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**Site Visit to ASHRAY AKRUTI – EARLY INTERVENTION CENTER, Hyderabad, India,
March 7, 2020**

A Voluntary Organization Working for the hearing impaired since 1996

Website: www.ashrayakruti.org

I visited the “Early Intervention Center” at Ashray Akruti on Saturday, March 7 2020. The “Early Intervention Center” at Ashray Akruti has three locations.

- 1) Srinagar Colony, (Ameerpet, Telangana)
- 2) Chandrayangutta, (Telangana)
- 3) Kadapa, (Andhra Pradesh)

I visited the “Early Intervention Center” located in Srinagar Colony, Hyderabad. This center has grown/doubled since my last visit (in November 2018) and has 40 children. The center at Chandrayangutta has also grown & has 20 children. Currently there are girls and boys, and the children are between the ages of 9 months to 5 years. There are 4 teachers in SR Nagar and 2 in Chandrayangutta . In addition to teaching the children, these teachers are also responsible for teaching approximately 50 parents, so that they can reinforce the lessons at home. In addition to the teachers there are also therapists. 6 children have received cochlear implants to-date, this year. The enrollment is expected to rise further due to the high demand, because of the positive outcomes & success rate – this will translate into more resources/funding that will be needed in order to continue providing quality services – this point was stressed by the teachers/co-ordinators. All children/students are hearing impaired with varying levels of disability. The goal of these Early Intervention Centers is to help the children at an earlier age when the outcomes are superior and the cost per child is significantly less. Furthermore, these children go on to regular schools and are mainstreamed at a much earlier age. This is the only such center in Telangana.



The early intervention center/school building at Srinagar Colony is clean and properly maintained. The classrooms are well organized. On a Saturday morning (March 7, 2020) I met with Kalpana, the vice principal of the center/school. Also present were Mr. Babu and Esther. I was meeting Esther for the first time. Esther is the co-ordinator for the programs and helps streamline the curriculum and provides oversight. As the number of children & programs grow, coordinating becomes important. She explained how the children are evaluated and taught at the center and reported on the progress they have made. Initial evaluation of children was discussed in my previous site visit report. Once the child has progressed to a certain level, the child/student may have the option to get a cochlear implant (parents approval needed). Depending on the financial capability of the family, this may be subsidized. After a cochlear implant the children attend the Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT) from where they can be easily mainstreamed. The progress for each child is tracked individually.

Learning at an early age as at the Early Intervention Center, occurs via hearing and speech as opposed to lip reading and sign language when there is no early intervention. This results in much better outcomes and quality of life for the child and family. It is also more economical: Happy and healthy children and a greater return on the investment.

During my visit this time, group activities were going on. I observed a teacher teaching 6 students, in Telugu, concepts of vegetable buying and selling – business transactions. The children were between the ages of 3-5 years. The children were eager to learn and happy. In another classroom the children were getting ready for the International Women’s Day celebration in the afternoon. They were accompanied by their mothers. I had an opportunity to speak with almost 15 mothers who expressed their gratitude to the center and the funds provided by donors such as ASHA. They were emotional and said this center has made a big difference in their lives and the life of their child. The children were happy to learn and started speaking after joining the center. Some of these mothers had to travel almost 2 hours each way to come to the center, but said it was well worth it.

I was able to see the progress children were making when compared to last year, during my site visit. Being a Saturday visit, I saw an entirely different set of group activities such as grocery buying concepts. There were about 6-7 children in the group and they were all interacting with each other – learning from each other.

They will need sponsors/donors in order to keep the programs going since the children are from very poor families. (See report from Ashray Akruti with further details). Furthermore due to the rise in enrollment, space is also at a premium.

It was a very rewarding experience to see a place where children & women can hope and build a better life.

Below are some photographs taken during my visit:



Students and mothers at the Early Intervention Center



Students at the Early Intervention Center



Group activities – concepts of business transaction!



Therapists preparing for classes