EMERGING FROM THE SHADOWS
STORIES OF HOPE AND COURAGE
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The Song of a Journey

Emerging from the Shadows: stories of hope and courage is a tribute to the tireless spirit and limitless aspirations of adolescents and youth, and the hope they have sparked off. This book is a humble attempt to share their dreams, fears, hopes and joys - the song of a journey towards a better future.

The stories in this book emerged out of a partnership between Macquarie and Magic Bus that began in the year 2016. The goal of this partnership was to develop and implement a programme, improving the ability of young people to access stable, salaried jobs that allow for growth over a period of time. In its third year, this partnership has touched the lives of 1,900 adolescents and 750 young people in rural Bhiwandi, 36km from the city of Mumbai. 74% of the youth are now placed in jobs in sectors like Retail and Manufacturing, with starting salaries from Rs. 7,000 to Rs. 15,000 per month - a first in their area since most of their parents still rely on agriculture as the chief source of income.
Macquarie’s Philanthropic Vision

Suresh Goyal
Executive Director
& India Country Head
Macquarie

Together with Macquarie’s philanthropic arm, the Macquarie Group Foundation, our staff support hundreds of community organisations each year through financial support, volunteering and skills sharing. Since inception in 1985, we have contributed more than $330M to community organisations globally.

The introduction of the 2% corporate social responsibility law in India gave us an opportunity to deepen our support of community development work in India, including a focus on job skills.
We realise that many people in India, especially young people, lack opportunities due to financial, social and environmental constraints. At Macquarie, one of our long-held principles is Opportunity, reflected in our India CSR theme of ‘Creating Opportunity’. We are committed to using our resources to educate, enable and empower the youth of India.

Through our partnership with Magic Bus India Foundation, we are funding the Adolescent to Livelihood programme in Bhiwandi district of Maharashtra. The objective of the programme is to develop and enhance the socio-emotional, life skills and employability skills of young people. We are currently in the third year of the programme and expect to impact the lives of 2,650 young people.

But there’s more to our partnership than money. Staff members run mock interview sessions with youth from the Magic Bus programme, equipping them with critical skills and confidence to help secure entry-level jobs, while social events like the recent Macquarie - Magic Bus cricket match provide informal ways to connect with staff and students.

We are also helping Magic Bus build their organisational capacity by funding the development of an Outcome Framework to create a new standard for reporting outcomes, for use by not only Magic Bus, but other organisations delivering skilling programmes. This framework will cater to different types of skilling programmes across India, to help effectively and consistently report programme outcomes and demonstrate their social impact.

The case stories here highlight the young lives being transformed so as to reach their full potential. I’ve had the privilege of knowing young people who have turned their lives around with the help from Magic Bus, which is why I am extremely proud that we are able to support this skill development programme with Magic Bus India Foundation.
THANK YOU,
MACQUARIE
INDIA

Jayant Rastogi
CEO, Magic Bus
We always begin with hope. And our association with Macquarie is just that.

Nowhere in the world is the pace of urbanisation as evident as it is in Mumbai, the financial capital of India.

And while we celebrate the development of new roads, newer forms of transport and entertainment, we are painfully aware that not many people can access these; in fact, such a large number continue to be denied basic amenities to survive. And yet, the surprising resilience of the youth, who bear all forms of disadvantages but are not ready to give up on their dreams, is what gives us the hope to work towards a poverty-free world.

We began with a hope to touch and transform the lives of 1,900 adolescents and 750 youth living in rural Bhiwandi, just 36km from Mumbai. Our goal is clear – ensure adolescents complete their secondary education, are not married off before they reach 18, and have the skill set and knowledge to get into organised work. We call this the journey from Childhood to Livelihood – an answer to breaking out of a self-perpetuating poverty cycle.

We are currently in the third year of the programme. The last two years have been eye-opening and some of these stories will tell you why. In order to do the three things mentioned above, we had to work very closely with each adolescent, their parents, school systems, and communities. There are victories and defeats, little milestones and tears of hope – everything that a journey evokes. Today, we see shifting mindsets of the communities with young girls as role models; we are supporting adolescents to be work ready and resilient as they face crises bigger than their age, and we are providing opportunities of stable employment to first-generation earners.

