andhra Pradesh the MVF activities have expanded exponentially. An NGO with a handful of activists working among a few hundred children has over the last decade or so, particularly over the last few years, transformed into a movement spread over the MVF project area covering 6000 villages in 137 *mandals* in 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh. It is a movement, which has successfully withdrawn over 250,000 thousand children from labour and sent them to full time schools. Nearly 4,000 activists are now directly linked to the MVF. The numbers mobilized by the MVF in actively working for the goal of liberation of child labour are of course far larger. Large numbers from existing grass roots level peoples' organizations like various PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions), SECs (School Education Committees), village level youth organizations and CBOs (Community Based Organizations) promoted by the MVF like the BKVV (Bala Karmika Vimochana Vedika)¹ and the CRPFs (Child Rights Protection Forums) at the village, mandal, district and state levels have been galvanized into action on the issue of child labour. Thus apart from the nearly 4000 MVF activists there are, in the MVF project area,

¹ An association of teachers committed to the abolition of child labour.

about 2500 BKVV teacher volunteers, 30,000 local youth volunteers and about 75,000 CRPF members (drawn from the various youth organizations, SECs, women's groups, nearly 2000 PRIs with which the MVF networks and from among the concerned citizens) have all emerged as cadres of the movement.

The impact of the movement launched by the MVF is much wider than the above figures suggest. The MVF by demonstrating remarkable success in its project area as well as through sustained advocacy has been able to project the MVF model for the abolition of child labour at the national and even international level. Major NGOs with huge international networks like the CRS (Catholic Relief Services), Stop Child Labour – School is the Best Place to Work Campaign (in Europe), CACL (Campaign Against Child Labour),² international organizations like the ILO (International Labour Organization), UNDP, UNICEF, etc., funding organizations at national and international level (including the World Bank) and governments at the state level and at the centre have been impressed and influenced by the MVF philosophy and model for fighting the scourge of child labour. MVF's work with India Committee of the Netherlands against child labour in cotton seed production (discussed later in this report) is another example.

It has led to attempts by Governments and by NGOs to replicate the MVF model in other areas. This has meant that the MVF experiment was no longer confined to the project area of an NGO, which by definition tends to be limited, but acquired the potential of becoming a major vehicle for widespread social transformation. The MVF has helped with 'technical' support³ when invited by Government or NGOs in Andhra Pradesh as well as outside Andhra Pradesh like in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tamilnadu and Assam. The MVF has also given technical support to initiatives against child labour in other countries such as Nepal. Thus the MVF role has changed from being purely an implementing agency to part implementer and part technical advisor.

One index of an initiative becoming a movement is the readiness with which people adopt it as their own. In many areas now concerned people invite MVF to come and start work there and when the MVF is unable to reach those parts they start similar work on their own sometimes even using the MVF name. The MVF too, as one would expect of a movement, takes pride in its ideas and practices being taken over by others instead of being possessive about them. The MVF as an organization does not compete for influence over people. It is satisfied with the ideas it believes in, reaching the people whoever may be the carrier of these ideas. Competition for turf is common between NGOs, political parties and other public action groups, quite often to the detriment of the cause itself.

² It is a networking organization, with over a 1000 NGOs concerned with child labour in the network.

³ Typically technical support would involve just a handful of MVF activists, sometimes even one or two, helping the movement take shape in areas where they are invited.

Basic Principles and Strategies of Social Mobilization

The major impact of the Indian national movement on the MVF is seen in the manner in which the MVF has defined its basic principles and strategy for attaining its objectives. Somewhat in line with the Gandhian idea of *antodaya* (emancipation of the last person at the margin) the MVF has set as its objective the protection of the rights of the weakest or the most vulnerable part of society, that is children committed to labour. The child right the MVF focuses on is their right to be in mainstream fulltime formal education, thus bringing within their reach what they needed the most,⁴ preventing them from having to lead a life of ‘humiliation, indignity and marginalisation’.⁵ In attempting to reach the last person the MVF was to use a strategy, which would involve the participation of the entire community, leading to the emancipation of working children as well as the community’s own emancipation— glimpses again of the Gandhian notion of *sarvodaya*.

Basic to the MVF strategy of creating conditions for all children going to school is the involvement of the entire community irrespective of class, caste, occupation, religion, political party affiliation or any other distinction. The employers of child labour, the school teachers who worked a system which pushed out poor children, the village elite which would often taunt at the poorest trying to send their children to school were to join hands with youth activists, children and parents to get working children back into school. Such a strategy of building a consensus in society, of inclusion rather than confrontation was critical since the most important condition for meeting the objective of all children going to school was found to be the creating of a societal norm in its favour. There is in fact a dialectical relationship between the objective defined by the MVF and the strategy chosen to achieve that objective; each complements and strengthens the other. The MVF objective of working for poor, defenseless children is one, which is relatively easily given to societal mobilization. Who would oppose it? As MVF activists often say while campaigning, even an animal nurtures and takes care of its children. On the other hand the cause for children can be best served if there is a societal consensus for it.

The MVF’s very early shift away from targeting only *dalit* children, or only bonded labour to all working children helped the mobilization of the whole community around the cause. It has been a sustained position of the MVF that it would not take up any cause for any particular section or group but work for all. Given the widespread sectarian (community or caste based) funding and mobilization that is prevalent in India the MVF has had to take special steps to distinguish themselves from such initiatives— a move which has been rewarding in terms of a wide social support for its cause and even the lowering of social polarization in the areas of its influence.

Mobilization of the community meant not only mobilizing all sections within the village, but in society as whole, whether it be business chambers, children going to elite

⁴ Studies have confirmed that the poor view education as the most important route to their emancipation.

⁵ This is the commonest description of what happens to those denied schooling, a description, significantly, made by parents of child labour who were themselves illiterate.

educational institutions, teachers, journalists, politicians or senior bureaucrats. This helped to bring about a societal focus on the poor and the under privileged without isolating the poor. The face of the privileged was now turned towards the poor as an ally who had to contribute to solutions, rather than as an enemy who had to contain violent, confrontationalist and sectarian demands.

In fact a striking feature of the MVF activity is that it is able to intervene in areas of Andhra Pradesh, which were acutely divided on caste and class basis. They function in areas where the PWG declares class war and scores of Dalit associations attempt to develop an exclusive Dalit consciousness and agenda for action. Through a consensual all-inclusive approach they are able to mobilize the Dalit *and* the upper caste, the landless labour along with the local landlord. In fact it is the firm conviction of the MVF grass roots level worker that almost any issue for social change (not only the child rights issue) can be better fought for in the village by taking along the whole community rather working with any exclusive group or groups. This is a major challenge to the widespread practitioners of exclusive politics and even to government programmes targeting exclusive groups. MVF actually believes that exclusive politics or any other exclusive form of intervention actually harms the interest of the exclusive group sought to be addressed by isolating them and often creating a negative backlash against them. The MVF strategy is to reach the poor and deprived with the consent and cooperation of the more privileged. It does so by devising a programme that keeps out no one but benefits largely the underprivileged.

It is significant that the chief form of mobilization used by the MVF is complementary to their strategy of mobilization. While there are the occasional street plays, mammoth public gatherings where dignitaries give inspiring speeches, *padyatras*, now even some video-presentations it is the relentless small village and mandal level meetings which form the backbone of the MVF mass mobilization. The MVF, for example, conducted a total of 8,628 meetings⁶ in one year (2003-4) in just the 10 mandals of Nalgonda district, which came under its project area after 2000. This would mean about 25 meetings a day and 2 to 3 meetings every day in each mandal.⁷ This is the stuff of which open mass movements are made, movements which, while achieving their objectives, succeed in changing the mindset of people. (This is quite distinct from secret, guerilla type of movements, which even if they succeed in capturing power, the people and their mindsets remain largely unaffected.).

In the MVF strategy, mobilization of the community meant not only getting community support for the achievement of the goals desired but the active participation of the community through community based people's organizations or forums, like the CRPF or the PRIs in working towards these goals. The MVF measures its success in terms of its ability to act as a catalyst in the processes of building such community forums, which take up the question of child rights in a democratic and transparent

⁶ 2091 School Education Committee and Gram Panchayat meetings, 1276 Youth meetings, 1398 Child rights Protection Committee (later called Forum) meetings, 944 BKVV meetings and 2919 parents and public meetings, all adding upto 8,268 meetings.

⁷ This is remarkable considering the very small number of 521 MVF activists in Nalgonda.

manner. The MVF targets are not set simply on the basis of number of children brought back to school. Its targets are the extent of change in mindset or mood of the entire community on the question of the exploitation involved in having working children and the extent to which the community based forums become active and self-sustaining in the long run.

Just as the MVF is quite clear that it would not substitute the state by setting up institutions parallel to the state or taking on activity which is the state's responsibility but would only try to create conditions and pressures which makes the state take on its responsibility, similarly it is equally clear that it is not to substitute the community. The MVF would withdraw after having acted as a catalyst for bringing about change in community perception and promoting sustainable community involvement leading to the community owning up the programme initiated by the MVF. To carry the imagery of the catalyst further, the MVF after having produced the 'reaction' of an empowered community would dissolve into the new 'solution.'

It is indeed a matter of some satisfaction that Hivos, one of the most important funding agencies for MVF, is particularly interested in "empowerment of the target group through organization-building and awareness-raising" and thus ensuring 'sustainability', aspects which we saw above are central to MVF's objectives and strategy.

Another non-negotiable in the MVF method of functioning is the absolute adherence to yet another Gandhian notion, non-violence. In fact the MVF strategy of consensus building between all sections of society was possible only if it was carried out through debate, discussion, persuasion and to use a Gandhian phrase, change of heart. Violence had not only no place in this process but would actually hinder it.

MVF has successfully linked its grassroots social mobilization to improved access to education by increasing parental and community demand for it. This has further motivated the State to meet this demand. This model, of linking the abolition of child labour to universalisation of education, has become known as a 'best practice' across the world.

Organizational Principles and Capacity Building

A few general points about the MVF organization and its method of functioning, which are critical to its emerging as a successful movement, may be outlined here. The MVF has consistently evolved its strategies and tactics by keeping its ear close to the ground. It does not come with preconceived notions, which it unleashes on unsuspecting people, but in fact tries to learn from and build people's initiative at the grassroots. So often activists would tell us that when they began to despair regarding what appeared to be an insurmountable problem the solution would be provided by the villagers and sometimes the children themselves. This can happen if one respects children and respects the people, an understanding the MVF activists repeatedly emphasize.

