

Sara Lizia D’Mello: Leading Change in Society

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“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader”

- John Quincy Adams

Committed Communities Development Trust

The Committed Communities Development Trust (CCDT) has been actively associated with marginalized communities in and around the slums of Mumbai since 1990. The organization began with its engagement with a self-settled colony of leprosy patients in North Mumbai and still continues today with its efforts to address deprivation of vulnerable communities and children. Over the years, health and education have emerged as the two major domains of its intervention, with special focus on families and children impacted by HIV/AIDS.

CCDT was one of the first organizations in India to develop a comprehensive care and support program for families impacted by HIV/AIDS. The organization pioneered the HIV/AIDS home-based Care model which includes education, livelihood, self-care, nutrition and psychosocial support to minimize the overall vulnerability of the child and the family as a whole.

Additionally, it has also developed a comprehensive Residential Care Program with crisis intervention centres serving as safety nets for children orphaned or in vulnerable situations on account of HIV/AIDS, enabling them to convert crisis into opportunity. They promote healthy

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growth and development for each child, thus allowing them access to a complete and inclusive childhood with opportunities for a brighter future. In view of the fact that there are very few inclusive institutions in the country housing both, children infected and affected with HIV; CCDT's work in this area is of great significance.

The Integrated Community Development Program of CCDT emphasizes on empowerment of the community to empower the child and similarly empowerment of the child to empower the community. It focuses on enabling children, youth and community members to be sensitive, take up responsibility, exercise their rights and work with the governing authorities to attain their entitlements. In the process, the organization tries to ensure that the future generations are independent and responsible citizens. This case describes the leadership of the founder of CCDT, Ms. Sara Lizia D'Mello.

Sara D'Mello and the Birth of CCDT

Sara Lizia D'Mello, a resident from the upmarket area of Bandra¹ in Mumbai and Ex-Principal of Green Lawns High School, always wanted to work with people "outside the system." However she felt that she was not ready and feared something so unfamiliar to her. Making an entry into this unstructured system, which was in complete contrast with the life she was living, worried her the most. Sara recalls one of her earliest memories when some construction work was on in the school while she was Principal, they were extending and building a new floor; she remembers seeing the children of the construction labourers running around playing in the mud, though undernourished they seemed bright. At that very moment she modified the school social service program and made the students look after, bathe and teach these children by setting up a system of a child to child mentoring program. Sara always believed, like the others, if these children were given an opportunity, they too, would have better futures.

¹ A suburb located in West Mumbai. It is considered the Queen of the suburbs and is home to celebrities and other top businesspersons who stay along the sea front or on Pali Hill. The population and culture of Bandra is quite cosmopolitan in nature.

In her own small way, Sara too did her bit of social service and volunteered at Ashadaan², she helped the sisters pick up people who were left on the streets and institutionalized them, although she was of the opinion that this act only curtailed their freedom. Sara's all-time role model has been Mother Theresa, but she also felt that each of the sisters from Ashadaan were role models for her in their own way. It was at this point that Sara started thinking and wondering about the life in a slum and how people in slums regarded their own lives. She was keen to understand and wanted to make a difference. Through a friend, she was able to get in touch with some missionaries and started volunteering regularly during school holidays in the Leprosy Slum Colony in Borivali³. Initially, she would only watch as the sisters worked with and assisted the residents of the slum. After a while, Sara too got involved with the work and gradually began to understand the ways of living of the people there.

Sara's voluntary work in the Leprosy Colony rigorously continued as she got deeply involved, she felt her time and efforts in the slums were not enough and she had to make a choice. After much thought and deliberation, she finally decided to quit as Principal of the elite Green Lawns School and work with the persons living with Leprosy. Her decision did not go down too well with the Board of Trustees of the school and so finally after a period of three and a half years, she was able to leave and follow this mission.

The initial phase in the Leprosy Colony was difficult, Sara was aware that she had no professional qualifications or skills to work with these people. She felt the most important barrier to overcome was that of communication, and so she decided to learn the local language of the people, which was Marathi. Further, the people required immediate medical aid and assistance which no one was willing to provide, so Sara, completed a First Aid course in order to

² An organization run by the Missionaries of Charity in Mumbai. It has several projects and homes across the city catering to physically and mentally disabled persons, the destitute and AIDS patients.

