INTRODUCTION

As Richa, our Programme Coordinator and I walked into our partner school in Sion, Mumbai, I paused to glance around. I saw a dilapidated building, overlooking a slushy road, playing school to over 3000 children. I noticed how some of the classrooms doubled up as residences, walking past the smelly toilet, and the noisy classrooms, finally, in the midst of it all, laid eyes upon the children who, oblivious to it all, were just happy to be there.

We spoke to the children and sensed their excitement about their mentors was unparalleled. My despair over the setting was displaced by an overwhelming sense of hope and gratitude. Hope for our children to break this poverty cycle, hope that their tomorrow is a more dignified one, hope that we will walk toward equity, one child at a time. Gratitude to the very hardworking MMI team and the wonderful mentors who can and will make this possible!

THE STORY LAST YEAR

This story is mirrored across our partner centres across Mumbai. In 2016, we operated in 12 centers across 10 locations, impacting more than 300 mentor-mentee lives. These pairs have together contributed to over 5000 hours of mentoring – learning English, working on children’s confidence levels, investing parents, raising funds for the mentee’s education, building a better future and so much more! From the mentor who recoded her mentees voice and played it back to her getting the mentee to hear her own voice in order to make it stronger, to the mentor who set goals and encouraged his mentee to get there by listening to stories of failure and then pushing him further all the while with empathy, the journey has been nothing short of incredible for the mentors, mentees and everyone else involved. This hasn’t been all roses either. We have had our own challenges of mentor dropouts, team changes, funding issues, school and spaces issues – and so much more. A lot of insights and learning!

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING FOR 2017

As we plunge into the next year, we are excited to pilot a new curriculum around Socio-Emotional Learning for our Year 2 mentor-mentee pairs, look forward to use technology more, and implement ways to make our mentoring relationships more meaningful and our support more targeted. We have many new partners and are grateful about the continued support from old ones. As of August 2017, we are already at 500+ mentoring pairs strong, with a team of 8 people ambitious to exponentially grow this number to reach many more children through our partners. 2017 is a year where we step back in order to step up in 2018 – with a much bigger, stronger and cohesive cohort of mentors.

CALL TO ACTION

As we grow, we are in need of ideas, funds, feedback, talent and of course, mentors! We are constantly thinking about using technology better, measuring impact, collaborating, reaching out to children in need of mentoring, strengthening existing relationships, mobilizing and taking action – we are happy to hear from you on this or anything else about the program.

I moved to Mumbai two months ago. Apart from the fast pace and stark inequity of the city, I am also humbled by the grit and determination I have seen. The children, the HM, the teachers, the mentors, and most of all my team in the office. We have a big task in front of us – but we fear not.

As Emerson says, “What lies behind us, and what lies ahead of us are little matters to what lies within us”. 

Notes from our Executive Director by Shruthi Iyer
Contents

01 Our Team
02 A Year in Review
03 Vision and Mission
04 Mentor - Mentee Stories
05 Our Events
06 Our Partners
07 Our Donors
08 Be a part of Our Journey
09 Budget and Expenditure
10 Conclusion
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Founder

VALERIE VON DER TANN
Program Director

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Executive Director

SABAHAH POTIA
Senior Program Coordinator

DIANA ARANHA
Program Coordinator

KRUSHNA DHARIA
Program Coordinator (Take Charge)

ANKITA SAUMYA
Program Coordinator

RICHAA ARORA
Program Coordinator

JESMINA SANGMA
Recruitment and Operations Associate

JANAVI PARIKH
Communications Consultant
A Year in Review

2016
APRIL 2016-MARCH 2017

2017

MAY
3 NEW additions to the Program team – largest in-house recruitment yet!

AUG
Decided to go deeper into the community with home visits at our mentees’ homes

DEC
3 centres graduated after completing one year – 34 pairs decided to continue on to year 2! And added over 40 mentor-mentee in our existing centres.

JUNE
Launch of biggest cohort yet with 165 mentors and mentees across 5 centres

SEPT
We turned consultants to another mentoring program in the city and added over 95 pairs to our program bringing us one step closer to our dream of building a culture of mentoring in India

JAN
We crowdfunded to raise over INR 9 lakh through SCMM with the help of our dedicated mentors and their supporters Formally launched support for mentors continuing to year 2 and beyond

FEB
Preparing for our next big launch and hoping to double the number of mentor-mentee pairs from last year

MAR
Decided to go deeper into the community with home visits at our mentees’ homes
Mentor Me India looks to not just pair children with strong role models, but throughout the course of one year it equips them to build a long-lasting relationship. Getting into a new relationship isn’t easy, and when it’s with a different age group from a different background it’s even more difficult. The programme helps mentors and mentees bridge this gap by handholding both throughout the year by providing resources, a dedicated point of contact and ensuring that they always remember their objective while having fun.