This sensitivity to the grassroots, the MVF is able to maintain by consciously adopting a decentralized way of functioning. Conflicts, disputes arising at the local level are sought to be resolved at that level by finding solutions and building consensus locally. The 'last' MVF staff meaning the staff at the deepest layer of society, either at the village, mandal, district or state level depending on which region one is dealing with has full autonomy⁸ in decision making, in planning, implementation, monitoring and even expansion of the programme. The decision is only reported to the next level right up to the centre; it is not taken up by the centre. The experiences of each worker is periodically presented and discussed in institutionalized, regular review meetings thus making available the experiences and innovations of each unit to the movement as a whole. Even financial decisions emerge from the bottom depending on what are the felt needs at that level. Activities are not fund driven on the basis of resources available at the centre but are demand driven at the grassroots with the centre trying to raise the necessary resources (beyond what is not raised locally) to the best of its ability.

This decentralization and autonomy to the grass roots level worker is critical to the capacity building of the MVF staff. It enables them to act independently on their own initiative, to behave like activists/cadres/volunteers of a movement rather than as employees of an NGO. This characteristic of the MVF worker as an activist rather than a salaried worker is one of the most noticeable features to any observer. It is this characteristic which has earned the MVF worker respect among the people greatly facilitating their acceptance and the spread of the movement. We were repeatedly told that the MVF teacher-volunteer/para-teacher,⁹ working at a fraction of the salary of the regular government teacher, often acted as a role model to the government teacher and even the headmaster in terms of his commitment and success with the students.

A telling example of the MVF staff behaving like cadres of a movement rather than employees occurred recently when the sudden withdrawal of funds by a funding agency led to a severe resource crunch threatening the closure of MVF activities in Nalgonda district where it had moved in only a short period earlier. The Nalgonda staff volunteered a 40 per cent wage cut pleading that the work started there should not be stopped. The staff of Ranga Reddy district, much larger in number than being the original starting point of the MVF, volunteered a 10 per cent wage cut to fund the drastically reduced wages of the Nalgonda staff, as Nalgonda now had no funding. Thus for an entire year (till Hivos came to the rescue) virtually the whole staff of the MVF drew lower salaries but would not allow the movement to suffer!

Apart from the capacity building of the MVF staff (appropriately called volunteers) which occurs through the shouldering of responsibility as a result of autonomous functioning at all levels the MVF cadre are also provided training in periodic

⁸ Subject to adherence to the MVF non-negotiables: all children must attend full-time formal day schools, any child out of school is child labour, all work / labour is hazardous and harms the overall growth of the child, there must be total abolition of child labour, any justification perpetuating the existence of child labour must be condemned.

⁹They are engaged in schools with a shortage of teachers, on the basis of contributions raised by the community and MVF support.

intensive training camps. Here the basic principles of the MVF are discussed and their *raison-de-etre* is explained. An effort is made to build the capacities of the staff to take on multiple roles outside child labour related activity. General issues concerning the people ranging from history, politics, economics, international relations, environment, gender to plural culture are discussed and debated. Language skills (such as in English), which expand the learning horizons of the staff and increase their ability to intervene in and influence larger areas, are provided.

An aspect of the capacity building of the MVF staff is the manner in which village level staff trained to function independently has gradually learnt to shoulder larger and larger responsibility. In the new districts and states that the MVF has moved into the entire operations is managed by staff which has worked its way up from being a village volunteer.

The impression that leaves the deepest mark after being exposed to the MVF movement is how it transforms ordinary people into agents of change or transformation, revolutionaries. An overwhelming majority of the MVF activists, including the core group of its leaders, some of them handling entire district and even states, have never been to college (BA). Many of them were former child labourers. Most of them come from socially or economically deprived sections of society. Very few of them are from the 'upper' castes. This has every potential of growing into a national movement. It needs to draw in cadres with caliber and qualifications. What is remarkable is its ability to make heroes out of ordinary men and women, which is after all what any movement would see as its ultimate achievement.

Research and Advocacy

The research and advocacy done by the MVF constitutes an important part of the movement itself. It is remarkable how just the process of generating ground level data through house-to-house surveys is in itself a major part of the movement. (The parallel with Gandhiji's first major movement in India, which electrified the country, is irresistible. It started with his going with a team of volunteers to Champaran to do a house to house survey to study the peasants grievances against the indigo planters and the British government.) It brings the MVF cadre close to the ground reality, familiarizes them with the people with whom they are to work, even earns their respect and most important generates the information, which to a considerable extent lays out the course of corrective action that needs to be taken. Every 15 days each child's status is physically checked taking the help of CRPF members! Since several events can push children out of school (a phraseology MVF prefers to 'dropping out') the critical activity of maintaining a data base for all children in each habitation, children in school and those out of school is taken very seriously. The activists are acutely aware, as they put it, of "the power" the information generates. It is significant that the survey sheets are also devised at the grass root level on the basis of the need of the grass roots worker. This partly explains the success of the surveys. Survey sheets sent out from the central office often used to be returned unfilled.

It is this information that the MVF cadres collect which enables them to do effective advocacy with the gram panchayats, village, mandal or state level CRPF, BKVVs, the mandal and district officials, the MLAs and even national or international institutions. The government has on several occasions has had to accept the MVF generated information as correct even when it was substantially different from that generated by the Government itself. Governments have even been persuaded to initiate legislation on child rights on the basis of data provided and advocacy by the MVF. Sometime just the process of collecting of information acts as a corrective on deviant government servants, say when information is collected on how welfare hostels meant for poor children are being run, to what extent facilities provided by the state reach the target group and so on. Many community based organizations (CRPFs) which are quite self sufficient, owning up the movement to a considerable degree, however, repeatedly maintained that they still needed the support of the MVF for collecting the necessary information through surveys.

The MVF is involved in other kinds of research as well. Recently they generated a 1000 case studies of the first hand experiences, the difficulties faced, the solutions found, the breakthroughs made, etc., by each volunteer engaged in bringing working children back to school. The idea is to learn from this and arrive at generalizations, which would have wider applicability. It is an effort to do on a larger scale what is an existing feature of the MVF, regular review meetings at the mandal and state level to share experiences and draw lessons for the movement. A typical MVF meeting, apart from discussing the agenda and drawing out a list of decisions taken, would involve each member speaking up turn by turn and relating their views and experiences.

Research done by the MVF on the large-scale misuse of the girl child for hybrid cotton farming in Andhra Pradesh led to this issue being taken up vigorously with considerable success.

Spread and Deepening of Activities

All movements have a base, a 'headquarters'. The MVF does not believe in having any fixed property or assets. It goes against their desire not to be tied down, to be constantly on the move. Yet Ranga Reddy district, and particularly Shankarpally mandal in that district where the MVF work with child labour started, has emerged as a kind of base, like the Gandhian Ashram, a laboratory where, innovations are tried out, new experiments are made. People from all over Andhra and other states and even other countries come here in continuous batches for 'exposure'. They come and stay here for extended periods and see how the movement works and try to replicate it in their regions. The Shankarpally, Ranga Reddy 'ashram', like the Gandhian ashrams, also produces cadres, which fan out to other districts and states carrying the message, method and technique perfected here. Over time, as the MVF activities have expanded, other areas have started performing similar roles to that of Ranga Reddy district, experimenting with new challenges and providing support to neighbouring areas. For example, Adilabad district offered its support to Maharashtra, Chittoor to Tamil Nadu, Vizianagaram to

Orissa and so on. Each area of activity is emerging as a laboratory and model for the next thus starting off a continuously widening spiral.

A movement by definition is a process and not an event. It must keep growing, simultaneously widening and deepening in content. The MVF movement for liberating the most vulnerable section of society, child labour, is spreading rapidly, though not as rapidly as one would wish it to. It is also widening and deepening in content by addressing issues of quality and content of education, gender discrimination, health, environment, superstition, child marriage, etc. issues which deeply affect the lives of common people. Having released the energies of the community for taking up the cause of the most vulnerable amongst them the movement has now created possibilities for the community to take up other issues of injustice and oppression. The MVF movement for the emancipation of oppressed children has all the potential for serving as an entry point for a wider social movement towards a more just, humane and egalitarian society.

Section III Core Issues

This section discusses some of the core issues that emerge out of the basic principles and strategy of the MVF discussed above.

Creation and Empowerment of Community Organizations

The most important development that has occurred in the MVF in the last five years is the creation of community forums like the BKVV and the CRPF, their rapid expansion and their growing empowerment. The very idea of a child rights forum in every village is an extraordinarily bold one. It is heartwarming to meet who constitute these committees and what they make of it. In village after village we would meet illiterate men and women, landless *cooly*, toddy tapper, village barber, potter, mason¹⁰ or tailor on the one hand and the local landlord, school headmaster, contractor, sarpanch of the gram panchayat, mandal and district level PRI representatives, etc., on the other, all CRPF members sitting down on the floor and proudly flashing their laminated CRPF membership card which they got after paying a 25 rupee membership fee. The CRPF membership cut across class, caste, gender and political affiliation. In some areas the CRPF was able to form an all party political alliance on the issue of child rights called the '*aikya vedika*'. What is noteworthy is the participation of the poorest on an equal basis. The non-hierarchical character of the MVF movement is reflected in these bodies.

The CRPF members meet regularly, weekly or fortnightly (even every three or four days during campaign periods) and discuss the situation in the village regarding working children, problems with the functioning of the school and what steps need to be taken. Teams are formed to carry out the tasks decided and the action taken reviewed in the next meeting. The task ahead would vary from area to area and the level CRPF (i.e., the village, mandal or state) was meeting. In areas where child labour was already in school, such as in Mominpet mandal of Ranga Reddy district the emphasis had shifted to the question of health, particularly of expecting mothers and girl children. In other similar areas like in Chevella the discussion would be about quality of education, making government schools as good as private schools, making secondary school level education available, increasing facilities in school by raising money from the community as well as by getting the government to meet their demands, etc. In newer areas the CRPFs are still strategizing how to make the village free of working children including bonded labour. Often, as we saw in Mahboobnagar district the sarpanch and the headmaster would be mobilized to tour villages along with the CRPF members. We attended mandal level CRPFs discussing how pressure was to be brought on to the MEOs (mandal education officers), hostel authorities, welfare department officials etc. The State level CRPF we met was strategizing how to influence the MLAs in the state legislature.

The government has begun to recognize the importance of the CRPFs. The Collector of Ranga Reddy district told us that plans are in the final stages for

¹⁰ For example in Inole village in the PWG infested palla malla hills there is this dalit young man called Electionayya, (yes he was born during elections) who is illiterate, landless and works as a mason. He is a proud CRPF member.

institutionalizing regular meetings between the CRPF and the mandal and district level officials of concerned departments.

