Site Visit Report: Sankalp Day Care, Kanpur

Visit Date: May 7th 2013

I contacted Dr. Deepti Mishra, who is the coordinator of Sankalp Day Care one day before and arranged to visit the centre next day.

Sankalp Day Care provides day care and learning to children with mild to moderate mental retardation. The centre operates from a building on rent (Rs. 10,000/pm with electricity including generator) in the premises of a hospital. The centre has been operational since 2009. There are currently 44 children enrolled at the centre in 7 classes. These classes are based on age-group and degree of disability. The centre staffs includes Deeptiji, 7 teachers, 2 part-time physiotherapists, 1 part-time speech therapist, 1 part-time psychologist, 1 part-time occupational therapist, 1 office attendant and 3 helpers. Teachers get 3 months orientation from NIMH.

The age of children (?) lies between 5 to 25 years with one person being 36 years old. Most of the children (?) are of the age between 10-20 years. The nature and degree of the disability ranges from mild to moderate retardation, mildly spastic and mild autism who are merged with mild-retardation. There are very few cases of severe retardation.

The family background of the children is from lower income level. Some of them have single parent and a few are being raised by relatives. Some of the parents are educated, but they also just want the children to remain calm and nothing beyond. According to Diptiji's observation siblings care for these children more than the parents and usually there are no complexes. Some of the siblings come for the parents meetings. Monthly parent meetings are organized, but not all parents show up. Some of the parents (and/or siblings) are very regular. Others do not care much. There is an optional fee of Rs. 1000/- pm which about half of the parents pay. Sometimes, children dropout from the centre either due to medical reasons (fits etc.) or family issues.

7 classes are run in a space of 2-3 rooms, with multiple classes in same room. One room is reserved for physiotherapy. Some older children also learn computer typing skills. Normal timings of the centre are 10am-2pm, however, at the time of my visit the timings were changed to 9am -12pm because of hot weather. Some of the students stay longer till 3-4pm. I interacted with some of the children asking their name etc. Some of the children were shy, but some were confident to speak in English and tell me their name. The students are usually trained to take care of themselves first and progressively simple house-hold tasks. Children are also given basic maths and reading/writing lessons. 6 students are ready to take A level open school exam through JBVS. Older children are also given some vocational training in domestic work, masala (spices) packing, snacks preparation, jewellery making and fabric painting etc., which is then sold to parents, in clubs and fairs. The centre has been allotted some space by the Nagar Nigam, which it plans to utilize to expand their vocational
training which is currently limited because of space restrictions. Centre remains closed from 24th May to 24th June and at the time of my visit, teachers and other staff members were also preparing individual progress reports for all children. Transport via van and auto are provided to some children.

Centre’s monthly budget is about Rs. 1.2 Lakhs, of which about Rs 40,000/- pm comes through some connections and local donations from acquaintances. Parents also pay a small sum. Teacher’s salary part comes through Asha-star project through Asha-SV. The budget for 2013-14 has already been sent to the chapter. Centre is also trying to generate more funds locally through clubs, and by making connections. Centre has requested for some funds from LIC – Golden Jubilee Funds. Centre has been recently registered as national trust.

My overall impression was very positive about the project. Though small in impact, this project serves a very important role in the lives of these children otherwise neglected by society or sometimes even by parents. The staff is adequately trained (most of them are graduates and receive 3 months NIMH orientation) and work with children with love and care. Children seem to be very calm and sometimes inquisitive of my visit. Main concerns for the project currently are space and transport. In addition to continued support for Asha-stars through Asha-SV, I would suggest project coordinators at Asha-SV to link Sankalp Day Care with Shrishti Special Academy in Bangalore and other similar projects for exchange of experience and knowledge.

Anshu Gaur

Few pictures from my visit: