

Site Visit Report – Asha Mumbai Center

(Dr Padmanava Sen, AfE Bangalore volunteer and AfE fellowship coordinator – padmanava.sen@gmail.com – December 2017)

Details:

- During my time in IIT Mumbai, I visited the Asha Mumbai center (walking distance from IIT Mumbai main gate) on 8th December, 2017. Another long-term volunteer Neena Majumdar (who volunteered with Asha Chicago chapter) accompanied me.
- Dr Smita Puniyani welcomed us to the center. It was my 3rd visit to the center. Now the focus is more on the students of higher class. Also most paid teachers are IIT Mumbai alumni. There are volunteer programs working with IIT Mumbai. I saw some of them. Overall I liked the environment. The teachers were passionately teaching the students. Smita-ji showed me some prizes children got. Also they have a very good alumni network. Some of the past students in the center regularly come and help out.
- We went from class to class and interacted with the students (Class 8,9,10 etc). I asked them their weaknesses and strengths. I talked about their aspirations. The students were smart. It seemed to me that there is a good culture of aspirations. The students are motivated by the teachers to do more than getting good marks. They are taught hands-on experiments. Some of the higher class students participated in competitions. Most students live close by and come to the center before and after school. The teachers put in 8-12 hrs a day. I talked to a teacher (IIT Mumbai PhD) in details. From the discussions, it was clear to me that the teachers have a well thought plan.
- Next day (9th December) I went to Dr Smita Puniyani's house. We talked about the future of the center. It felt good to discuss with an alumni from the center, Digvijay Maurya about improving social outreach and website update process of Asha Mumbai. He is a success story.
- After two months, I met some of the students from Asha Mumbai center in Asha Chennai campus (Feb 11th 2018). They were participating in FLL first Lego league. The confidence in their voice and aspirations in their eyes made all of us (Asha conference participants) happy. They had some knowledge about Robotics and showed us some prototypes. We were impressed.

Summary – I think the center is doing very well in the quality of education department. The students are taught beyond text books. They are also trained for competitive exams and other career paths. The teachers and other people involved are very dedicated.



Dr Smita Puniyani showing a certificate



Interesting way to decorate



Some children were taught outside the rooms







Happy faces everywhere