The CRPFs are increasingly beginning to influence how schools are run, what role the panchayat plays, role of the local government servant and even the police, how activists of different political parties conduct themselves and so on. For example, the Nalgonda district CRPF surveyed 245 hostels in one month sending ten teams of 5 to 6 members to accomplish this task. Complaints were registered against hostels, which were badly run.¹¹ Not unexpectedly the warden of a Social Welfare Scheduled Caste girl's hostel complained to the police against MVF activists accusing them of demanding bribes and got the district in charge of the MVF arrested. What followed is indicative of the importance and growing influence of community organizations like the CRPF. Immediately a large delegation of CRPF members representing different sections of the community got together and reached the police station exposed the real situation and got the MVF activists released nipping in the bud what could have turned into an ugly situation.

The CRPF represents the power of the community. We were told for example by CRPF activists campaigning against bonded labour in Tekupally village of Ranga Reddy District how they used the law against bonded labour and even got the Mandal Revenue Officer and the police to put pressure which they were willing to, given the fact that the Government was now pushing for support to the MVF objectives. However they maintained that the village moral pressure that had got generated through CRPF campaigning was more important than the law. Laws can and do get violated with impunity unless there is community sanction against it.

The BKVV another potent organization is coming to acquire increasing importance. We attended a district level BKVV meeting in Suryapet town, Nalgonda. 53 teachers from 11 Mandals had got together for the 2nd monthly meeting of the State BKVV. They had come from considerable distances for a day-long meeting not to discuss their salaries or service conditions but child rights! This in itself is a major breakthrough. Among the various things they decided on was to adopt villages with high incidence of bonded labour, BKVV teachers to give extra time to children in the evenings, no corporal punishment, vidya volunteers should be used only for mobilization and not teaching, a woman teachers workshop to be organized to discuss issues relating to girl children, education, health, marriage, etc. The 86th amendment was discussed and it was decided that children below 6 and between 14 to 18 also need to be included as part of child rights.

One of the teachers said that they were the intellectuals of the village and should be able to play a constructive role in all issues concerning the village. In doing so the teachers are actually restoring to themselves the position and dignity due to them as the most enlightened in the village, a position which has got severely eroded. Their taking up

¹¹ A common complaint was not only that funds meant for the poor dalit hostel children were misappropriated but they were treated badly, like beggars, taunted for complaining about bad or insufficient food saying that at home they don't even get this. The MVF persistent focus on treating each child with respect is understandable in this situation.

the children's cause has led to their status in the village and among parents improving qualitatively. The BKVV is reported to have played an important role in the abolition of non-formal education from Andhra Pradesh in favour of full time State supported formal education, a long standing demand of the MVF. BKVV members are emerging as very important members of the CRPF carrying the credibility of teachers espousing the students' cause.

The MVF has also tried to energize existing community organizations like the gram panchayat. For example in Ranga Reddy district nearly a hundred gram panchayats are now properly monitoring children a task earlier performed by the MVF volunteer. The MVF trains panchayat office bearers and other members of statutory community institutions in collecting data, what questions to ask revenue officials or education department officials, what are its rights, what activities it can rightfully monitor and so on. This is an activity the MVF proposes to expand.

The moral and financial contributions made by MVF in nurturing these community based alliances should not be underestimated. Travel expenses and hospitality for meetings is provided by MVF, networking and information dissemination through workshops is an important contribution, and the presence of MVF activists at different levels helps to keep the focus and to mediate any potential disagreements.

Tables 1 and 2 below show, for Ranga Reddy district, the growing numbers of members of the various community groups in Ranga Reddy district and the high frequency of meetings held.

Table 1¹²

**Support Group Members
2000 - 2004**

Sl.No.	Year	No. of Members							
		Youth	CRPC	SEC	BKVV	GP	Mothers / DWCRA	GRPC	Total
1	2000-2001	3253	1344	1474	473	1025	2970	1016	11555
2	2001-2002	4168	1974	1577	635	1380	3471	1525	14730
3	2002-2003	5184	2855	2429	939	1891	4147	1651	19096
4	2003-2004	6244	3594	2679	962	2481	4972	1725	22657

¹² All tables are based on data provided by MVF.

Table 2

**DETAILS OF MEETINGS CONDUCTED
2000-2004**

Sl.No	Year	SEC	YOUTH	CRPF	Mothers/ DWCRA	GRPF	Parents	BKVV	Others	Gram Panchayat	Total
1	2000-2001	2840	1695	696	1427	411	1471	850	150	606	10147
2	2001-2002	4702	2142	1283	2100	1028	2576	1209	963	1074	17077
3	2002-2003	4453	2431	1819	2176	1360	2903	1874	204	1124	18344
4	2003-2004	4169	2492	2115	2591	1613	2995	1967	507	1157	19606

SEC: School Education Committee

CRPF: Child Rights Protection Forum

DWCRA: Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas

GRPF: Girl Child Rights Protection Forum

BKVV: Bala Karmika Vimochana Vedika

GP: Gram Panchayat

Principles of Expansion

Until 2000, MVF worked exclusively in Ranga Reddy district. Since then, it has expanded to other districts in Andhra as well as sent volunteers to other states. This reflects the fact that Ranga Reddy has virtually achieved full elimination of child labour. Tables 3 and 4 below show the increased area of activity in Ranga Reddy and Nalgonda districts respectively.

Table 3

**MVF PROJECT AREA: RANGA REDDY DISTRICT
2000-2004**

S.No.	Year	No. of Villages
1	2000-2001	553
2	2001-2002	819
3	2002-2003	894
4	2003-2004	954

Table 4

**MVF PROJECT AREA: NALGONDA DISTRICT
2000-2004**

Sl No	Year	No. of Villages
1	2000-01	51
2	2001-02	462
3	2002-03	523
4	2003-04	530

MVF firmly believes that its activities ought to be 'demand led' and not 'resource driven'. That is, activities are expanded into new geographical areas where they are invited in, by community, youth groups, government, NGOs etc. In neighbouring districts

to its core area, Ranga Reddy, it has often been youth volunteers or community leaders who have requested MVF to start their work and offered all assistance in implementing the strategy. In other states, it has generally been the state government that has invited them to mobilize local cadres (as in Madhya Pradesh and Assam) although in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, it was a large NGO that invited MVF to send its volunteers.

Obviously, expansion to other areas also requires additional resources. So far, MVF has been fortunate in being able to finance expansion through its own resources. The volunteers sent to Assam and Madhya Pradesh were at the expense of MVF rather than of the inviting organisation. MVF activists invited to other states have been supported by UNDP and Hivos funded fellowships. This is despite the fact that the inviting party would have been able to finance the volunteers. It has been MVFs belief that their volunteers would have a higher status and would also have greater autonomy if they were not dependent on the resources of the inviting party. In its current strategy, then, the full costs of expansion are being met by MVF itself, even though the expansion is not attempted without a clear invitation. Raising resources is thus an extremely critical aspect to further expansion through MVF technical support.

This strategy also means that MVF volunteers remain clearly outsiders in the new areas to which they might go. This might be a positive thing, in that it reinforces the understanding that social mobilization must be done with and by local resources, and what MVF can do is offer suggestions, offer moral support, and share experience, but it does not seek to simply replicate past experience on new soil, where it may or may not take root.

Apart from geographical expansion, another sense in which the term 'expansion' could be used would be growing into new activities or new areas of work. It is in this sense that Ranga Reddy is seen by MVF as a 'laboratory', where new initiatives can be tried and tested before being recommended to other areas. Ranga Reddy is clearly where MVF's base is the strongest, and visitors to Ranga Reddy get a feel for the best of MVF. Exposure visits are frequently conducted in Ranga Reddy, with people coming from all over the country and even different parts of the world. In places where 95% enrolment has been reached, MVF has started working on health issues, including nutrition monitoring, tracking immunization of children, keeping a record of child weight, pre and post natal care, etc. MVF volunteers in parts of Ranga Reddy are thus now working on health issues, while staying alert to the possibility of any reversal of its achievements in eliminating child labour.

Other areas of expansion that MVF has identified as possibilities include working more effectively with adolescent girls, and with disabled children.

External Factors enabling MVF Success and Question of Replication of the Model

Certain factors specific to the state of Andhra Pradesh can be noted as factors that have been important in MVF success and upscaling of M.V.Foundation's operations. This includes, first, the existence of a large number of young men with some experience of

social mobilization through the Ambedkar Youth Group and other youth groups, who had not been absorbed into full time employment and were available to direct their energies into this task.

Second, the existence of a network of social welfare hostels and residential schools throughout the state, which had been set up many years previously and were severely underutilized, allowing MVF to have a ready space to which children could be taken after completing bridge courses. (This infrastructure is unique to the state of Andhra Pradesh).

Third, is the availability of like minded senior level bureaucrats willing to understand the strength of MVF's argument and the efficacy of its model. This is being complemented by MVF's own efforts to bring 'children to school' MVF activities have been to convince the education bureaucracy and the political leaders in Andhra Pradesh who encouraged and supported in the form of policy support, willingness to change procedures and financial assistance. This has resulted in making policy changes in support of first generation learners. The political leadership recognized the community demand and pressure for schools and therefore wholly supported the need for firm action to abolish child labour. The district officials took the lead to report cases of child labour in their areas and found MVF's mobilization and other activities useful as it furthered its own agenda. The fact that MVF is able to contribute financially to the task also means that the total budget for these activities goes up in the areas where MVF is actively working. Tensions do arise, of course, such as disputes over the number of children out of school, but these are not over fundamentals and usually are rapidly resolved. The willingness of senior officials of the state government to give credit to MVF as the influence and inspiration behind the government's strategy reflects the building up of good relations over time between MVF, the political leadership and the bureaucracy. New leaders with change in government and new officials do require an investment of time in developing the relationship, but there is no evidence that politically any of the principles involved are being questioned. The climate of acceptance of MVF's approach within Andhra is also testified to by the 'Child and Police' camps that have been set up by the police authorities.

The MVF model can be replicated (and of this the MVF activists are very confident) wherever there is democratic space available, there is scope for the functioning of civil society organizations and one can negotiate with the State to enlist support for further replication. The confidence in the replicability of the MVF model has been gained through demonstrated positive results starting with Ranga Reddy and later in Nalgonda. MVF has influenced the work of several other organizations, including for example in Rajasthan (Lok Jumbish – which also uses bridge camps, pioneered by MVF), Calcutta (Cini Asha), Lucknow (CARE), Tamil Nadu (Slum Clearance Board), Orissa (UNDP), Assam (DPEP) and MP (DPEP). MVF and the CRPF have worked in tribal and forest regions, coastal belts, deserts, and dry land farms among fisher folk, nomads, tribals, landless poor agricultural labourers and quarry workers. Though there are variations of the model depending on the needs of the intervention area the basic principles or components remains the same and perhaps all or a combination of these basic

components would be needed depending on the situation (i.e. strong community participation and organization against child labour and in favour of education at all levels, residential bridge course, community based monitoring of educational access and quality, teachers' forum on child labour, involvement of Gram Panchayats and forming of CRPFs, building on the existing education infrastructure and policy, advocacy for girl child education).