³ A suburb in the North-west of Mumbai. It is framed as the suburb of Gardens and is the new destination for residence on account of the increased costs of living in the other parts of the city. Located at the Northern tip of West Mumbai, the place is host to migrants to come to the city for employment and thus have set-up base in slums across the area.

make herself more effective in her work. With basic knowledge of the language and freshly learnt skills in medical care, she was able to provide the people not only with the assistance that they required but also the care and support they needed. Sara also addressed cases of acute malnutrition, tuberculosis and polio which were rampant in the slum. Thus, began Sara's journey towards making a difference.

The Goodbye Leprosy Campaign

Sara believed that the welfare of the people is the responsibility of the State and so she requested the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation⁴ (BMC) for support, however, she received none. She would visit the BMC office every day for months on end, sit for hours from morning to night, just to make her presence felt and hoping that they would remember her face. Finally, one day, a Senior Medical Officer who noticed her in the office showed interest and decided to support her work. Together with the BMC, several medical camps were planned and organized for the people in the colony.

Sara was of the opinion that Leprosy should not be confined to the slums of Borivali alone and so decided to publicize the issue to create awareness and eliminate the existing stigma. Consequently, the Good Bye Leprosy Campaign was organized and partly funded by Sara's retirement savings. With the help of a friend from the Lioness Club of Mumbai she booked the Oberoi Towers (a well-known hotel in Mumbai) as the venue hoping to attract participants. She contacted the press and informed them about the event. Right enough; the location of the venue itself attracted most of the press who instantly confirmed their presence. Sara then visited all the organizations working with Leprosy in Mumbai in order to know and learn about their work and how they empowered people. She did not speak at this conference but only provided a platform for these experts in the field to publicize their work and so she ensured

⁴ Now known as the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, is the primary agency responsible for urban governance in Mumbai. It is one of the largest local governments in the Asian continent and is dedicated to the cause of provision of a better life for all its citizens.

that all the organizations present spoke their bit. Lastly, she contacted the Department of Leprosy in the Indian Government and asked them to co-sponsor the event. She was able to garner their support because the Leprosy Eradication Program staff working in the colony knew her and her work in the slums and so willingly co-operated. Through a colleague, she was also able to get a senior representative from the BMC to be present for this campaign. Working with the Governing authorities was always of utmost importance, Sara would strive to involve them in her work, at conferences, workshops and trainings. The program was a complete success and was covered by all the leading newspapers in Mumbai the very next day.

Charity vs. Empowerment

As time went by, Sara realized that the kind of support being provided to the people would be temporary. She always believed that they had to be made aware of their rights as citizens and get involved in demanding for the same. However, this belief was not in conjunction with the philosophy of the missionaries who believed more in the charity perspective. With such conflicting beliefs and actions, having no other alternative Sara stopped volunteering with them and moved out of the colony to avoid any altercation. When she did not return to the Leprosy colony, the entire slum community threatened to agitate until she returned to work with them. This move only gave Sara the motivation to pursue her goal. She was alone, without any organizational support or alliances or financial aid apart from her meager Retirement fund. All she was assured of was the support of the people from the community. She set-up base in a small hut which was given by a lady who moved and lived with her daughter. The people of the slum all worked together to repair the hut and make it functional. Thus was born, '*Pushpa Vihar*', the first centre in the colony of persons living with Leprosy solely set up by the community and Sara.

While working in *Pushpa Vihar* she realized that although education was important it was the stigma that prevented children from attending school. At this juncture, she decided to make

health and awareness a priority in the slum community. Sara took this thought forward and set-up a school or *Balwadi*⁵ for the young children. This seemed to be a good start however, she had no resources and no one to teach them as no teacher from outside wished to come into this 'taboo' area. At this point, several women from the Leprosy Colony came forward, to teach the children and to be trained in order to work for their community.

