

**Mission Possible!**  
( A report on Saidapet Balwadis)

Taking over and working in the 4 balwadi centers at Jones Road, Saidapet was not going to be an easy task. The first two centers had a strength of around 50 children, while the next two centers had around 20 children each, - a total of around 140 children. Looking at the state of affairs in the balwadis it seemed like an impossible mission! The place was hardly swept and wiped and the children were dirty and crying and given very poor care. The center was new and had good infrastructure facilities, yet there was total lack of general and toilet hygiene. Gathering enough funds, and courage, Ramacharan Trust by now quite experienced, defied its fears and took up the challenge.

The Center was inaugurated by one of our donors, Mr. C. Srikanth, on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008. The Project Officer, Ms. Sargunam who spoke on the occasion said that she was very happy that we had chosen the Saidapet center and promised full support.

All centers were sufficiently supplied with necessary furniture, work mats, lunch mats, play equipment and materials for the children. Work resumed and progressed. Although it was intended to run the centers as play centers, seeing the readiness of the children Montessori preliminary material was purchased and the children are working with a huge array of material on mats like in a Montessori environment. The older children work in the first two centers while the younger children play and are kept suitably engaged with materials and activities in the next two centers.

In the second month of our work children from the neighboring two centers were re-located here, because their center was, and still is under re-construction. With the additional 40 odd children came lots of things including furniture, vessels etc. which were dumped in our centers. The teachers and other staff from there came too. With the entry of more adults into the centers there was less help and more confusion!!! However, things have been streamlined now and the balwadi centers are working almost on par with the KG sections on the first and second floors!

The four balwadi teachers were selected based on their attitude and aptitude to work with little children. Feeling the need to equip them further these teachers have been taught the basic concepts of the Montessori Method and are also undergoing training in using Montessori material. The first two centers are in the process of being upgraded into Semi-Montessori Centers.

Two ayahs are working full time to maintain hygiene and cleanliness. But, there is a need for more helper staff and we may appoint more helpers shortly.

The children can be said to be not only our beneficiaries but also our saviors. They are so adept in taking instructions, falling in line and absorbing and adjusting to the system. You can see from the photos how readily they have adapted and harmonized, and make us proud and happy for having taken up this endeavor. We are sure the donors feel the same too.

The huge number of children at the Saidapet centers makes the project a worthy one, albeit one which requires concerted efforts. As always the Trust is extremely fortunate to get exceedingly

dedicated teachers who are putting in their best efforts to convert and raise this center into a show-case center for all balwadis!