

Asha for Education

PROGRESS REPORT OF 15 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

(FROM 1ST JULY - 2002 TO 30th JUNE -2003)

Name of the organization :- **Ruchika Social Service Organization**

Date of establishment :- **07.04.1985**

Location :- **Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India**

Description of area :- **Bhubaneswar Urban Slum**

Contact person(s) :- **Mrs. Inderjit Khurana**

Address :- **G-6, Ganganagar, Unit-VI
Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India
Pin- 751001**

Phone number :- **91-674-2532611, 2403827**

Fax number :- **91-674-2535214**

E-mail :- **rssobbs@hotmail.com**

Number of children currently enrolled in the project :- **467**

Current Girl/Boy ratio :- **Boys- 212 , Girls - 255**

Current Teacher/ student ratio : - **1 : 25**

Over all school attendance percentage: - **70% - 80%**

Medium of Instruction : - **Oriya (Local language of Orissa)**

Introduction:

Inability to universalize primary education today is acknowledged to be India's most important area of concern. In an educationally backward state like Orissa the magnitude of the problem in simple terms of providing primary schooling facilities is very high. Over 50 % of the total population in Orissa are illiterate.

Thousands of children in the slums of Bhubaneswar who live un-cared, undernourished since birth, are denied a piece of bread everyday. Education and health care for whom are distant dreams. They are the children whom the world tries to forget or ignore. They are the children whom nobody smiles at, nobody cuddles, nobody protects, and nobody comforts. Slum children are engaged in either wage earning outside or working at home .

Distrust in the society often makes them gang leaders on the streets, drug addicts, alcoholic, narcotic peddlers or part of antisocial gangs even if they do not want to be so. Employers victimize and exploit them when they are young; hardening them because they neither have bargaining capacity nor do they have any support system. Parents are often illiterate, ignorant and no guidance is given to the children. **We seek for these children the right to live a life worth living. We seek for these children the right to protection, equal right to development and a sense of participation to grow as normal human beings.**

Acknowledging the growing and apparently formidable challenges faced by the children of the slums and those who live on the street, the Ruchika Social Service Organization started its innovative educational programme with a platform school in April 1985. Presently it is reaching over 4,000 impoverished children and their families in the slums and on the street. Through a diverse and large variety of educational innovations, RSSO has dedicated itself to the ideal that : **"if the child cannot come to the school, then the school must come to the child"**.

The mission of the organisation is dedication for advancing the opportunities for upward socio-economic mobility for underprivileged children through education, vocational training, nutrition, medical treatment, emergency assistance and other varied programs.

Asha for education project was started in July-2002, in 15 urban slums of Bhubaneswar city at a very critical time when some centers were being closed down . This helped the slum children deprived of the scope for primary education on account of inflexible timing of schools, distance from school, parental indifference, and inability to escort the child to school etc. With the school in the slum, the child comes to school on her/his own, bringing the sibling along. With a firm foundation in language and numbers, they go on to regular schools with greater chances of retention in the school system.

Details of the school curriculum

The Ruchika Social Service Organisation has been experiencing in running play-way and innovative education centers since 1985. The education programme follows a child-centered activity oriented method. A child-friendly, joyful and holistic methodology is followed in the school to make learning an interesting experience.

To hold the children's attention activities like singing, dancing, story telling, puppets, sight-reading and flash cards are used. Efforts are made to create a liberal and child-friendly environment in the school and to make the school a non-authoritarian place.



The children sit in semi circles in the study and activity classes and in a circle during song, dance and drama classes. Hand made educational materials are used as well as the materials available in the immediate vicinity like trees, plants, leaves, stone, sand, water, seeds. Match-boxes, old newspapers, old magazines, ice-cream sticks and disposable plastic cups etc are also utilized . The children were both interested in and excited to use these materials.



The organisation has designed an innovative curriculum for the children based on the text books published under the District Primary Education Programme(D.P.E.P.) The interest of older children, first time learners, non-starters and late starters has been taken into account

while designing the curriculum. Functional literacy and life skills for all are emphasized.

Language is taught through sight reading cards, reading newspaper headings, sign boards where as numerical ability is taught by counting wheels of the vehicles. All the children learn their name and address first before they start alphabets because they feel proud of signing their name. Local history is taught by taking children to different temples and places of historical importance and explaining its historical background. Science is taught through experiment and demonstration and visit to the Science Park and Planetarium.

The organisation has designed, written and published its own text and work books for the children keeping in view the children's ability, local culture, language on one hand and pedagogy and learning skills on the other. Separates books have been planned for the older children., work on which has yet to start.

Long-term goals of the project

The long term goal of the project is **"to take the education to the child to universalize access to schooling facilities based on community demand to reach the deprived sections in an innovative and cost effective manner acknowledging the right of all children to learn"**.

No such change has been foreseen in the original goal. We have only planned to extend classes up to class-V before transferring the children to regular school. (Presently the children are taught up to class - III.) This way the drop out ratio can be reduced as they get personal attention in the non-formal school, progress can be monitored and the foundation becomes firmer. Secondly, vocational training can be planned out for those who are not making progress/losing interest in academics.



These children are then transferred to our vocational training center which has continuing education classes in four trades. After completing the course they are helped with jobs or self-employment.

