Summary of SSS project

Overview: Sandnya Sanwardhan Sanstha (SSS) is a research institute dedicated to the development and rehabilitation of the mentally handicapped children. The uniqueness of this institute is that they are committed to differently able persons, which means that they provide individual attention depending on the specific circumstances of the child.

SSS was started in 1993 in Nagpur, Maharashtra and has been dedicated in providing such service to about 82 children today.

The children fall under 5 levels of retardedness - ranging from borderline retarded to profoundly retarded. Profoundly retarded children need 1-on-1 attention for them to do their daily tasks (like brushing their teeth, eating, etc.). More than 13 children in SSS are profoundly-retarded.

Services Provided: They provide a range of services to the children, depending on their level of mental handicap ness. These are:

1. Special Education: Special education to children of 4 to 18 years through qualified educators. The curriculum is absolutely individualized and catered to the child's specific needs. There are about 55 children in this stage.

2. Speech Therapy: Children are provided services of speech pathology and therapy to address their speech and language problem.

3. Physio Therapy: Children are provided services of physio therapy and occupational therapy to address problems like spasticity, ataxia, paralysis and postural defects.

4. Music Therapy: Music is used as a 'universal' form of art (that does not require any level of intelligence) to aid in the development of a mentally handicapped child.

5. Parents and Sibling Training: Parents and siblings play an important role in the overall development of a mentally handicapped child. To help such children perform to the best of their abilities, such training programs are conducted periodically.
6. **Learning through cultural programs, sports and yoga:** Such recreational activities play an important role to strike a balance in the development of a mentally handicapped child.

7. **Home-based training:** For parents (specifically mothers), home-training is also provided whereby a specific curriculum is planned by the child psychologist for the mother. The mother than gets trained on this.

8. **Public Awareness:** In order to promote the cause and bring about maximum visibility in the eyes of the public, SSS also conducts awareness programs on a large scale in rural and urban areas. So far, there have been 350 public awareness meetings conducted.

9. **Vocational Training:** Children are given vocational training in various trades depending on their ability to perform and family background. Some examples are making rakhis, diyas, greeting cards, screen printing, sewing, etc.

10. **Rehabilitation:** The sole objective of education and training is ultimately their rehabilitation. It is to help them stand on their own feet with minimum external dependence. Here there are two types again: (a) shelter workshops: where children work under close supervision, (b) open environment: where children work under indirect supervision. There are 3 rehabilitation units. To date, 16 children have been successfully rehabilitated.

11. **Parent Relief Center:** In grave family situations like serious illness or accidents, the mentally handicapped child is usually neglected by the family. Such PRCs offer the child a convenient and reliable stay during that time.

**Staff:** They have 32 staff members that they employ full-time for these children. These staff members are treated like regular employees with all benefits like provident funds, etc. offered to them. Recently, they made long-due salary increases for the staff members.

**Expenses:** The current monthly expense is more than Rs. 1,65,000. The average expense per child per month is Rs. 2000. The monthly expense for the buses runs at Rs. 50,000 per month.

**Income:** The primary source of income is through donations. They generate their donations from three primary sources:

1. **Recurring donations:** About 350 people donor-base donating anywhere between Rs. 50 to Rs. 5000
2. **Ad-hoc donations:** Non-recurring donations typically ranging from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000
3. **Programs:** They do charity programs, dramas, etc. from time to time to raise money.
SSS does not accept government grants, because if they do, they will have to abide by government's rules and restrictions that are applicable to normal children, but that do not take into account mentally handicapped children (one example is that govt may allow only 2 years for a child to remain in a certain program/level, but a mentally handicapped child may take 6 years to cross the same program/level).

**Distribution of children in programs:** SSS has a total of 82 children (32 are girls) with the following breakdown:

1. 55 in special education (ranging from 4 years to 22 years of age)
2. 18 in vocational training
3. rest in rehab centers, with the following distribution:
   1. **Group 1:** Making rakhis (4 children)
   2. **Group 2:** Making office files/screen printing (5 children)
   3. **Group 3:** Making Dinshaw ice cream spoons (8 children earning Rs. 700/mth)
   4. **Group 4:** Making garlands

**Operations:** SSS runs its operations everyday from 10:30 am to 4:30 pm. They do not provide staying facilities for children, only education. All children come from a diverse range of family backgrounds - some come from poor families, some rich families, some rural areas, some urban areas, some where families are concerned about children, some where families are not concerned about children (in 50% cases, in which case SSS takes responsibilities of all expenses of child). They have kept 2 buses that take children to and fro from their homes to SSS. The monthly expense for the buses runs at Rs. 50,000 per month.

**Future Priorities:** The future priorities for SSS are as follows:

- To pay more salary to the SSS staff – Rs. 9.36 lakhs / year
  - Incremental salary to existing staff – Rs. 6.24 lakhs / year
  - Additional staff required – Rs. 3.12 lakhs / year
- To extent services to additional rural population [about 50 such children] Rs. 6 Lakhs per annum.
- To build ‘Corpus’ of reasonable size for financial security.- Rs. 50 lakhs.
- II Phase of building [7000 sq.ft.] – Rs. 37 lakhs.
- Agro-based rehabilitation project – Rs. 30 lakhs.
- To make provision for ever increasing recurrent expense – Rs. 20 lakhs per Annum.
- To make parent relief centre operational – Rs. 2 lakhs per annum.

**Priority for Asha:** SSS requests Asha to consider their top-most priority item, which is addressing the matter of staff salary – Rs. 9.36 lakhs / year for 5 years.

- Incremental salary to existing staff – Rs. 6.24 lakhs / year (~$14,500 @Rs.43)
- Additional staff required – Rs. 3.12 lakhs / year (~$7,250 @Rs. 43)
- Total – Rs. 9.36 lakhs / year (~$21,750 @Rs. 43)