The role of MVF role has been changing from one of implementer to that of advisor or facilitator. The more determined promotion of community based structures to support children's rights through CRPF should prove to be easier to replicate, more sustainable and cost effective in the long-run.

In its initial phases, MVF mobilized different groups sequentially and hence the whole process of getting a child labour free habitation and a community committed to maintaining it that way, took much longer. Today, MVF activists start mobilizing different groups simultaneously, so all the various community formations are put in place much faster. This learning of the MVF activists explains the increased momentum and ease in replication in other new areas.

The model is also flexible and responsive as it began focused on the dalit population and then moved to child bonded labour and then all child labour. In the last few years, MVF has been expanding into other areas of work such as early child marriage and health, which have an important impact on child labour. However, as MVF expands into these new themes, it is important to re-assess continually as it has done in the past on the way in which it is stimulating processes. MVF has emerged due to the external historical factor of a strong male youth and student movement, which formed its base of support. In an effort to replicate the model in areas such as child marriage, pre-natal health and early child care one would need to consider ways in which female adolescents and women can take on more active and also leadership roles in advocacy efforts. This process might happen naturally but the MVF in its technical advisory role can also encourage links to other movements and groups in the region that engage women and determine and promote ways in which they can be central to advocacy efforts particular on the rights of the girl child.

In discussing replication, it is important to emphasise that what needs to be done is to identify and cull out the core principle, and to think in terms of processes rather than outcomes. In 'replicating' MVF, one would essentially be referring to the following aspects of its work

- spelling out the non-negotiables
- mobilizing communities around these
- building up support structures to enable their implementation
- monitoring children on a continuous basis
- advocating with the government and other agencies to help in creation of the required infrastructure

The specific institutional structures through which MVF has worked may, or may not, suit other contexts. For example, if these ideas are to be discussed in communities where people have already been mobilized around other issues, and where other forums already exist, it is very likely that the precise manner in which these ideas are implemented may be different.

Financial Planning and Management

For field activities, financial planning and management at MVF is heavily decentralized. This reflects the fact that social mobilization through a force of volunteers could be successful in proportion to the autonomy and trust accorded to the volunteers. It also reflects a very sound business sense that programme planning and financial planning must go hand in hand with each other. Accordingly, volunteers draw up a strategy, plan activities and assess the financial resources required. These are approved at the level of the mandal in charge. The mandal in charge in turn forwards the financial plan to the MVF HQ for approval, generally for three months at a time. The various mandal plans are co-ordinated and approved by the Finance Advisory Committee for the Trustees. This system has not required any change as long as the primary initiative is itself at the level of the habitation and in fact it encourages initiative and motivation.

For activities in Hyderabad, financial decisions relating to conferences, seminars and the frequent workshops held for the volunteers, teachers, and others decisions are centralized and these expenses are kept separate from the field expenses.

We did not have access to details of financial expenditure and allocation, and understand that a financial review has been separately undertaken. In case the nature of the activity itself changes, then there may be reason to suggest changes in the system and methods of financial planning and management. But as long as social mobilization is the central activity for MVF, the systems seem to be well in place.

Youth and Women

The MVF has emerged due to the external historical factor of a strong male youth and student movement, which formed its original base of support. Yet, the MVF has been sensitive to the issue of gender discrimination against the girl child. In fact special efforts were made from the beginning (for example' by setting up bridge course camps for girl children) to ensure girl children were brought into schools. In fact a cursory look at the statistical profile of the MVF activity in 18 mandals of Ranga Reddy District shows that between 2000 and 2004 the number of girl children enrolled directly or mainstreamed through camps was almost the same as the number of boys. Many of the girl children educated in MVF camps are now MVF activists, and education volunteers. However, as the activities of the MVF move to focus on issues of adolescent girls, child marriage, pre and post natal health of women, etc., there is a greater need for active participation of women in the MVF including in leadership positions at grassroots and the middle level. This is one of the challenges the MVF has before itself.

It has often been suggested that youth and women are natural allies, and several movements have been built up with the active support of both groups (for example, the famous Chipko movement in the Himalayas). It could be argued that where women are in the lead, they tend to look to youth for support. Where youth are in the lead, perhaps it may or may not happen. Interestingly such a joining of hands is at its early stages in the MVF movement. The MVF's social mobilization has required a large base of volunteers, and one of the defining characteristics of these has been their mobility and willingness to wholly devote themselves to this task. MVF volunteers report that over a period of time, young educated girls have joined the youth force, taking an active part in mobilizing children to schools. Many of them expressed the need to assign to them tasks of community mobilization, which included negotiation with the authorities regarding all children in a particular area in addition to building linkages with women's groups. It is felt that by building a systematic alliance between the youth and women's groups the quality of the movement could be further enhanced as in the case of the Chipko Movement.

However, the MVF strategy has been successfully adapted in other areas with women playing the leading role. For example, the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), very much inspired by the MVF approach, have reportedly been able to implement the strategy through women. The CRS had organized groups of women on thrift and other such issues in their areas of operation and they were able to get these women to adopt the MVF programme. CRS and its partner NGOs started working with MVF in 1998. As a result, the programme of the CRS itself has shifted away from being institution based food aid to a community based development programme that integrates child schooling with the food aid programme.

MVF itself conducts another programme (funded by HIVOS) called "Empowerment of Women Through Collective Action", and there would be an important sharing of experiences across the programmes. So far, however, the two programmes have been distinct.

Children

From the field review, it was clear that despite the emotional and physical hardships faced as working children, MVF has been able to create both a safe and empowering environment for these children. The work of MVF has enabled these children to recover from their difficult experiences and for many of these children, learn how to read and write for the first time in preparation for entry into full-time formal education. During our visit to Mahboobnagar (Oct 2/04), we visited one of the bridge camps and sat together and listened to the stories of former bonded and child labourers. We heard about 11 year old Lakshmi who toiled in the cotton fields and lived like an orphan at a relative's house since her mother passed away and father left and re-married another. 17 year old former bonded child labourer, Romulus, recounted sadly about how many times he tried to accept the help of MVF and the CRPF but his parents felt compelled to send him to work with the cattle, buffaloes or other domestic work due their

family income needs and sister's marriage. There was 11 year old Chandra who was taken by her village elders to Hyderabad to clean dishes and perform other domestic work and received harsh punishment when she made mistakes. We heard about how the girls cried for their mothers and the boys for their buffaloes when they would first come to the bridge camps until they realized they would reunite with their families again soon and felt more comfortable and secure in the new environment. These children perhaps had for the first time hope for a better life for themselves and their families in the future.

At the end of what must have been a difficult discussion for these children, we could see, nonetheless, the sparkle in their eyes and the happiness in their smiles. Not only did this demonstrate the competence of MVF to bring back their childhood, but also the children's emotional resilience and ability to put behind their difficult past experiences as working children in search of a better life. What is just as important as the numbers of children that MVF and CRPF has been able to assist, is the impact the organization has been able to make on social attitudes and norms in the villages they have worked in. This is crucial for the promotion of child labour free communities over the long term.

MVF has also made determined efforts to not treat these children simply as victims of emotional and physical violence as well as economic exploitation, but rather as active participants in advocacy efforts. The creation of School Children's Committees, with representatives from each class meeting once in a fortnight have proved to be effective in promoting a child friendly and participatory learning environment with a more active student teacher relationship. Difficulties experienced by children have ranged from early marriage, performance of slow learners and discussion on curriculum with older children to reviewing school drop out and problems faced with school teachers at the primary and upper primary level.

From Table 5 below for Ranga Reddy, we can see that the number of non school going children were 12.4 % of the total in 2000-01, and down to 6.7 % in 2003-04. For girls, the corresponding fall was from 13.6 % to 3.4 %. For boys, from 11.2 % to 6.1 %.

Table 5

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOLS (RANGA REDDY)
2000 - 2004**

Sl. No	Year	No. of Villages in project area	School Going			Non School Going			Non School Going Total		
			Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	2000-2001	553	71953	62894	134847	9105	9938	19043	81058	72832	153890
2	2001-2002	819	85150	78295	163445	11253	11546	22799	96403	89841	186244
3	2002-2003	894	103478	94159	197637	6926	7238	14164	110404	101397	211801
4	2003-2004	954	114060	104802	218862	7473	8052	15525	121533	112854	234387

Table 6, also for Ranga Reddy, shows that the number of child labour free villages went up to 404 from 281, and the number of bonded labour free villages from 270 to 589.

Table 6

**CHILD LABOUR AND BONDED LABOUR FREE VILLAGES (RANGA REDDY)
2000 - 2004**

Sl.No.	Year	No. of Child Labour Free Villages	No. of Bonded Labour Free Villages	No. of Bonded Labour Released
1	2000-2001	281	270	404
2	2001-2002	284	483	922
3	2002-2003	304	509	312
4	2003-2004	404	589	241

Table 7 and 8 show the corresponding picture in Nalgonda.

Table 7

**CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL NALGONDA
2000-2004**

Sl No	Year	No. of Villages in Project Area	School Going			Non School Going			Total		
			Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	2000-01	51	4943	4038	8981	1069	1542	2611	6012	5580	11592
2	2001-02	462	47665	39835	87500	8423	10562	18985	56088	50397	106485
3	2002-03	523	58039	50080	108119	3922	6090	10012	61961	56170	118131
4	2003-04	530	53633	46561	100194	4135	5899	10034	57768	52460	110228

The percentage of non school going children was 22.5 in 2000-01, and 9 % in 2003-04. However the table shows a fall in total number of children over the last two years despite increased number of villages. The explanation is given below. Since the area changed, the time trend is not entirely accurate.

In 2002-03 MVF was operational in the following 11 mandals: Arvapally, Athmakur(S), Chivvemla, Kethepally, Mothey, Munagala, Nuthankal, Penpahad , Ramannapet , Thirumalgiri and Thungathurthi. In 2003-04 MVF was operational in the following 10 mandals: Arvapally, Athmakur(S), Chivvemla, Palakurthy, Mothey, Munagala, Nuthankal, Penpahad , Thirumalgiri and Thungathurthi

In 2002-03, the project area in Kethepally and Ramannapet mandals accounted for 61 villages and 21142 children. MVF withdrew from these two mandals in 2003-04 and

expanded to the new mandal “Palakurthy”. The project area in “Palakurthy” consists of 62 villages and 13127 children.

