



## Abhivyakti Media for Development, Nashik Project – Aflatoun and Aflateen by Mel-Jol



### ▪ **About ‘Abhivyakti’:**

‘Abhivyakti’ means self expression. Abhivyakti Media for Development has been facilitating media and communication towards sustainable development since 1987. It is located in Nashik, India. The organisation’s mission is to strengthen citizenship, local governance and social justice by enhancing the leadership capacities resources of NGOs and grassroots communities.

Abhivyakti believes that critical and creative communities are possible to challenge the hegemony of the singular world-view. Abhivyakti works to strengthen the processes that develop, enhance and deepen the emergence of critical and creative communities at the grassroots and which rejuvenate grassroots leadership, democracy and social justice.

### ▪ **Features and Background :**

Abhivyakti has always worked to increase the use of different tools and media forms by the community and reiterate and strengthen space of the voiceless communities in the dominant media culture. It has always worked to facilitate the process of linking the prevailing media culture with the issues and concerns of the underprivileged and voiceless communities. Abhivyakti has taken a lead role in production and creative use of media which is sensitive towards the needs and concerns of the poor and the needy communities.

Abhivyakti has skilfully developed the capacities of numerous development professionals and activists in the state of Maharashtra in particular and others in the diverse areas of development communication. The subjects of these trainings included group media, community media, development journalism, communication skills & leadership development, training of trainers, effective documentation of development processes, writing skills, creative communication with children, team building, parent effectiveness, and gender and sexuality education and so on.

These training programs have benefitted the activists working at grassroots level, staff in the Government and Semi Government offices, community members, PRI officials, teachers among others. Instead of following the traditional ‘Teaching-learning’ approach, these training programs offers a vibrant space for co-learning and reflection. These trainings are proving helpful to the participants not only at their office places but also for their personal development in comprehensive way. Many of the youth and women have found these trainings useful in increasing their employability chances.

Abhivyakti had a meaningful experience of 'Media Education'. Media Education program was implemented with the help of local community organization and parents. We explored the basic needs and interest of children who were turning media consumers in a big way. Media education was organized in a creative and learning atmosphere for the involvement of children. Parents were also engaged and contributed their experiences in facilitating the sessions in the schools of Nashik. Learning through experience, knowledge sharing and exchanges, collective learning and wisdom was the thrust behind the media education programme. For more than last fifteen years, Abhivyakti has worked with children for their social and educational development. By involving and motivating parents in that activity, they reformed their group at community level. It was known as 'Sujan Palak' (Conscious Parenthood).

Abhivyakti has gained huge experience in Media Education with children and parents since last 15 years. Perhaps, it was this reason that Meljol, a Mumbai-based organisation approached us to initiate a similar programme with school students in Nashik. We thus started for the first time 'Aflatoun', a social and financial Education Program' with 125 Primary schools of Zilha Parishad at Malegaon block of Nashik District with 15000 Children in July 2013 to July 2015. In the second year, we started Aflatoun program in another 40 Municipal Corporation Schools at Nashik block (2014 to 2016) with 4800 children. Then we started Aflatoun for Primary and Aflateen program for secondary school students in 100 Schools of mainly Zilha Parishad and a few of Nashik Municipal Corporation. We had covered nearly 15000 school children.

## ▪ **Goal & Objectives**

### ◆ **Overall goals of Meljol Aflatoun and Aflateen are -**

To give opportunities and build confidence in children for their active involvement in Social, Psychological, Educational, Environmental and Financial activities, and develop positive and creative changes in the ZP school and Corporation schools of Malegaon and Nashik Taluka of Nashik District of Maharashtra state.

### ◆ **Objectives during the project period:**

- ✓ To create awareness and encourage children regarding their Rights and Responsibilities, and improve their capacities in planning and decision-making process for living a meaningful life.
- ✓ To encourage and promote children for initiating positive environmental change through their active participation, awareness and right to know its importance.
- ✓ To create awareness amongst children about the importance of 'Saving' and build their confidence and strength in utilising water, light, environment, money.

- ✓ To encourage and promote children regarding their active participation in educational, social, financial and life-skill enrichment process.

The philosophy behind this process is to affirm the value of wisdom of the participants and to bring that into the open for further discussion. We believe that each person should have an opportunity to take active part in the learning process. The role of the facilitator is to enable the silent ones to feel comfortable and create space for them to speak and share their concerns and ideas. We believe training is part of our education programme at the core of which is liberating people from all that holds them back from a full human life.