In addition, Sara went from house to house, meeting eligible women and encouraging them to become teachers and outreach workers. When an entire group of teachers-to-be was formed, she contacted an NGO working with women who would be able to train these women and develop their skills. Here too, Sara found it extremely essential to inform the local *Panchayats*⁶ in the slums about this project. She involved them in the entire process, stressing on the fact that they were the leaders there and played a significant role in the development of the community. She also got them to sponsor the trainings for the women.

The trainings began in full swing where the women, some of whom were ill with Leprosy, were trained over a period of time and empowered in the process. Sara would insist that they purchase a train ticket, wear nice *sarees*⁷ and bangles and travel with dignity. One of them said 'I would always travel in trains as a beggar as no one looked or touched me. Today, I know what it is to travel like a normal person and wear nice clothes. Now I know what it is to be treated with respect.' Another woman said, "I never knew what it felt like to be treated as an equal, I can freely share my plate and glass with everyone here." The *Balwadi* was set-up and

⁵ Pre-primary schools run mostly in rural areas in India for the economically weaker sections of society. It is run economically but scientifically with the use of as many teaching aids as possible made from locally available material. The first Balwadi started in the year 1945.

⁶ This forms the base of the local self government organization in India of the Panchayati Raj system in villages or small towns. The Sarpanch is the elected head. The Panchayat consists of between seven and seventeen members elected from wards of a village or town, they are called a "panch". A third of the seats are reserved for female candidates.

⁷ It is a garment worn by women in South Asia, it consists of a drape varying from five to nine yards in length and two to four feet in breadth. It is wrapped around the waist with one end draped over the shoulder baring the midriff.

running as per plan, the children from the colony could now attend school and have an education. While teaching, Sara also urged the teachers to complete their schooling and college education as well. Over time, these women were not only teachers but also community workers who identified and monitored health issues in the slum. Today, most of these women have secured employment as teachers outside the slum while two of them still continue to work with the Non-Governmental Organization that was set-up later by Sara. While speaking of the birth of this organization, she remembers the day when the *Sarpanch*⁸ in the colony, suggested that she set up a Trust, as this was the only way she could procure any kind of support. She recalled how initially she was averse to setting up a formal organization as she lacked the qualifications and the skill. To this, the *Sarpanch* confidently assured her of all his support.

Formation of a Trust

In early 1980, Sara had to create a Board of Trustees for this Trust; she did not wish to have family members or friends as part of the Board. She wanted young and dynamic persons from varied fields; she preferred if they were from nearby places so that they could meet often, however she was open to having anyone who was enthusiastic and shared similar ideals. She insisted that there be a representative from the Government and BMC on the Board in order for the Trust to know what the Government was involved in and how they could work together with them. She contacted people with expertise through her friends and others through the NGOs in the field. She also managed to get a famous architect onto the Board. Many people dissuaded her, stating corruption, politics, lack of resources and other issues as major problems, undeterred she continued; her vision being working with persons with Leprosy and children in especially difficult situations. She also insisted that families of those affected had to be involved in the process. The Trust then had a Board but no name, so one day Sara met with

⁸ The elected head of the local self-government called the Panchayat. The Sarpanch together with the other elected members form the Panchayat in a village or town. The Sarpanch is the point of contact between the Government and the community.

two of her close friends to christen it. She knew that she wanted the word 'committed' to be part of the name alongwith 'community' as it is the people who would take the organization forward. And so in 1990, the Committed Communities Development Trust was born.

The NGO was finally set-up and registered, with its Board of Trustees (Refer to Exhibit 1) and yet had no manpower, for Sara, passionate and proficient individuals were of utmost importance. She stated that anybody could work, their qualifications didn't matter. She personally interviewed each and every candidate in the organization right until 2008. For her, a good team member was someone who was ardent and hardworking. These were the two traits she looked for in any candidate. She remembers the first staff, he was an apprentice to a carpenter, today he is a senior social worker still employed with the organization.

