

VINIMAY TRUST'S SMT. COOMIBEN BABUBHAI SHAH

TARUN SADAN HOSTEL

(A HOME FOR UNDER-PRIVILEGED YOUTH)

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Vinimay Trust is an organization of voluntary social workers. It started as an informal group in 1982 and was registered as a Charitable Trust in 1989. Vinimay works for under-privileged children and youth, especially those staying in and emerging out of Child Welfare Institutions (CWI).
- 1.2 All existing CWIs look after boys only till they are eighteen years of age. For many reasons, the children are not fully equipped to lead an independent life by that time. Thus, the money and manpower spent on bringing up the child up to that age yield grossly poor returns. Vinimay Trust continues to assist youth leaving such institutions till they get fully integrated with society.
- 1.3 To put its youth welfare activities on a firm footing, Vinimay has established a Transition Hostel for boys where such boys can be housed, protected, assisted and guided, so that through a process of smooth and gradual transition, they can integrate themselves with the outside world.

2.0 Need for a transition hostel

- 2.1 Existing child welfare programmes, including the 1 After-Care' programmes, look after boys only up to the age of 18.
- 2.2 More often than not, boys leaving the CWIs are not fully equipped to face the confusing and ominous-looking outside world.
- 2.3 Their education usually terminates at the age of sixteen, since they have to be put to some job as apprentices by that age if they are to become independent by eighteen. They usually lose a few years of education due to their late joining, psychological disturbances, problems of acclimatizing to the institutions, illness, lack of academic coaching, etc. These factors limit their education to 8th standard or less.
- 2.4 At the age of sixteen, then, when a normal child will be fully engrossed in his studies, these children face the reality of having to learn to fend for themselves within a couple of years. The threat of not having a place to live in hangs heavily on them. The fear starts to haunt them even a few years before their legal discharge date, resulting in poor academic performance and other associated behavioral problems. In haste, some of them even try to develop outside contacts at an age when they are not mature enough to discriminate between the good and the bad.
- 2.5 Even granting that a boy has been apprenticed for two years and has got a job by eighteen, he faces many problems in the process of integrating himself with society .The life in the

institutions where they have lived is isolated, impersonal and strait-jacketed and does not give them an opportunity to learn to judge situations and people and adapt themselves to life. They never get a chance for natural interaction with adults and outsiders.

- 2.6 By all counts, eighteen is a crucial period in the lives of these children. They have to learn to fend for themselves, look after themselves and adapt themselves to new life-situations, while all the time facing a bleak and uncertain tomorrow.
- 2.7 Faced with such formidable problems, and with none to look for guidance and consolation, a large number of them become unstable and misguided, feel rootless and purposeless and tend to float through life. Some of them fall prey to anti-social elements, some of them get grossly exploited and most of them end up in situations where their children may face the same problems they faced when they were young. These points are true not only in the case of orphans and destitute, but also in the case of unwanted children, children from broken homes, etc.
- 2.8 Thus, all the money and manpower spent on these children till they become eighteen come to nothing. This need not be the case, since, a little more care, money and man-hours spent over a few more years could consolidate the gains of all the child welfare activities.
- 2.9 Finally, society is becoming more and more complex and competitive; youths are challenged to acquire more skills to face this competition. The number of years spent in study is also increasing correspondingly. This also points to the need to extending childcare by a few more years.

3.0 Vinimay's experience

- 3.1 Vinimay Trust has been active in the field of child-welfare for nearly 20 years. The Trust has been playing a supportive role in existing CWIs, because the Trust is convinced that such support would help these institutions achieve better results.
- 3.2 From its experience in dealing with boys leaving child welfare institutions, Vinimay has realized the need for. Post-institutional care. Therefore, Vinimay formulated a programme called 'Tarun Vinimay' for the ex-inmates of CWIs. Activities under, this programme include
 - (a) Regular contact meetings
 - (b) Living accommodation
 - (c) Job placement
 - (d) Loans
 - (e) Education
 - (f) Health care
 - (g) Personality development
 - (h) Sports and recreation
 - (i) Interaction with Society
 - (j) Involvement in constructive activities

Some statistics on this subject are given on the last page.

- 3.3 Over the years the number of boys covered under this programme has been growing. Since the boys were accommodated at different places and on an ad-hoc basis it was becoming difficult to keep in close touch with them to the extent desirable for guiding and counseling them, or to reach out to them when they were in distress. Better results would be obtained if they were housed in close proximity with no uncertainty regarding their period of stay.

3.4 Hence, Vinimay has embarked on a Transition Hostel project wherein the youth leaving CWIs can be housed and groomed into full-fledged young adults.

4.0 Project details

4.1 Principles on which the Hostel will be run

The hostel is a launching pad for the boys: It will prepare them for life; it will provide guidance, counsel, assistance for further education (both academic and technical), job placement, savings and financial assistance to acquire living accommodation. It will look after the boys during periods of illness and unemployment. It will also develop their personality through formal and informal training on inter-personal relationships, family education, money management, etc.

4.2 Admission and Farewell

Admissions will be by interview and inquiry .Most of the boys the Trust knows through its child welfare activities. The boys will be encouraged to launch forth on their own as early as possible, but without any threats or deadlines. Assistance, including loans will be given for this. It is envisaged that the average period of stay will be 3-4 years. However, in case of emergencies / crisis, the boys can still come back to the hostel, to take a fresh break into the world again. The hostel will be their home.

4.3 Facilities

The Hostel will eventually have a built-up area of approx. 6500 sq. ft; it will accommodate about 50 boys and will have reading room, recreation room, kitchen, dining hall and office in addition to living rooms. Simple and hygienic living conditions (including food, clothing, medical aid, etc.) will be provided. The boys will be looked after by a residential superintendent qualified in the field of social work. The strength of the hostel is planned to be limited to 50 boys to ensure meaningful and personal interaction with the boys.

5.0 Project status

5.1 The Trust was allotted land (approx. 6500 sq. ft.) by CIDCO at Kopar Khairane, Navi Mumbai at a concessional rate applicable to social welfare organizations.

5.2 The first phase of construction was started in July 98 and the hostel was inaugurated on 23rd May 1999. Common facilities like office, superintendent's quarters, kitchen, dining hall and study room are included in the first phase of construction in addition to living rooms to accommodate 25 boys. The cost of the first phase of construction was Rs.30 lakhs (including the cost of land).

5.3 Since the boys will stay in the hostel for a period of 3-4 years, the annual intake will be about 6. The hostel started with strength of 7 boys and currently houses 24 boys. Seven boys have already been rehabilitated. (July 2002 data)

6.0 Future plans

6.1 The second (and final) phase of construction will cost us a further Rs.25 lakhs. In addition a Corpus Fund will be built up for meeting the running cost of the hostel.

6.2 The hostel will also be developed as a training centre for children from child welfare institutions. This activity has already started with the organization of 'Life Education Camps' for children.