

## **Site Visit Report**

Vision Society of Interactive Operational Needs  
Vyaspur and Badibazaar of the Chandoli district, Varanasi, India

### **Preliminaries:**

Date Visited: January 15, 2003

#### Details of Arrangement of Visit:

On the night of January 14, 2003, I had my cousin, Mridul, call Ms. Kudsia Shamim. We also tried to call Ms. Jagriti Rahi, but we could not get through. Ms. Kudsia Shamim was very accommodating to let us come. She gave us instructions to the Center from Allahabad. She had a good attitude about preparing for us to come and said she would contact Ms. Jagriti Rahi and Vallabh, so we could meet with them also. She told us that the sector in the village for younger girls is closed because there is a national order right now that because of the extreme cold, kids' schools are closed. The city center is open for older girls though. This is not a surprise visit, but last-minute for them.

#### Attachments:

- 1) Newspaper clipping about the school,
- 2) Two donation slips,
- 3) Vision staff contact information on Vision stationery,
- 4) Two schoolbooks being used.

### **Statistics:**

- Both centers are all girls and have attendance of 10-12 girls attending regularly. It was really cold then, so the attendance had been low.
- Vyaspur – 25 children enrolled, some kids have moved on to go to formal school.
- Girls are underprivileged – have to work
- 13-14 % of boys attend school, only 1-2% of girls
- 2 full time teachers – one at each center

### **Observations:**

The people I met on day of visit:

- 1) Shadan Latifi
- 2) Alok Kumar Singh
- 3) Ms. Jagriti Rahi
- 4) Ms. Kudsia Shamim
- 5) Adil Ahmed
- 6) Sanjay Singh

- all are experienced social workers, used to work with NGO, were constrained, and started out on their own with Vision
- all voluntary, spend out of their own pockets

- no other organizations or government branches have helped them yet, except ASHA.
- They teach non-formal education courses
- hard to get kids to school because their families prefer that they work
- the course they teach is “Diya Bathi” (these literacy books of India are free, only have to pay printing costs of 1 rupee, 50 paise)
- planning to have rehabilitation center to train kids, where kids who do work, could stop for a year and come and live there in a hostile type environment – they would teach them basic training skills so they can move on to make a decent income - this way they would not have to worry about money and could study full time – Ms. Jagriti Singh has a large 13-bedroom house that they want to convert to a hostile
- Expenses- they distribute fruits once a month
- they do family counseling and check hygiene
- they have a donation booklet, don’t receive many donations, if they do, usually not more than 25/- rupees
- they had a formal picture of all the kids taken, some parents objected to having their children in the picture because of the parda system – very rigid – having a picture would be sinful for the girls – especially if being published where men could see it (see attached newspaper clipping)
- they focus on functional literacy – hygiene, health, skills
- they take them on field trips – post office, railroad station, showed them how to work a voting machine (how to send letters, buy a train ticket) – they want them to be aware of society and that they have a role in it
- there are 10 people who work on the project
- I didn’t meet Shalendra who has a medicine business and provides the kids with medicines if they need them
- they have future plans to teach them computer literacy with their own 3 pc’s

The girls that were in attendance the day I went:

- 1) Wajibunnisha
- 2) Nasreen nisha
- 3) Rarveen
- 4) Angina Bano
- 5) Rehana
- 6) Farzana
- 7) Uzma Parveen
- 8) Shama
- 9) Parveen
- 10) Feroza Bano
- 11) Amina
- 12) Hasina Bilsa
- 13) Mohd Ari
- 14) Shama Parveen
- 15) Farida Bano
- 16) Waheeda Bano

- 1/2 are teenagers, 1/2 are small children – approximate, don't know actual ages
- go at the same level, pace, what they don't know, they teach each other to bring them up to speed
- The girl named Rehana got married young, had a son, husband put her on a train and left with their son, she did not realize what was happening and could not read or write, so she got off the train at the last stop – Binaris – they counseled her into attending school if not for herself but for her future kids, she will probably get married again soon and she has not had any contact with her family – there is not way too

-these girls work making binarsi saris, families of 10 work 15 days (and night), so  
 -1 sari costs 3000 ruppees to make and they charge 6000 to the buyer (store owner)

-So,  $6000 - 3000 = 3000 / 10 = 300$  – each person makes 300 ruppees for 2 weeks of work

The school was 6 km away from the office. I went by riksha with Ms. Kudsmia and Shadan Latifi. They pointed out landmarks along the way, including a famous mandir and Ms. Latifi's husband's family businesses of grains and ghee. We got there after 15 minutes or so. When we got there, we got off riksha and walked through an open area to get to the classroom. There in the open area were lots of people (old and young) stretching and straightening silk thread for the Binarsi saris. Mr. Alok Kumar knew the kids by name when they came to greet us. We then entered Ms. Farida's home and on her upper floor was the classroom (pictures attached). The class is composed of all Muslim (caste: Ansari) girls. The girls are very shy. There is a small chalkboard in the corner that they appear to be teaching the hindi alphabet on. The room is small, but the girls just sit on the floor all huddled together and don't take up much room. I gave the girls markers, paper, candy, and other little trinkets. They are very shy to accept them. When the teacher asks them to stand up and say their names, they do it as fast as they can, and I can see they are nervous to do it and are very relieved when they are done. The girls are cute, when I left they ran to the balcony to say bye. I took pictures of them and they were surprised. They are a weaving society (the colony is called Natti Neem). It takes lots of workers to make the saris. They exclusively do saris. It is hard for the girls to get to class sometimes because their families would prefer that they stay and work on the saris (more money). I was not able to interview any parents or neighbors.

### **Odd Observations:**

- they made the signs for the office and school the same day I came, but they were honest and said so
- they do not keep any formal financial records!!!!
- no organization of finances – they just deposit money and take out money – no bookkeeping
- they do not have records of how much of their own money goes into this account
- they have not asked government for money – probably because they do not have records to show them
- Ms. Shadan Latifi did not know the kids' names when we were taking attendance
- they don't keep attendance records

**Opinions:**

- 1) I feel that ASHA should fund this project because the workers are sincere and are trying to do what they can to improve the lives of these girls. They take the time out of their day and put their own money into their project. The girls will benefit from this education, although it may not be formal schooling, it serves its purpose by teaching them valuable skills they need for their everyday lives.
- 2) I feel that they should keep financial records, but that ASHA does not need to cut their funding, but instead, insist that they make that improvement.

Name of Visitor – Shefali Gopal

Date – February 15, 2003