The First Funders

As CCDT grew, Sara's Retirement fund was not enough to sustain it. She did not have any important contacts or financial resources to sustain it. One day, a group of tourists from Spain expressed the desire to visit a slum in Mumbai. Sara was contacted and got on the job immediately, while with the Spaniards, she got to know that they belonged to various funding agencies in their country. Seizing the opportunity, Sara immediately spoke of her work, which they found most interesting and invited her to Spain. She then went overseas, formulated a proposal about the work of the organization and presented it. CCDT received funding from an agency in Spain for eleven years after that. This continued on account of the meticulous documentation of the work the staff carried out and submitted on time, transparency in accounts and constant updates given to them by Sara.

At this stage, Sara had a strong hold and great influence over the Leprosy Colony, she did not restrict her work with this illness alone but branched out to address health and other related issues in the community. Being aware of this fact, the President of the World Bank who was

addressing a conference which Sara attended, requested her to set-up a local health post⁹ in the colony as the BMC was unwilling to do the same. Sara's prompt reply to this was, "I'll start it, if you fund it." Surprised by her answer, he readily agreed and even roped in UNICEF¹⁰ to impart the required trainings to the staff. Thus, began the first Health Post in the slum, something which the people thought impossible.

With the successful functioning of the Health post in Borivali, the BMC approached Sara to run a similar program in another 'taboo' area where no one wished to go – *Kamathipura*¹¹ (an area occupied by commercial sex workers). Sara and her staff agreed and set-up base there, this was also funded by World Bank. While working in this red-light area, Sara noticed that the women were dying for no real prominent reason, leaving their children on the streets, abandoned or at the risk of being lured into prostitution and anti-social activities. It was at this point of her work where her vision became clear – She wanted to work with the community but with focus on the child.

Over the years in *Kamathipura*, Sara found that the AIDS¹² epidemic was just surfacing in India and was the cause of the deaths of the women in prostitution; they left behind their children who were either infected or affected by the illness. With the assistance from the BMC, day and night shelters for the children were set-up in old unused BMC offices, CCDT thus became to first

⁹ Primary health clinics set-up by the Government in rural or urban areas in India providing basic medical care and facilities to the surrounding community. The clinic will have trained personnel and be provided with the required resources in order to meet the health needs of the community.

¹⁰ The United Nations Children's Fund is a United Nations Program with its headquarters in New York city providing long term humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in the developing countries. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and its Executive Committee.

¹¹ This is Mumbai's oldest and one of Asia's largest red-light areas. It is divided into fourteen lanes according to the regional and linguistic backgrounds of the sex workers. Most of the sex workers are trafficked from other Indian states, Nepal and Bangladesh. The numbers of the workers are dwindling in this area on account of AIDS and migration to newer locations.

¹² Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is a condition caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The virus is transferred through unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected partner, contact with infected blood and infected needles. HIV/AIDS has a tremendous impact on society, both as an illness and a cause for stigma and discrimination.

NGO in the country to provide care and support to these children, in Sara's words – "We restored hope when there was none."

The Challenge

The biggest challenge that Sara faced was that of funding, she lacked the skills and resources to raise her own funds. Nevertheless, the people in the field were aware about her work and one day a Medical Officer from the BMC mentioned CCDT to some representatives from the World Health Organization¹³ (WHO) who were in India. Interested to know more, they visited the organization and were oriented by Sara. In her nonchalant but avid and forceful way she convinced them of the need in the area and managed to secure funding from *Terres des Hommes*¹⁴, an international organization. However, these funders came in with their own agenda and philosophy which did not suit the situation in India and so although it was her greatest need, Sara refused to compromise after explaining her reasons. After observing her stand her ground firmly in her beliefs, the organization decided to fund CCDT after a year. Hence, together with the funding came in a more structured way of working, skill development, professionalism and a system. The standards the funders required were high and CCDT adhered to them. Considering that the organization had assured funding for a period of five years but continued for ten only goes to indicate that CCDT was making a positive impact and bringing about change. In this period, the news about CCDT's work had spread to the capital, Delhi and

¹³ This is an agency of the United Nations with special focus on international health. Established in the year 1948, it has its headquarters in Geneva. Since its inception, it has played a role in trying to mitigate various diseases, focus on reproductive health, aging, nutrition, food security and substance abuse to name a few. WHO is responsible for the World Health Report, the World Health Survey and World Health Day.