This book is a window for us to look at some remarkable stories that breathe hope in our efforts and help us carry forward. We will continue to be inspired by the adolescents and young people who choose to share their journey with us.

We will remain deeply indebted to Macquarie for being a pillar of support to help us achieve every milestone of this journey.
FROM POVERTY TO A LIFE OF POSSIBILITIES
Leading by example

KADAMBARI’S STORY
In 2017...she was judged the best Community Youth Leader (CYL) of her programme.

Sonali and Pankaj Patil
Kadambari’s parents

We trusted Magic Bus with our daughter and we have never been disappointed. Our community is cut off from all urban contact. Girls in our neighbourhood don’t normally go out to facilitate sessions. But Magic Bus sessions are so wonderful, engaging, and have proved so beneficial for our daughter, that we are glad she took this role up.
“I want to work in Mumbai”

Kadambari, a 19-year-old girl, lives with her family in Dhabad village located 60km from the city of Mumbai. Like girls of her age, she has heard stories of the city life and yearns to be among those who go there just to fulfill their dreams. “I want to work there,” comes her swift reply.

Her father works as a stage decorator and is the only earning member of the family. His monthly salary is Rs. 10,000. Her mother is a home-maker.

Kadambari loves sports. It is during one such game that Sudarshan from Magic Bus spotted her. He was then in charge of mobilising young leaders to lead the Magic Bus sessions. He saw an infectious energy in the young girl. She was engrossed in her game with children much younger to her.

Kadambari eagerly signed up for the role. She went for a round of training to understand the curriculum and learn ways to interact and engage with children. In 2017, one year after she joined Magic Bus, she was judged the best Community Youth Leader (CYL) of her programme. Her parents watched and clapped fervently as she received her award.

“My first award as a leader in my community,” says a proud Kadambari.

Kadambari has completed her secondary education and is currently preparing for college. “Between now and college, I decided to take up a job at the local e-Seva Kendra to support my family,” she shares.

A bright and optimistic girl who aspires to have a career, Kadambari is an inspiration for all of us.
Breaking out of his challenges

SHIVAM’S STORY
In the tough times, we get by with a little help from our friends.

But sometimes, the tough times are deeply personal and we retreat inwards, cutting ourselves off from others.

That’s what happened to Shivam, a young man who lives in Bhiwandi, and whose family earns a meagre Rs. 150 each day, in basic agricultural work.

Shivam lost his father earlier this year. A sudden heart attack and he was no more. Now food, medicines, care for the ailing grandparents... it’s all much harder to come by.

Inevitably, the young man has struggled to adapt and to retain his high spirits through this tough time. He quietened down, his grades in school dropped.

Fortunately he was part of the Magic Bus programme that relied on generating joy – each week he played games in sessions that focused on a life skill like resilience or self-management. Through these he began to recover his spirits. In this there were little encouragements that came to him from his Magic Bus mentors – that was just what he needed to resurface as his old self.

He’s now preparing himself to be work-ready when he finishes with his secondary schooling. He knows he has to earn, but he’s committed also to finding a way to continue with his education.

He will of course, find a way to do both. And should he stumble, he’ll pick himself up, dust himself off and get on with it.

With a little help from his friends.
Mamta Madhukar Patil, Shivam’s mother

Magic Bus sessions are a blessing for my son. He is a bright boy born in a very poor family. Even when my husband was alive, it was difficult to make ends meet. Farming is not a well-paying job. With his father gone, my son would have been completely lost had it not been for the Magic Bus mentors he had in school. He learnt how to speak in English. **Who would have imagined that in a household of farmers of a village like ours?**

Amol, Magic Bus Life Skills Educator

I met Shivam during our life skills and work readiness sessions in his school. He is a bright boy, curious to learn, and determined to succeed. All of us were impressed by his perseverance and efforts at learning the English language. His father’s death shocked him. He had to appear for SSC (10th standard) examination so we worked closely with him to ensure he gets over the crisis. He is a fighter. Shivam is now working at a garage to support his family and is also taking computer lessons. He continues to remain in touch with me.
Gaining ground

TEJAL’S STORY
B B Patil, Headmaster, Tejal’s school
Today, she is confident, outspoken and full of energy.

