Virtual site Visit- Adruta Children Home (Rawa Academy)

- By Sree Geetha Dandapanthula (Project Steward)
  September 10, 2021

Attendees: Madan, Sridhar, Vibha, Project partners from various centers

As the COVID situation in India continues to limit our ability to do an in-person site visit, I decided to organize a virtual site visit to Adruta. I coordinated with Adruta staff and Asha Seattle Web team to arrange a virtual site visit on Sept 10, 2021 at 7:30 pm PST (Sept 11, 2021 8 am IST). I sent email with zoom link to Asha Seattle volunteers’ group and posted in various project groups.

The meeting started on time. Few volunteers from Asha Seattle and project partners from 10 centers joined the call.

- There are 12 centers in Odisha for girls and for boys providing them clean and loving homes. Children attend nearby schools. Children are encouraged to learn art, music, dance, chess, martial arts depending on their personal interest. There are special teachers at various centers.
- Kids who are abandoned are rescued and placed in a hospital and then a home. All adoptions are through Government Social Welfare services.
- All the centers are gated and secured buildings. They typically have a visitor center, office, kitchen, dining hall and dormitories for children. There is a meditation hall for the children at each center. They have people from all religions. Kids wake up at 4 am to 5 am and start the day with meditation.
- There are no cleaners, workers in any center and children do all the tidying and cleaning.
- They provide vegetarian food at all centers.
- There are 2 centers in Bhubaneshwar—one for boys, one for girls
  - **Adruta- Bhubaneshwar Boys’ home:**
    - Basement and four floors building
    - As of 2002, they moved to this home
      - Initially this was the girls’ home
    - Visitors room on entry to the home
    - Large meditation hall—get up early at 4-5 and meditate
      - Auspicious beginning of day
    - 45 total boys currently
    - Classroom with benches and a blackboard at front. Used by tutors to teach the students. The online classes are running using the projectors (Asha Seattle funded this in 2020)
      - Class seems to be running smoothly
    - Beds in bedroom, kept neatly
    - Infosys gave initial funding for the building.
    - CC cameras in the office to look at all the boys and monitor all the rooms
    - Outside dormitory with bunk beds—less space, so bunk beds used to house more children and make it less crowded
Surrounded by trees, nearby to the town

- **Adruta- Bhubaneshwar Girls' home:**
  - Coffee house outside, sheltered place in very peaceful and green surroundings.
  - Stage outside for the Bharatanatyam/Odissi program
    - Lots of children learn dance, and they get lots of acclaim for their dances. Travelled to USA and many other countries earning lots of prizes and trophies for their work
  - Many of the children learn musical instruments as well.
  - Staff quarters/male workers stay outside the building as it is a girl’s home
  - Currently, there are 85 total girls at the home
  - Don’t serve nonvegetarian food, they get cow’s milk from cows in cowshed
  - Cows are donated by people, there is a dedicated caretaker to cows
  - Visitors must sign when coming in
  - Multipurpose Activity room for study, music, practice dance
    - Art gallery for painting and art pieces
      - Sand art, pot paintings, watercolor, acrylic
      - Governor came recently in July 2021 and appreciated art pieces
      - Lots of paintings made during pandemic time
  - Computer room to learn about computers
  - Mechanized kitchen maintained very neatly
  - 16 toilets and 16 washrooms
    - In 4 floors, there are 32 in total
  - Typically, there are 8 children per room. Bunk beds are kept cleanly and pushed to the wall so that there is a lot of space
  - Dormitory rooms upstairs as well
  - Don’t get old dresses, so that they don’t feel unwanted and loose self esteem
  - Some people give readymade dresses, school uniforms are made with seamstress
    - Seamstress teaches girls stitching skills
  - Solar panels utilized to lower the electric bills.
  - There is a big study room with cubicles and desks where 30-35 children can study in a single room

- **Adruta Puri:**
  - Functions in a rented building
    - Own land, but not enough funding
  - 34 children
  - Young children are still online
    - Schools are open only for 10th and 11th
  - Meditation hall on first floor
  - Kitchen is small, but they manage
  - They are requesting people to construct infrastructure
  - Tiling is new and made by owner

- **Adruta Cuttack:**
- Gated and secure
- Sports room with table tennis - Kids were playing at the time of the visit
  - Some of them perform in state competitions
- There are lots of trophies
- Children study in dormitories
- 40+ children
- Most things and utensils are gifted by others

- **Adruta Angul:**
  - Angul has three different centers - for babies, girls, and boys
  - There is a swing to put the babies so that animals don’t hurt them if left near the gate
    - Asha donated solar panels (20 kilowatts)
    - Big garden with greenery, Elephant statues and lots of fruit trees
  - One of the centers is for babies-SAA—Special Adoption Agency with Capacity of 10 babies
  - In Angul chapter, there are 115 children—boys and girls and babies
  - Playroom with toys for kids
  - Very large meditation hall—holds up to 200 people
  - Spacious dining hall with neatly maintained kitchen close-by

- **Adruta Balangir Home:**
  - Gated and secure place and has 35 boys
  - Neat and spacious dormitories that hold lots of boys and each floor has bathrooms
  - Capacity is 50 children
  - Large garden, peaceful and lots of greenery (rainy season)

- **Adruta Sundargarh Home:**
  - It’s a boys’ Home- currently has 35 boys
  - Financial crunch—It is in a rented a house
  - Young man gave a building rent free
  - Beautiful view and outside space
  - Spacious activity room with artwork and paintings
  - The boys were studying in dorms
  - Tutors come every day and help them

- **Adruta Dhenkanal**
  - It is a Boys Home with 47 boys
  - Costliest building with Ground + 3 floors
  - Elephants come and stay on roads
  - Very secure building
  - Activity room—excellency in chess
    - Earned lots of awards, medals, and trophies
  - Very large rooms with beds, lots of boys per room
  - Spacious guest rooms
  - Meditation hall is very big with calming environment

- **Adruta Keonjhar Home:**
- Boys Home in a rented home with 49 boys
- Lots of prizes
- Attending class in small rooms together
- Very crowded
  - But still studying well
- During the site visit, we spoke with few children at various homes. They seem to be happy and humble. They have goals and ambitions and working sincerely to achieve them. We also saw few physically challenged kids and kids with troubled past. The caretakers were looking after them patiently. All the centers were in peaceful and green surroundings. The kids are encouraged to learn fine arts, music, dance, sports, and games along with formal education.
- Some of the infrastructure like maintaining guest rooms with beds etc. seems unnecessary. But the project partners think it is necessary as they have many donors supporting the project and have frequent visits.
- The site visit left me with appreciation for the care takers, superintends and managers for their dedicated work and love for the children.

- Pictures from various Adruta chapters