¹⁴ An international organization set-up in 1960 in Switzerland focuses on two core areas – healthcare and child protection. It endeavors to defend the rights of children in times of war, natural disasters or less publicized situations of distress. It is the largest organization for children's aid in Switzerland and has projects and relief programmes in over thirty countries.

so came in the new funders – USAID¹⁵ through Family Health International¹⁶ (FHI) who continued from where the earlier ones had left. This chain of funding continues to date.

Overcoming the Challenge

Sara believes that there are certain aspects on account of which she was able to overcome her biggest challenge. These included honesty, transparency, networking, documentation, professionalism, process orientation, doing more with less, and persistence.

Honesty

Honesty meant being open about any kind of problem or issue related to the funds received. This could include under spending or overspending or anything else. She emphasized on the fact that the funder should be made aware of all the facts. This value is also one that she looked for while recruiting and observing staff work in the organization.

Transparency

Transparency was maintained at all times and a perfect balance of money received and money spent was maintained. Apart from this, she took great pride in the fact that the Accounts Department of CCDT was adept with the latest Programs and financial policies and used these for maximum output. The Department also always had a bill or receipt or letter as an explanation for the money the organization spent right down to the last rupee.

Networking

This has been a cross-cutting theme for Sara and her staff. Maintenance of healthy relationships with the funders or the Government authorities or trainers or service users,

¹⁵ The United States Agency for International Development is the United States Government agency responsible for administering civilian foreign aid. It's mission statement is 'to partner to end extreme poverty and to promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing the security and prosperity of the United States. USAID operates in Africa, Asia, Latin America and East Europe.

¹⁶ Family Health International now FHI 360 was established in 1971 focusing on reproductive health and now also on HIV/AIDS. This nonprofit human development organization is committed to improving lives sustainable and through locally driven solutions. The organization serves more than seventy countries and all U.S states and territories.

though time consuming and cumbersome, is the most important attribute she has learned and taught others as well (refer Exhibit 2). In the case of funders, building and maintaining contacts and alliances was crucial for the organization and she emphasized that one must never let go of any opportunity to do so. While doing this, it was also essential to understand that the objectives of the funders and the vision of the organization ran parallel and not towards different goals. It was a very fruitful learning experience for her when she once refused funding from an American organization as their aims were different from her own.

Documentation

The documentation of work done is another important factor that contributed to the growth of the organization. It not only helped CCDT maintain records of the work done but also checked and analyzed how and why it was done and if it could have been done better. Documentation provided the opportunity to study the impact of the work and plan accordingly for the future.

Professionalism

Lastly, Sara maintained that no matter how emotional or moving the cause, each one must be professional when at work. She insisted on details like smart dressing and a neat hairstyle to larger aspects of putting management and human resource systems in place in the organization. For her, all these together form the package and contribute to building up the credibility of the organization. She insisted that staff speak English and document their reports in the language; she supported them with English classes and also encouraged them to pursue their higher studies. Capacity building was a very important aspect for her and all the staff had to be trained and incorporate the learning into their work.

Today, as Sara looks back at the initial years, she feels that it was the funding organizations who helped CCDT grow (refer Exhibit 3 and Exhibit 4), making them refine their skills, be accountable and proficient. Funding being an integral part of any NGO project needs to be channelized and the ultimate goal must be kept in mind. Over the years, according to Sara, it is the funders who

have helped streamline the organization and focus on what their core motive was. She is very grateful for this and is happy that the experience has helped her and the team learn and grow.

Process Orientation

Till today, all the programs of CCDT have followed a simple five-step process which has helped them achieve success. This includes- need identification, proposal preparation, funding, resource mobilization, and strategic planning. The first step is to identify the need for an intervention due to a problem or issue which requires immediate action. The next step is to do a brief analysis of the situation, analyze research data and the extent of the problem. Based on this, with a vision in mind, an intervention plan is prepared with its associated budget. As soon as the project is on paper, it moves onto the funding stage. That is, it is presented to possible funders interested in supporting this cause. As soon as they have been roped in, resources including manpower, materials, equipment, etc. are put into place before the actual functioning begins. Finally, the objectives, goals and inputs required for the program are set before the commencement of work. If staff capacity building is required then it must be done before starting the program. The targets to be achieved along with the expected outcome with timelines are fixed. The important stakeholders too can be involved in this process.

