'Young Kids Festival' at Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai
Implementation of Young Kids’ Festival at ‘Manikya Lal Verma Park’– Transforming it into a vibrant, safe yet interactive and engaging space for young kids and their care-givers

**Project** – Urban95 Program, Udaipur

**City Partner** – Udaipur Municipal Corporation (UMC)

**Funder cum Supporting Partner** – Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BvLF).

**Technical Partner** – ICLEI- South Asia
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1. Urban95 in Udaipur

Udaipur city associated with the Urban95 Program of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BvLF) to become an Infant, Toddler and Caregiver (ITC) friendly city. Udaipur Municipal Corporation (UMC) joined the global Urban95 program in early 2019, becoming the third Indian city to do so. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia is providing technical support for the on-ground implementation of this program.

Under the program, a series of tactical and pilot interventions will be implemented in identified pilot demonstration wards. The interventions are aimed at applying ideas on the ground in Udaipur to generate interest and showcase impact to the people.

Figure 1: Municipal Boundary and Pilot Demonstration Wards, Udaipur
1.1. ‘Young Kids Festival’ as Tactical Intervention

A tactical intervention branded as the ‘Urban95 Kids Festival’ was conceptualized to engage children in the age group of 0-6 years and their caregivers in a festival-like setting. This festival – which included activities and games such as storytelling, clay modeling, learning tree, hurdle games, target throw games, big ball play, bubble zone, magic and puppet shows and mobile clown - was organized at Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai, Udaipur, on the 18th and 19th of February 2020.

Udaipur is a scenic tourist city that has several area-level parks. However, they are not maintained properly. They also lack activities to attract children or their caregivers, who avoid using them and also don’t approach senior municipal representatives to make these spaces worthy of use. The Festival, therefore, aimed:

1) To show parents and teachers of young kids the willingness and interest on the part of the city to improve and provide better infrastructure
2) To bring young kids together to showcase their appreciation of the city’s efforts and the need for continued efforts
3) To demonstrate that urban spaces that have lost their relevance can be transformed into an active ITC-responsive zone by introducing activities and by improving the built environment.

The festival was also aimed at spurring ideas and thoughts among care-givers on activities and games and their importance in the holistic and all-round development of a young child.

1.2. Approach & Methodology

The following methodology was adopted for implementing the festival on the ground:

Figure 2: Methodology Adopted for On-ground Implementation of Tactical Intervention
2. The Venue: Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai

Figure 3: Activity Mapping, Ward No. 14

Manikya Lal Verma Park, also known as Rock Garden at Dudh Talai, is located on the foothills of ‘Machla Magra’, and is famous for spectacular views of Jag Mandir, Lake Pichola and the City Palace. The park also acts as an access route to the Temple of Karni Mata, situated on the hills of ‘Machla Magra’.
Figure 4: Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai

Constructed in late 70s and named after a Member of the Constituent Assembly who later became Chief Minister (CM) of Rajasthan, the park is carved out of a hillock and has multiple fountains. It also has iconic features such as a stream, a multi-level metal slide, a double-domed Chatri, lotus-shaped potable water tanks, slides in the shape of a crocodile, frog and fish, and embossed artwork on the walls.
The park was selected as the venue for the 'Urban95 Kids Festival' because it presents several sensory and multi-level movement opportunities due to its topography and dense and natural tree cover.

Additions such as shaded seating areas (benches, steps and a lawn), dustbins at strategic locations, lighting, utilities such as potable water points and toilets, restaurant and food kiosks made this site a convenient place to host a festival for young kids.

Figure 5: Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai
2.1. Mapping the Existing Situation

Figure 6: Activity Mapping at Manikya Lal Verma Park.

The site was mapped and studied to gauge the status of ITCN indicators and userbase. A study of the quality criteria, intercept surveys, and stakeholder and user interviews were also conducted to map needs and aspirations.

