

Project Site Visit Report: SHADES OF HAPPINESS

By: Shivansh, Asha Purdue volunteer

I visited shades of Happiness on 24th Feb. I planned to do it on a weekday, but it wasn't made possible citing the reasons that the classes don't run on weekdays anymore. Chris further added that the St Columbus School (the place where organization runs) didn't allow classes in the premises after the school hours anymore. So, the kids are sent to the teacher's residences instead. There is a total of 4 teachers who supervise 40 odd kids from classes 8th, 9th and 10th.

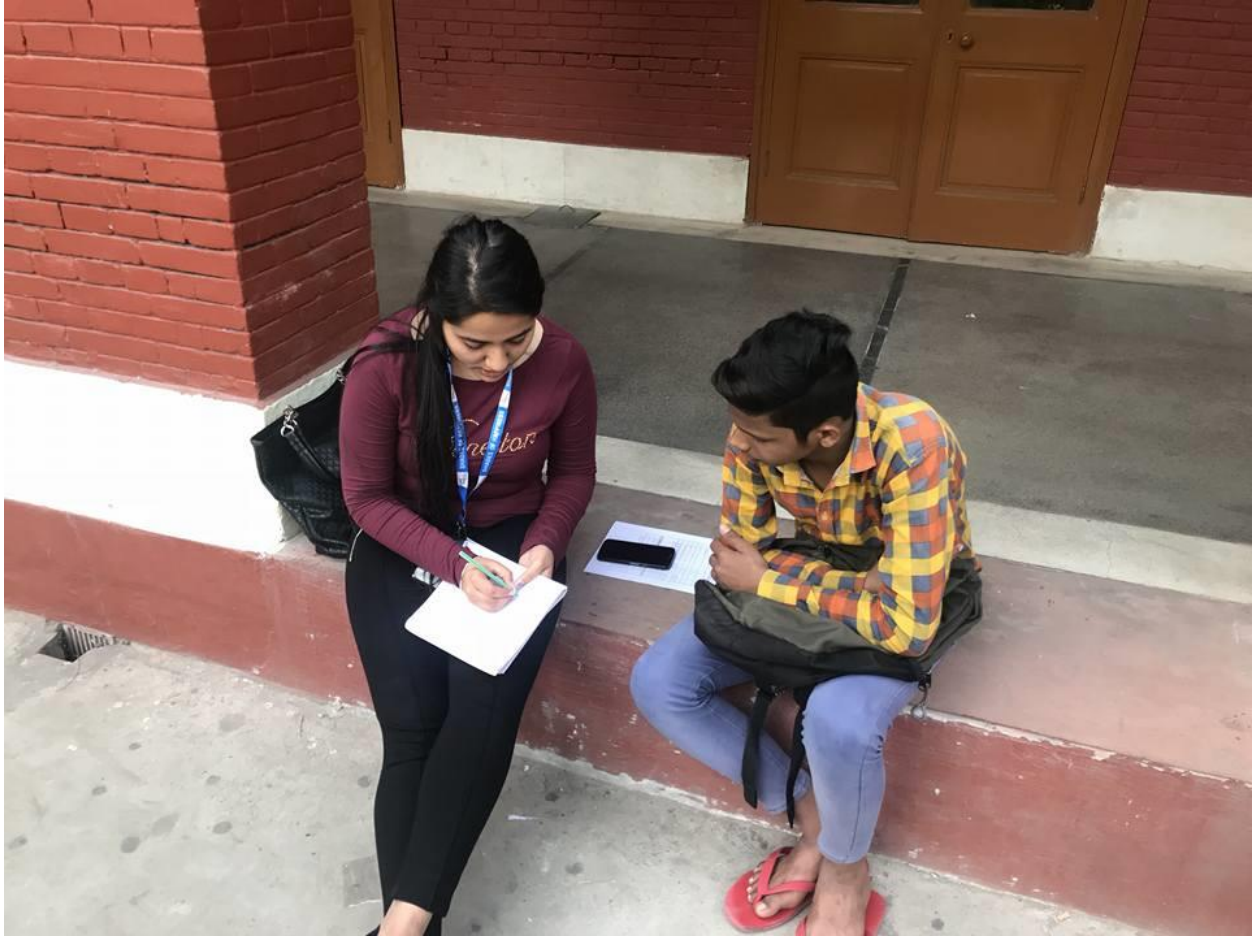


Pic: Golu (white uniform, class 10th) discussing Sanskrit with his classmates

24th Feb was a Saturday and I got to see their classes running in full swing. There were about 10 volunteers teaching kids on a one to one basis. Mostly English, some math and science too. The volunteers were mostly college students from local university. Upon discussion, I came to know that all of them were hired through internshala (a website for hiring interns). A lot of them were new and were teaching since December 2017. They were motivated and most of them had previous experience working in different social sectors.



Pic: Roshni (volunteer), teaching class 10th statistics to arjuna and Sandeep.



Pic: Abhimanyu being taught English by a volunteer (can't remember her name)

There were no signs of the weekday teachers however. I was told that the teachers lived in nearby government headquarters. Though I couldn't give them a visit, I plan to it in the third week of March. But in order to know more about the teachers, I inquired the same set of questions from different kids. I was hoping to find any discrepancies in their answers that can be traced back to a conclusion. Their answers however were satisfactory, and I found the following:

1. The teachers teach student in a batch of 10. And I got positive reviews from the children.
2. Some of the students were irregular to these teachers. We can inquire how SOH is helping in making sure they are present in the classes.
3. Most of the students go only 4 out of 5 days, the reason cited was that there wasn't enough topics to cover

I hope to clear more things in the upcoming visit. I plan to visit the weekday teachers in their residences and touch some more aspects of their weekend training, specially the sustainability

