

# Targeting Change



An Initiative  
by  
Saamarthya Foundation

# Saamarthya Foundation

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*Trust Registration No. Act 1950 No. F / 13697 / Ahmedabad. Society Regd. Act 1860 No. GUJ / 13838 / Ahmedabad Registration Date : 24-04-2008.  
12AA No. DIT / 12 AA / 107 / 2008 - 09. Exemption U/S 80 G No. DIT (E) / 80 G (5) / 321 / 2008 - 2009, Valid from 01 - 04 - 2008 to 31 - 03 - 2011.*

## **Our Mission - Sports as a path to growth.**

In India, even today, it is a reality in quite a few urban pockets of the best of cities, that there are a sizeable number of families where youth from families of lower income groups (daily / monthly wage earners, low skilled job workers, etc.) often do not have the financial resources to pay for their formal schooling fees, textbooks and notebooks after managing to scrounge together enough money towards feeding their often large families.

It follows to reason that the scope for excelling and pursuing a career in any sports at any level by youth from such families is nowhere on the radar. Even for talented sports persons from lower - middle and middle class families, the pursuit of excellence in sports after a point is a far off dream due to pressures of studying for a career, family inability to support the financial aspects of sporting needs and such other factors.

**The media since a long time, has been highlighting stories of sports persons who toil without facilities and resources (often selling off land and family valuables) to pursue glory for their city, state and country. There are a whole lot of talented youth from lower-middle and middle class families who excel in different sports such as football, hockey, tennis, basketball and athletics among others. Most give up the sport after a point due to lack of financial support towards their dietary, sporting and allied needs.**

**Even today, the average sports person representing the college, university, district and state gets a daily stipend of Rs. 75 to Rs. 250 and that too only on tour, which is a maximum of 5 days a year. The balance time, he / she has to shell out from their own pocket. And we still wonder why India does not do well in sports !!!!!**

As former sports persons ourselves, we have also faced all of the above at different levels and out of this has been born the desire to change this aspect of Indian Sports and raise resources for the same.

**At Saamarthya Foundation, it will be our endeavor to raise resources to support, equip, train and sponsor individual youth excelling at different sports from an early age and help them achieve a career in sports.**

**Also, our efforts will be to use sports (starting with football) to inculcate better values in the lives of youth from well-to-do as well as economically challenged families.**

**We have taken the first step by putting into motion our first project - SHARPSHOOTERS - Targeting Change - which will be a Football Training Academy for youth as outlined below.**

**Sharpshooters - The Football Academy** - is aimed at generating funds for youth from economically challenged families in urban areas, initially as a means of raising and training a football team and thereafter, moving on to empowering their lives with education, nutrition and even the possibility of a career in football at a later stage.

**The vital component of the project is that section of the football academy which is targeting youth from the middle & upper middle class rung of urban families who want specialized training ( coaching ) in football and / or want to play football on a recreational basis, can afford to pay for the same and are willing to do so. These services are provided to the youth on a fees based model.**

Facilities provided by the academy are a full sized football ground, qualified coaches, equipment for training (footballs, training aids etc.). The fees for these facilities are priced according to the age of the participants. This phase is essential for the project to raise funds for it's operations and sustain any interventions it may want to undertake.



## **Our Progress so far**

We have commenced the first phase of the plan - the launch of the Football Academy. So far within 2 months of the same, we already have 25-30 students who have joined up after paying up their fees. This then, takes care of almost 55% of our operational expenses.

The upcoming Football World Cup in South Africa later this year will further act as a fillip to attendances and increased demand for coaching and playing facilities.

**Simultaneously, we have started training a small group (12-15 in numbers) of under privileged youth from slums who are fond of the game of football, have created a team from among them and started entering them in local tournaments.**

The process of identifying talented footballers in the age group of 8 to 15 years in need of financial support has been started and a system of achievement - based sponsorship will soon be put in place depending on availability of funds.



## Project related problems

### Premises :

The first and foremost problem has been that of getting a football ground which could be used as a base for starting our academy.

