

Friends of Children Site Visit Report

- Pallavi Kulkarni, Asha Boston Volunteer
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Friends of Children (FoC) is a non-profit organization in Pune, Maharashtra, providing financial assistance to needy college going students to complete their higher education (graduation, post-graduation). Asha for Education Boston Chapter has been working with FoC since Jan 2015. Private donors 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. To date, there are 3 donors sponsoring 4 students through Asha.

I visited the administrative office of Friends of Children (FoC) and met with Mrs. Vani Subramanyam, Founder & Trustee on the morning of February 06, 2016. FoC had recently acquired a small apartment in Yerawada region of Pune and had made it their administrative office. They had just moved their furniture and file cabinets to this new office and were settling in to the new space. I met Mrs. Vani at 10 in the morning and she drove me to the office. Since they were just moving and settling in to their new office space it was not very well organized. As can be seen from the pictures below there is not much furniture in the office, a computer and few cabinets that has all the records and details of the students that they sponsor. There is an office administrator that works part time at FoC to handles the student files and records. They get more volunteers & staff when they have workshops and other events.





I asked Mrs Vani Subramanyam to provide a brief summary of how FoC identifies deserving students each year and the overall process of sponsorship over their entire duration of education. FoC has tie ups with schools and colleges in and around Pune from where they get list of potential students. The students then fill out application form and provide details about their school education and also their family background. They have certain family income criteria that has to be met in order to qualify for the scholarship. They maintain a file for each student which has details such as 10th grade or 12th grade mark sheets, proof of family income or income statement. Volunteers from FoC go to each students' home and perform site visit from which a student profile is created. They have a specific questionnaire provided to them which has to be filled out completely. After meeting all the criteria, the student is accepted for the scholarship for that academic year. FoC has a 5 point credit system on which they decide the total amount being awarded to the student. There are certain requirements that the students need to fulfill and they receiving the scholarship is incumbent on that. FoC also conducts 2 residential workshops every year and the students are expected to come and attend those. FoC makes arrangements for accommodating all the girls and boys for the 3 days that they have to attend the workshops. One point is deducted from 5 for every requirement that the student fails to meet. Final amount awarded is based on the score on 5 they receive.

Mrs Vani could not show me the exact files for the students that were sponsored through Asha as they has recently moved in to their new office space and had not completely settled down. However, she did show me 2 sample files. Mrs. Vani offered to create a spread sheet of all the students that have been sponsored by donors through Asha.

FoC's most immediate need is for 3 laptop computers and 2 overhead projectors that are necessary to conduct the workshops. The amount requested is 1.4Lac INR. They have already submitted a proposal for this to Asha in August 2015.