Description of current school facilities (building, equipment etc)

All the Alternative Schools are running in the slums. Out of the 15 such centres supported by ASHA two are running on the temple platform, two in community halls, and one center in an open area under the tree. Ten centers have regular one-room buildings constructed by the organization.



There are no such school furniture available in the school except what the children sit on like asan's or polythene sheets. There is a big aluminum trunk full of with education materials and teaching aids in the school. A first aid box with requisite medicine and first aid tools is also there in all the centres for emergency

service. to the children. In all the schools there is a black board either cemented and attached to the wall or wooden hung on the wall.

Need to improve the existing facilities?

To maintain and improve these facilities we needed permanent school houses and the help of the community. After the super cyclone, all the school sheds were demolished. With help from Child Relief & You (**CRY**), **ICIC** and the community, we put up the sheds with pillars and roofs of GC sheets. Subsequently **Concern World Wide**, a foreign funding agency supported the organisation to construct the walls, flooring, and to fix doors and windows. The organisation also received full cooperation from the community for labour. It is hoped that the school building will become the hub of many community activities.

The organisation is mobilizing the local community to support the schools with other infrastructure and locally available materials to improve the standard of education.

How do you think the school has improved in the last year?

The community participation has noticeably improved in the last year. The parents and community leaders are supporting the organisation to bring a change in the school in developing physical infrastructure, organising meetings, social functions and co-curricular activities in the schools.

Most of slum children are getting schooling facilities in their community. The school is looking bright with charts on the wall and children's art work displayed. School room makes for orderliness.

Parents are getting motivated to look after the children's education. They talk to the teachers and find out the progress of their children. Parent teacher associations and

slum education committees are very actively functioning to bring an improvement in the quality of the school.

Problems faced last year?

- Attendance of some children was irregular. Poverty compels parents to send children as domestics or other petty jobs for some additional income.
- There is no potable water or toilet near the schools.
- Girl children go for water collection for the family during class-hours specially in summer.
- There is insufficient place in some of the schools to accommodate more children.

How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this project over the past year?

The project has worked well. It has been very effective with the "out of school" children. Most importantly 60% of the parents have been motivated to send their children to school everyday. The organisation has supported to 35 above average poor children to be mainstreamed to



formal school. The Basti Education



Committees and Parent Teacher's Associations have been formed at all the centres. The members of these committees are attending the meeting very regularly. They are contributing with innovative suggestions for the improvement of the schools. The outreach of the education programme has involved the whole community in women empowerment projects, meetings of the committees, family planning meetings,

and immunization camps. The school has become the focal point in the slum, providing a convergence of services.

A doctor (Homeopathic) visits the schools twice a week with medicine. She conduct health check up of children. Parents are also included in the health care programme. 25 to 30 sick persons attend the clinic each day . If any child is sick in between the doctor's visit, he is referred to nearest public health dispensary by the teacher.

Above the programme has been moving toward to be the people's movement in the slums.

The duration of funding required form ASHA

It is a daunting task to educate and empower the poor (down and out) community and to bring about a positive attitudinal change. Most of the adult male population are alcoholics and addicted to narcotic drugs as well. Spending a major portion of their income on drugs and sex is a very common practice. However with our continuous effort for last 10 years we have been able to sensitize the slum community to some extent to at least take care of their children's education, health and a better future.

We hope in another 9 years education and health for the children will be a people's movement and an empowered community would take over the running of school and health care services. Then we will be able to withdraw our support. Asha is therefore requested to continue for this period. The organisation then plans to run toddler centers / balwadis to take care of the 3 to 6 year old group the age group that has not been covered in the 93rd Amendment of the constitution which made education compulsory and free from 6-14 years.

Other news

Extra curricular activities

An interesting programme on sports was organized in two alternative schools. On 15th Dec-2002 in Harinagar Alternative School an inter school competition was organized. The fun events were spoon potato race, needle thread race, puchhi, 100 meters race, 50 meters race. A sort of mini sports meeting was organized by the community.

Same sports were held on 15th Feb. -2003, at Baliapata sahi G.G.P. Colony Alternative School. All the programmes were organized by the community with help of RSSO. All prize winners received prizes from the Basti Education Committee President Khetra Mohan Mohapatra.

We felt happy when a popular oriya film maker considered our alternative center at Baramunda Godam Sahi good enough to include in his film "Rakat Kahib Kie Kahar". The community was also very excited and happy with the shooting.

Visitors:

Mrs. Esther Hewlett and her daughter Mary visited our alternative centers from 25th - 27th March 2003. She was happy to see the organizations programme so well run.

Mrs. Vered Kater from Israel was sent by American Jewish World Service as a volunteer to the organisation and stayed for two months She trained our field workers , teachers

and supervisor on First Aid and Emergency medical aid. This training was very effective and helpful for our staff.

Mrs. Catherin Shymony , Director, American Jewish World Service and Dr. Roni Shymoni, medical physician from America visited Mancheswar (Patra Sahi) school and Dumduma (Raghunath Nagar), Dumduma (Subas Bose Nagar) and Jharana Basti. They remarked that these centres are working excellent to impart education among slum children.

Ms. Nilam Singh from NOVIB, New Delhi visited the 6 schools and appreciated the education programme.

Ms. Sarah Bachman, California, USA, visited the programme and applauded the work done.
