

Site Visit Report

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I visited Astha last week. I met with Pratik and Jyoti as well as with teachers.

1. The FCRA situation was a difficult time for the project as they had to let go of some of their teachers. However, they ensured that both Rakesh and Gaurav, who are with the helpline, were somehow retained.

2. The funding during this period came from the trustee in the first year. Azim Premij Foundation gave a one time grant for the second year. Astha also used some of the corpus money to tide over this period. Though the FCRA is valid for 5 years, the date starts from the date of application. Therefore, in another 3 years, they have to again apply for FCRA.

3. 75 students are currently enrolled. Most of the children (40-42) now attend school and come in the afternoon if they need extra help. The Astha staff works with the school educators and prepare worksheets for learning purposes. Though the Delhi Government has ensured special educators are appointed in all schools, many of the schools expect these special educators to handle other classes too. There is still a lot to be done in this area. However, Astha has a good connection with the Delhi Government and therefore, they can get a lot of things done.

4. The focus of the center has shifted to developing skills for independent living. Therefore, the classes are geared towards developing vocational skills, money management, and other initiatives that will help them to live by themselves. 5 people were initially trained for jobs. Of these, 3 men have jobs with Mitti cafe- 2 work in the cafe at Supreme Court, and one works in the cafe at Hansraj College, Delhi University. One of them was awarded the best employee of the month. Simultaneously, they are also trying to complete school education through NIOS. They travel by metro by themselves and are doing exceedingly well. The two women who were also trained dropped out as it was too long a journey to make it to their workplace. This is something that the organization will have to address in the coming years.

5. Through their helpline, Astha has reached out to more than 3000 people. This includes counseling, informing them about various schemes and telling them how to apply for certificates.

6. In addition, they have also helped Delhi Government home- Asha Kiran. They trained 120 staff in how to deal disabled children/people.

7. Two sessions - one with small children and the other on livelihood skills- were being conducted. I have taken videos on my phone. If you can share your whatsapp number, I will forward the videos to you.

8. One of the biggest achievement has been that the children are now enrolling in schools at appropriate ages. Both Delhi Government and Astha have done a commendable job in this regard.