## ▪ **Details about Aflatoun and Aflateen Program**

### ◆ **Aflatoun – Overview**

Social and Financial Education is aimed at helping young people think critically, learn about rights and responsibilities, and gain financial knowledge and skills that will enable them to achieve their dreams. It also helps them reflect and make sense of the life transitions they are going through, and how they can best be engaged in the world. Social Education teaches them to believe in themselves and become responsible citizens by understanding and being involved in social issues that affect them while Financial Education teaches the important skills of saving, appropriate spending, budgeting, planning and engaging in age-appropriate Social and Financial Enterprises. Children also learn to the optimum and effective utilization of the resources (financial & non-financial).

### ◆ **About Aflatoun, The character**

To make children relate to the program, a hypothetical character was conceptualized and as the name suggested by children based on then popular Bollywood movie song it was named as Aflatoun. Aflatoun character is a little fireball from outer space. Aflatoun is a unique character who brings together all Aflatoun children across the globe; the children are happy to know that this character is friends with their counterparts all around the world.

### • **Aflatoun Social and Financial Education program is based on 5 core elements:**

The teaching principle used in Aflatoun's program is called child-centered learning. Children are given space to express themselves, to act on their own, and to solve practical problems together. They act in these situations according to the Aflatoun motto: 'Explore, Think, Investigate and Act'. Methods of learning include storytelling, song, drama and dance, games, Aflatoun club formation (Children club). All activities and books covered in the current Aflatoun programme address these issues through "Five Core Elements" that are balanced throughout the curriculum.

## **1. Self Understanding and Personal Exploration**

Aflatoun boost a child's confidence and understanding by helping them explore their own identity from an early age. Children are encouraged to determine and assume about their place in the world as a child, a girl or a boy, a son or daughter, a student, and a citizen. Children are also familiarized with nationality, ethnicity and religion, which made children aware of and appreciate the different characteristics that make them unique individuals. Aflatoun programme material promoted compassion, respect for others, and stress the child's position within a wider community.

## **2. Rights and Responsibilities**

Aflatoun programme is grounded in the UN convention on the Rights of the Child. We look into four major rights i.e., Right to Survival, Right to Protection, Right to Development and Right to Participation. Children increase their understanding and knowledge of their rights as well as those of others. They are given an opportunity to initiate, plan and organize activities that may positively promote child rights. Rights do not exist alone, it goes hand in hand along with responsibilities, children learn about their responsibilities towards themselves, their family, community and the environment.

## **3. Saving and Spending**

Children as we all know are keen in collecting things that they think have value. The programme develops a broad and clear definition of savings. Children save money and learn how to spend responsibly. Even objects of personal value and natural resources are promoted as equally important as money (coins and bills). Aflatoun often used club and class approach to saving. Children set up Aflatoun club and elected a child leader who managed a group saving process under the supervision of trained teacher. It is place for democratic decisions and the club organize social and financial enterprises.

## **4. Planning and Budgeting**

The concept of thinking ahead and planning is a skill, and is a key to individual development. Planning and budgeting let children to set both personal and financial goals for the future. Children starts to think ahead by their experience and look at what their future may hold. They learn how to make a concrete steps towards a goal that they set for themselves.

## **5. Social and Financial Enterprise**

In social and financial enterprise, children view themselves and act as active participants in their community. It is the rational extension of the different learning objectives and activities in Aflatoun programme. Social enterprise focuses on improving their own lives and the lives of the people around them through their

collective activities and action, while in financial enterprise children make money through small business initiatives as a way to learn more about the market. The objectives of social and financial enterprise may seem very different however they are connected by the idea that children can play an active and solve a set of problem together. The money earned here is not important as much as their learning about the world and realizing that they are capable of accomplishing things together.

Based on these concepts, a well-structured and balanced curriculum has been drafted which was for children aging between 6-14yrs. The curriculum itself was refined over 18 years of action research in India, followed by 10 pilot projects around the world. It has been adapted to be appropriate for children in different regions and of different ages, and to be taught both in classrooms and out of school. MelJol conducted training, facilitated interactions with the children and teachers and help them understand and implement the program during these sessions.

## ◆ Aflateen – Overview

Aflateen programme is designed as a journey for young people to reflect on their lives, learn to explore issues and problems in society, acquire skills that help them become engaged citizens and enact enterprises and projects with other young people from their communities. Young people have prominent roles in these inspirational stories as well. The Aflateen programme can help young people realize their potential and become agents of change.

Social and financial education is aimed at helping young people think critically and learn about rights and responsibilities, as well as gain financial knowledge and skills that will enable them to make the best use of resources. It also helps them reflect and make sense of the transitions they are going through and how they can best be engaged in the world. Social education teaches them responsible citizenship needing to know about and being involved in social issues that affect them, while financial education teaches the children the important skills of saving, budgeting and engaging in enterprises.

### 1. Self-Understanding and Personal Exploration

Young people have positive and negative traits, and they are all in the process of learning more about them. The importance of knowing self and others is critical to reaching out one's goals. Becoming independent and building a bridge for the future.