How programme aligns with our theme of **MMI as a Community**

A one-on-one mentoring journey can be lonely, leaving mentor-mentee pairs disconnected from the larger picture. Over the course of the last year, Mentor Me India has strived to embrace these one-on-one journeys and build a strong, dedicated community of individuals who passionately believe in paying it forward and learning from each other. The programme has done this through frequent group sessions in the communities of our mentees, meet-ups between just mentors and encouraging all our stakeholders involved to go beyond the programme requirements. This year we are proud of the fact that our mentors initiated and organized several exposure activities not just for their mentees, but for the first time in MMI history with their mentees’ parents!

**VISION**

All children discover and achieve their potential regardless of their background.

**MISSION**

Help children in low-income communities achieve their full potential by supporting one-on-one relationships with strong role models.
When Sonali first met Gayatri, she noticed that Gayatri is very quiet and shy and refuses to say anything other than thank you and smile at everything that Sonali said. Sonali would ask her what she wants to do in a session and Gayatri would say "Jo bhi aap bolo". Sonali is a life coach and works with people on improving their self-confidence and helping them figure out their life goals. However, she had never had to work her skills on an 11-year-old. This was a different type of challenge for her. Sonali decided to get to know her mentee and at the same time tell her about herself and all the challenges that she faced when she was just 11 years old and how she overcame them. Gayatri slowly started sharing about her interests and hobbies and expressing to Sonali about little things like "aaj school mein humne yeh seekha, mujhe English pasand hain lekin mein bol nahin sakti isiliye mujhe darr lagta hain". Sonali realized that Gayatri has several other fears that are holding her back from participating in competitions and showing her talents. Sonali helped Gayatri overcome these fears by helping her in English and pushing her to speak more often and express her opinions. Almost 11 months after they first met, Gayatri did a solo dance performance at our MMI Day. She even speaks up in class now and feels much more confident about herself.
When Felice joined our program as a mentor we knew he would be a perfect fit for our mentee Rishikesh who had more than 1 thing in common with him. Not only do they share similar interests in sports and dance but also in their professional goals. Felice is a doctor by profession and is currently undergoing training to become an officer in the Indian army. When Rishikesh grows up, he wants to become a doctor in the Indian army. Over the course of 1 year Felice and Rishikesh have spoken in detail about how Felice decided to become a doctor and his journey so far and Rishikesh has a clear idea of what it takes to become a doctor in the Indian army. Felice and Rishikesh set monthly goals for Rishikesh to get better at sports and academics in order to make sure he gets a scholarship for his 11th and 12th grade. Rishikesh and Felice also discuss topics on current affairs related to the army, medicine and general state of affairs in the country. Rishikesh has also visited Felice’s hospital and interacted with other doctors and found out about other opportunities in medicine. Rishikesh has become more aware about his goals and has a better idea of what he needs to do in order to achieve them.

Swapnil and Kuldeep truly believe in keeping each session about learning things from each other and make sure that they ask each other and make sure that they ask each other questions to prepare for the next session. “Kuldeep taught me a bit about some plant and animal tissues which was a bit embarrassing since I didn’t know about it. Then he was asking me about my job and my company. So I had fund explaining him what investment banks are and how they help companies raise money and how people buy and sell shares in the stock market. He is one curious soul, I tell you! And a fast learner as well. He could quickly relate to things he’d heard about stock markets and stuff. It felt great explaining this stuff to a person who’s genuinely interested to learn about it.”
As with many mentees, Alok (mentee) was an extremely reserved child. He found it difficult to open up in school and his teachers mentioned to us that no one seemed to know of Alok’s interests and hobbies.

During the mentor recruitment process, Nis-hant informed us that he considered himself to be a bit of an introvert too. Based on our personality test, the two seemed a good fit to under-stand each other. Their very first meeting, at our Kick-Off, their interaction was a pleasure to wit-ness! They instantly clicked and though both are men of few words, they seemed to understand each other through their unique method of com-munication.

