

Project Report

Report period from:	January 2023	Report period to:	December 2023
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1. Project Summary

Project Title (same as in the project proposal)			
Karuna – Stepping Stone Charitable Society			
Project Location: Country	India	Region / District/ Town / Village	Mumbai
Project start date	January 2023	Project end date	December 2023
Fincode			
Report written by	Karuna Project	Email address:	karuna@sscsindia.org
Date submitted			
Budget summary (Local currency)	Annual Budget	Actual expenditure during the reporting period	Total Expenditure this year
	2,585,960.00 Total		3,291,406.00

The Karuna Project had a major breakthrough this year, after many attempts we managed to secure a government project. Karuna has been accepted to provide services in Contact Survey and Home-Based Self-care under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme. Karuna had already made a major shift in its focus to identifying new cases. The shift was made as a result of last years partnerships with Primary Health Centres and the connection established with a former TLMIT leprosy technician working for the government.

With the acceptance of Stepping Stone as a service provider by the government health department we have direct access to all the PHCs. Through these connections Karuna Project started to function in the new areas and were successful in detecting new cases of leprosy. The big shift in focus is now on new case detection, working in partnerships, exploring mode of operation that are sustainable. In the last twelve months the team has carried out house-to-house surveys among brick kiln workers, government residential schools for tribal children, villages and medical clinics in the primary health centres. The team is highly motivated with all these developments, the team has gone to great lengths travelling to interior villages by braving extreme heat and sweat to heavy rains, and being stuck in traffic jams at times.

The Karuna Team consulted a social enterprises expert to explore the option of setting up a Karuna enterprise that could bring in volunteers, scope for bringing in an income and make the project more sustainable in the future and bring an income to the training course graduates. This is a big step forward from providing livelihood trainings to setting up a production unit. In the month of May the trainees completed three successful bags stitching orders and the trainer along with a volunteer underwent a screen-printing hands-on training. Now we can stitch bags and print the logos or any matter required by the client for just the cost of printing ink.

The evaluation and the change theory planning conducted by TLM UK & Wales and TLMIT has got the team highly motivated to think through ways of taking Karuna Project on an exciting and profitable journey. The team is very keen to see what the next few years would unwarp for the project.

We thank **TLM UK, Lauren Information Technologies Ltd., Blastec, Jolly Abrasive and many more individuals** for all the support and encouragement given to the work of Karuna. Special thanks to the evaluation team and the Safeguarding Advisor for their visits and valuable inputs.

During the year 2023 Karuna Project have provided medical care and treatment to **1095** adult male, **52** male children and **1192** adult female leprosy patients and **47** female children, **228** male and **725** general female patients, **173** male and **170** general female children. A total of **3682** treatments were given to leprosy and general patients. Additionally, **142** female family members too were benefited through the work of Karuna Project.

The Karuna Team Conducted house-to-house Survey under the government scheme 'Contact Survey and Home-based Care'. **142** new cases were detected out of the **4824** contacts that were screened. **1942** houses were visited and **132** were treated for various skin infections. The team did Self-care Training to **28** male and **10** female new cases.

The Karuna Project provided Ulcer Care Kits to **133** male and **77** female patients, dressed ulcer wounds for **164** male and **60** female patients. Helped **14** male and **9** female people access MCR footwear.

During the year 2023 **7** people died due to old age, heart attack and one person due to kidney failure.

Is the project working and effectively addressing the problem(s) identified in the proposal? Yes / No / Partially – explain why.
The Karuna Project has been effectively addressing the problems of the target population through the various initiatives of the project. The project's medical mobile clinic has continued to serve the people affected with leprosy. The mobile clinic has also been very instrumental in travelling to the villages to conduct surveys, provide medicines to new patients and treat the patients especially at the brick kilns who have very limited access to medical facilities. The team has put lot of emphasis on the patient's taking ownership for their lives and practice self-care. This is no easy task to get the patients from being dependent to inter-dependent. The PALs are more directed to look at what government schemes or facilities are available and then go pursuing these facilities. The team, however, is assisting them in all endeavors. The team as part of advocacy has been aiding the PALs and their families to obtain an e-Shram card. A portal is being built to create a national database of unorganized workers; the holders of the card are eligible for insurance and pension. The team is taking every opportunity to encourage the ladies through microfinance groups and the tailoring classes to focus on becoming economically independent. To develop skills and find work or start small businesses. Most women are now either employed or self-employed. After much persuasion the women have now started approaching their local leaders to address issues they face as a community. The team has been progressively teaching them to take their own initiatives to find solutions to their challenges and not to be dependent.

