

Site Visit Report

Project: Sandhya Sanwardhan Sanstha, Butibori, Nagpur, Maharashtra

Date of Visit: 6th Mar 2023

Sandhya Sanwardhan Sanstha has been supported by Asha for Education since 2006. Asha Athens & Asha NYC/NJ are the current primary supporting and stewarding chapters. In the past, there have been significant contributions from other Asha Chapters like Silicon Valley, Philadelphia, and Portland.

It was after a gap of almost 2 years that a physical visit to Sandhya could be accomplished. The previous one was a [virtual visit](#) in Aug 2021. It wasn't until mid-2022 that the institute could reopen and start functioning normally again after the pandemic. A number of significant changes have happened at the school.





Student and Staff strength

Post-pandemic a lot of Asha-supported schools across the country have reported lower enrollment numbers. Compared to that, Sandhya retains most of its student enrollment - although a minor drop of 5-6 students has been noted as the school reopened in 2022. Staff strength remains more or less the same too.

Special Wheel Chair enabled school bus

Much has been written and reported in previous site visit reports about the struggles to get a special custom-built school bus that can carry wheelchair-bound students. For details, I will refer the reader to the following reports

[Site Visit August 2021](#)

[Site visit December 2019](#)

[Site visit August 2019](#)

[Progress Report 2019](#)

The current status is that the bus is currently not being used for lack of a driver on staff.

Student Residence Construction Project

[Progress Report 2019](#) also refers to a Parent Relief Center that was started by the school administration to give the opportunity to parents to take a break by boarding their child temporarily in the school where few rooms have been repurposed to be used for residence. About 6-8 students can be accommodated currently and 4 stay on the school premises on a full-time basis. The Parent Relief Center has been a boon to parents as the constant care and attention required for a child can drain them physically and psychologically.

A further expansion of this idea is taking shape in the form of the construction of a student residence that will accommodate up to 28 students on the school campus. An extension is being built to the existing school building along with the addition of rooms to the topmost floors of the 3-story building. Pictures of the construction are referenced below.

The small pit seen in the first picture is the elevator shaft. This will be the second elevator in the school building that will serve the residential wing exclusively. The first elevator was built and installed back in 2011 using a combination of funds raised by Asha's Work-An-Hour campaign and a donation of the elevator by an elevator manufacturer in India. Elevators greatly help the mobility of wheelchair-bound students throughout the building.



The big pit structure seen in the pictures will be a water tank to be used for the purposes of hydrotherapy for students. A good proportion of the students require physiotherapy on a regular basis to develop their natural motion for daily activities and hydrotherapy will supplement those efforts



Changes in the Trustee Board

Dr Navin Deshpande, who was a co-founder, a longtime trustee, and secretary of the school has stepped back from the board to focus on another initiative he had started a few years ago related to elderly and hospice care. Dr. Deshpande had been Asha's main point of contact since Sandhya's relationship with Asha began in 2006. Asha's current points of contact at the school are Dr. R M Uttarwar, also a co-founder and the Chairman and Alok Trivedi, the principal of the school.

School Administrative Office Relocated

The school is situated about 26km outside of the main city of Nagpur in a satellite industrial township of Butibori. Most of the students and staff live in Nagpur and so does the schools' donor base as well as the market for the goods produced in the vocational units. For a number of years, the school used to maintain an administrative office in a rented space in the city. The Pandemic forced the office to close for an extended period of time and eventually, the school board decided to give up the office space. A few rooms in Dr RM Uttarwar's home now double up as the administrative office which has a staff of about 5-6 people. I visited the office and met with the staff as well.

Some additional pictures from the physiotherapy unit and vocational units are attached below.







Summary

Overall, I was happy to see the school functioning as before once again. The trustees have managed to raise significant donations to be able to fund the construction of an entirely new wing for accommodating 28 students. The trustee board has been more or less stable over the years so the transition has been handled well and a major change like Dr. Deshpande stepping back after 30 years of service hasn't affected the regular functioning of the school.

Thanks

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