11-year-old Tejal Patil lives with her maternal uncle and his family at Manivali, a village in Bhiwandi taluka of Thane district, Maharashtra. Tejal’s parents, her three sisters and elder brother live together in a nearby village. When she was young, Tejal’s mother had contracted Malaria and couldn’t take care of Tejal. Since then, Tejal has been brought up by her maternal uncle’s seven-member family.

Tejal’s father works as a driver while her mother is a seamstress. Their collective income amounts to Rs. 10,000 a month.

When the Magic Bus programme started in her school, Tejal found herself in a difficult situation. She was too shy to participate in games and activities. She felt too conscious of herself and tried to remain as inconspicuous as possible.

With each passing day at the Magic Bus session, her shyness gave way to a newfound fondness for games. She found friends to laugh, play and compete with. She found a way to voice her opinions at the end of the game.

Today, Tejal is unmistakable during the sessions. She is confident, outspoken and full of energy. She aspires to be a teacher.

She is one of the smartest girls of her class. After participating in the Magic Bus sessions, she has also become open and confident. She and several other girls in her class seem to have come out of their cocoons.
Dreaming big

VIKAS’S STORY
“I never imagined any company would hire me”
At the Livelihoods Centre, Vikas got an opportunity to plan his career.

“I never imagined any company would hire me,” says 22-year-old Vikas from Chamle village of Bhiwandi. Vikas was a part of the second batch of youth who underwent livelihoods training at the Magic Bus- Macquarie Livelihoods Centre in Ambadi, Maharashtra.

His parents are farmers with an income of Rs. 5,000 a month. Their family of five survives on this. Vikas didn’t have the means to opt for college. “I had to look out for work instead. But with just a higher secondary degree there were no jobs available for me.” He enrolled for a diesel mechanics course with the hope to find a job, but in vain. Convinced that all doors to employment are permanently closed, Vikas fell in the company of youth who whiled away time playing cards. That is when his uncle spoke to him and informed him about Magic Bus-Macquarie Livelihoods Centre at Ambadi, just 8 km away from his home.

At the Livelihoods Centre, Vikas got an opportunity to plan his career. He went for counselling sessions where he spoke about his strengths and came to terms with his limitations. He took a keen interest in learning to speak in English, and in the digital and financial literacy classes. At the end of the course, he sat for job interviews lined up by the Centre. He joined as a RO technician at a leading water treatment plant with a starting salary of Rs. 9,000 per month.
Amol Patil
Director
Jalamrut Water Purifier
Kudus, Maharashtra
“I could sense a beginning at a point of my life when I had completely given up hope,” he says.

Within six months of his joining, Vikas got promoted as a team leader with four employees reporting into him. His performance earned him a place in the company’s sales team. Within a span of just four months, he sold more than 50 units of water purifiers, earning business worth four lakh rupees. It was around this time that he also received an offer to intern with Coca Cola. It was a paid internship of Rs. 7,000 per month.

At present, Vikas works two jobs. He earns Rs. 17,000 per month. “Our conditions have improved. We don’t need to worry about two square meals a day. I still see this as a beginning. I want to work more, see more of the world and do better with each job,” he signs off.

I am the Director of Jalamrut Water Purifier. I entered into a partnership with the Magic Bus Livelihoods programme in search of skilled and qualified staff for my business. Till date, we have recruited 8 Magic Bus youth in our company and have had a good experience with each of them. As an employer, I found candidates are adequately trained, are good communicators with competitive skill sets. They require less training even on their first job.
Undeterred
MINAL’S STORY
“I had not hoped to come this far.”

22-year-old Minal Jadhav always wanted to work in the health care sector. When she applied for the nursing course at Sion hospital in Mumbai, her candidature was rejected. She did not have the required marks.

Minal was dismayed. “I had worked hard all along and just in one moment, my dream seemed to have slipped out. I had never thought of any alternate career. I felt lost,” she says.

Minal’s father works at the electrical department of the Central Railways. Her mother is a homemaker. She has a younger brother. “I wanted to start earning so that I could support my father,” she says. Her relative told her about the Magic Bus-Macquarie Livelihoods Centre in her neighbourhood. “I heard they had courses by GE Healthcare,” she explains.