**The above problem has been solved with the cooperation of authorities at our former alma mater - St Xavier's College and we have contracted use of their football ground on rental terms. In this, we have been helped immensely by Mr. Fidence Lawrence and Principal of St. Xavier's College, Father Vincent Briganza who agreed to let us use the college football ground for at least 3 months (April to June 2010) on rental terms.**

### Funds :

The second problem was that of funds to hire the ground (matching stiff rentals paid by cricket enthusiasts), buy minimum equipment, and more importantly, to cater for enough funds to last at least a period of 3 months from April to June 2010.

**This hurdle has been temporarily solved by committing funds from our own pockets towards meeting our operational expenses for the initial 3 months, after which we shall have to generate funds from the project or from other sources (donations, etc.)**

### Publicity for the Academy :

The funds crunch also means that we cannot spend on conventional advertising which is expensive. The next step was through word of mouth (inexpensive flyers, posters in schools, colleges and such). At this junction, the football fan owner of a popular restaurant serving South Indian cuisine in Ahmedabad came forward and willingly offered us the use of their frontage to put up a hoarding announcing salient details of our academy. This has helped us immensely in slowly but steadily getting us noticed.



**Mr. Bino Panicker**, the owner of Coconut Palm Restaurant who has helped us immensely by letting us put up a banner advertising our coaching services.

## The defining moment that led us to this effort ?

There is a large slum settlement named “**Hollywood**” in the Gulbai Tekra area of Ahmedabad which is peopled by a community which is at the bottom rung of the Indian Hindu caste system hierarchy as well as being at the lowest possible indicators of human development regards income parameters, health and hygiene and other living standards.



Paradoxically, this slum is an encroachment on a private property in an area of affluence around it, but vested interests have ensured that neither the problems of the encroachment are solved, nor the lot of this community has improved even after almost 5 decades. Most of them work at self employed trades and their prime source of income is from 4 months of terracotta idol making which they then trade all over India. The rest of the year is thereafter dependent on the earnings from these 4 months.

The slum is situated right next to St. Xaviers College which runs a few programmes for them (a free medical camp every week, free rations once a month, etc).

**The one uplifting factor - the youth of this slum are madly in love with the game of football. They play among themselves barefoot on any surface and with any torn, worn - out football they can lay hands on and some of them are really talented. Without even a regular ground on which to practice, they will play on practically any space they can find. Right now they have regular kick - around practise sessions on an unused plot of land with 4 footballs we have given them.**

The defining moment for us was after this years Ahmedabad city league final match when a few of them came up to us and very confidently asked us if we could help them with registering a team and entering the same in local tournaments. When asked the reason for their confidence, they proclaimed that they had after all, been practising for the last 15 years and were now ready to take on any team !!!

That was when we took the decision to first build a team from among them and then field them in various tournaments at the local level.

Without even a regular ground on which to practice, they right now kick - around on an unused plot of land with 4 footballs we gave them. We have a coaching session with them thrice a week where we give them tips, training exercises and tactical advice.





## Why Football ?

Being footballers ourselves, and ex-Xavierites, football was but naturally the first choice for us. Also, when we were students in St. Xavier's College, the Late Rev. Father Donald Dias (our Principal) was a big fan of all sports, especially football. We still remember him running up and down on the sidelines cheering us on during inter college games and dishing out expert advice during half time. What better way to be inspired by him than to use the game he loved to try and bring joy and purpose into a few lives ?

Given the need to raise funds, it is imperative that there should be a large enough base of paying trainees who can avail of coaching services on commercial terms and these funds could then be utilized for support activities. To our pleasant surprise, there has been an upsurge in the popularity of football as a sport among the youth from middle and upper middle class families of Ahmedabad in the last three years.

A rise in the conduct of tournaments across all age groups from Under - 10 years right till Under - 21 categories has further fueled the enthusiasm of young soccer stars whose numbers keep rising by the day. This, factor then, emboldens us to believe that there will be a constant, growing need for academies and qualified, professional coaching.

The upcoming Soccer World Cup in South Africa will also serve as a booster dose in that there will be a whole new section of upcoming soccer "Ronaldos" and "Rooneys" who will take to the game enthusiastically and will need coaching services.