2. Project activities

1. New Case Detection

The Karuna Team has been successfully conducting new case detection surveys at different locations in the Thane district. Partnering with the Primary Health Centres the team has made good inroads into the remote village areas. For the first time the team conducted new case detections among brick kiln workers, these contracted laborers come from different villages. Many new cases have been identified; the owners of these kilns were very cooperative. We also did surveys in government schools checking more than 2360 children and we detected 8 new cases. Being included in the government programme has empowered the team to travel to any of the villages, brick kilns and schools to do survey and refer cases to the primary health centers.



2. Microfinance

Currently there are 11 Microfinance Groups and 121 members in the microfinance group. Three groups are dysfunctional as some members have moved cities, some are not able to save every month and couple of members have died. Karuna Team is working with these group members to restart by adding new members to the group since each group needs to have a minimum number of 10 members. The members have gained confidence to move out of their comfort zone 64 of the 121 members are employed and 18 are self-employed through running small businesses. One lady who was running a good cake business has now started working as an Asha worker while she continues to take orders so another lady who has started a creche as well as she takes cooking orders. Overall, the members are doing well. The team has initiated meetings with the group leaders encouraging them to take the lead in organising group meetings and to involve members in other skills trainings and enhance their job skills.



3. Tailoring classes

Fifty-Nine students were undergoing training in the tailoring classes in two communities. Twenty-nine trainees have graduated during the last six months. Twenty-one trainees continue to train at Karuna. The trainer has been following the syllabus, and the students are putting in their efforts to learn as much as possible. One church volunteer who has experience in setting up social enterprises has offered to share his expertise in setting up a production unit for Karuna Project as one of the steps towards long-term strategy to achieve sustainability. Two ladies work as assistance trainers releasing the Karuna trainer to focus on setting up a production unit.



4. Advocacy

The Karuna team assisted nine women to register their businesses under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Post the business training that Karuna conducted for the microfinance groups through our partnership with an NGO named Learning Links the women were encouraged to write business proposals. Nine were selected as they were already functioning or were in the process of starting their business. Registering their small business was a big step forward for these women as this gave them the boost to further grow their business. Four people also managed to get government loans which again was organised by Karuna with the government office that offers loans for small start ups two women got Rs.5000/- and a couple got 10,000.00. The Team is constantly looking out for various schemes and benefits that help these budding entrepreneurs.



5. Mobile Clinic

The Karuna mobile clinic continues to be the main identity of the project. Mobile clinics are functional in more than 11 areas where there are people with the leprosy. The bus that is converted into a mobile clinic has done extensive travelling in the last one year to new areas of work in interior villages. The clinic has been providing medical care, ulcer treatment and transporting the team to places where there are very few public transportations available. The brick kiln workers were majorly benefited through the mobile clinic for carrying out body check for existence of patches or other skin infections. Many people in the villages were also benefited especially in the remote villages.



6. Self-Care Training

The team continues to conduct Self-Care Training for the people under ulcer care observation and for the new cases that have been deducted. Using Self-care posters, the team has been providing training for the new cases on eye care, hand care, foot care and the importance of prevention of injuries. People with ulcers are provided with ulcer care kits to encourage them to dress their own wounds and keep it clean and safe.



7. Events

The Karuna Team conducted a Leprosy Awareness Program at a government school in Bhiwandi on **World Leprosy Day**. Through a skit we conveyed a message on prevention, treatment and acceptance of the affected person. Leprosy is curable, it's the stigma that we need to break. 60 students along with their teachers, Asha workers, PHC medical team participated in the awareness program. An **Annual Lunch** was hosted for staff and volunteers to strengthen the unity.



8. Microenterprise

The trainees from the tailoring classes along with a few of the ladies that have graduated worked together to finish an order of 4000 canvas bags. Another order 500 bags were completed and delivered before the deadline. The trainer has identified tailors that have graduated from the Karuna tailoring course that are willing to work with the project whenever there are stitching orders. This group of women have been very busy in stitching bags and earning money through this work. More orders for bags have been received and the team was on job. The team is also making samples for various items as were prepared to have a sale of new products in churches and corporations. This group also completed stitching face masks for factory workers.