At the Magic Bus-Macquarie Livelihoods Centre, Minal learnt skills that would help her succeed in a career of her choice. Activity-based sessions on life skills, learning to speak in English, and career guidance helped her set her career goals in perspective.
“I am still in touch with my mentors at Magic Bus, the ones who made me believe magic is possible and it happens”

Minal was in the first list of candidates from the Livelihoods Centre to receive training to be an X-ray technician by GE Healthcare. She cleared the written test examination and the interview. “I was excited. I had given up on my dream and here it was knocking at my door,” she shares.

“GE Healthcare’s infrastructure is mind-blowing – the spacious lecture rooms, operation labs and digital labs were nothing I had seen or experienced so far. I wouldn’t have been able to take this training had it not been for Magic Bus,” she says.

During the 5 months course, Minal learnt the technological aspects of X-ray, handling of radiographic equipment and formulation of X-ray exposure factors. At the end of her training, she was placed as an intern to get hands-on experience of the job to be done ahead. During her internship, Minal worked under the direction of experienced radiologists.

Her hard work and efforts were rewarded. Minal works as a Radiologist at Chaitanya Hospital in Kalyan since November 2017. She is popular for her sensitivity and rigour in anything she undertakes.

“I had not hoped to come this far. My parents could never have afforded the fees for the kind of training I received. I am still in touch with my mentors at Magic Bus, the ones who made me believe magic is possible and it happens!” she exclaims.

Sonu Raina
Sr. Operations Leader
GE Healthcare, India

We love to collaborate with Magic Bus and get their youth on board for internship, and then, jobs. The youth from the Livelihoods Centre at Ambadi are skilled, confident and outspoken. So far, Magic Bus has sent over 50 students to GEHCl and over 30 are on internship. Few of them started their job as X-ray technician in hospitals, with a salary ranging from Rs. 8000 to Rs. 10,000 per month.
A step towards a brighter future

PRAJAKTA’S STORY
“It is a dream come true. I want to work hard and make it big in the retail sector.”
21-year-old Prajakta is the first member of her family to have a salaried job.

Currently in the second year of college, Prajakta also works as a Sales Assistant at Gangar Eyenation’s outlet in Mumbai.

Prajakta comes from Digashi, a small village in rural Thane in Maharashtra. Like most others in her village, her parents are farmers with a small income. “I scored high marks in the 12th standard. After celebrating, my father was worried and sad that he would not be able to help me study further,” she remembers.

**She knew she had to work to study further.**

She enrolled herself on the Macquarie-supported Magic Bus Livelihoods Programme in August 2017 on the suggestion of a friend. “Throughout the training, I had plenty of guidance from the Centre team to plan my career and further education,” she says.

At the end of two months, she appeared for three interviews and chose a retail sales profile with Gangar Eyenation. “It is a dream come true. I want to work hard and make it big in the retail sector,” she says in a confident voice.

With an income of Rs. 10,000 a month, she supports her family, pays her college fees and saves a little for her future.

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**Nisha Mehbubani**  
Manager,  
Human Resources  
Gangar Eyenation

Working with Magic Bus continues to be one-of-a-kind experience. The streamlined and continuous support they provide to the youth after they are placed in jobs is not just commendable but also phenomenal. It is one of the most responsive and supportive partners we have.
Walking Together:

Arun Nalavadi
Director, Corporate Sustainability and Partnerships
Magic Bus

Macquarie and Magic Bus have collaborated since 2016 on two of the major reasons for modern slavery in the Indian context—a lack of education and employability skills that allow the transition into dignified, salaried work. 1,900 adolescents and 750 young people from Bhiwandi, Maharashtra have benefitted so far from this intervention. The adolescents are on course to complete secondary school and the young people are being placed in work with the promise of career growth. All of them will successfully resist the conditions that result in labour with poor working conditions and pay.

The Magic Bus project team has received quality inputs from employees of Macquarie India, many of whom have engaged with the young people to share what it is like to work in the formal sector. Such role models are crucial in the journey out of poverty. It is this involvement that makes our collaboration unique.

We look forward to continuing this work collaboration with Macquarie India for many more years to come, together resisting the conditions that push people into modern slavery, and engaging them productively in the critical task of nation building.
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