They are also influenced and affected by several people that they have met and events that they have experienced. Each time they change little with the effect of interaction and get some additional knowledge they already have from the person whom he/she is interacting. They start struggling between their roles of their parent's children and becoming independent people. Aflateen help the children to understand that each family is unique and there are different family models possible. This is also the age at which young people transit from being children into becoming young adults – and the tensions that arise as they grapple with their independence, identity, values and even physical changes, sets the stage for more

personal self-reflection, understanding and exploration. Aflateen module provides young people, philosophy of change and makes them learn coping with it. It also speaks about the goals and necessary steps required to achieve them.

## **2. Rights and Responsibilities**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child is a human rights treaty. Aflateen manual make the young children aware of the rights concept. The CRC (Child Rights Convention) treaty is divided into four pillars : – (Rights to survival, Right to development, Rights to Protection and Right to Participation). Aflateen Program guide children not only in claiming young people's rights, but also in performing their responsibilities towards themselves, their family, their community and the environment. This sense of responsibility will later help guide the decisions they make when they come to set up their own Social or Financial Enterprises. That is why Aflateen encourages experiential learning where young persons are free to offer opinions and express themselves.

## **3. Saving and Spending**

Aflateen's holistic approach toward development, a broad definition of savings is promoted; one that entails both material and non-material resources. Saving water and using natural resources responsibly are deemed just as important as saving money. Young people, aged 15 years and older, make decisions about saving and spending their money and the use of resources. They have growing consumer power and need to start preparing for financial independence. The Program emphasizes the skills that will help young people demonstrate responsible use and management of resources.

## **4. Planning and Budgeting**

The process of learning to be a change-maker in the Aflateen programme culminates in the participants' planning and completion of a Social or Financial Enterprise. In Aflateen program, participants through the process of choosing a Social or Financial Enterprise, forming a group, planning and budgeting their Enterprise with their group, and finally conducting the Enterprise. It is important for participants to realize that they can make a difference; that they can set a goal and make it happen. Their goal might be a social goal for their community or a financial goal that will affect the social reality of the participants and those around them.

## **5. Social and Financial Enterprise**

It is the rational extension of different learning objectives and activities in Aflateen programme. Social enterprise focuses on improving their own lives and the lives of the people around them through their collective activities and action, while in financial enterprise children make money through small business initiatives as a way to learn more about the market. The objectives of social and financial enterprise may seem very different however they are connected by the idea that children can play an active and solve a set of problem together. The money

earned here is not important as much as their learning about the world and realizing that they are capable of accomplishing things together.

Based on these concepts, a well-structured and balanced curriculum has been drafted for children aging between 15-18 yrs. The curriculum itself was refined over years of action research, followed by pilot projects around the world.

### Objectives of Aflateen program:

- Examine and reflect on their identities, age, gender, nationality, values and beliefs, as well as their relationships with family, friends and communities.
- Critique and investigate how rights are realized or violated in society.
- Describe and practice responsible use and accumulation of financial, natural and other kinds of resources (people, planet and profit).
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct planning and budgeting activities towards realizing a desired goal.
- Learn to plan and start micro-enterprises and community projects that have a positive effect in their communities.
- Develop socially responsible and economically empowered youth to be agents of change
- To understand money and market, which affect youth more as they become consumers, workers, and producers.

### • Activities of the program

1. Teachers Training Workshops - to train teachers on the concept, curriculum and the methodologies used in Aflateen Social and financial education program
2. Sessions in the schools - based on the MelJol Aflateen series curriculum which included songs, fun games, activities etc.
3. Formation of Children Aflateen Club - to provide the children a platform to express their feelings, discuss the issues they face, learn from peers. Children also elected their representatives (Leaders such as President, Secretary, Treasurer) democratically to carry out the day to day work of the club.
4. Formation of School Level Aflateen Bank - to inculcate the habit of saving, Children are encouraged to save money in the Aflateen bank while the transaction is maintained in their individual passbook and school ledger. The teacher is the custodian of the money saved and if the saved amount exceeds a predefined amount then a formal bank account or a postal account is opened in the name of the school.
5. School Level Camps - are done to reinforce the learning and sharing of ideas at school level. Children get exposure as this program is of the children, organized by children, for the children. Teachers help them when required. The group work is expected to be held in the school camps.
6. Cluster Level Camps - are done to provide children with the opportunity to share their learning with their counterparts in other schools. Generally it is done at cluster level, by bringing 4-5 children from 6 schools in a particular block.