Therefore there is not much difference in the number of villages in 2002-03 and 2003-04. However there is a gap in the number of children.

Table 8

**NUMBER OF BONDED LABOUR FREE VILLAGES NALGONDA
2000-2004**

Year	No. of BL free villages	No. of Bonded Labour Released
2000-2004	171	2510

Parents

Our field visits did not bring us into contact with many parents. However MVF documents have examined the impact on parents, and suggest that it has been positive. They begin to value the child more, are willing to find ways of substituting for the labour of the child, and are responsive to new ideas brought home by children. It is MVFs understanding and this is well confirmed by studies all over the country that the demand for schooling is not the problem, all parents want their children to be educated. Problems arise because since there are no social norms to this effect, there is a lack of support structures and an inhospitable environment within schools. In order to send and keep first generation learners in school, additional effort is needed not just by the schools but by the entire community. It is this understanding that MVF has been able to translate into action, and parents have responded very positively.

The volunteers did suggest that even in Ranga Reddy there would be the odd parent who would not co-operate, but they did not agree that this might be the poorest households. In their experience, poverty was not the primary reason for difficult attitudes. MVF leaders have never encouraged the perspective that education is an instrument for better jobs. In fact in all its meetings MVF has repeatedly emphasized the intrinsic value of education and it being a vehicle to gain more abstract yet important values such as equity, dignity, cultural capital and so on. The fact that expectations from schooling are often linked to jobs reflects the social milieu and the dominant values of the community, and poses a challenge for MVF volunteers.

Schools

Government schools have been energized. The influx of children has meant that the schools have more activity, more teaching, many have been upgraded.

Improvements in school infrastructure are shown as below.

Table 9

**IMPROVEMENT IN SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE*: RANGA REDDY
2000 - 2004**

S.No	Year	No. of Schools Upgraded	No. of Additional Rooms Constructed	Additional Land Given	Toilet Facility	Compound Wall	Any others
1	2000-2001	123	187	17	26	52	25
2	2001-2002	163	183	3	39	65	3
3	2002-2003	138	145	8	89	111	30
4	2003-2004	131	159	16	99	133	31
	Total	555	674	44	253	361	89

Table 10

**IMPROVEMENT IN SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE: NALGONDA
2001-2004**

Sl. No.	Year	No. of Schools upgraded	No. of Additional Rooms	Additional Land Given	Toilet Facility	Compound Wall
1	Up to 2004	61	377	53.28 Acres	337	178

Table 11

HIVOS, MVF, DPEP AND ROUND TABLE SUPPORTED SCHOOL BUILDINGS: NALGONDA

S.No.	Name of the School	No. of Class Rooms
1	ZPHS, Tummala Penpahad	8
2	UPS, MKD Pally	6
3	Islapuram	3
4	Enubamla	2
5	Midthapally	2
6	Kothagudem (M)	3
7	Shatigudem	3
	Total	27

We witnessed in one school the distribution of a wholesome, cooked mid day meal to children. The involvement of teachers in the forums created – BKVV, CRPF – has stimulated them into greater effort in teaching. Even as the inequity between ‘children in school’ and ‘children not in school’ is being eliminated, a new inequity is beginning to emerge: between children in government schools and children in private schools. This is seen all over the country and it was confirmed to us in our field visits, that while poorer children are sent to government schools, those who can afford it are in private schools, wherever such schools exist.¹³ This is an enormous challenge. The poor very clearly see how education is necessary to get them out of marginalisation and

¹³ It was somewhat ironic to find in one of the villages that the sarpanch, while an active member of the CRPF, was also running a private school.

vulnerability. They see education as indispensable for negotiating with the society and power structures that operate outside their realm. They see education as a way of getting an opportunity to seize opportunities and make choices. Education as a vehicle of breaking the intergenerational cycle of deprivation, ignorance and backwardness is also well acknowledged by them and so aptly expressed in one cryptic statement “Our children must not be like us”. They certainly do not reduce education to a mere vehicle for something tangible as material prosperity or jobs and at the same time would not oppose such benefits. There is however a connection between demand for education, the content and quality and relevance of schooling, and the ability of those who have been to school to be able to articulate the problems around them and seek solutions. If there is to be a long term impact on development and on community cohesiveness this can be possible only if the content of schooling is able to strengthen community feeling.

Data on state education expenditures for Andhra Pradesh shows that over the period 2001-02 to 2003-04 there has been an increase in the total allocation for elementary education. While separate data for the allocations to social welfare hostels was not available, the total allocation for the social welfare department has also gone up. The state’s commitment to bringing all children to school thus seems to be backed by some increase in resources (see Table 12 below). A new component of the education budget from 2002-03 is the mid day meal component. Most funding for elementary education is now channeled under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. This programme includes allocations for innovations, and can support aspects of the MVF approach, for example bridge camps.

Table 12

Expenditure on Education: Andhra Pradesh

Education Expenditures under various Heads

<i>In crore Rs.</i>	2000-01			2001-02			2002-03			2003-04		
	AE	BE	RE	AE	BE	RE	AE	BE	RE	AE	BE	RE
DPEP	49.03	254.48	52.89	9.22	106.4	105.71		1922.22	183.89		84.02	
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan				15.41	88.8	88.8		101.24	80.64		439.56	
Nutritional Meal Programme				0				0	68.33		250	
Total Elementary Education				1713.9				2012	2036.08		2502	
Residential Schools				8.47				14.97	11.72		12.05	
Total Social Welfare Department	110.79			599.62	241.04	276.95		639.86	579.37		807.84	

Source: Andhra Pradesh Budget, from MVF.

AE: Annual Estimate
BE: Budget Estimate
RE: Revised Estimate

School Governance

The manner in which schools are governed and the quality of education imparted leave much to be desired. MVF understands that these issues would be corrected in the process of children accessing schools and a demand on education. All along quality of schools and relevance of education has been seen as a supply side agenda. MVF believes that this has not really enabled improvement in the quality of education. Therefore, it is attempting to bring pressure on the system to make schools more responsive to children and their learning. This, it feels, is far more sustainable approach to enhance the quality of education. MVF sees itself as a facilitator in the process and not as a trainer or a pedagogue to make improvements in classroom transactions. Therefore it provides the linkages for the teachers with experts in the government as well as outside to help them introspect on how to improve supplies.

It has been MVF's understanding that inhospitable school governance systems play an important part in keeping children out of school. MVF has therefore advocated – successfully- for small changes in school governance that have a very large impact on bringing and keeping children in school. For example, allowing admissions throughout the year; not refusing admission on grounds of not having a teacher, but letting the volunteer teacher help until such time as a fully qualified teacher can be inducted; negotiating to allow remission of examination fees in special cases; and discouraging practices that exclude some children (such as insistence on uniforms). Simplifying procedures of getting transfer certificates is another example. During our visits to the villages, these efforts of MVF volunteers were repeatedly mentioned with appreciation.

Clearly, these are changes likely to be most resisted by school principals and teachers and the managers of the school education system. MVF's strategy of building up a teacher's forum (BKVV) is thus very far sighted. It allows teachers to articulate problems and forces them to think of solutions. It is probably too early to say how these groups will evolve eventually. Although several women teachers are reported to be members of the BKVV, we found very few actually present. It is possible that some of the issues that particularly affect young girls within a school building could be better understood and advocated for by women teachers.

Teachers and Teachers Unions

It is interesting to note that there is no distinction between the teacher and the mobilizer in the MVF model. Despite problems in many of the MVF intervention areas, such as lack of the most basic facilities, materials and support systems, the teacher/mobiliser plays multiple roles as educator, counselor, mentor and role model for the child but also the parents and communities too to instill the value of education. Teachers are the weakest in education hierarchy though they are the policy makers for children and

have the most influence in how and what they learn in the classroom. At the same time, the parents are the weakest in the social hierarchy. Thus, MVF has effectively promoted the alignment of teachers and parents through Parent Teacher Associations.

During our field review, CRPF members complained about how teachers' unions focus exclusively on status and salary demands. The BKVV has widened the discussion to include a strong focus on children's rights and this initiative can be even further expanded and strengthened. Still, issues of status and working conditions are legitimate considerations for teachers. Other similar experiences in Asia, Africa, and the Americas have demonstrated that if these legitimate demands are linked to children's rights, teachers will improve their negotiation position with the government and achieve more in improving their own situation. BKVV, along with MVF and CRPF should consider more strongly linking child labour elimination with increased quality of education and improved status and working conditions of teachers in their advocacy.

Camps for girl children

This is perhaps the single most successful innovation made by MVF, linking the schooling system to the child out of school. In the course of the field visits, we visited three camps for girls. The children seemed very lively and were not shy to engage in discussion with visitors. A number of the girls appeared to be older than 14 or 15. For adolescent girls, the camp itself is an immensely liberating experience. The teachers pointed out the girls who had been through these camps were much more confident and mobile than those who had not.

Table 13 shows that in Ranga Reddy, around 18 % of the children enrolled were mainstreamed through camps in 2000-01. Four years later this was 7 %.

Table 13

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITHDRAWN FROM WORK AND MAINSTREAMED TO SCHOOLS
200-2004**

Sl. No.	Year	Children Enrolled (5 - 14)			Children Mainstreamed through Camps			Total Children Mainstreamed		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	2000-2001	5260	5156	10416	1109	1181	2290	6369	6337	12706
2	2001-2002	4836	4458	9294	995	864	1859	5831	5322	11153
3	2002-2003	6707	6090	12797	1041	949	1990	7748	7039	14787
4	2003-2004	6089	5823	11912	585	354	939	6674	6177	12851
	Total	22892	21527	44419	3730	3348	7078	26622	24875	51497

Table 14 shows that the percentage of girls attending short term camps in Ranga Reddy was 69 % of the total in 2000-01, but only 31 % in 2003-04. In absolute numbers also the number of girls attending camps decreased between 2001-2004. This suggests that in the project area the older girls were effectively mainstreamed in the initial years.

Table 14**Short Term Camps (1 - 3 Days) Conducted for Boys and Girls in the 9 - 14 Age Group
2000 - 2004**

Sl.No.	Year	No. of Short Term Camps	No. of children Attended		
			Boys	Girls	Total
1	2000-2001	8	225	495	720
2	2001-2002	12	850	918	1768
3	2002-2003	4	212	229	441
4	2003-2004	4	280	127	407
	Total	28	1567	1769	3336

Table 15 shows that the majority of children attending the motivation centres in Ranga Reddy were girls, 81 % in 2000-01 and 72 % in 2003-04.