Doing More with Less

Sara recalls how she insisted that staff make do with whatever resources they had but nothing should hamper their work. She insists that this needs to continue today as well. The lack of a computer or printer or staff or funds should not deter anyone from achieving the organizational goals. She feels that it is essential that staff have a keen desire within them for their work in order to overcome situations like these. She has just a line of advice for her staff, "Just keep going on. It doesn't rain forever".

Persistence

Besides the lack of resources, Sara also faced a lot of opposition from social workers, other NGOs and institutions stating that she was not a professional and so had no idea as to how field work needed to be done. This did not daunt her and she continued her work knowing that she was learning from the people she worked with. Sara's work with the Government and the BMC was the hardest and most frustrating; at times she would even lose her temper due to the corruption and bureaucracy. A lot of her time, energy and effort would go into attempting to meet with them, explaining a project to them or getting required permissions. She also recalls, refusing to bribe any personnel or use illegal methods in order to get the work done. She however, continued to insist that representatives from each section of the Governing authorities must be involved or made aware of the work being carried out by the organization. She believed that if any kind of policy impact or change was to be brought about, the first steps would have to start with such actions.

The scenario has changed in recent times, foreign funding has lessened considerably leaving NGOs with no option but to shut-shop or cut down on their project work. Sara feels that NGOs now have to focus on brand-building and publicity if they want to continue working and obtain local funding. The competition is intense and only those best at marketing themselves and their work will be able to secure support.

Managing Impressions

In all of Sara's social interactions as a leader and manager she is constantly, consciously or unconsciously attempting to control her image that is projected through these interactions. Sara D'Mello never promoted herself; she promoted the organization – its vision, mission, objectives, work and impact. This was of utmost importance to her and she believed in putting the organization before herself. In a sense, she was the face of CCDT, its mouthpiece and

spokesperson. In order to do this, she used a range of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies.

Non-verbal

In her work, Sara insisted that actions spoke louder than words. Her non-verbal actions with the children and people included hugging, holding, pats on the back, sitting with them on the floor and speaking their language, to name a few. These actions not only inspired the team but motivated the people to work with the organization. Apart from this and most importantly, through these actions Sara was able to eliminate the fears and discrimination in the minds of the people who interacted with her.

Shifting from her warm ways of interaction at the grassroots, Sara would be firm and demanding in her interactions with the funders or Government authorities. She walked into any office confidently and never showed any kind of weakness or desperate need for a resource. She maintained her composure even through crisis situations and never broke eye contact with the persons she interacted with.

Within the organization, Sara was a role model for her team. As a Director, she would turn up early and leave late from work. On returning home, she would continue with her work till the late hours of the night. Holidays were never holidays for her, but days to spend time with the children in CCDT's care and also to think about the future of the organization. Sara wished that her immediate subordinates and staff too, emulated this kind of passion and commitment towards their work. She even stated that leave should be taken only if there is a personal emergency and not for any other purpose.

Despite being acknowledged and admired internationally, Sara was open and accepting of her incapability. She refused to depend on others but focused on working on her weaknesses and coming on par with the others. For example, she was unaware about the local language and knew she required this for all her interactions with the Government authorities, in order to

overcome this gap, she learnt the language. Similarly, when she volunteered for the first time with the missionaries, she was unable to assist them as she had no experience in healthcare, to overcome this she read about the illness and completed a first aid course as well. Over time she reached a point where the people of the colony would only go to her for any medical assistance. This self-learning and motivation in Sara coupled with her charismatic leadership positively influenced the entire body of staff in the organization. Some attended language classes and courses; some pursued their higher education while others completed useful trainings in order to enhance their performance.

