

Site Visit Report

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I visited the Night Shelter run by Nishtha twice this summer. Both visits were similar, so I shall talk about the first one.

1 Background

Nishtha runs the Night Shelter for children of the women who work in the red light area in Baruipur. This shelter was built in 2014 with Asha Atlanta's support, though Nishtha had been doing their best to take care of these children for many years. This shelter is built with the purpose of providing these children a decent childhood and education, so that they can escape the clutches of the sex trade and lead a more respectable life. There are currently about 30 children in the shelter, who stay there from late afternoon to late night. They get meals and the caregivers there help them with schoolwork, or engage them in activities like reading, singing, dancing and simple games. The shelter is a plain 1 floor 2 room house with a roof.

2 My visit

The children prepare for visitors. When I arrived, I found them dressed in their best clothes, excited to meet me. Some of them were reading, a few were sketching, others were finishing up homework while some were preparing for the song and dance routine they would present for us, the visitors. I greeted the children and asked some of them to read to me what they had open, and they all read perfectly. One of them recited a poem from memory. They showed me their paintings: simple, bright and full of life. With the right guidance, it seems that they should be able to continue into a respectable life. The children and their guardians remembered me from my last visit and were gracious and loving.





The children then danced, first the younger ones, and then the older groups. Watching them, I was transported to my own childhood, whence I would take part in such performances to the insistence of my parents. It struck me that what Nishtha has achieved is giving these children a slice of the normal childhood we all take for granted. The children seemed to be having fun.



3 Concluding thoughts

A matter for concern with the Night Shelter children is that once they become older, they are more susceptible to being ensnared by the brothel. To prevent this, Nishtha sends these children to hostels once they are old enough, so that they can pursue their studies in peace. This program has ensured two girls from the Night Shelter careers as certified nurses in local government hospitals. However, even in hostels, these children need to be kept in some manner of secrecy, because if people got to know these are children born to prostitutes, they will be cast out. In government hostels, the risk of being trafficked is also prevalent. This was revealed to me by Monami, a Nishtha employee who is in charge of many of their programs and activities, who accompanied me on this visit. Asha Atlanta's SAC (support a child) programs for Nishtha Night Shelter fund the hostel relocation and studies of these children.