

Report of site visit to Sankalp, Kanpur

Deepak Gupta, Madhav Ranganathan and Sundar Iyer, all volunteers of Asha Kanpur, on Saturday, the 22nd of November, 2008, visited Sankalp, a centre for children with special needs. This centre is located on the back side of McRobert Hospital in the Civil Lines area of Kanpur. The centre is run by Dr. Deepti Mishra. A web-site describing the centre is at <http://www.sankalp-daycare.com/index.html>

We left IIT campus around 10 AM. Dr. Mishra had given us directions and we reached the place around 10:40 AM. When we went, Dr. Mishra was waiting to receive us. The centre was operational. Dr. Mishra first took us to the office and explained how the centre came about. When her child was diagnosed with mental retardation, she realised the utter lack of facilities in the Kanpur area. Being a doctor, she took it upon herself to start the centre. The trust running McRobert Hospital decided to give a portion of the hospital building that was in a state of disuse, to the centre for a nominal rent.

The building where the centre is being run is a typical colonial red-brick structure with high ceilings. The rooms were reasonably well maintained and the place was functional.

Dr. Mishra explained the timings of the centre and showed us the records of the children admitted and the teachers (volunteers) who are working at the centre. After that we went to the various class rooms. We could see that the teachers were patiently teaching the children some basic skills such as picking up objects, sorting objects according to their shape and colour, etc. Some of the more advanced children were also learning to read and write. We spent some time talking to the teachers and children.

Later we went to another room which was used for children with autism. A couple of children were present. The teacher who was present managed to control the children by being firm and at the same time kind.

We then again went to Dr. Mishra's office. She discussed some of her experiences. She mentioned the need to train the parents and family members of the children as well as the special training needed for the children. She also suggested that the society at large needs to be sensitised about issues related to children with special needs. We had discussions on how Sankalp can work within Asha's framework and how Dr. Mishra could expand her work to have a wider impact in the region and reach out to more children in need and their families.

We finally took leave around 12:30 PM.

Some of the pictures we took during our site visit may be viewed at

<http://home.iitk.ac.in/~sskiyer/Sankalp>