Site visit by Anu Arora and Ranjan Pradeep. – Asha volunteers from Seattle.

Date of visit – Jan 9, 2025

**Subject:** Transforming Lives with Project WHY: Our Journey of Hope

Pradeep Krishnaswamy, Anu Arora and Ranjan Pradeep visit 3 centers of Project WHY in South Delhi

The morning, we set out for **Project WHY**, the streets of Delhi were alive with contrast—markets bustling, roads chaotic, life moving forward at its relentless pace. But just 15 kilometers away, another world unfolded. A world where children showed up to learn every day, despite the odds stacked against them. No electricity. No clean running water. A future uncertain. Yet, there they were, eager, determined, and full of hope.

The **Yamuna center of Project WHY** sits on the floodplains of the Yamuna River, where families lease land to grow vegetables, only to see their homes and livelihoods wiped out every few years by floods. Here, there is no government infrastructure. No schools. No running water. No electricity. But people live here. They need power. They need water. **And they need education.**

This is where **Project WHY** steps in. Founded by **Anouradha Bakshi**, this grassroots NGO is built on the belief that **education alone can transform society**. In 2005, they rented a cowshed with a thatched roof in the middle of the farms, where children from the floodplains could gather to learn. When floods destroyed the shed, **teachers and students rebuilt it—again and again**. Since then, **Project WHY has educated thousands of children.**

We met incredible students and teachers—each with a story of resilience:
💡 **Sangeeta** didn’t see a school until she was 9. Today, she has completed 12th grade and dreams of being a fashion designer.
🎥 **Utpal**, abandoned at 2 after suffering severe burns, received multiple surgeries and an education through Project WHY. Today, he **is assisting in film production in Bollywood**.
📚 **Sonia**, a widow and mother of two, commutes **four hours daily** to teach at Project WHY. The first in her family to be educated, she is determined to give children the same chance she had.

The next day, we drove 10 kilometers in the opposite direction, away from the floodplains and into **Okhla’s dense urban slums**—where children grow up too fast for all the wrong reasons. No schools. No infrastructure. Just survival.

One woman changed that. **Sofia**, a migrant worker, wanted more for the children of her slum. She approached Anouradha Bakshi, asking for a school. **And so, they built one.**

Every morning, they arrived to find the makeshift tent school **trashed** by the local mafia, who used the kids as drug mules. Every morning, they cleaned up and rebuilt. The local crime lord, Ayya, eventually confronted Anouradha, telling her to stop. But when she asked him, "**Why do you want to kill me?**" he broke down in tears.

"If you had been here 20 years ago, my life would have been different," he said.

That was **21 years ago.** Today, the school is a **permanent structure** where **386 children** learn safely. **Sofia still teaches here.** So does **Mithoo**, a polio survivor who self-taught himself computers and now teaches hundreds of students the skills they need to find employment.

🗺️ **Project WHY proves that no corner is too far and no child is too unreachable.**

Our visit to Project WHY was a powerful reminder that true understanding comes from being on the ground, witnessing the resilience, and engaging with the people whose lives are being transformed. We often support causes from a distance, but standing in the very places where education is changing the trajectory of young lives brought home just how vital these efforts are. Seeing firsthand how Asha for Education’s support is making a tangible difference reaffirmed the importance of not just raising funds but also building deeper connections with the projects we champion. When we visit, we don’t just bring resources—we bring encouragement, solidarity, and the promise that they are not alone in this fight for a better future. If you ever have the chance, go visit. See the impact for yourself. And if you can’t, know that your support is reaching places where it is truly life-changing.