9. Safeguarding

The Karuna Team had a full day training with the TLMEW Safeguarding Advisor. A recap on Safeguarding policy and a Workshop on Risk Assessment, Wellbeing and Trauma was done on the first day. A training on Safeguarding and Trauma was organised for 35 participants from 17 NGOs including Stepping Stone project staff on day two. The Advisor spent the third day with the team at the Trombay Mobile Clinic. She spent time talking to the women from the Self-help groups and the tailoring trainees on Safeguarding issues in the community. The Stepping Stone board members have formally accepted the policy and have passed a resolution to implement safeguarding policy in all the projects. An Internal Compliance Committee would also be in place



10. Karuna Project Evaluation

An end of phase evaluation was carried out from 21st–24th Nov 2022 by the TLMEW Programmes & Advocacy Officer and TLMIT Project Manager – Udaan Project. The team did a SWOC analysis was conducted with the entire team, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six of the team members and three government health professionals. Four areas of Mumbai & Thane districts were visited. Focused group discussions were held with the various groups of the microfinance groups, tailoring trainees and the people who benefit from the clinic.



11. Karuna Team

The Karuna Team has well adapted to the new changes that project has undergone. The team now travels to interior regions doing house-house surveys, the team has developed an eye for detecting leprosy symptoms of patches and deformities and multi task as the need arises. The team underwent three trainings, Safeguarding & Risk Management, working with new cases and Trust Building & Heart of a Healthy Leader. One team member Mrs. Sonali B. who worked as a nurse and microfinance coordinator has moved from Karuna to pursue other career options. Two volunteers Ajay & Sayali have joined to strengthen the survey work.



Were there any unexpected results, either positive or negative?

The openness among all the Primary Health Centers that Karuna visits was very positive. Though unexpected, their willingness to cooperate and work in collaboration is also a positive result in our efforts to partner with the government.

The team faced hostility from some of the government officers who were visiting the government hospital where Karuna Mobile clinic was attending to people with leprosy. Meeting with senior government officials including the director and Assistant for Health department (Leprosy) has opened an opportunity for Karuna project to apply for a government scheme under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme.

The Karuna Team has already detected forty-five new cases of leprosy among children as young as two years old as well as adults. The team did not anticipate that it would make inroads in the interiors of Maharashtra state in detecting new cases at such a short time.

The end of phase evaluation has highlighted the areas of development as well as the strengths of the team. The team has started to implement many of the recommendations that the evaluation team has made.

Case Study One:



The Karuna Team was of a big service to this young 18-year-old man who came to the Clinic referred by the government hospital in Bhiwandi. He came with an ulcer wound in his leg filled with maggots, the team patiently cleaned his wound, extracted the maggots that were lodged in the wound, and bandaged it. The provided him with new MCR footwear. He was relieved of the pain and experienced much comfort. He was referred to the government hospital to undergo RCS of his hands, he took the offer and other himself admitted in the hospital and underwent surgery. He is still at the hospital recovering from the

Case Study Two:



Laxmi Darede is a resident of Trombay colony. When Karuna Project first started work at the Trombay colony her father Mr. Gajanan was the sarpanch or community leader. Her parents and she have all been affected by leprosy. Due to early detection and treatment, she has not had any deformity or major effect due to leprosy. Laxmi joined the tailoring classes and completed the one-year course. She joined the microfinance group and managed to set up her own tailoring business. Laxmi has been trained to be a trainer for new batch of trainees relieving the Karuna trainer to focus on taking stitching work orders.

Case Study Three



This vegetable vendor had her shop step up in near one of the brick kilns. When the team were conducting a survey at the brick kilns, they noticed the patch on her face. The team took the lady inside the mobile clinic and spoke to her about the patch and explained to her about the possibility of leprosy on conducting further investigation it was confirmed that she was positive for Leprosy. She was put on the MDT, the team provided awareness about the medication, complications and continuing the medication without a break for complete cure and prevention of deformities and disabilities. It was trained self-care to prevent injuries and avoid getting an ulcer.

a. Direct clients that have been assisted by this project during the reporting year

	People directly affected by leprosy				Family members of people affected by leprosy				People with disabilities				Others				Total			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Child < 18yrs		52		47										173		170		225		217
Adult 18- 59 yrs		1095		1192				142						228		725		1323		2059
Adult >60yrs																				
Total		1147		1239				142						401		895		1548		2276