They continued to meet regularly for the next few months. At our first Group Mentoring session, a few months into the program, mentors and mentees were asked to do an activity around Self-Awareness. Mentees were asked to showcase any talent in order to prove that they deserved to win an imaginary ticket to Australia! To our sur-prise, Alok stood up and rapped a poem about himself! His confidence was palpable. Over the course of just a few months, the pair had bond-ed over their love for music and Alok had been inspired by his bhaiyya. They discovered rap music and Alok wrote the poem with Nishant’s help, winning his imaginary ticket at the end of the session! Alok has become considerably more confident and has been opening up more with Nishant’s constant push and belief in him.

Vaishnavi started off in our program with seem-ing-ly few problems. A perfect student with good grades, well-behaved at school and home, kind and well-man-nered. When her didi, Tamanna, first met her, she was worried that Vaishnavi might not truly be in need of a mentor and might not even want one. Vaishnavi would rarely talk about anything at all, and found it difficult to express her feelings or her needs. Tamanna tried to involve Vaishnavi’s friends in their activities, but soon realized that Vaishnavi is only friendly with one other girl in class and prefers to keep to herself. Tamanna, who is an extrovert by nature, found this to be her number one challenge and took it upon herself to help Vaishnavi open up more, get to know her fellow classmates and make friends.

She planned several group activities with Vaishnavi’s cousins and classmates and focused more on conversa-tions and games that involved a lot of teamwork. Vaish-navi expressed that she wished to become a doctor, and Tamanna responded by planning a visit to a hospital along with another mentor-mentee pair. Here, she en-couraged Vaishnavi to speak up and pose questions to the doctors and nurses.

This turned out to be a pivotal point in their rela-tionship. Vaishnavi was her own person in the hospital, happy to spend time with the nurses and doctors and answer all their questions in return to hers. After this ses-sion, Tamanna continued to focus on Vaishnavi’s social interaction skills by conducting group reading sessions for Vaishnavi and her cousins and encouraging them to have healthy debates on the stories and the characters. She has also pushed Vaishnavi to try new things, like art and craft, something that Vaishnavi claimed to hate initially but has now grown fond of and wants to learn more!
Our Events

No community life is complete without celebrations. Mentor Me India initiates various events, meet-ups and workshops. Not to be left behind, for the first time this year, our mentors have taken up and conducted multiple initiatives themselves for the benefit of our enthusiastic mentees.

CROWDFUNDING FOR MMI

Enthusiastic mentors and well-wishers came forward and led crowdfunding campaigns through United Way Mumbai and SCMM 2017 (the largest marathon in India). With the constant support and guidance provided to the crowdfunders, MMI raised funds to support approximately 50 new Mentor-mentee pairs.

KICK-OFF SESSIONS

Fun, interactive sessions held across all centres where mentees meet their didis and bhaiyyas for the first time!

GROUP MENTORING SESSIONS

These sessions, conducted by MMI, are held for both the mentors and the mentees. They consist of group activities centred around the different aspects of the curriculum: Self-Awareness, Social Interaction, Aspirations, Citizenship.
GRADUATION DAY

A Graduation day ceremony was held for mentor-mentee pairs at some of the centres to celebrate their completion of one year into the programme!

BIG MMI DAY

Big MMI Day is the biggest event in the MMI calendar, a day for all our mentors and mentees to come together and have a fun-filled day with games, competitions and activities.

Mentees participated in talent, dance, art and sports competitions while mentors cheered them on enthusiastically. Our mentors also participated in sports competitions like lemon and spoon, three-legged race etc. We also had workshops on Yoga, Origami, Quilling, Cupcake Decoration and Bookmark decoration which was conducted by mentees and mentors as well.

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

Christmas celebrations at Sion, Goregaon (E) and Thane centres.
Movie screening at Goregaon (E) centre.
Children’s Day Celebration at Sion centre.

ADDITIONAL WORKSHOPS

Visit to the Bank (CVM) at Goregaon (E) centre
Banking session for parents at Goregaon (E) centre
Safety at Home, Road and School at Thane centre
Oral Hygiene at Thane centre
Words from our Mentee Partners

**CVM
GOREGAON EAST**

Partner Since: Dec 2015
Current Active Pairs: 101

“It’s a good program – individual attention is given to the students and the mentors are from good professional backgrounds. They (mentees) have all become very confident. They used to dress up anyhow before, but there is a sense of responsibility now and they want to do more. Their parents also are happy with the programme!”