of SOH's model. Presently all the weekday teachers are based purely out of monetary motives. Chris had a view that if SOH pays the teachers, it can hold them accountable if the children aren't performing well. This however was contradicting to the fact the weekend volunteers were unpaid but still contributed quite actively towards the education of the kids in the organization.

Thanks
Shivansh

Follow up site visit on 23rd of March, after the decision was made to fund them:
I visited Shades of Happiness on 23rd of March to meet weekday teachers. I met three out of the four teachers, namely Meenakshi Sharma, Meenakshi Sharma and Ankit Deo.

1. Meenakshi sharma is an ex volunteer at shades of happiness and has been getting salary since April last year. She is associated with SOH from the past 3 years and used to be a weekend volunteer. She has done, B. Com, M. Com and is currently pursuing some Secretary Studies from DU. She teaches students for two hours every day, from Monday through Friday. She manages 12 students, mostly class 8th, 9 and 10th. And gets paid Rs12k.
2. Meenakshi Sharma is also an ex volunteer at Shades of Happiness. She has a background in Hindi Literature and teaches History, Geography and Political Science. She is also teaching at Jawahar Navoday Vidyalaya and is applying for a PhD next year. She teaches the students of class 11th and 12th. She's currently managing 3 students and gets paid Rs 3k per month.
3. Ankit Deo is the only male teacher in the group and is a student of Architecture. He is currently pursuing his education in IGNOU. He is associated with Shades of Happiness from the last 5 years. He too used to be an unpaid volunteer who is now getting paid since April last year. He teaches the 12 students of class 9th.
4. The fourth teacher wasn't available. Her name is Savita. The proposed budget had 40 children. I'd assume that the rest 13 go to her.

Red Flags

1. All the teachers were unpaid volunteer at SoH till last year. And now they are paid as a teacher at Rs1k per student.

2. The teachers were teaching together at St Columbus School for 6 months but didn't seem to know each other. (even if we don't consider the time when they were volunteering prior to 2017)
3. There were a lot of uncertainties in their answers, e.g when asked about how many children come to them daily...they gave a round figure initially. Like 10-12. This was a major concern since they've been with the children for almost a year now.