Last, but not the least, as a sport too, football is a perfect blend of artistry and brute strength. It combines the virtues of individual excellence within a team framework where every cog is equally important and has to complement each other. The need for sportsmanship and respect for rivals without giving quarter is part and parcel of the game and representative of life. Hard work has to be complemented with enjoying the game.



Our current batch of Sharpshooters

## **The SOCCER BUDDIES Programme**

To further the cause of youth who cannot afford sporting kits, we have initiated the Soccer Buddies programme. Simply put, it involves players at our academy from reasonably well to do families who are willing to sponsor the kits of players from poor backgrounds for one year.

**The amount involved is Rs.600 per 'Soccer Buddy'.** The sponsor gets a 80(G) certificate entitling them to tax exemptions. The choice of whether to sponsor or not is entirely voluntary and it enables the latter to build a team too and participate in tournaments. This also would lead to giving the sponsor youth a sense of purpose as well as the pride of doing a good deed & inculcating a social responsibility which would serve them well in their lives in future.

**We are very happy to report that we already have enough players from our paid services section who have committed to sponsoring soccer buddies of their own to equip a team of 16 youth from the slum community.**



**The Sharpshooters Hollywood Team (above)  
in their kits sponsored by some of their  
SOCCER BUDDIES (below)**





## Results (Tangible)

Within the first 2 months, we have managed a total of 25 - 30 paying students which has set us on our way to generating funds to see the project through. At a monthly mean of 45 - 50 students, we will have covered our operational costs and thereafter will have extra funds for our proposed activities.

Our target in the next 3 - 12 months is a mean of 50 - 75 paying students per month which will ensure that we have a decent amount of funds left over to fund essentials like football shoes, shin guards, uniforms and nutritional requirements for deserving players.

**Further, it gives us the greatest of pleasure to state that the team of “Hollywood” youth from the Gulbai Tekra slum who were entered in the Under - 21 section in the Vadilal Cup seven-a-side tournament at St. Xaviers College grounds, Ahmedabad from 10<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010 reached the quarter final stage where they bowed out after a spirited fight, backed vociferously by their soccer buddies (see DNA, Ahmedabad Edition report attached).**

Here, we also would like to thank the organizing committee of the Vadilal Cup tournament **Mz. Pallavi Somani, Mr. Clayton D'souza, Mz. Aditi Patel and Mr. Karl Saldanha** who were so supportive of us fielding the “Hollywood” team to the extent that they readily waived the hefty entry fee is usually charged by organizers.



**Last, but certainly not the least, our Under16 years team (above) comprised of youth from our paid coaching services section also participated in the Vadilal Cup tournament held at St. Xaviers College, Ahmedabad from 10<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010, winning 3 matches & bowed out after reaching the semi finals. Here, they were cheered on by their soccer buddies from the slum youth and many more besides.**

**A well deserved reward for their large heartedness in sponsoring a team of slum youth as their soccer buddies !!!**



## **Progress and / or the lack of progress (Intangible)**

After the first 2 tournaments that the slum youth played, we have noticed that there is a marked change in their social skills as under :

\* Today, after quite a few practise sessions with the youth from more affluent backgrounds (Group A), the slum youth (Group B) have the confidence to greet all and shake hands whereas earlier, they would sidle up and stand a little away from everyone.

\* The attitude during friendly games earlier would be that of deferring to the Group A youth and "letting" them win. This was something new to us as we had noticed that they were fiercely competitive otherwise. When we queried about the same, the answer was startling and revealing. Since they had been told that a part of the fees from the Group A youth would be used to fund their kits, they figured that they should not do anything to "upset" them or they stood to lose the funds !!

Once it was explained to them that they were not "dependants" but deserved kits as they were good players in their own right, the entire mindset has changed and the friendly games have become fiercely fought encounters with no quarter given by either side. It is to the credit of the maturity of youth from Group A that they too have understood the need to treat the Group B as equals and not be snobbish or even condescending.

\* We have found that most of them have been enrolled in municipal schools at some point or the other, but quit due to reasons ranging from lack of funds to pay fees, disinterested parents who feel their kids need to work for an additional source of income and such. Financial considerations being paramount, it remains to be seen what kind of headway we can make here.

