

Sankalp Virtual Site Visit Report

Project: Sankalp Welfare Society (<https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=620>)

Type of project: Formal Educational for children from the Urban slums

Supporting Chapter: Dallas, TX

Type of visit: Virtual via Zoom call

Date: September 18th, 2021

Time: 11:00 PM CST, 9:30 AM IST (duration: 1 hour)

Goals:

- To interact with the teachers and project staff and understand their individual role and experiences
- To understand the status of activities and how they are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

Asha's members attending the meeting:

- Naresh Boga – Volunteer & Dallas Chapter Treasurer
- Dhwanil Shukla – Volunteer & Asha Projects team member
- Neena Pemmaraju - Volunteer & Sankalp Project Steward

Sankalp Team organizing the visit:

Setup by Radhika Sethi (sankalpsankalp@yahoo.com) Board member at Sankalp

In there were 8 teachers from Sankalp

Virtual Site Visit:

Teachers and staff joined the meeting with Asha volunteers. They had all connected to the zoom meeting from their homes. The virtual visit started with an informal introduction of the current activities of the staff and teachers and how they had adapted to virtual learning environment. They shared their transition to eLearning and how they interacted with the students to keep them learning remotely and staying on track.

Interacting with the teachers and project staff:

Since the lockdown they have not been able to conduct classes at the Sankalp school. Since the children are not familiar with Zoom or Google meets, etc. and the school has not had a chance to meet the children person to person to show them how these Apps work, they have decided to use WhatsApp which is easier to use.

The current strength of the school is 200 children. The children have been divided into 11 WhatsApp groups with each WhatsApp group having one teacher. Lessons are shared through 10–15-minute videos created by the teachers for every chapter, every day. Teachers use their phones or PPTs using their laptops. They are currently doing 2 subjects a day. The lessons are made by the teacher & approved by the principal and then put up on the Sankalp YouTube channel. Every evening between an appointed time (each WhatsApp group set an appointed time) say, 4- 6 PM IST the homework is uploaded to the WhatsApp applicable group. The children typically take 12-36 hours to review the homework & upload the answers to the WhatsApp group. The child will write the homework on their notebook, take a picture of it & send it to the teacher on a one-on-one WhatsApp message to the teacher. The teacher then corrects the homework & responds to each child belonging to her WhatsApp group, with corrections. The corrected sheets from the teachers are also reviewed by the subject leads in Sankalp to ensure help guide the teachers, if needed.

Majority of the children, approx. 75% of the students in the WhatsApp groups are responding within is the planned timeframe with homework. If teachers are not hearing back from some children, they send WhatsApp messages to them to follow-up. They have also kept designated Saturdays just for meeting with children's parents specially if the children are not responding to the WhatsApp lessons.

The children are dependent on using their parent's mobile phones. Typically, they have access to mobile phone from 6 pm in the evening (after their parents return from work) to 10 AM the next morning (before their parents leave for work). So, the teacher ensures that all their lessons & homework is uploaded by 6 PM each evening. The children do their homework from between 6 PM to 10 AM the next morning & share it with their teachers for correction. Teachers often have video calls with the children at late evenings for any questions that the students may have.

Every day the students have math, and then alternating English & Hindi each day. For the younger group they are also doing art & morals classes. The children sent in audio clips of the good moral they learned.

In the past when a child moved away & was not able to physically attend classes at Sankalp they would typically remove them from the school roster. But after seeing the power of remote learning they feel they can continue to support their children remotely too. This was key eye-opener to Sankalp. One story was of a little girl in 4th grade that had to move back to her remote village in Bengal, but due to these WhatsApp groups from Sankalp teachers she was able to continue learning & often was the first one to share her completed homework.

Though the Sankalp team is very focused to make this remote learning environment as good as possible, they acknowledge that it cannot replace the face-to-face interactions & learnings from the in-person school environment. Sankalp plans to try to get back to in-person schooling once the situation improves.

Some of the challenges faced were the memory issues, slowing down of the laptops due to video rich content sent from teachers to students and vice versa. There was also the challenge of teaching the teachers about how create effective videos for the children as well as getting them more tech savvy.

General Impression:

It was very heartening to hear the enthusiasm from the teachers & staff about how they came up with a model to pursue teaching the children of Sankalp remotely during the pandemic.

I was impressed at how the teachers and children quickly took to technology using YouTube videos, WhatsApp messages & video calls to connect with the children & help them continue with education. They also adapted to the children's circumstances of having fixed hours of mobile phone availability and changed their timings of teaching to the child's mobile phone availability.

Sankalp also created & shared videos with their students about how to stay safe during the pandemic, asking the children to view these videos with their families. It was great to see Sankalp's efforts to keep the children and their families educated & informed during the pandemic.

From the Volunteers:

Naresh Boga:

- Teachers seem very dedicated and enthusiastic.
- Based on the teachers' feedback, many kids seem to be eager to learn despite the constraints of remote learning.
- They had hiccups with remote learning initially but have made a lot of progress in the past year plus.
- All the staff have been vaccinated due to the push from the administration.

For Further Information:

Funding Proposal: https://ashadocserver.s3.amazonaws.com/620_FundingProposal2021-22-v1.2.docx