Verbal

Sara was often seen expressing her appreciation for her team; she adorned each one with words of praise especially on an achievement or completion of a major task. The following are her words to a staff member on the successful rescue of a child from trafficking, "I am so proud of you, it is a privilege to have you on my team". Sara's words were always generous and she never held back if the individual deserved praise. This motivated staff to work more efficiently and be ambitious.

While narrating about her own expertise in the area of education or her experiences in the field while working with the persons with leprosy, Sara stressed on how she managed with limited resources and manpower. She also often spoke of the obstacles she overcame while working with the Government and the other environmental factors that came in the way of her work.

Sara remains unaffected by what some think of her, in her words, she says, "I am what I am, they can take it or leave it". She would often call herself a 'bull-dozer' as at times she was rather adamant about getting her way or her decision implemented. As a result of this, she continued to maintain a position of power and is respected by those more powerful than her; some of who even changed their beliefs and opinions after meeting her.

The Team

Sara only recruited staff who were enthusiastic, honest and hardworking. She insisted that they be trained and developed their potential, making them competent professionals. Many staff who worked with her at the start still continue to work for CCDT today. In general the turnover in this organization is much lower than other similar organizations. Sara values each and every staff in the organization and has always conveyed to them their importance therein. She also has great respect for all the staff, be it the cleaners or the directors, she has never distinguished between anyone and kept her door open for anyone who would like to walk in and speak with her. At the same time, Sara would not permit any kind of lacunae at work or misconduct of the staff. She took strict action whenever required and dismissed those who refused to comply with the rules and organizational goals. As a leader she mentioned that compromise was essential in all cases but not on one's values. This kept her motivated and enabled her to influence others as well. She also sacrificed tremendously for the good of the organization and would expect her staff to do the same. Sara cited an example of her 15-hour day, where she was only in the field with the people. She said "If they can do it, why can't I". A member on the Board of Trustees today, Sara was asked if she considered herself a leader, she just shrugged and said that it was not upto her to decide that.

The people from the Leprosy colony in Borivali, still refer to Sara as "Ma" or "Saviour", when asked what would make them say this...Sara promptly responded "I cared for and loved them like my own family". She had instilled within them a feeling of importance, of belonging and being valued. She had made herself one with them and never considered herself to be superior. This according to her could be a few reasons as to why these people love and respect her.

Strategy and Beliefs

Sara's strategy is based on the view that all development starts with the individual; but that the individual cannot do it alone or in a vacuum. She is positive, disciplined, hardworking pro-active yet non-threatening in her style, and sets a high standard of expectations. She is of the belief that knowledge and information, combined with hard work, patience and focus, will always produce positive results. She believes in introspection for individuals and collective introspection for her organization and promotes an optimistic approach. Challenges, problems, disputes or crisis situations will not go away by themselves. They must be faced, and they must be tackled from all sides. She is convinced that even if a matter is personal, it is better to share it with others who one trusts. Their support and compassion, points of view and insights, can help provide greater perspective.

She suggested that short-term and long-term goals must be identified and implemented and that it is extremely important that each member of the organization is aware of how his or her work contributes to the organizational goal. Integrity, commitment and discipline must be applied to the process and to the solutions arrived at. No matter how hard this may seem at the time, if the solution was arrived at through a proper process, and duly implemented and adhered to, the intended end-result will unfold successfully.

Sara fully understands compromise, not as giving in or giving up, but as being realistic and as choosing the best solution possible, even if just for the time-being. She believes that not-so-good things happen to remind one that one must always seek knowledge and information and new ways of doing things. Obstacles or difficulties cause one to re-think positions, to change one's attitude and perspective and they are therefore not really negative, but positive. Social, political, economic and technological issues are closely inter-twined and subject to forces that demand change and adaptability faster than human personalities, patterns or habits may traditionally be accustomed to. Sara consistently encourages change through informed

negotiation that must be balanced in its approach, process and end-results, thus adopting a democratic type of leadership style.