\* Street kids being a tough lot due to the circumstances they grow up and live in, the use of foul language and abuses is considered normal by them. One of the first conditions we laid down has been that those who want to train and play with us have to control the use of these abuses. The deterrent has been that any such usage is penalized by a "sending off" from the game and missing the rest of the session. This is strictly enforced, more so, because when we field teams in tournaments, the need for control of language is necessary. Initially, there was not much of a difference, but after 2 months of "sending offs", the message seems to be getting across that it is better to keep mum than miss a session and maybe even lose a place in the team.

\* The need for financial security leads most of the youth to miss practise sessions frequently as they will take up any part time or casual jobs to supplement their income. This is something we have no control over and cannot enforce as a reduction in their earnings is something we cannot compensate them for (as yet). Sometimes, we also found, that there are those who deliberately missed sessions for no reason other than sheer laziness, thinking that they would be called whenever teams are to be put in tournaments. Such elements were kept out from team formations and thereafter, the dropout rate has drastically reduced.

**All in all, it has been a story of 2 steps forward & 1 step backwards, being the order of the day thus far !!!**

## **The Game of Life : Gutkha v/s Food**

The slum youth have habits which range from smoking practically anything they can lay hands on, to chewing GUTKHA in quantities. (this is a tobacco derivative which is highly addictive and carcinogenic too). Its media created image as a mouth freshener ensures its easy availability and its low cost - it is sold in sachets priced at Rs.2 - Rs.5 (U.S. 4 - 10 cents only!!) - means it is affordable to most families in the slum. The reason behind consuming gutkha is the fact that it suppresses hunger and so their parents get them hooked on to it at as early an age as 5-7 years !!! We have seen kids as young as 7 who cannot fully open their mouths which is due to the constant chewing of the gutkha and has led to lockjaw.

The irony is that its addictive nature makes it a habit which needs constant replenishment and that makes the youth spend almost as much money on it in a day as they would require for maybe one square meal. This also makes them resort to petty thievery and begging which further damages and reinforces their reputation as an unreliable community of thieves, beggars and vagabonds. The areas around the slum do not employ them even for odd jobs due to the same reason. This is not to say that all of them are the same, but the fact is that they are caught in a vicious cycle. Quite a few do hold regular jobs & a substantial number take up part time jobs.

We are now trying to speak to them and emphasizing that the sport needs a healthy body free of these habits. A scheme we have floated to them is that they give us the Rs.2 they spend on the gutkha sachet and in return we give them a banana, an egg or a bar of milk chocolate [each of these cost approximately Rs.4 (U.S. 8 cents)] apiece which is a 50% saving for the slum youth on the economic front and priceless value for us in the health parameter.

The idea is to divert use of meager financial resources from harmful wastage and convert the same into consumption which is beneficial health wise. Progress is naturally slow for a few reasons. The addictive nature of the gutkha makes it difficult to give up totally in one go so perforce the youth do consume a certain amount every day. Also, the one banana or one egg is taken home where it is appropriated many times by an elder sibling or even the parent (mostly the father), leaving the kid back at square one - hungry and angry.

An unwritten rule is that there should be no signs of gutkha packets on the football ground. Surprise and random checks are carried out on the youth and anyone found bearing a packet is debarred for that day from participating in the game. Earlier, they wouldn't take this seriously but a few sessions of sitting out has now convinced them not to be caught with a packet at least on the ground. A small victory, but it's a start.

The eradication of GUTKHA consumption is one of the key elements we want to incorporate in our programme and therefore, we have given it a higher allocation in our budgetary outlay. Since it is linked with the nutritional requirements, we feel that the "exchange" should be supported for at least 2-3 years as that would be the time to give results. We however, do not want it to be a totally free handout as that breeds parasitism. The value attached to something which one pays for (even partly) is much more than a freebie.

The encouraging sign is that the younger age groups (5-8 years) are bringing in the money and exchanging it for the fruit & eggs. This is the generation which we feel would benefit most to be rid and free of the addiction faster than the youth in the older age groups who have been addicted longer and therefore will need more time to get rid of the same.