7. Bank or Post office or Enterprise Visits - to gain the understanding of a financial institution set up and its functions. Also gives the exposure and demonstration to the children to explore more to set up the enterprise.
8. Social Enterprise - Once the Aflatoun clubs are formed, the children conduct regular meetings of clubs and discuss many topics that matter to them. Sometime children feel the need to address any of the issues at larger level. They discuss the issue in group, decides the strategies to address it, take help of teachers and organize any activity for awareness generation. It is not expected that the children will resolve the issue, but the efforts towards resolving issue enhance their ability to think critically and explore alternative for the same in group.
9. Financial Enterprise - The children in Aflatoun club discuss things in groups and plan to organize any entrepreneurship activities. It gives first-hand experience to the children to think critically, experiment planning and budgeting aspects and learn things on their own. Money earned in the enterprise activity is not important rather than the learning of how to start a business and the prerequisite of it. This exercise develops ambitions of children of becoming an entrepreneur.
10. Entrepreneurship Lab - Entrepreneurship Lab is conceived to be a place where the young child feels at home to gain knowledge, also garner and practice some of the skills to nurture the entrepreneurial streak that child must have found while participating in the Aflateen Program. The concept behind the Entrepreneurship Lab is to provide opportunities for these young learners to think critically and act in an enterprising ways. It also has a clear focus on core and soft skills, and the ability to transfer them to different contexts in the different work surrounding.
11. Aflatoun Annual Day - to Disseminate to the local education authorities, local media etc. The children come together to celebrate International Aflatoun Day which has been their inspiration for Social and Financial Education. Children with the help of teachers organize various activities to share things they have learnt in this programme. The interstate or international talks can also be organized to interact with children from other communities, countries.

Between 2015 to 2016 Abhivaytki implemented MelJol Aflatoun and Aflateen program in 20 Nashik Municipal Corporation and 80 Zilha Parishad schools in Nashik District in collaboration with MeJol, Mumbai.

During the implementation Meljol program our facilitator team regularly visited schools and facilitated sessions with the children through monitoring visits. The children were briefed on the concepts of Meljol, the five core components of the Meljol program which are - my identity, my rights and responsibilities, financial education, social issues and preparation for change. Children were made aware of their rights and responsibilities in schools.

We gave inputs on saving by stressing the importance of saving. Then children established Aflatoun bank by holding elections in a democratic manner in school. They were regularly saving money in Aflatoun Banks by operating it themselves. We also gave inputs on social issues, created awareness especially about their responsibilities, and then established Aflatoun Club by holding election in a democratic manner in schools. Children played important roles through Aflatoun

Club for social awareness and solving their social issues at school and community level.

We also introduced social and economic entrepreneurship, to increase the awareness among the students about social values, child rights and responsibilities by organising two hours sessions which were conducted with the students in each school throughout the year.

We organised workshop on Financial Entrepreneurship Skill Lab event to develop the entrepreneurial skills of school children under this project. 30 students (16 girls and 14 boys) from Zilla Parishad and Municipal schools participated in the workshop. We organised various informative and skill oriented sessions in the office of Abhivyakti. Students learnt various lessons of entrepreneurship, their confidence increased, they got motivation through ever entrepreneurial speech and industry visits. During this Entrepreneurship Skill Lab event we gave knowledge, skill and perspective about enterprises. They prepared best from waste like bottle art painting and designing, paper bag, paper articles. Children learnt coconut shell and wooden jewellery, and other items like key chain, bracelets, necklaces, etc. During our annual Ankur Film Festival during 22 to 25 December 2016 at Raosaheb Thorat Hall, Gangapur road, Nashik we gave learning opportunity to the children and encouraged them to set up their stalls with products created by them. In this stall they sold all the jewellery made by them. They got business skill, confidence, marketing skill, how to sell their products, how to communicate with customer, negotiation skill, etc.

- **Outcome of the project:**

- ✓ Children became aware about their right and responsibilities, friendly and openly initiated dialogue with teachers. They also took active interest in learning and gained by experience.
- ✓ Through Meljol Aflatoun and Aflateen program our relation and network got rooted in Zilha Parishad and Municipal Corporation schools and empowered children at a local level.
- ✓ Children developed courageous, confident and leadership qualities which will contribute in increasing their participation in the process of their right and responsibilities, educational, socio-economic and environmental activities.
- ✓ The social and financial awareness, importance of savings which the children developed will enable them to contribute their initiatives and leadership at local level.

## A few photos of the program



Children drawing Aflatoun on black-board

Facilitators conducting session with Children on Aflatoun Concept



Students involved in an activity



## Formation of Aflatoun Club



### Community Visit and discussion with children during summer holidays



### Children understanding concept of Aflatoun



## Children singing and dancing with Aflatoun songs



**Introduction of Child Rights and Responsibilities using poster**



**Establishing Aflatoun Bank by election process among classroom**