All parties concerned must participate; all are responsible; all have a voice; all must give and all must get, no matter how small each one's contribution or gain is. For Sara, if you don't have the knowledge or skill, learn from those who do, and build respectful relationships with them, listening and learning; especially from the children and the communities who the organization works with is of great importance, where one might need to go back to such individuals again and again. According to her, gauging of the characters of the stakeholders she deals with, and identifying the challenge at hand is crucial; some funders need to be taken to dinner for informal and more private discussions before and during the group meetings; some Government authorities need to be gently reminded that force-of-character or position does not necessarily mean he or she has the best viewpoint, opinion or suggestions; some quiet ones need to have their input drawn out of them and affirmed before they contribute more securely. According to Sara, rules and regulations, and codes of conduct must be practical, achievable, clarified, made known, and abided with by everyone who is part of the organization.

Every meeting must have a purpose and an outcome. Sara firmly believes that everyone can make a positive difference, not only to his or her own circumstance, but also to those of the family, organization and nation of which he or she is a part. She applies this strategy automatically and with diplomacy; developed and practiced in her family life since she was a child. It is for these skills, and her reputation as a successful leader, that Sara has gained international acclaim and even won awards for her work. Regarding these, she suggests that success relies as much on the willingness and caliber of the partners, as it does on the skills of the mediator.

Advice for Future Leaders

Sara has just a few words for those who wish to bring about change. She states that one must start small and remain focused on the vision. There is no point in scaling up one's work if one is not confident about healthy support from those relevant to the program like the staff, funders and other stakeholders. Sara emphasized on the fact that one must believe in what one wants to do and enjoy it to the fullest. Anything less will not help.

Exhibit 1: Board of Trustees

1. Mrs. Sara Lizia D’Mello
2. Mr. David Cardoz
3. Dr. (Mrs.) Malathi Pillai
4. Mr. Anthony Samy
5. Dr. Prakash Mirchandani
6. Dr. (Mrs.) Alka Karande
7. Dr. (Prof) Sneha Palnitkar

Exhibit 2: Partnerships and Linkages

1. Amics Del Mumbai, Spain
2. Charities Aid Foundation India
3. Childline India Foundation
4. Cox and Kings Foundation
5. ELCA Cosmetics Pvt. Ltd. (MAC Aids Fund)
6. Kewal Ramani Foundation
7. Mission Del Sorisso
8. Plan International India Chapter
9. Savitri Waney Charitable Foundation
10. Smile Foundation
11. Smt. Dayaben Girjashanker Sheth Trust
12. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
13. Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Spain
14. United Way of India
15. United Way of Mumbai
16. Volunteers in Service to Education in India (VSEI)
17. Western India Culinary Association
18. Eric Borges
19. Neetu Kapoor and Ranbir Kapoor
20. Rafael Metternich

Exhibit 3: Growth of CCDT in the Last Three Years

Year	Funds, Liabilities/ Properties, Assets (Rs.)	Expenditure (Rs.)	Income (Rs.)
2012	21,610,043	54,177,935	54,177,935
2013	25,141,845	58,439,811	58,439,811
2014	26,026,303	55,854,275	55,854,275

Exhibit 4: Current Programmes

- 1.) *Home-Based Care* – Seeks to prevent the disintegration of families impacted by HIV/AIDS by ensuring and protecting the rights of the children and adults. Projects are currently spread across 15 wards in Mumbai and catering to the needs of 1000 families.
- 2.) *Residential Care* – Provides care and protection for children and youth, in crisis situations who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The programme has 4 residential centres in and outside Mumbai and 2 group homes housing children and youth and preparing them for eventual reintegration into society. It supports 200 children through direct and indirect interventions.
- 3.) *Adolescent and Youth Empowerment* – The Integrated Community Development Programme now focuses on empowerment of the youth to work with issues of health, education and child protection in the slums of Mumbai. The 5 community projects have reached out to almost 2 lakh people and 6500 marginalized families.
- 4.) *Childline* – The organization partners with Childline 1098 an emergency helpline for children in need of care and protection. The project is support by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) linking the State Government and allied systems. The programme addresses around 500 cases each year and conducts awareness sessions for over 10,000 people.
- 5.) *New Intervention* – In 2014 -15, the organization will be leading a consortium to combat malnutrition in 10 districts of Maharashtra. This initiative will be supported by the State Government.