**Considering that these are all habits and attitudes deeply entrenched since the last 4 to 5 decades, the progress we are making is slow. It is the deep love for the sport that makes the slum youth to challenge themselves & make efforts to rise above the morass they are in.**

**This makes it all the more incumbent on us to support them in any way to pursue the beautiful game of football.**

# Challenges Ahead

The issues now staring at us are broadly as under :

- \* The need for a comprehensive survey / study of the families residing in the Gulbai Tekra "Hollywood" Slum. This would include elements such as income statistics, educational levels, expenditure patterns and other routine statistics such as age patterns, etc.

The above needs to be done in order to get a clear idea of the task ahead and thereafter plan a future course of action.

- \* The second issue is extending the lease for the football ground from the authorities at St. Xavier's College.

The process for the same has been initiated and we are reasonably confident of a positive response from the other side.

- \* Next would be ensuring a rise in the number of paying students at the academy which will not only meet the operating expenses for the same but also further generate funds for our proposed interventions.

From 9 paying students in the first month to 25 in the third, it has been a slow and steady increase. Conventional advertising being expensive, we have to be content with word of mouth publicity as one satisfied student brings in another.

- \* The last challenge is to search for a sponsor who would cover our costs at least for a period of 12 months in order that we may stabilize and increase our income from operations to the extent that we do not have to approach anyone else with a begging bowl.



## The Sharpshooters Coaching Team

### Mr. Tejas Sharma

20 years, works as a free lance sports coach in many an elite school in Ahmedabad offering his services in Physical Fitness, Table Tennis and Football. Entirely self taught, Tejas unfailingly takes time off from his hectic schedule every evening to assist in the running of the Sharpshooters Academy, going well out of his way sometimes.



### Mr. Pratap Barolia

41 years, has been a national level football player (Santosh Trophy), currently employed with and representing the Income Tax Department of the Government Of India.

His interest in the sport is as deep today, where even after a hectic professional schedule, he still has it in him to contribute his free time, efforts and technical expertise towards the coaching activities of the academy. And all this is done with a benign smile !!!

### Mr. Jamshed Chinoy

40 years, has also been a national level football player (Santosh Trophy), having represented semi pro and professional club teams in Mumbai and Ahmedabad (currently representing Reserve Bank of India, Ahmedabad as a guest player). He has an independent business of his own and actively supports any initiative in his passion - football.

**He is also associated with another football academy Kahaani Foundation - whose director is a dynamic lady Mrs. Manisha Shah who has been single handedly responsible for rejuvenating the game of football in Ahmedabad since the last 3 years.**



The coaching programme for Kahaani has been set out by 5 coaches, all former Santosh Trophy players and is availed by 200+ youth right from Under-10 years, Under-12 years, Under-15 years and Open categories of youth. In the last 2 years, teams from Kahaani participated in a total of 14 tournaments across all age groups and were crowned champions in 11 of them.

**To know more about our project, visiting us and sponsoring options, call : Mr. Jamshed Chinoy : 9824171506.**

# 'Hollywood' boys shine



Action in the SharpShooters vs True Blue match at the Ahmedabad seven-a-side football championship at Xavier's college ground, on Tuesday

**DNA CORRESPONDENT. AHMEDABAD**

SharpShooters, the team made up of players from 'Hollywood' lane — the slum area near St Xavier's College — showed their fighting spirit when they downed True Blue 7-6 in the penalty shootout and stormed into the quarter-finals of the Under-21 section, at the Ahmedabad seven-a-side football championship at the Xavier's college ground here on Tuesday.

Naresh netted twice for the winners in regular time, while Deep Shah and Siddhartha Keskani scored one each to take the match into the shootout.

In other U-21 matches, Spartans thrashed Red Devils 4-1 with goals coming from Asit Malik (14th and 31st minutes) and Parth Vaghela (23rd and 37th minutes). Chandkehedra beat Galactico 3-0, scoring through Manish Suryavanshi, Mahavir Rajput and a self-goal.

