Virtual Site Visit Reports 2020 and 2021– Sandnya Sanwardhan Sanstha – Nagpur, Maharashtra

Date: 10/20/20 and 08/01/21

Attendees: Asha NYCNJ – Girish Ramaswamy, Sharda Sheshabhattar, Parveen Kose, Ruta Sankhe; Asha Central – Abhyuday Mandal (Project Steward), Akshay Bhole; Project Partner – Navin Deshpande

Background on Sandnya Sanwardhan Sanstha: Currently have 126 mentally challenged children - Children are a mix of borderline, moderate and severely affected. While borderline cases can take care of their own activities of daily living (ADL) with only verbal instructions, severe cases require both physical and verbal support.

Of the 126 kids, 46 are borderline and are enrolled in vocational and rehab training and can take care of their ADLs with 1-2 verbal instructions. The rest ~77 children (chronologicla age of ~4-18/19 years) are in special school section and can be segmented into borderline, moderate and severe.

Typical School Schedule: June 15th is the beginning of the academic year and goes on until Diwali vacation. The 2nd half of the school year begins following Diwali and goes on until April 30th. From May to June 15th is summer vacation.

Current Situation during COVID: School has been closed for almost a year. They have plans to re-open and bring children back to the school from the fresh academic year on June 15th, but entirely dependent on the COVID-19 situation especially considering the spike in cases in Maharashtra recently.

Challenges Faced: The challenges faced by the children, caregivers (typically parents) and SSS during COVID are the following:

- **Children**: These children, especially the severely affected require intervention by caregivers. At home with family around, such intervention is difficult. A structured set up at school is quite important for such children for their rehabilitation.
- **SSS**: A strict lockdown has prevented students from coming to campus. Staff and teachers cannot visit kids as well to check-in. A few children were unable to
cope up at home and SSS brought them to the school for a few days, helped them get better and then sent them back home.

- Caregivers/Parents: Managing children along with work is difficult. Approx. 60% of the families do not have the financial capability to provide the infrastructure (e.g. toys for activities) to support these children.

SSS Solutions so far: Teachers / staff have been coming to campus. Teachers have created special audio-visual videos for the children. For severe children, videos are 1:1 giving step by step instructions on different activities that they would do at school. For borderline children videos are addressed to around 8-10 children/parents while for moderate children, video is addressed to around 3-4 children.

Another solution that has been proposed by SSS’ management committee - To send a special instructor to the childrens' homes regularly. However, this has been blocked by government so far, can initiate if it loosens in the near future.

Update from August 2021 virtual site visit: The COVID lockdown has not eased in the area and hence students are unable to resume attendance of school at campus. The teachers are continuing to create instructional videos for parents, in the case of severely affected children so parents can continue to activities at home with their children. For the students that are mild or moderately challenged, the teachers connect virtually with the children to continue their instructions.

There is no clear update on the opening of in-person school due to the COVID situation. Until then, the teachers will continue to engage with the students virtually.

Project presentation: On 6/19/2021, Navin Sir made a presentation during an Athens meeting, please see the slides here (need Asha wiki login)