

Aasra Seva Sansthan
Mankaiyan, Mirzamurad, Varanasi
Evaluation Report

Context: The proposal of “Aasra” for co-operation was received by “Asha” in July 2004. The proposal was taken up on “Asha proposal form” after corrections in budget due to discussions with Mr. Ajay Patel.

Today, 22nd of September 2005, we (Rakesh and Vallabh) reached at Mankaiyan center of “Aasra Seva Sansthan” without giving any prior information. This Mankaiyan village is around 30 km from Varanasi district head-quarters and 8 km far from zonal head-quarters Aarajiline. Mankaiyan munsar and sonkar settlements (basti) are situated about one km on the link road originating from Varanasi-Allahabad highway. We reached there at 4:00 pm and when we asked about this teaching center, we got to know that it runs from 4:30 pm in front of the hut of Mr. Lalji Sonkar. We waited there and talked to the local people. Main inhabitants here belong to Sonkar, Mushar, Barber, Gond who are very backward as far as social, economic and educational background is concerned. Their main living source is poultry, raising pigs, making leaf plates, blankets, ploughing fields and manual labour. “Aasra” institute is running an educational center here for the past one year in which 18 students are regular out of total 30 students. Mr. Ashok Kumar who is a teacher here teaches with a great interest using the tools of songs and playing games. When we were having talks with villagers, we saw 8-10 children coming to education center along with Ashokji. The students were quite excited because their teacher had a box of toys. In no time, there were 18 students (11 boys and 7 girls) sitting quietly on a mat. Along side, they arranged a folding black board from the home of Mr. Lalji. When we introduced ourselves to Mr. Ashokji, he told us that due to the rain in August “Aasra” had closed its educational centers because most of the people here live in huts and they have no such place where students can study despite of rain. He also told that children do not go to other schools even when there is a primary school in Mankaiyan village. The villagers gave us reasons that first of all, in the day children are associated with domestic works like poultry, farming and plucking the leaves etc. Moreover, there is caste discrimination in government primary school, hence children do not want to go there. When we talked with the students, we came to know that they have been taught the letter and numerals so far. About the toys, Ashokji told that Ajay patel (Who was a volunteer in Nagapattanam district which was largely affected by Tsunami) of the Institute was given some toys by friends belonging to “Asha”, and that the children play with great enthusiasm.

We started from here to reach Jogapur village which is 3 km from here and is mainly inhabited by Mushar, Nat, Patel, Kahar, Bind and Muslims. They have a poor economical condition. We noticed from the road that Mr. Ajay patel was teaching the children under a tree. The center is running on the ground of Mr. Asgar Ali, as we came to know from children and Ajayji. Also the study time is 4 to 6 pm daily. This center is running for the past 18 months. No fees is taken from children, 38 students come to the center, out of these only 5 go to school as it is situated far (around 2 km). By this time we saw some more children coming. There were two groups studying at the center, one was making

pictures while other was copying numerals and letters from the blackboard. There was a clear gleam in their eyes and enthusiasm due to their ability to read and write. But there was another reason for this gleam that they were about to receive toys from “Bhaiyaji” (The children here calls Mr. Ajay as Bhaiyaji). Ajay told me that he distributes toys to children twice a week and take them back at the closing time. Board, mat etc remains in the house of Asgar when classes are not running. Out of 32 students present today, 21 were girls. The knowledge level of children was average.

Ajay also told about other works of “Aasra”. Except these two centers, there is one sewing training center running from 1 to 3 pm in the same Mankaiyan village. Mrs Manju Devi of the same village is teaching, while 15 ladies are learning. This center is running in the home of Manju Devi, except two out of these ladies, they give a contribution of Rs. 20 per month which goes to the teacher. “Aasra” is also trying for health, women’s empowerment, right to information. It has also made 3 SHGs which are running successfully. There is no monetary help to the society except for some money collected from local people. Ajayji has arranged the pencil, slate, board using his contacts. Mr. Ashok has his own tailoring shop while Mr. Ajay is doing screen printing and making candles at a local level.

We gave some suggestions to Mr. Ajay

1. Inspire the villagers to build a hut at both places with local support so that they also get involved in operating the center.
2. Inspire as much children as possible to go to government schools and try to eradicate the discrimination which takes place in the schools so that these children can get the facilities provided by the government.
3. Make consolidated efforts for completion of basic requirements of the people of these villages

When we returned, we asked about the training center in Mankaiyan, we got to know from the local people that it runs in house of Manu Devi, but as it was quite dark and the center runs only in day, we did not go there.

Thus by observing the efforts of “Aasra” we felt that it could be helped by “Asha”. Even in this absence of resources, when it is doing such a good work, it is obvious that these people, if helped, will be able to give a direction to the society.

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22-09-2005

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