In U-16 matches, Rising Sun Red beat Nirman High School 3-1. They found the target through Tapan Patel (12th), Karan Patel (18th) and an own goal in the 33rd minute. Diptiman Mahapatra got the consolation for Nirman High School in the 29th minute.

In an exciting encounter match between Youth Club and Rising Sun Blue, the match went into penalties and the latter won 7-6.

**DNA, Ahmedabad Edition, 12 May 2010**



# Life lessons through FOOTBALL

To some people football is a matter of life and death, I can assure you it's more serious than that.

Bill Shankly - FORMER LIVERPOOL MANAGER

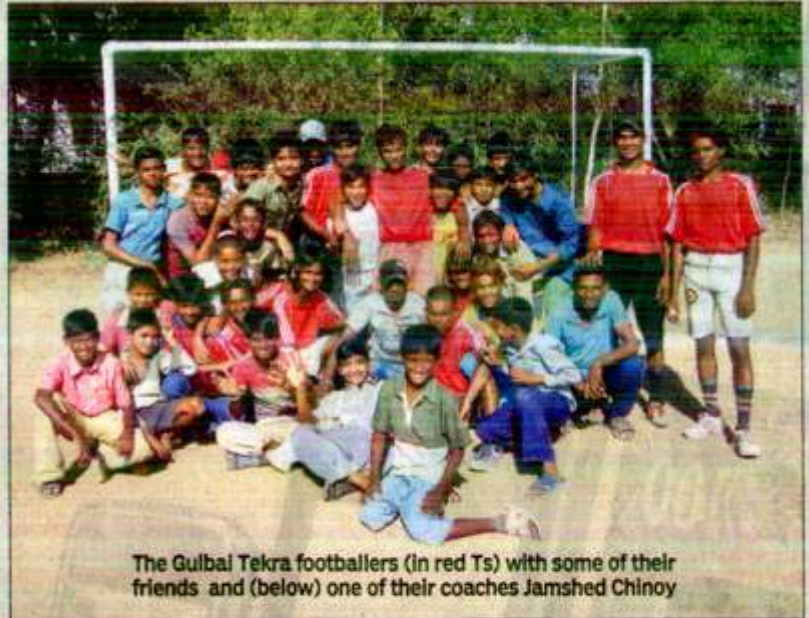
Peter Nazareth | TNN

**Ahmedabad:** While the above quote is normally used to show obsession with the sport, it also throws light on the power the game has to fire up passion in people.

Saamarthya Foundation, an organisation in the city are using the power of football to make a difference in the lives of under-privileged children.

They have taken up a group of 25 children from the Gulbai Tekra slum and are coaching them in football to develop their talent, as well as to give them a way to introduce discipline and focus in the lives of the slum children.

"The kids from Gulbai Tekra have always liked football they would come to the St Xavier's College field and play barefoot — but then they would go back and indulge in harmful behavior. There is a lot of talent in them and we saw football training could introduce discipline and use their pent-up energy to keep them away from harmful things like



The Gulbai Tekra footballers (in red Ts) with some of their friends and (below) one of their coaches Jamshed Chinoy

vices and occasional petty crime," says Jamshed Chinoy, 40, of Samarthya foundation.

They also run the Sharpshooters Academy at the St Xavier's College ground and introduced the 'Soccer Buddy Programme,' where more well-off kids could support a player from Gulbai Tekra, by providing a basic football kit for a small amount. The kit would get them jerseys, shorts, stockings and shinpads and they would train alongside his other students.

The initiative now has a core group of 25 players from the slum, 10 of whom are soccer

buddies. Chinoy also arranged for the use of a vacant municipal plot and footballs for the Gulbai Tekra children to practice.

Although resources are short the initiative is doing well. "We were inspired by Manisha Shah of Kahaani who gave us the idea to develop the talent from the slum. Fidence Lawrence, the property manager of St Xavier's College got the football ground back as it was earlier being rented as a cricket ground. The children are also doing well — Its not only because of this, but they are holding jobs and are disciplined about their practice, so it's good to see the results we are getting," he adds.



**The Times of India, Ahmedabad Edition  
21 May 2010**