Asha for Education

Site Visit Report

Organization:                    Bodh Siksha Samiti

Place visited:                     Samudayik Bodh Shala, Guru Teg Bahadur Nagar, Jaipur (Rajasthan, India)

Date of visit:                      November 21, 2018

Our names:             Durgesh Gupta (from CNJ chapter of AFE in NJ)

Background:  I have been associated with Bodh for about 5 years both as volunteer teacher and the donor including yearly visits to their schools in and around Jaipur. Email attached at the end of this report from Divya Singh (Sr. Fellow at Bodh) triggered the efforts to seek funding from AFE to support the school. Thanks to Minnesota team for showing interest in funding Guru Teg Bahadur School.

Here is the site visit report:

The site visit was done by Durgesh Gupta on November 21, 2018 accompanied by a senior teacher Ms. Lekha Mohan  who was a teacher in the same school earlier. Many families were sitting on the cots in the street doing household chores. They all greeted us warmly, offered tea as they knew Lekhaji. The school had three small size rooms with basic things like fan, lights, black board, hand-made posters, etc. We saw one Mom sitting with the kid in Pre-K. We were told that he child cries a lot so mom is allowed to be with him for few days. Teachers were taking combined classes for 1st and 2nd grades due to shortage of space and rooms. The schools had total three teachers including principal who is also responsible for administrative activities. School is supervised by the Bodh administrative office. I was impressed by the dedication and sincerity of the teachers who were providing their best with lots of compassion and love in spite of the minimal resources available to them.  
  
I was told by Lekhaji that parents try to pull out kids giving reasons of family hardship; but thanks to Bodh efforts in convincing them how important education is in life. We met few ex-students whom Lekhaji taught.  Some of them are in college now and were happy to meet their teacher. The strong bond that teachers and students build for life showed in the interactions. I believe, the credit goes to good education that Bodh provides to these underprivileged kids.

I was also told that the training and regular academic support to teachers are provided by the senior faculty of Bodh's Education Resource Center (ERC- team members) through monthly workshops. Learning aids/teaching materials, text books and stationery for teachers are provided by Bodh. The students bring their own stationary like notebooks, pencil and other materials along with them. In addition to the above, an appointed coordinator frequently visits these schools and provides direct on-field support to the teachers.

Bodh teachers visit the children's homes on a daily basis. During these visits they share their experiences and the child's academic progress with the parents. In addition to this, monthly parent teacher meetings are also organized to discuss and share the child's academic progress and issues/ aspects related to their overall development.

Parents seemed to be very happy and grateful for the school facility provided by Bodh. I was also happy to see the strong teacher-parents relationship and am satisfied after my visit that the financial assistance could make significant impact in the lives of these kids and the community.

Recommendations:  As the primary focus of AFE is to support the education for under privileged children, Samudayik Bodh Shala, Guru Teg Bahadur Nagar, Jaipur is a strong choice for the financial assistance. The money would be put to the best use for uplifting the lives of under-privileged kids.

Photos:

Photos taken during this visit can be viewed at [https://photos.app.goo.gl/H913ezXoVt3rSCs88](https://photos.app.goo.gl/H913ezXoVt3rSCs88" \t "_blank)

Video of the school can also be seen here: [https://youtu.be/ygzzrrF1b54](https://youtu.be/ygzzrrF1b54" \t "_blank)

Original E-mail requesting funds from Bodh:

“Date: Sat, Jun 2, 2018, 2:20 PM  
Subject: Regarding Bodhshalas

Dear Durgesh ji, Ashok ji and Neha

I am writing this letter with a heavy heart as we have received a final message from SBI Foundation that as they have been in losses in the last financial year, they will not be able to fund  our urban Bodhshalas anymore.  The sudden withdrawal of the foundation has got us in a position that mobilizing a grant for the schools in such a short notice would be difficult. So, would it be possible to request Asha Foundation for a small grant for running two small schools? The cost for running two schools is around 10.5 lakhs. Can you please see if funding for one school ( 6-7 lakhs) or part funding for a school can be mobilized from Asha Foundation?

…”

As the primary focus of AFE is to support the education for under privileged children, Samudaik Guru Teg Bahadur School facility run by Bodh is a strong choice as I could tangibly feel that it is making a meaningful difference in the lives of girls living in slum areas.

Here is a little history of Bodhshala Guruteg Bahadur as obtained during the visit:

the majority population of the Guruteg Bahadur Nagar slum is Sikh.  This Sikh community has migrated from Pakistan's Sindh area during the 1947 India- Pakistan partition. Many of their relatives live in other districts of Rajasthan and also parts of Punjab. Member of this community are primarily ironsmiths- they make doors, windows, railings, etc out of iron. 50% of them are daily wagers while the remaining 50% take work on contractual basis. According to a survey conducted by the Guruteg Bahadur Nagar School, there are around 250 families in this slum area.

                                           The school was established almost 29 years back and is presently having grades pre-primary to 2nd. The school has a total enrolment of 60 students. The community is a small one and is located in an area where there are private schools and a government school too in the neighborhood. Though access may not be an issue if the school closes down but the school stands tall as a testimonial to what a marginalized community can do. The school building has been created only 8-9 years back. From inception till the year 2005, the school used to run at almost 18 different locations which were homes of different members. The women used to cook early in the morning and the class used to take place at their home (with the family sitting outside for more than 5 hours). This has been the dedication of the women of Guruteg Bahadur school. We feel that the school needs to be sustained and certainly further reformed so that it can work as a demonstration/resource school. The annual expenditure of the school is Rs. 4.5 lakh.