Table 15**Number of Motivation Centers for Boys and Girls in the Age Group of 9 - 14 Years
2000 - 2001**

Sl. No.	Year	No. of Motivation Centres	Total No. of children		
			Boys	Girls	Total
1	2000-2001	103	430	1873	2303
2	2001-2002	106	401	1665	2066
3	2002-2003	45	263	534	797
4	2003-2004	39	267	696	963
	Total	293	1361	4768	6129

Table 16, for Nalgonda, shows that a smaller percentage of the children enrolled passed through camps, compared to Ranga Reddy. The percentage was 4.9 in 2001-02 and in 2003-04; but much higher, at 16 % in 2002-03. The higher level of MVF activity in 2002-03, resulting in higher level of mainstreaming, is discussed further in the section on 'interactions with government'.

Table 16**NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITHDRAWN FROM WORK AND MAINSTREAMED TO SCHOOLS
2001-2004**

Sl No	Year	Children Enrolled Directly (5-14)			Children Mainstreamed through Camps			Total Children Mainstreamed		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	2001-02	5092	3915	9007	298	170	468	5390	4085	9475
2	2002-03	9300	8065	17365	1740	1648	3388	11040	9713	20753
3	2003-04	3214	2684	5898	268	35	303	3482	2719	6201
	Total	17606	14664	32270	2306	1853	4159	19912	16517	36429

In the short term camps, children are divided into groups according to age and learning level. The average time taken to prepare an unschooled child for the class 7 exam is 1.5 years. For admission into junior classes (3,4,5) a spell of six months in the camp was usually adequate. Daily reviews with the children ensure that what is taught is actually learnt. Other skills are developed by encouraging active participation of children

in committees for games, water, cleaning, review, food, security, exercise. A separate meeting is held with adolescent girls once in a fortnight, to raise health awareness, and a gynaecologist visits once a month. Parents are free to visit the camps at any time.

The camps have been fully successful with younger children, enabling entry or re-entry into schools at a level commensurate with their age and learning. The problem is greater with the 'hard core' child labour, who require a longer period of counseling and exposure within the camps before they are able to settle down in regular schools. The problems are also much greater with older girls. At an age of 14 +, parents find it difficult to understand why several years of schooling should be preferable to an early marriage. Girls are under constant pressure at this age. Several times, it was explained to us that the girls say they will be able to agree to a later marriage only if they can clearly show their parents that they will be usefully employed over a few years – either in constructive study, or else in vocational training. MVF sees the completion of class X as a minimum for any child. Upon completion of Class X however girls say they will be unable to resist marriage unless there are other kinds of opportunities. This suggests a natural extension of MVF's current activities, the identification or creation of alternative opportunities for adolescent girls.

Advocacy for education of girl children

Gender discrimination has been deeply rooted in the Ranga Reddy District as in other parts of India. Fewer numbers of girls are enrolled in school than boys, and the drop out rate is higher among girls. When faced with limited resources, and many financial demands, parents prefer to invest in the education of their sons and not lose their daughters' vital contribution to the household economy. In recent years the expansion of commercial cash crops and increased demand for girl child labour has posed a new challenge. There are few role models of educated women, and schools are not girl-child friendly.

MVF launched the Girl Child Programme in 1998 which is an outcome of review within the organization, with the community and other stakeholders. Elements have included efforts to mainstream girl child issue in main village, mandal and district level agendas; recruitment and training of female girl-child activists whose major contribution is to convince parents to send their daughters to school through house-to-house campaigns; awareness raising; motivation centres to cater to adolescent girls; short-term camps for girls 9 – 14 years; and support structures (Girl Child Rights Protection Committees at village/mandal levels, Mother's Committees, Schoolgirls' Committees, Girl Youth Committees).

Over the years, due to the increasing and widespread incidence of early child marriage combined with problems of access to education for girls leading them into child labour, campaigns against child marriage has become a crucial item on the agenda for girl-child activists.

The data shows significant increases in girls' enrollment from 2000 – 2004, as discussed above, which is in part due to the advocacy for girls' education. The large numbers of motivation centres for girls reflects the explicit objective of MVF to promote both access and retention of girls in school. In Nalgonda, there has so far been limited success in changing social norms on child marriages, which impact both enrollment and retention.

Child marriages noticed and stopped in the two districts are indicated in tables 17 and 18 below. While over a third of the child marriages noticed in Ranga Reddy were stopped, in Nalgonda less than 15 % of those identified could be stopped.

Table 17
CHILD MARRIAGES IDENTIFIED AND STOPPED
2000 -2004

Sl.No.	Year	No. of child marriages	
		Identified/Noticed	Stopped
1	2000-2001	622	235
2	2001-2002	669	269
3	2002-2003	790	295
4	2003-2004	740	269
	Total	2821	1068

Table 18
CHILD MARRIAGES IDENTIFIED AND STOPPED
2002-2004

Sl No	Year	No. of child marriages	
		Identified/Noticed	Stopped
1	2002-03	49	
2	2003-04	674	99
	Total	723	99

While MVF's stated goals have been to mainstream the issue of the girl child in the main agenda at all levels since 1998, this mainstreaming is not being led by women and girls. There are clearly a number of activities engaging women and girls and the issues are being raised at all levels. Still, the value and potential greater impact of having women and girls raise these issues in the regular structures set up or promoted by MVF at village, mandal and district level should not be underestimated. It is recommended that MVF reflect on this and if they also appreciate the value in itself of women and girls leading the struggle for their own rights, there could be intensive review of what processes are needed to encourage this kind of participation including linking with other movements and organizations that can support this. In Thungathurty mandal, Nalgonda district, strong links have been made with women's groups (Mahila Sangams) and women have played a crucial role in mobilizing girls to schools and participating in major public events including International Women's Day where they spoke about the need for girl children to be in schools and against child marriage. They also raised the issue of lack of toilets and latrines in schools. Building on these kinds of experiences, it would be

interesting to see how this kind of leadership can be apparent in the regular structures of MVF, CRPF and BKVV rather than only at public events or campaigns (Source, 2001 – 2002 Annual Report, pp. 38 – 39).

Learning Guarantee Initiative

While significant progress has been made in the struggle to increase children's access to education, the battle hasn't stopped there. For those children mainstreamed into formal education, the focus has then shifted to how children were performing in school and what and how were they learning. In an assessment of children in selected schools in Chittoor district in 2001 conducted by the government, it was found that 60% of children in Class V did not even reach Class 1 standard! This started a debate on the quality of teaching and learning in Shankerpally mandal and a similar assessment was undertaken to find the same results if not worse.

There is a need for focusing attention on improving the quality of education in response to the tremendous parental demand for education. MVF has tried to facilitate teacher participation in making schools accountable by providing a learning guarantee.

Head Masters of 8 schools developed a practical programme with the active participation of mandal level officials and the BKVV, under the informed guidance of DPEP staff. The teachers evolved Teaching Learning Material to build the competence of children in the respective schools through a 6 week remedial programme designed to bring the children to the competency levels appropriate to their original classes. From 2002 – 2003, 21,153 children have been reached through the Learning Guarantee Programme and quality improvements in schooling in 16 Mandals of Ranga Reddy District. In addition to the individual children that have benefited through this programme, there has been a positive impact on the 230 schools targeted. This includes democratization of schools and accountability to community, teacher empowerment, taking the learning of pupils seriously, and greater regularity in attendance. According to MVF reports, learning levels have been significantly enhanced. Based on this positive experience along with the other ways in which MVF has been promoting the quality of education such as advocating for improved pupil/teacher ratios, MVF could consider bringing pressure on the government as well as teachers union to take up issues of quality and curriculum content in order to ensure institutional reform

Interactions with Government

MVF's work has been guided by the principle that education is the responsibility of the State and MVF has motivated and lobbied for the government to fulfill this obligation. The significant increases in the numbers of children ready to enroll in school on account of MVF's mobilization efforts, has forced the State to deal with this demand and appreciate the need for institutional reform.

The "Back to School" programme, using residential bridge camps, was launched in 1996 by the Social Welfare Department, inspired by the MVF approach, and succeeded in mainstreaming an impressive 100,000 children into school in the first year.

Between 1999 – 2003, 900,000 children were brought back to school through this programme. This formed part of the 'Total Literacy and Child Labour Free Society by 2005' initiative and State Act on Child Labour.

Partnership between the State Education Department and MVF exists at various levels. At a policy level, as discussed above, the MVF approach of using bridge camps and social welfare hostels, and encouraging admissions into residential schools, has been up scaled and made into a part of the regular programmes of the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department. At the level of implementation, MVF had previously been given responsibility for running bridge course camps in Ranga Reddy district for the Education Department. However this has more recently been withdrawn. The reason appears to be that there are now other contenders for the role and a decision seems to have been taken within the government to support self help groups, which are being heavily supported in various ways in the state. (At the same time, the officials concerned generously acknowledged the excellent work done by MVF in our meetings with them). At the mandal level, the detailed data collected by MVF volunteers provides a basis for ongoing dialogue between the volunteers and the education bureaucracy. In fact, officials have acknowledged that MVF data is often more accurate than the official data, and are suggesting a joint data collection on the basis of which programmes can be monitored.

The occasional turbulence in the interaction with government gets reflected in MVF's own statistics. For example, with reference to table 16 above, it is seen that there is a drop in enrolment from 2002-03 (20,753) to 2003-04 (6201). In 2002-03 the programme was actively operational in 11 mandals. 12 Bridge course camps were conducted in 11 mandals. Also the enrollment done in one more mandal of Athmakur (M) from which MVF withdrew in December 2003 is taken into consideration. Numerous enrollment rallies, meetings and campaigns against bonded labour were done in this reporting period. Also the entire mobilisation processes of the previous two years resulted in such enrollment. The State Government also conducted some programmes like Chaduvula Pandaga (2-11, August 2002) and Akshara Sankranti in January, in all the districts. These programmes were utilised by MVF, highlighting the cause and withdrawing children from work and enrolling them into schools. During 2002-03 MVF had a fund support to carry out intensive campaigns, RBCs and also follow up programme. This was abruptly stopped by the government for reasons not entirely clear, as a result of which the programme was slowed down considerably. In 2003 – 04 MVF withdrew its staff and bridge course camps (BCCs conducted only in five mandals as against 11 mandals in 2002-03) to a considerable extent due to paucity of funds which set back the mobilisation of child labour. In 2002-03 there were 737 staff in the district and the expenditure of the programme was Rs 27,030,250 while in 2003-04 the staff got reduced to 465 employees in the district and the expenditure was Rs 13,793,310. Therefore, there is a difference in enrollment between 2002-03 and 2003-04. Nevertheless, the existing staff and support groups enrolled 6000 children and retained those already in schools.