Table 1: Available and Missing ITCN Indicators, Manikya Lal Verma Park.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available ITCN Indicators</th>
<th>Missing ITCN Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Footfall – High; city-level recreational space and tourist attractions</td>
<td>Park in dilapidated condition in absence of timely repair and maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location -core city; easily accessible from all parts of the city</td>
<td>Open dumping of waste in absence of regular upkeep and cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views –scenic; surrounded by lake, hills, forest</td>
<td>Opportunities for engagement with children absent due to defunct play equipment (swings, slides)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory and experiential value - several multi-level movement opportunities because of topography</td>
<td>No CCTVs for monitoring purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora and fauna- naturally shaded areas and ample flora and fauna to engage with</td>
<td>Inadequate lighting, which limits use of the park in the evening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Available ITCN Indicators | Missing ITCN Indicators
---|---
Ample and shaded seating facilities - lawn, benches, steps, low platforms - made of metal, wood, cement | Dustbins- strategically placed but most of them are broken
Mix of softscape and hardscape in the park | 
Playing equipment- Uniquely designed swings, slides- metal, cemented | 
Local cultural elements - Traditional/ heritage elements - Chatri, gates, lotus-shaped drinking water tank, stream and fountains | 
Public Utilities- modern drinking water facilities and toilets | 
Ample parking for visitors | 

3. Conceptualization of Urban95 Kids Festival

The two-day Young Kids Festival was conceptualized to engage children in the age group of 0-6 years and their care-givers. They are the 'direct and active beneficiaries' of different games and activities that were planned, such as storytelling, clay modeling, learning tree, hurdle game, target throw games, big ball play, bubble zone, magic and puppet shows and mobile clown.

- Improving gross, fine motor and locomotor skills - kids hurdle game, target throw, big ball
- Sensory processing capabilities and stimulating the senses of touch, sight and hearing - clay modeling, sandpit, bubble zone
- Cognitive development and creative thinking by manipulating materials, and to act, interact and react- painting, pottery
- Imaginative learning through active actions and visual and sound-based activities, inculcating local cultural flavor- story telling, puppet & magic shows

Figure 7: Learning-Based Activities for the 'Urban95 kids Festival'
These activities were based on site analysis, surveys and user interactions, aimed at providing a stimulating and active atmosphere and included physical, visual, sensory, imaginative and cognitive experiences for young kids and their care-givers.

The site areas were finalized and demarcated into zones for activity planning & management purposes.

Figure 8: Proposed Zoning and Activities for ‘Urban95 Kids Festival’ at Manikya Lal Verma Park

3.1. Stakeholder Engagement- Concept and Site Finalization

The proposed activities, zoning and area demarcation were shared and discussed with project partners and the host for their approval and support in organizing the festival. The proposal was also presented to the concerned Ward Councilor for supporting the festival.
3.2. Promotion and Pre- Festival Preparation

To reach out to citizens and the target group, a number of promotional and dissemination actions, such as visually compelling posters, e-invitations and activity banners were designed for the festival.

![Urban95 Kids Festival Poster](image)

**Figure 10:** Poster, Banners, E-Invitations for 'Urban95 Kids Festival'

Government-run anganwadi centers and community-scale playschools and preschools were identified and invited to participate in the festival, and were made to understand the need to expose young kids to the activities being planned by the UMC.

Students from a city-based college agreed to volunteer and supervise the safety and security of the participating children at the festival venue.
Chief Medical & Health Office (CMHO), Udaipur, organized an ambulance to be stationed there along with a nurse in case of any medical emergency. The regional West Zone Cultural Centre (WZCC) organized a puppet show and clay modeling activity, which were on the festival agenda. City Home Guards ensured the safety and security of the people at the venue. The UMC arranged transport for children from schools and anganwadis who needed it.

The park was decorated a day before the festival to give it a vibrant and colorful look and to set up shaded areas wherever needed.

