

## **Site Visit Report**

Friends of Children (FoC), Pune, Maharashtra, India

Date: August 20, 2017

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Asha Boston started collaboration with Friends of Children in 2014. Friends of Children (FoC) is a Non-profit organization in Pune, Maharashtra that works towards enabling higher education to deserving candidates who otherwise would not be able to afford it. They offer monetary support to students from needy families desiring to pursuing higher education (B.Sc, B.E etc...). Private donors (local as well as international) sponsor the students by donating \$320 per year. FoC provides up to INR 20,000 to deserving students who come from economically poor backgrounds and whose parents cannot afford to support their higher education. They also conduct workshops and training sessions for young adults in professional development and job interview preparation.

I was visiting Pune in August 2017 for vacation, during this time I was able to do a site visit to FoC. On August 20, FoC had 2 events going on in a community hall at Forbes Marshall, Kasarwadi, Pune. One event was interviews of new prospective students who had applied for scholarship at FoC. The other event was Leadership Workshop organized by FoC for Second Year students. I was able to witness both these events and got an opportunity to interact with students who are already being sponsored by FoC.

### **Leadership Workshop:**

FoC had hired a consultant to provide "Leadership" training to these youth. His name was Mr. Shekhar Purandare. There were 15 girls and 4 boys

from in and around Pune area attending the workshop. Attending this workshop is a mandatory requirement of FoC in order to get continued scholarship. The purpose of the Leadership workshop was not to make them leaders of a company or make them CEO, but to make them leaders in their own lives. How to manage and lead your own life and be successful. I sat through part of the session, and found it to be very informative and interactive. Mr. Purandare was engaging the students by asking questions and asking for comments. I noticed that the girls had far better participation than the boys. The boys were rather shy and were not volunteering to answer or engage in discussion. I was quite impressed by the girls' participation and involvement.

One example is below:

Mr Purandare asked the group to give a name of one single leader in their life that they dislike, and why?

Answer by Pooja: Rahul Gandhi. He has poor communications skills and is not committed to his party or the country.

Answer by Trupti: Mr. Modi. He did not communicate the demonetization enough in advance which led to chaos.

The workshop was from 11AM to 2 PM. Below are some pictures from that workshop

I feel that workshop like these are effective in bringing awareness in the students and engaging them in discussions. It is an effective tool and makes them more responsible, responsive, assertive and confident.



### **Interviews of prospective students:**

In another hall, Ms Vani Subramanyam and 2 other volunteers were conducting interviews of students who had applied for scholarship at FoC. There were 20-30 students who had come to interview from nearby villages. Some had traveled 3 hrs by bus with their parents, that day there were heavy rains in Pune. This interview session was one among 5 sessions which FoC conducts every Sunday morning for 4-5 weeks in August-September.

The students are asked to fill a form with their educational, family, monetary background. Ms Vani and 2 other volunteers sat in separate rooms and were interviewing students using a standardized form. They were asking questions like "what do your parents do?", "how many siblings do you have, and what do they do", "What is the family income?", "what is your motivation to study?", "How did you hear about FoC", "What are your hobbies, and what do you want to become?", "Who will pay the fees if FoC does not sponsor?"

Based on the outcome of the interview, they decide whether to accept or reject the application for scholarship. There were few "alumni" students of FoC who now are working and have good jobs also present volunteering & helping out with administrative stuff. Below are some pictures.



**Interview Sheet**

Student Name/Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Panel's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date / Time: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Verify Marksheet/Certificates

10 <sup>th</sup> :	11 <sup>th</sup> :	12 <sup>th</sup> :	Caste Cert.:	Income Cert.:	Ration Card:	Fee Receipts:
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2. Tell us about yourself:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

No. of Brothers:	Studying/Fees:	Working/Income:
No. of Sisters:	Studying/Fees:	Working/Income:

3. Why do you want to study? /Motivation to study

Poverty:	Role model:	Money:	Become Famous:	Parents ask me to:	Support Family:
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4. How have you managed the Funds for 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> & Present Class?

Parents:	Self:	Uncle/Aunt:	Donation:	Scholarships:	Loan:	Others:
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5. Why have you applied to FOC?

High Fees:	Parents won't give:	Scholarships:	Workshops:	Books:	Others:
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6. What do you want to study further? (It's ok if student does not have enough clarity)

Finish Graduation:	Go For Masters:	Job + Masters:	MPSC/UPSC:	Have A Future Plan:
Have No Idea:	Others:			

7. If FOC does not sponsor you, how will you continue to study?

Ask Father:	Uncle/Aunt:	Give Up:	Part Time Job:	Manage Somehow:	Loan:
No Idea:	Other:				

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Overall, based on my visit I think that FoC is doing an important task of shaping the minds & future of young adults in India by providing them means to get good education.