At the national level, MVF is acknowledged for its innovative approach to child labour. The Report of the Second National Commission on Labour has accepted MVF's

approach and recommended a new legislation that would link abolition of child labour with universal schooling.

Links with national issue based networks

MVF has attended meetings of NAFRE (of which it is one of the founding members), and is active in implementing the major decisions taken at a central level. Initially, the link with CACL was tenuous, but since 2000 (as a result of CACL's participation in a review of MVF's work) the association has been much stronger. MVF has taken a role as a participant in most of the existing national networks and through its own field work has demonstrated the efficacy of the programme for universalization of education and total abolition of child labour thus giving strength to the efforts of the national level lobbyists. Most of the networking of MV Foundation has been through imparting training for hundreds of officials and NGOs from across the states in the country and at a national level and establishing systematic contact with them. It has therefore chosen to take part in networks only as a participant instead of taking the lead with existing national level lobbyists and advocacy groups. It sees itself as complementing them in this manner. MVF has also initiated (in 2003) a network within Andhra which is concerned with data, and seeks to collect data that would be a corrective to inaccurate official pronouncements.

MVF's role in the international community and campaigns

“School is the Best Place to Work” campaign

Launched in May 2003, this campaign seeks to eliminate all child labor through the provision of full-time, quality education and it is run by the Alliance 2015 network of Development Organizations comprised of Hivos (Netherlands), Concern (Ireland) and Welthungerhilfe (Germany). In the Netherlands, India Committee of Netherlands (ICN), Dutch Federation of Unions (FNV), and the General Teachers Union (AOB) are involved. ICN coordinates the lobbying strategy and also acts as liaison with Global March. The campaign calls on the governments of the Netherlands, Ireland and Germany and the EU to create a coherent policy on the elimination of child labour linked to the provision of full-time, formal education for all children up to 14 years of age, to ensure that EU members work together to allocate at least 8% of ODA to formal primary education, including strategies to integrate all out-of-school children into the education system, make provisions in ODA to ensure that girls and young children from vulnerable groups (including those living in absolute poverty) are integrated into the formal school system and the hope is that these goals will be reached by 2005. While these are the political goals of the campaign, the projects goals are different and more focused on awareness raising and lobbying to reach those goals

MVF has been working cooperatively with this Campaign to demonstrate that the goals of EFA and child labour abolition are inextricably linked and that their experience on the ground has shown that child labour is both a cause and consequence of poverty for which education is the key to breaking this vicious cycle. It has been a prime example

and model for how to put the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Employment into practice and demonstrate that it is not only desirable but also feasible to get the most vulnerable children into full-time education. Without MVF, there could not be such a Campaign. The Stop Child Labour Campaign is a good example of north-south collaboration towards global efforts to achieve the elimination of child labour and Education For All.

MVF's role has been to connect their grassroots experiences to such global movements and bring the experiences of the most remote areas of Andhra Pradesh to light in the global policy arena. Source of information, inspiration and "reality" check as well as important in joint lobbying efforts with the EU. The participation of MVF has also been important for providing the credibility and evidence to justify the need for a coherent policy on the elimination of child labour linked to the provision of full-time formal education for all children up to 14 years of age. MVF's work not only stresses the needs for increased ODA to formal primary education but also for strategies and provisions to integrate all out-of-school children into the formal education system. Undeniably, working children should be considered a primary target group for inter-sectoral approaches which aim to reach out of school children and realize Education for All. Based on the MVF experiences, youth forums have been created and promoted through the Campaign to promote global understanding and action.

While the connection with other international civil society networks against child labour and in support of education is there (Global March, Global Campaign for Education) these links should continue and be strengthened to include other grassroots experiences in Asia, Africa or the Americas to further drive home the message of the campaign. Indeed, MVF is one of the strongest models globally at present in using education and social mobilization to combat child labour. Still, there are models developed around the world in using education to combat child labour that have valuable lessons to share. Also, by strongly linking to these networks, the campaign could reach even more people, organizations, and donors around the world. There are plans to broaden the Campaign and there are discussions now with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Global March which is promising.

It was an excellent idea to have an international conference organized by MVF in cooperation with the Campaign, "Out of Work Into School – Children's Right to Education as a Non-negotiable" in Hyderabad of which one of the stated objectives is to identify strategy of expansion of the movement to link child labour and education in the South. The meeting included a wide range of stakeholders from around the world to consolidate and reinforce the child labour and education movement in India and around the world and thus going beyond the goals initially envisaged in the campaign. It provided an opportunity to expose officials to the grassroots experiences written about in the Campaign

While the Campaign is critical of the child labour and education policies of various UN agencies, these agencies can also be allies in some ways. For example, the ILO has long been advocating for free and compulsory education up until minimum

working age for several years along with the Global March and has been successful in having UNESCO take this on board. This would be a potential area for collaboration for both MVF and the Campaign. What could be another focus of the Campaign is the World Bank and donors exclusive focus on Universal Primary Education which only deals with 5 or 6 years basic education when it should be 9 years basic education to ensure that the child does not drop out of school and enter work. The reality is that there are still many countries that do not guarantee the right to free and compulsory 9 years basic education. In fact the ILO has used Convention 182 to advocate for the right of children removed or at risk of the worst forms of child labour up until 18 years to education.

MVF played an active role in the physical march of the historic Global March Against Child Labour in 1998 in Andhra Pradesh but are not actively engaged at present. MVF is in a good position to help bolster such international networks and movements including for the Global Campaign for Education.

MVF and Multilateral Agencies

ILO

MVF is one of the first implementing partners supported by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the ILO. The MVF has subsequently influenced and demonstrated to the ILO how education and social mobilization can be used to combat child labour. The work of MVF has served over the years as a convincing model for the ILO constituents and helped shape and support the policy framework of ILO-IPEC on child labour and education which advocates for free and compulsory education of good quality up until minimum working age. (ILO/IPEC, *Combating Child Labour through Education*, 2004)

While strongly supportive of the Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No. 138), MVF has been critical about the recent campaign for, adoption and ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999 (No.182). Since MVF felt that the recent Convention was designed to deal only with a portion of the larger issue of child labour, there was serious concern that it would weaken the strength of ILO Convention 138 by setting a new, lower standard on child labour. Thus far, those concerns do not seem to have turned into a serious problem and in fact the opposite has actually happened. After years of struggling with just a few ratifications from countries with widespread child labour, the number of ratifications for the Minimum Age Convention which was adopted in 1973, have almost doubled in the last 5 years at 135 since the adoption of Convention 182.

It seems that the increased international attention on child labour and the process of defining core labour standards has motivated a number of governments to make the effort of ratifying Convention 138. In this context, the recent Convention can be considered a well-placed stepping stone for countries moving towards the ultimate elimination of child labour and aims to set up processes and structures at country level which will also be important for the longer term goal of ending all forms of child labour. The campaign at all levels from the grassroots to the politicians for the adoption of Convention 182 has brought unprecedented global awareness and consensus on the

problem of child labour. It should also be considered that according to the latest figures, the majority of child labour is in its worst forms.¹⁴ It should be remembered, nonetheless, that the overall elimination of child labour is also the ultimate goal of the ILO.

At the same time, MVF has found it more practical from their point of view to work towards the prevention of *all* child labour based on the principles of ILO Convention 138. Since the ILO's policy on child labour and education is also based on linking free and compulsory education with the minimum working age, there are indeed many possibilities for collaboration. Unfortunately, however, the differences in opinion of whether it is possible or desirable to target specific worst forms seem to have discouraged collaboration between MVF and the ILO on several areas of agreement particularly in this field of child labour and education. It is recommended that there be increased dialogue for potential collaboration between the two organizations both in India and at Headquarter level. It is proposed that there be joint dialogue between MVF, the relevant ILO staff including the Child Labour Specialist in the ILO Sub-Regional Office in Delhi, the Child Labour and Education Specialist in the ILO Regional Office based in Bangkok, and ILO-IPEC Headquarters.

UNESCO HQ

The Dakar framework for action makes no reference to child labour which is considered by many a serious omission. Despite this, UNESCO has been keen on highlighting child labour as a key obstacle to EFA and MVF has been an important part of influencing UNESCO on this. MVF also through its action on the ground has demonstrated to UNESCO both in India and at headquarters the inextricable linkages between the achievement of EFA and the elimination of child labour. There have been other organizations such as the Global March, the Global Campaign for Education and the ILO that have also been promoting these linkages with UNESCO and MVF has contributed enormously to such policy dialogue at global level.

There are several official document and speeches of UNESCO which highlight the linkages between child labour and Education For All including one bulletin Education Today (2002c:8) where Abhimanyu Singh, the Head of the Dakar Follow-up Unit at UNESCO HQ states: "Governments are shying away from tackling child labour because it's a very complex political and socio-economic issue. But, the bottom line is that all children have the right to education. So, if we want to achieve Education For All, the issue of child labour must be taken more squarely into account". The same bulletin

¹⁴ According to both "Future without Child Labour "Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 2002 and "Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour," IPEC 2002, there are 178 million children in worst forms of child labour out of a total of 246 million child labourers between the ages of 5 – 17 years. Girls who are not paid for household work in their home or another home are not counted in all official labour statistics. But, if the conditions of their work is considered to be worst forms under Convention 182, Article 3(d), girls' domestic work could also be considered worst forms of child labour. If these girls were counted, there would in fact be greater evidence of child labour including in its worst forms. This points to the need for more research and statistical data gathering and analysis considering the hidden and often clandestine nature of child labour including in its worst forms.

features an interview with Shanta Sinha and the work of the MVF to demonstrate why this is true.

In summer, 2002, Shanta Sinha had been invited by UNESCO HQ in summer 2002 EFA Working Group Meeting to make a key note speech on the experiences of India and the challenges in achieving EFA. The ILO strongly supported her presentation and made a good alliance in pushing strongly the issue of child labour there and making an impression on government, donor, UN agency and NGO representatives there

Cotton Seeds: an example of collaboration

MVF has had a ten year relation with India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), and supported the advocacy work of ICN (and consequently other groups in the Netherlands, the US, Germany and the UK) against child labour in cotton seed production. MVF has played a crucial role in the campaign since they have been able to engage companies on the ground with pressure exerted from the MVF side in India and from the INC side abroad towards the Multinationals. This is a truly solid example of a North-South multi-stakeholder initiative against child labour. This could be a model for how companies can be engaged in a process of eradicating child labour in cooperation with a local civil society organization, with pressure and other forms of engagement from the side of international civil society organizations (see <http://www.indiatogether.org>).

