

Discussions with INSPIRATION and Visit to their Smile Foundation Center: December 16, 2016

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Questions provided by Anu, project steward from Asha Atlanta

- ***Talk to Chandreyeedi and Sharmila (coordinator of Smile program at Inspiration) and meet directly with the girls/boys who attended Spoken English and Computer training through them. Get to know their educational and family background, english and computer proficiency before and after their training.***
 - I met Sharmila and the teachers. I also met 10+ students from the current batches ending in December. Most of them were appearing in interviews so could not come. However, I check their family background and educations. Most of them are 12th pass (dropped out) and current college students. I felt they are from a lower middle class background. Some of them have taken first computer courses already and this is their 2nd or 3rd one. Their english skills were passable but their speaking skills have significantly improved. 50% students can speak decent english and the rest are not shy to speak english (with bit of grammatical errors but that is the whole point of speaking english without fear). Most want to work to be independent and gain experience. However, it does not feel like they will drop out or will be forced for marriage if they do not get the training. So the background is quite different in cities as expected. However, some have classmates getting married in colleges but they are not planning anything like that. Most students stressed on the fact about their improvement in spoken english, getting much better in computer.
- ***Find out the exact details of the training program such as daily and weekly schedule, course syllabus etc.***
 - Smile foundation has an established course framework across India (they are working with 10 NGOs in Kolkata area namely 2 Asha partners - INSPIRATION and Tomorrow's Foundation). They take 3 tests - intro tests for assessment, mid term tests and final tests. The course is 6 days a week - 4 hrs every day. Most college students who need to attend classes prefer the 3-30 to 7-30 shift. The center runs 12 months a year- jan to April, May to August and September to December. Out of weekly 24 hrs, 12 hrs of computer training, 8 hr of spoken english, 2 hr of Retail management & 2 hr of soft skill development are taught.
- ***Find out how many of them are placed in jobs successfully. For the students who are currently working, find out how long each student has had training and how many rounds of training they needed to undergo before being good at their job.***
 - They have around 80-85% JOB placement record. I met two of such students who are studying in colleges and working in Hardware/Security. One of them is working in computer assembly. Both of them seem very smart. Everyone was given 4-month rigorous training. They are very strict about attendences and called parents . INSPIRATION charged only 400 Rs for the whole course which is very cheap compared to 5-10K course fees of other such programs. They have good list of partners Like brand factory, Cafe coffee day, Big Bazar etc. And after few round of selections, they continued their partnerships and expanded it.
- ***Inspiration said that Smile Foundation and Inspiration jointly worked in reaching out to their contacts in and around Kolkata for job placement of the Smile Foundation kids. In the case of Nishtha, job placement n and around Baruipur is critical (not Kolkata). So in that case, how does Inspiration plan to get the Jagaran girls jobs in case Asha Atlanta moves forward with Inspiration for the vocational training?***

- I personally do not think that will work and INSPIRATION mentioned it is their first project on employability. After 4 x 40 =160 students being trained they requested Smile to move the center near Kamarhati. Since they may cover most kids in the surrounding area in 2 yrs, they plan to move to Kamarhati the 3rd year of the 3 yr program in first phase. I think it is much better if INSPIRATION works with the kids of Kamarhati (the other Asha Atlanta Project) for now. Vocational training is a different ballgame where we should approach differently.
- All the materials are from Smile foundation, so any expansion needs prior approval from Smile foundation. BTW, the materials are given to the students in contrast to DBT training.
- ***If Inspiration requires that the Jagaran girls need to undergo focused Monday to Sunday intensive training for English, will Nishtha ensure that the Jagaran girls will be able to attend the training in such a focused, continuous manner?***
 - I stress on the fact that we are not there yet. We may need to find another partner for Baruipur or follow my suggestions.
- ***Finally, for Inspiration boys and girls who are in class 10 and 12, convince Chandreeyedi to personally visit Don Bosco Tech Liluah to see first hand the excellent facilities and training they are offering such as Machine Tool operators, AutoCad, Milling and lathe Machines etc. All training programs are geared towards job placements in the manufacturing sector such as Siemens, Yamaha, Tech Mahindra etc. Minimum educational requirements in most cases is just Class 10 pass. If she agrees, I can send a joint email introducing Father Tomy to her so she can then move forward with the visit.***
 - As I said, INSPIRATION wants to give training the Kamarhati kids under smile foundation. However, I requested to visit and consider DBTech for advanced training if they found interest from the graduating students.