

EOTO SITE VISIT

August 30th, 2013

Sion, Mumbai

The Asha-Seattle sponsored EOTO program supports 40 special needs children that attend the public/BMC school in the Sion area of Bombay.

The school offers academic instructions to these students. EOTO provides medicines for them on a monthly basis, based on the need of each child. They have salaried staff that deals with the day to day affairs of EOTO and two other teachers who teach stitching and art respectively. The school has provided three classrooms for the special needs section. This is where EOTO conducts its daily activities for students as well. EOTO takes up non-academic activities like celebrating student birthdays and occasionally arranges for volunteers to teach the students some fun activities like dancing for annual school events or teaching craft. There is a computer lab available for all students of the school, including the mentally handicapped children. EOTO manages the computer lab (staff) in a joint effort with another organization called Pratham. Asha-Seattle funds were also used by EOTO to contribute towards cleaning the toilets in the school. They also provide stationery to students such as workbooks, crayons, and coloring books. These students unfortunately drop out after the age of 18. After that, the students are sent to other organizations that provide support.

The main problem faced by EOTO with this project is that most students that come to this school belong to families that can't afford to send their children to school. Most of these families live in the slums and the parents do not have the proper education and resources to support their children, which makes it harder to keep them in school. In the minds of the parents, education is not the highest priority so this leads to a high dropout rate amongst these students. Another issue is that a lot of these families who live in the slums do not have permanent housing which means that they must keep moving between homes quite often. This also contributes to the high dropout rates.

EOTO is in need of counsellors that can help solve the problem above by working with parents at home and teachers in the school. The counsellors can guide the parents on the kind of support the child needs at home and can work with EOTO volunteers in the school to ensure the children make the most of their time at school.

EOTO also provides after school tutoring for other children from the same school that belong to the 8th, 9th or 10th grade. This is not a part of Asha-Seattle sponsored program.