

Site Visit to Ashray Akruti in Hyderabad, Telangana

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Visited and Report by: Lalitha Podila

On my visit to India in Jul-Aug 2022, I informed Mr.Babu, Center Director, of my interest to visit the site of Ashray Akruti. As always, I traveled by a car arranged by the organization. I had a good conversation with the driver and learned more on his role in supporting the mission of the organization including his wife's involvement in the residential segment of the school. Even before I got started with the visit, I learned of yet another instance of Mr.Babu's inspiring approach to sustainability of project through his continued efforts to build an ecosystem of donors, employees and supporters at Ashray Akruti.

At Ashray Akruti, I was well received by Mr.Babu, Ms.Kalpna and Mr. Venkat Raman. They are highly appreciative of the support they receive from Asha Danbury. I received updates from support to Covid 19 and to the early intervention program for 2021-22 and plans for 2022-23. The discussion was followed by visit to classrooms. The goal of the early intervention program is to intervene at a young age for kids with hearing impairment as it improves success with outcomes by several-fold. Asha Danbury continues to be the main supporter of the program and has been supporting the program since its launch. The need for support continues to be high. I was satisfied to see the engagement of teachers in teaching young kids 3-5 years old and speaking skills of children. I watched as children responded to the questions. I also interacted with the kids, and they responded back. I interacted with mothers who had accompanied their kids and they are grateful for the support of Asha Danbury to Mr.Babu's efforts to help their kids hear and communicate with them. I also learned of older kids from Ashray Akruti who have just graduated from college and have been recruited by global or local tech companies.

While the early intervention program is now showing clear impact on the quality of hearing and thus speech in children, and the program continues to grow, through discussions, it was clear to me that Mr. Babu continues to engage the local community with his ambitious goals. More than 100 kids received free/sponsored cochlear implant surgeries at Apollo hospital in Hyderabad. Hearing outcomes and quality of speech through such an intervention are much greater than those with hearing aids in general. The surgery is followed by a much needed auditory and verbal training program. Mr.Babu's request for Asha Danbury was to support the program and demonstrate success together once again in this program, similar to what we did in the early intervention program. A clear benefit of this program is ability to mainstream children into local government schools by the age of 5 or 6 yrs instead of being dependent on Ashray Akruti through grade 10.

The discussion was open, focused on how the year went by, and what the vision is for the next few years. I walked away feeling completely satisfied with Asha Danbury's support and investment in this project focused on underprivileged children with hearing disability and recommend support to the auditory and verbal training program so the kids can not only hear but also speak with clarity so they can be mainstreamed early on and interact with other children with confidence while getting the same opportunities to learning as the other kids.