Figure 11: Site Decor for the Urban95 Kids Festival- A Visual Treat
4. Urban95 Young Kids Festival Days

Children inaugurated the Young Kids festival in the presence of Commissioner and Deputy Mayor, UMC, and representatives from BvLF and ICLEI SA. The atmosphere at the two-day festival was filled with children’s laughter, chatter and happy faces all around. Their enormous energy and participation in the interactive and engaging activities kept the festival going.

Around 1200 children from 14 preschools and playschools and 14 anganwadi centres, along with their care-givers, attended the festival. Additionally, 100 children came with their care-givers to participate, following coverage of the event in social and print media before and during the festival.

All the participating kids were served healthy snacks and fresh fruit juice to keep them active and hydrated during the festival. Drinks were served at every 15-20m. A temporary ‘Feeding Room’ was also set up at the venue.

Officials from Udaipur Smart City Ltd. (USCL), UMC and the ICDS department visited the venue to observe and appreciate the event.
Figure 12: Inauguration and Registration of Officials from UMC, USCL, BvLF, ICLEI-South Asia at 'Urban95 kids Festival'
Figure 13: Smiling and happy faces all around at the Urban95 Kids Festival at Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai
5. Media Coverage

The Kids Festival was widely covered in the print and electronic media.

Figure 14: Print Media Coverage of 'Urban95 Kids Festival' at Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai
6. Festival Impact

Figure 15: Footfall - Before and After the Urban95 Kids Festival - at Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai

The impact of Young Kids Festival has been documented based on comparative sample user counts, photo documentation and surveys on a regular weekend in relation to the post-festival weekend days.

The collected evidence shows an increase in the footfall of the primary target audience, i.e. young kids and their care-givers, after the festival, increasing from less than 15% before the festival, to more than 50% after the festival.

UMC can also help to retain this increase in numbers of small children by regular cleaning and upkeep of the park. Comparative activity mapping also shows an increase in the number of activities the children are engaged in.

Several interviews of parents, school teachers and city officials were also conducted during and after the festival for their feedback on the festival and their experience.
I congratulate the team. Manikya Lal Verma Park is Udaipur’s legacy, but had lost its sheen in recent times. But this festival has revived its glorious past and that this kind of festival is needed in the present times.

Mr. Paras Singhvi, Deputy Mayor, UMC

Happy to be part of this beautiful festival, as our kids are enjoying it and there are lots of learnings and takeaways from this festival, both for kids as well for our teachers.

Thanks for inviting us to the Urban95 Kids Festival. The UMC should do this annually.

Mrs. Sheetal Mathur, Principal, Eden International School

We came here after reading about the festival in the newspaper, and we are happy that we came.

My daughter really enjoyed and participated in almost all the activities, but she wants to stay here longer. It’s already been more than two hours since we reached here.

Very happy to see such an initiative by the Nagar Nigam. It is a memorable event for both of us.

Mrs. Anita Solanki, with her two-year-old daughter Rani

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**Figure 16: Activity Mapping to gauge the number of users and kind of activities they are engaged in**

**Figure 17: Stakeholders Interviews - City Officials and Care-Givers (Teachers, Parents)**
Figure 18: Sensory Mapping at Manikya Lal Verma Park
7. Take Away

The biggest takeaway from the Urban95 Kids Festival is that it has shown the importance of spaces and activities, created from the perspective of young kids and their care-givers. Additionally:

1) Parents and teachers of young kids were shown that the city was willing to improve and provide better infrastructure for its future.
2) The active participation of young kids in large numbers showed their appreciation of the city’s efforts and the need for continued efforts.
3) It is possible to rejuvenate urban spaces like the Manikyalal Verma Park to make them active ITC-responsive zones, by introducing activities and improving the built environment.
4) Festival events such as this, which bring together young kids, teachers and parents, spur ideas and thoughts among care-givers on the kind of activities and games that are needed for the all-round development of a young mind.

