

Site visit report: VISION, November 2004

Name of Organization: **Vision Society for Interactive Operational Needs (VISION)**

Date visited: November 19, 2004

**My visit:**

I called the project coordinator Ms. Jagriti Rahi, a day before my visit. I reached the location at about 9:00am. Ms. Rahi was not available at the time and her husband (Mr. Sanjay Singh) took me to one of the centers in Nakkighat. About 20 students (50% boys, 50% girls 5-14 years old) were present at this center (a room in teachers home). The classroom environment was somewhat informal. The same teacher also teaches some more students (about 15) at another location in same locality in evening. The students are taught with the help of educational charts and the course is set to books 1,2 and 3 by Jamia Milia state resource center. Book 3 is equivalent to class 5. Though English is not part of this curriculum, it is taught separately. I also visited the second location which is run in a room given by a local resident. The kids are about the same age with same gender ratio. The time of these two centers is set such that if kids can not come at one time, they can attend the class at the second location. I also met a lady of middle age who also comes to the center to learn. Ms. Rahi joined us at this center.

We proceeded to another centre in Badibazaar, where Ms. Nigar run the center for girls. The girls were gathered there for a social visit (this being the first Friday after Eid). All the students at this center are girls with age group of 8-18 years. Here also the same curriculum and books are taught. Also older girls are also educated with women related issues. At this center girls also learn weaving and embroidery work. I saw some of the samples and was quite impressed. Sometimes it is difficult to convince the parents of older girls to send them to the center. Parents of a girl took her out from the center after her photo was published in news article about the center in a local newspaper.

I could not visit the center in Vyaspur.

**Social and financial background:**

The centers are located in Muslim majority regions of Varanasi. Most of the families in these localities are small scale weavers and due to lack of support from government are losing their business to modern weaves and big companies. Most of the people have taken up other jobs like rickshaw-pulling etc. Most of the manual weaves are not operational now and the weavers are jobless. The literacy rate in the region is also very low and so are the health and hygiene conditions. Some time the whole area of Nakkighat gets immersed in water during rainy season and it brings a host of diseases to the area. In fact a kid named "Surfaraaz" died of diarrhea last year in July.

**Financial Statement:**

The amounts sent to the project are distributed through Asha-India chapter and are spent according to the original proposal. Asha-India sent the money in three installments to the project. A copy of the receipts is sent to Asha-India.

**Future plans:**

One of the center has become self sufficient. The girls earn small wages by doing some embroidery work and also the community also has started to support the project at this center. There is plan to open another center and the talks with community people and a potential teacher were on.

**My impression:**

In general I got a very good impression about the project. The educational centers are run in socially and financially backward regions of Varanasi where the literacy rate is very low. The project has support from local community but this support is only moral. The people in the community have great respect for the coordinator and the teachers of this project. The project coordinator seems like a person who could effect change in the community.

Anshu Gaur  
Site visit for Asha-UIUC