The INC in its media and advocacy work has used data and information provided by MVF to describe the hazardous condition of work on the cotton seed farms in AP which are being produced for multinational corporations Advanta (Dutch), Bayer (German), Emergent Genetics (US, with co-investment from Dutch-British Unilever) and Monsanto (US). Due to local pressure in India by MVF and international pressure on the MNCs by ICN, in September 2003, the Association of Seed Industry agreed to work with MVF to eradicate child labour in collaboration with other stakeholders. Unfortunately, however the MNCs have not lived up to this promise which is why the pressure has continued.

The international coalition led by ICN has made demands on all cottonseed companies to:

- Eliminate child labour and ensure education for all children engaged in cotton seed production
- Pay fair procurement prices to farmers so that they can hire adult labourers with at least minimum wage
- Eliminate all forms of bonded labour in cotton seed production in India
- Respect the workers' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Provide OSH training to farmers and seed organizers

Unplanned, Unexpected Benefits of the MVF Programme¹⁵

- The MVF movement opens up the moral spaces that all human beings have within themselves. This leads to a change in relationships within the family as well within the community as a whole.
- Parents having taken on the responsibility of sending their children to school, making all necessary sacrifices, feel genuinely like proud loving parents. The children withdrawn from work and sent to school begin to feel like children who are valued and whose needs and rights are respected. The sense of self worth of the children particularly the generally neglected girl child goes up. Men have started taking responsibility for the child, sharing work with the woman whose workload often increases by sending a child to school. The family once again becomes a family, with all the love, cordiality, joy and pain that a normal family experiences. This change in family relationships has been reported to us repeatedly.¹⁶
- The dehumanization, the lack of self worth caused by poverty, deprivation etc., is to some extent countered by the 'human' act of working for the most vulnerable. It raises the sense of dignity of the person making the effort as it does of the beneficiary of that effort. Repeatedly very poor CRPF workers, landless peasants, part time coolies, village potters, etc., told us, that after having taken up this work their status in the village had gone up.
- The village landlord, the headmaster and teacher, the shopkeeper, the tailor, members belonging to diverse castes or communities, the elders, the youth who worked together to do something not for themselves or their community but for the deprived children of the village irrespective of their caste or family backgrounds, begins to create a sense of bonding, a feeling of community. The restoration of a sense of the village community is a major gain in times when either intense individualism (each one for himself and his family) or mobilization of support on the basis of fragmented identities based on caste, community, etc., is the norm.
- Lowering of divisions within the village. The gap between the youth and the elders bridged. They are able to sit together and grapple with issues. The caste divide is virtually disappearing in many areas.¹⁷ We participated in meals served in Dalit houses where the village elite joined in. Dalit health workers of the MVF freely enter the interiors of upper caste houses to help pregnant mothers or mothers of newborn babies. It appeared that short of the restriction on inter-caste

¹⁵ This section is based on observation during field visits and discussions with MVF activists at various levels and not on data, which has been quantified.

¹⁶ We witnessed a touching scene at the Chevella residential girl's camp where a tribal Lambada girl's mother who is a casual labourer in a far away city came to visit her after several months. She had brought some money and gifts and the child clung to her making numerous childlike demands and asking her not to leave her and go away. There was such tenderness expressed on both sides it brought tears to our eyes. Some local bystanders commented that normally among the poor like her the child would be shooed away.

¹⁷ As a dalit activist told us in Mominpet mandal, "the 'blot' of working only among the dalits is wiped out from us. There is greater social acceptability. We can now sit and discuss with village elders which we could never do earlier."

marriage most caste taboos have been eroded which have been exposed to prolonged MVF or MVF type of activities.

- There is a visible fall in violence at the village level, even during periods prone to violence such as election times. Consensuality as a method of solving disputes seems to have grown. This is partly a result of the lowering of divisions mentioned above and partly the result of the consensual, non-violent discussion based mobilization promoted by the MVF. The weapon of dialogue is in evidence. We attended several CRPF meetings where members from all political parties, including communist extremists sat together congenially and discussed. One MVF street theatre that we witnessed was put up using the house front of a CPI(ML) activist, with the prominent party logos and slogans forming the backdrop. In fact in Andhra Pradesh the MVF has succeeded in creating democratic space in dangerous Naxal areas like Amrabad in Mehboobnagar, areas from which the World Bank funded government *velugu* programme was driven away but the MVF succeeded in making an entry.

In Assam even underground militants, have been persuaded to cooperate on the child right issue. Tribal leaders from the North-east who have deep-seated hostility to each other were brought to Ranga Reddy for exposure and we are told are now cooperating on the child rights question.

- Emergence of local level leaders who take up local issues.
- As was mentioned in the overview once the positive energies of the people were aroused on one question, child labour it created capacities for addressing other issues. It is reported that in areas where the community had become very active on the child labour question the community also began to settle issues of land, water, marriage etc., locally and even taking it further if necessary.
- Adult wages appear to have gone up in areas where child labour has been abolished. (as reported by MVF)
- There is a noticeable decrease in alcoholism among poor to enable them to send their children to school. There is a decrease in other wasteful expenditure as well.
- In families where there were non-working members there is a tendency to take up work to finance the schooling of children.
- The strong MVF campaign in areas like the Ranga Reddy district has led to a shift away from child labour using hybrid cotton, and floriculture to other types of cultivation.
- A discernable increase in the child marriage age has occurred.
- An example of changed social values is that reportedly discussions in social occasions in the village would no longer centre on land related issues but would focus on enquiring about each other's children. One is used to this happening in urban middle class families but represents a definite shift among poor villagers.
- MVF has become a mobilization-cum-education model for other parts of AP, India and abroad.

It appears thus that both the planned and the unplanned outcomes of the MVF intervention have been generally positive, and provide affirmation that the basic approach and strategy has been appropriate to the context and the problem. Our recommendations,

given in the next section, make some suggestions which we hope would be constructive inputs as MVF plans for its future activities, areas of focus, and strategies to be used.

Section IV Recommendations

1. MVF's effort to move away from implementer to technical advisor is most welcome and crucial for replication on a wider scale. This should be more strongly supported to ensure national and community ownership for sustainability. At the same time, it is important to remember that the credibility and the strength of MVF's approach lies in its demonstration on the ground. MVF will therefore need to follow a dual strategy, of implementing on the one hand and advising on the other. Capacities in both areas need to be maintained.
2. In its implementing role, while a lot of work remains to be done in eradication of child labour itself, there are also several new directions that have emerged from MVF's work, which include working more with adolescent girls, working with disabled children; advocating against child marriage; examining the content and quality of education, raising issues of health and environment. Entering into other areas which require greater technical skills could be done either through networking with other groups, or alternatively through extending the cadre itself, whichever seems more appropriate. However, the existing MVF cadre is primarily skilled in social mobilization and that should remain the primary focus of the MVF.
3. The shift of the MVF towards technical support has several resource implications.
 - a. The community based organizations promoted by the MVF such as the CRPF and the BKVV play a central role, and all efforts to build and strengthen these organizations need to be supported
 - b. The MVF effort to train, strengthen and empower existing community organizations like the Gram Panchayats or the School Education Committees needs to be fully supported.
 - c. The fellowship programme, which enables the MVF to send its activists to other areas to provide technical support, is crucial and must be expanded if the MVF model is to be replicated widely.
 - d. The MVF focus on training their activists on a regular basis needs to be supported as it is critical to the MVF being able to provide technical support to wider areas both in a geographical sense and in terms of the growing number of issues taken up.
4. One critical role the MVF plays is in undertaking research and surveys of the ground realities concerning the education and health of each child. The data thus generated plays an important part in mobilizing the community as well as the government and other agencies. This is a crucial task in both regions where the MVF is the implementer and regions where they provide only technical support. This role of the MVF has so far not been substituted by any other agency even in areas where the community organizations like the CRPF or the Gram Panchayats are very strong and active. The MVF must continue to receive support for this activity.
5. The MVF movement has benefited considerably due to the external historical factor of a strong male youth and student movement, which formed its original base of

support. The MVF has been from the beginning sensitive to the issue of gender discrimination against the girl child and has ensured that girl children benefited from this programme as much as male children. However with the movement increasingly focusing on issues relating to adolescent women, pre and post-natal health care, child marriage, etc., MVF can consider ways in which female adolescents and women can take on more leadership roles in advocacy efforts including on the issue of the girl-child to serve as role models to the affected communities. MVF could reflect on this and if they also appreciate the value in itself of women and girls leading the struggle for their own rights, there could be intensive review of what processes are needed to encourage this kind of participation including linking with other movements and organizations that can support this. All efforts directed towards a greater attention to the girl child as well as towards bringing women into the movement need full support.

6. The MVF may consider strengthening its fund raising initiatives from the people themselves (through donations, subscriptions, etc.)¹⁸. Even if these initiatives meet only a fraction of the total financial requirements of the MVF they are well worth the effort in terms of their mobilizational value and in building commitment of the stakeholders.
7. The MVF model has received recognition at state and national level as well as internationally. However more dialogue, both nationally and internationally, would be useful as differences of opinion exist between different agencies although there may be large areas of agreement as well.
8. At the international level, there is indeed a great deal that other international agencies and organizations around the world can benefit and learn from the experiences of MVF. It is recommended that there continue to be promotion of the work of MVF globally through documentation in printed, video and audio forms, the media, exposure visits and key policy meetings or events. While the MVF has been critical of the child labour and basic education policies of various UN agencies, they can also be allies in some respects. Considering the strong mutual objectives of child labour abolition and universalization of elementary education by both MVF and the ILO, it is recommended that efforts be made by both parties for increased dialogue and collaboration at headquarter and country levels. In addition to the School is the Best Place to Work Campaign, it is recommended that MVF work more closely with the ILO, Global March and other organizations to address the serious omission of child labour in the Dakar Framework and integrate child labour concerns into EFA planning, resources and implementation led by UNESCO and World Bank. MVF can also work with the ILO and the Global March to advocate for free and compulsory education up until minimum working age which UNESCO has demonstrated support for. MVF can also join the ILO, Global March, the Global Campaign for Education and other organizations to lobby the donor governments and the World Bank to move beyond Universal Primary Education and ensure 9 years basic education as a matter of priority.

¹⁸ In many villages where the MVF is active the village community decided to collect a small contribution from all users of the ration shops.