

## Shanti Sadhana Ashram, Guwahati, Assam

### Site Visit, Nov 16, 2025

I, Kala Ramaswamy, had the pleasure of visiting with the students, teachers and administrators of Shanti Sadhana Ashram in Guwahati, Assam. Upasha Boruah Phukan from ADI accompanied me to SSA. Raj Bajaj (ADI finance) and Raj Kamal (previous ADI finance and now SSA finance) met us at the Ashram. Below are the meeting minutes from the visit.

#### 1. Facility tour

- a. SSA facility is very nicely setup and provides a quite environment for the children.
- b. SSA not only provides children's education but they also have vocational training in weaving and local art.
- c. SSA environment is very clean and well kept.
- d. Met with the children in a joint classroom.
- e. Currently there are only 35 full time students. Enrollment has been low due to the migrant workers being busy with the multitude of construction around the city and not putting any effort to send their children to school. Teachers have tried to visit with the migrant parents to encourage them to send their children to school but this has not made much of a dent in the enrollment.
- f. All the children were happy, very easy to interact with and were very healthy looking.
- g. As per Jeuti, the principal teacher and Sabnam another teacher, the students from SSA where they provide education from nursery to 8<sup>th</sup> grade are well prepared when they move on to high/higher secondary school.
- h. The teachers were very proud of a couple of the veteran students, one of whom just passed out of law school and the other had finished their phd and started teaching. This gives the school and the teachers a good reputation.
- i. Teachers are extremely dedicated to the children's education and are very proud of their achievements.

#### 2. 2025 budget and audit

- a. Met with Hem Bhai, Baba ji and Raj Kamal to go over the budget.
- b. Raj Kamal who is responsible for working with Babaji on the budget noted that the external auditors were behind in their activities and had finally completed the review/audit and would be sending the signed copy of the audit to Asha by close of business on Nov 16, 2025.

- c. The audited information was received from auditor via Raj Kamal. Asha team has received the information and will be meeting on Nov 23, 2025 to review, approve and start the next steps to provide the requested funding.
  - d. Prashanti, Hem Bhai's daughter has taken over the role of secretary for SSA and she will be the face of SSA going forward.
  - e. I talked to Prashanti who works for IMF in Washington, DC, made the request that she join the ADI/Asha meetings once in 2 months to provide an update on the status of the school and finances. She has agreed to do that. Hiren/Upasha will be forwarding her contact to Asha so we can start including her in our periodic meetings.
3. SSA, short and long term strategy
- a. For the short term SSA and its teachers will continue to focus on increasing the enrollment of students in the various classes
  - b. Long term SSA is working on adding 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades as per the rules setup by the Assam government. This is a 2 year plan before the higher grades will be opened for enrollment.
  - c. They also plan to add additional vocational training for higher secondary students.
  - d. Their very long term aim is to start additional schools in the same format as SSA in other parts of Assam to continue their mission to provide education to all needy children.
4. SSA commitment to teachers, transparency in their expenses reporting
- a. Discussed with Hem Bhai and Babaji the need to have transparency in their expense reporting. Did have a frank discussion as what is driving this need from Asha perspective. Mentioned to them that Asha is driving strict rules and want each of the chapters to be extremely clear on how they are managing their projects and the corresponding funding that is provided to each of the projects. If Asha received a message year after year that SSA has underutilized their funding that was provided to them, questions arises as to whether any fraudulent activities are taking place and if additional insight is warranted. Hem Bhai did not like the word "fraudulent" and wanted to make sure that SSA was a reputable institution and they make every effort to use the funds wisely. Mentioned to them that it is because of their high reputation that Asha is glad to work with them and any chaos or communication gap and proper accounting can be addressed by transparency and timely reporting.
  - b. After the above discussion the agreement was as following:

- i. Pranshanti will be the front face for SSA and will be responsible for providing timely reporting on all spends
- ii. Teachers who are being paid once a quarter will be paid their dues on the 7<sup>th</sup> of every month
- iii. Prashanti will be joining the ADI/Asha meetings once in 2 months to provide timely updates