**KBPV
SION**

Partner Since: May 2016
Current Active Pairs: 79

“The kids are motivated individually and as a group as a whole. I like the special attention that you give through home visits. The overall participation of students (in school) has increased”

**ABGES
GOREGAON WEST**

Partner Since: Dec 2014
Current Active Pairs: 15

“I would rate the program 10/10. Have already recommended to people. In love with the concept. Would have been a mentor myself if time permitted”

**Reys of HOPE Ministries
“Kaivalya”**

Partner Since: Dec 2014
Current Active Pairs: 15

“In every group session, I have noticed that the children are being more free, they are open. We enrolled the children to see growth in their lives and that is happening”

**Udaan India Foundation**

Partner Since: May 2016
Current Active Pairs: 32

“Vivek Gupta one of the most distracted and restless child started showing signs of steadiness and attention in his tasks. It is heartening to note that mentors have worked on the challenges and weaknesses of our children thus enabling a process of gradual change”

**KAIVALYA
EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

Partner Since: May 2016
Current Active Pairs: 67

“I really liked the fact there was one mentor per child, which means each child gets special attention in the programme. The children have been enjoying the programme and the mentors too have been doing really interesting activities with them.”
Take Charge is a leadership program for Catholic youth [16-21 years] that strives to foster entrepreneurship spirit, encourage the quest for excellence and motivate youth to pursue their passions to the best of their abilities.

It has been successfully able to do the above through various channels; namely, the mentorship program, career seminars hosted by pioneers in a diverse number of fields and through continuous online engagement. Ranging from Civil Services to Banking, Advertising, Marketing, Education, Finance, to mention a few, Take Charge agenda is to expand horizons and guide Catholic youth to strive for excellence.

Take Charge aims to raise aspirations, build relationships and help young people prepare for the real world.

Mentor Me India’s mentoring model has been applied to and managed on behalf of the Take Charge mentoring program which started in 2015. and 32 Mentors-Mentees graduated in the pilot batch. The second batch began from October 2016, when 97 mentor-mentee pairs began their mentoring journey. This batch will graduate in mid-2018!

**EVENTS**

1. Second batch Trainings in October and November 2016
2. Second batch Inductions [November/December 2016]
4. Mental Wellness Workshop for Mentors [26th February 2017]
5. Mentor Hangout [16th March 2017]

Feedback from the mentees who attended the session Mental Wellness Workshop

“The workshop gave us an understanding of our feelings and how it affects our behaviour. In short, very informative too. I have been practicing these techniques since the workshop happened, and it really does help.”

“It was a really good workshop. And it came in at the right time when I need a new perspective to deal with things. The topic depression was very new and intense to me but it was very informative and built an awareness in me.”
Founded in 2013, Mentor Me India has grown to impact the lives of Mentor-Mentee pairs across Mumbai. All of this would not have been possible without strong support from our donor partners. Our donor partners can be categorized into two, some who support us by sponsoring our mentor-mentee pairs and some partners who wish to donate to us in kind. We also provide our mentoring expertise to the Take Charge project and they support us by funding for our 100 mentor-mentee pairs.

The funding for our mentor-mentee pairs from highly vulnerable communities like street living children, children from red light districts and children who are orphans comes from the Rosy Blue Foundation. One of our individual donors has also helped us with setting up better technology for managing our mentor database and mentor applications.

For over two years (from 2014 to 2016), the KRYFS team has shared its office space with us, entirely pro-bono, but also made us feel a part of their large-hearted family through shared celebrations on birthdays and festivals. All-Cargo allowed us to use their space for a few months from September 2016 to June 2017. Mentor Me India currently operates out of UpGrad’s premises and are we so grateful to them for their hospitality and support!
MENTOR WITH US

We have two recruitment cycles

Summer (March to June)
Winter (September to December)

REQUIREMENT

Min. 6 hours per month on weekends + attendance at additional sessions
Qualification: Graduates, Age no bar
Minimum commitment of 1 year

If you are unable to volunteer as a Mentor with our program, you can help us out anyway. A few skills we’re constantly on the look out for are: photography, videography, marketing, event managers, website development, design, hold sessions for our kids, aspirations sessions!

CORPORATES (MENTOR AND DONATION PARTNERS)

Non-Profits and Schools (Mentee Partners) (kids)
The mentees for our program belong to our Mentee Partners which are comprised of low income schools and non-profit orgs which work with children from vulnerable backgrounds
Registered NGOs
Schools in low-income communities
Volunteer (camera)
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Annual Budget and Expenditure