

## **SITE VISIT REPORT OF VASAI KNOWLEDGE INITIATIVE**

### **Project Steward & Site Visitor's Information:**

**Name:** Harshavardhan Purandare

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### **A) Preparation before visiting the Project:**

I informed all local organizational leaders, staff, people and media that I will interact them in different meetings and understand the working of project as well as local NGO, Agashi Sanskar Kendra (ASK). I visited them on three different occasions and met sections of society active in Agashi.

### **B) Visit:**

**Dates:** 12 July 2010, 21st July 2010, 21st August 2010

**Name of Project:** Agashi Knowledge Initiative

**Project Partner:** Krishna Dake

**Contact:** 9096205742

**Name of the organization running the project (if different):** Asha Mumbai , Agashi Sanskar Kendra (ASK) and Center for Environmental Education (CEE)

### **Was your site visit planned and known to the project, or was it a surprise visit?**

Site visits were planned and known to the Project.

### **Project Contact:**

**Name:** Baba Patil , Krishna Dake ,Devdas Purandare

**Address:** c/o Young Stars Trust Chawlpeth Naka, Agashi , Phone Number(s): 91 9096205742, Email: agashikendra@gmail.com

1. What is the background and commitment of people involved in the organization?

This local group Agashi Sanskar Kendra (ASK) is very committed to the cause of social development and they seem to hold a great goodwill with community. They are innovative

and want to learn everything new and incorporate it in their work. They socially influence local politics to a great deal, but do not contest elections themselves. The group is locally popular by the name young stars.

2. What is the administrative structure of the organization and how democratic is its functioning?

The project is completely handled by staff and full time volunteers (3)- Nutan and Ranjana (local) and Krishna (from Asha). The leaders (Baba Patil, Vikas) do give them ideas, practice knowledge sharing and networking for development.

3. How many women hold key positions or play an important role in the decision making within the organization's hierarchy?

For social initiatives like Small Savings Scheme women have lead. But there is not much organizational leadership of women; I think their action is confined to their own issues. Although, both staff memmbers running the programs are women.

4. Are the grass roots volunteers local or from outside?

Two local and one outside (Asha Full time )

5. Do the main volunteers perform only administrative duties or actually spend time at the grassroots?

The Grass roots work and campaign in Agashi is very effective, very close and action oriented relationship with community. Main volunteers spend lot of time there.

### **Project:**

Asha component of whole activity is non-formal Environmental Education Training and Resource Center. Here are some functioning details:

The project is run by Nutan, Ranjana (Local) and Krishna (Asha) volunteers.

The ongoing work is

1. Gathering resources for teachers' training
2. Meeting the teachers and school administration to explain the idea. First Training Session is organised on 8th September, Krishna is spearheading the community development activity with fantastic speed. The Center opens at 9 in the morning and closes @ 7 o'clock. Krishna sits in the center for 2 hrs daily and travels to schools to

meet school admin & teachers. The list of schools participating in a program was available at the center. Already 29 teachers from 20 schools have enrolled. [The teacher's trained in our center will disseminate knowledge to their respective classes, we will reach indirectly to 1000 students @ minimum.]

### **Local people/parents/community:**

The community development of ASK is exceptionally good because the organization is very well established. Their main focus is to target each individual in area and help him/her for economic development. The group running the organization is exceptionally enterprising. These people do not know how to create a profile as NGO, but they undertake lot of positive programs.

This , in effect ,is becoming Asha's experiment of introducing educational innovation like EE to established community organization .[Krishna, Asha volunteer, is given a one room kitchen place to stay for first month, that indicates readiness to social experiments.]

### **Infrastructure:**

ASK wants their center to be recognized as modern place, the facilities reflect this sentiment as compared to similar local non-profits. They have office of two floors (around 1000 Ft on each of two floors), white-boards, chairs, stationery.

Asha asked for a computer set up for better presentation of our activities - We intend to also take up computer and Internet training facility for children/youth and teachers. In last week, ASK created set up 11 desktops and 3 LCDs, the work of assembling was going on when I visited. They also have created a space for library and asked me if I could refer the books students, youth should buy. The center also has a gym which is popular with youth.

### **Finance:**

The center is resourceful in many ways, the bank statements do not reflect much of financing happens at the center as the association of person is unregistered, but they collect funds for many programs they take up, mostly through local donations. Full timers are paid between Rs. 3,000 to 4,000 and they are quite happy with their income. Plus they are encouraged with social enterprise opportunities like micro-finance. I could see hesitation in investing in 'outsiders' unless their value is proven, so the local people are keen to evaluate value proposition of program Asha has initiated.

**My Observations of Project:**

1. There will be no constraint on budget on our center infrastructure through local donations but as program stretches in schools there will be fund shortage, Asha can help with organizing one training camp every month, I see that much social demand of our program being generated.
2. The team of local volunteers is still not very active on Asha project- although staff and org leaders are totally committed, Krishna needs to gather few youth volunteer in next month, at least 5 of them for putting in some weekly hours.
3. We need to network better with CEE, in my discussion I realized that center has not absorbed much knowledge from the knowledge partners yet. That can happen when the teachers participate in action. We need 5 teachers to lead resource creation and training activity, CEE will work with us to create Train of Trainers.