Site visit report of Muskaan

Namita Agrawal

Supporting Asha chapter: Asha Seattle
Visit done by: Namita Agrawal from Asha Zurich
Project Partner: Muskaan
Visit Facilitator: Shivani
Location: Jeevan Shiksha Pahal, Baghmughalia (near DPS School)
Date of visit: 20th December, 2018

Project brief (as per Asha page): Muskaan extensively works in twenty four slum areas of Bhopal providing education to the underprivileged children. The organization's primary focus is on the education of children unable to access mainstream schools. Asha Seattle has been supporting Muskaan for education expenses since October 2005 and making a difference to the lives of underprivileged kids in the slums of Bhopal.

Project description (as per Asha page):
a. To promote meaningful education amongst children
b. To restore the rights of food, shelter, education and health to deprived children
c. To promote economic independence by providing opportunities for learning basic skills to youth and women
d. To promote awareness of social problems

The visit was divided into following parts

1. Observation of the newly constructed school
2. Observation of kids during classes
3. Individual assessment of basic learning skills
4. Visiting a basti center

They are briefly described in the following.

1. **Observation of the newly constructed school**

A new campus for the kids was constructed in 2017. There were two dormitory rooms, one on each floor. The top floor is allocated to girls and the bottom is for boys. The rooms were very clean and are maintained by the residential kids. There is a guest room in the hostel for visitors. Around 30-35 kids stay in the hostel. The total strength of the school is around 120 students. On the day of visit, around 75 kids were present.
Staircase towards upper floor and dormitory of girls

The kitchen is good sized and is maintained with hygiene. The kids have a washing area where they wash their plates post lunch. On the day of visit, dal, rice and a curry was prepared for the hostel kids.
Cook serving food to the hostel kids

Washing area for the plates

Bathrooms were also very clean and tidy. The kids staying in hostel are responsible for the maintenance of the premises of the school. There was space for computer lab, however, it is not yet setup. Currently, the laptops are taken to the classes and then used. Lack of stable electricity and internet connectivity are the reasons for delay in setup of computer labs. There is space for pottery studio also, but it is not yet setup. Rains and remote location of architect are causing delay in the construction of the studio. There is an auditorium in the school. It is intended to be used for playing educational videos for the students. It has not yet been completed.
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Bathrooms

Auditorium
2. Observation of kids during classes

During morning, the kids arrived by buses in batches (based on the localities). The buses are a huge factor in maintaining the attendance of kids. One of the sections had multilingual classes ongoing. The kids seemed very enthusiastic about this class and were excited to have me join the class. Next section had poetry classes, and the kids were enjoying reciting poetry the way teacher was instructing them to do so. One of the sections had story-writing class where every student could choose their own topic and the kid was not restricted to sit in the class. The kids could wander around and choose any object they wish to describe. Few classes were held in classrooms and few were held on the terrace. Kids of 8th class were studying alone without any teacher in the backyard.
Kids coming to school with bus

6th class studying on terrace and 5th in a classroom
Story-writing kids sitting randomly discussing about their ideas

Students getting geared up for the multilingual class
Outcome of Multilingual class
The most interesting concept was multilingual class. The teacher writes down an article and then also notes the meaning of this article in each of the local language the students come from. He then writes the word in English to help the kids remember the words easily.

3. Individual assessment of basic learning skills
Individual assessment of learning ability of the 8th class students was done by asking them to write one sentence each in English, which were dictated by me and also read a paragraph from their textbook. Additionally their math proficiency was tested by asking them to do a simple interest question. All except one student performed very well in English. They did very well in the written test of English. During reading exercise, they were mostly correct with their pronunciations, and they had good understanding of the context they were reading about.
Students of 5th class were also tested in Maths with basic addition, multiplication, subtraction and division. Most of the students in 5th class could do addition, multiplication and subtraction easily. Some of them (around 25%) could perform division.

Students of 5th class solving Maths questions

A detailed assessment of 8th class students is shown below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Student</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>English Reading</th>
<th>English Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tushar</td>
<td>Very Good. Could solve Simple Interest question</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Very Good (one spelling mistake)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Could solve the problem</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Good (two spelling mistakes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushpa</td>
<td>Could not solve the problem</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Good (two spelling mistakes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>Could not solve the problem</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Good (two spelling mistakes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prem</td>
<td>Could solve the problem with help.</td>
<td>Lot of pronunciation mistakes</td>
<td>Average (lot of spelling mistakes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Could not solve the problem</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Very Good (one spelling mistake)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suwni</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeenu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Visiting a Basti Center

After the visit of JSP building, we went to one of the Basti Centers in Baghmugalia. Basti centers are focused on primary education. Their intention is to help kids maintain school going habits. When we reached the center, the students were engrossed in solving puzzles. The kids were very enthusiastic and all of us participated and asked them different kind of riddles. The teachers then showed us around the basti and we met the parents of a few students. The parents were motivated to send their kids to school and to make sure they have education whenever possible.
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Students in Baghmughalia basti center

Puzzle Sessions Ongoing
Conclusion
I was impressed by the dedication of the teachers and volunteers in Muskaan. I truly believe that they are helping in making the society a better place to live in. I think Asha should continue supporting the project in order to help the slum kids of Bhopal in receiving education and helping them lead a meaningful life.

Few observations
Following were a few observations made during the site visit:
1) The classes did not start on time. The kids were coming late and buses were arriving later than the scheduled school time.
2) Students of higher grade seemed less motivated to come to school.
3) There was no play area for kids in the JSP campus.
4) One of the teachers also mentioned that it would be helpful if the kids can have some industrial visits or educational visits. This can help maintain the motivation and enthusiasm of the students.