It was for the first time that a children’s festival of this scale had been organized here. However, the number of participants, their enthusiasm and the joy on their faces has only emphasised the fact that the city lacks such opportunities and that there is a need for more such festivals or events and places created specifically from the perspective of toddlers and young children.
## Annexure I - Urban95 Quality Criteria

Table 2: Urban 95 Quality Criteria, Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai (Observations and User Interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Protection from crime and violence</td>
<td>Fear of crime, theft and of any unexpected incident including sexual harassment in the late hours in absence of proper lighting</td>
<td>Increase in footfall and in duration of stay in the evening after installation of new lights and the repair of the existing ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences</td>
<td>Garbage and waste lying around in some parts of the park in the absence of regular cleaning</td>
<td>Regular cleaning and upkeep of the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feeling of comfort</td>
<td>Quite Comfortable – the site is tucked away in a quiet corner, away from traffic. Good shaded and seating areas available</td>
<td>No change in status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hygiene and health</td>
<td>Garbage and waste lying around in absence of regular cleaning has hygiene &amp; health issues</td>
<td>Regular cleaning and upkeep of the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of food</td>
<td>The park has a restaurant and a cafe</td>
<td>No change in status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Opportunities to stop by and spend time</td>
<td>Due to negligence and maintenance issues, the park is grossly underutilized</td>
<td>Following the repair and maintenance of park infrastructure (play equipment, benches), the footfall and overall duration of stay of people in the park have risen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sightseeing opportunities</td>
<td>The park is famous for its spectacular sunset views and breathtaking views of Lake Pichola, besides the natural scenery. It has unique &amp; intricate wall murals, double-domed Chatri, a lotus-shaped water tank, animal installations in concrete, gates etc., but they were in a dilapidated state</td>
<td>The repair and maintenance of all these structures has led to an increase in footfall and the time people spend in the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Play time</td>
<td>There is a lot of play equipment (metal and cemented) but mostly in dilapidated condition due to lack of maintenance and regular upkeep. Shaded lawns allow people to engage in games. However, in the absence of regular cleaning, these spaces are also underutilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Located in its centre, the park is easily accessible from other parts of the city</td>
<td>No change in status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration with other attractions</td>
<td>Being in the city centre, it is in close proximity to other tourist attractions (City Palace, Jagdish Temple, Gulab Bagh, Lake Pichola etc.)</td>
<td>No change in status quo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Annexure II – Intercept Survey

Table 3: Intercept Survey, Manikya Lal Verma Park, Dudh Talai (Observations and User Interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Fear of crime, theft and of untoward incidents, including sexual harassment, in the evening in the absence of proper lighting</td>
<td>Increase in footfall and overall duration of stay in the evening after the installation of new lights and repair of the existing ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Time Spent in park</td>
<td>Park offers people several opportunities to stop by and spend time there. However, due to lack of repair and maintenance issues, the park is grossly underutilized</td>
<td>Repair &amp; maintenance of the park infrastructure (play equipment, benches) has led to an increase in footfall &amp; the overall duration of stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meeting New People</td>
<td>With few people coming to the park, there weren’t much opportunity to meet new people</td>
<td>With increase in footfall, the chances of meeting new people and sharing the common spaces has increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Opportunities to play</td>
<td>There was play equipment (metal and cemented), but mostly in dilapidated condition in the absence of proper repair and maintenance</td>
<td>The repair &amp; maintenance of all these elements has led to an increase in footfall &amp; overall duration of stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shaded lawns allowed users to engage in lot of other games. However, in the absence of regular cleaning, these spaces were also underutilized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ease of movement</td>
<td>In the absence of ramps, various parts of the park were not pram/stroller-friendly and wheelchair-friendly</td>
<td>No change in status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Comfortable for Caregivers</td>
<td>Elderly care-givers found it difficult to access certain areas of the park because of its topography, especially the area where the kids play, which needs to be accessed via a series of steps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>However, with its lush green trees, shaded seating areas, and landscaped garden, the park was a blessing to all its users</td>
<td>No change in status quo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>