

Asha Site Visit Prepared by : Padmanava Sen/ Ajoy Saha
Nishtha (20th April 2013)

- Night Shelter -
 - Description - We started our Nishtha visit at the Baruipur Night Shelter. It gives shelter to the children of sex workers. The purpose is to create a healthy environment for studies and at the same time, protect them from trafficking and anti-social influence. They stay in the night, taught in the day before school hours, learn extra-curricular activities. Their mothers live close-by so they visit them once a day. The children sang few songs as well as performed for 3 songs. They seem happy to be in Nishtha. Then we talked to their mothers and the moms are very enthusiastic about their children to get education and their girl children not to go into their profession. Two of the girls are going to college.
 - Requests - This project is totally dependant on AID's sinchan and Asha Atlanta's support. Now that the kids have grown, some space is required on the 1st floor to separate out teenagers (girls from boys).
 - To Note - This project caters to extremely marginalized children. It is indeed a big step to protect the girl child from the curse of prostitution and the boy child from anti-social influence. It is almost impossible to support this project with Govt help or any local company CSR efforts. The only thing that may work is the role model based approach when two girl students graduate from college and more will follow their footsteps thus changing the community. **For both Nishtha students, everyday life is a big struggle. Because of their poor economic and social status, their needs are more basic. More than good quality education, they need mentors who can guide them through their everyday issues regarding safety and life in general.**
- Sarada Bhavan -
 - Description - Visited the school attached to Sarada Bhavan. This is run by a different funding agency. It is a full-fledged school to overcome the problem with the distance to Govt School. Also, most students from village get transportation.
 - Requests - Nishtha is trying to get RTE compliance for the school. The basic bottleneck is the high cost to maintain Govt salary. Since there won't be any Govt funding, private funding won't be enough to sustain.
 - To Note - This can be a successful case of RTE compliance if the existing terms are accepted.
- Meeting with youth group -
 - Description - Asha volunteers had a discussion with Nishtha youth group to get a better understanding of their plans, challenges and procedures followed. The dedication of young volunteers and leaders are clear and their confidence as well as awareness was very impressive.

- Request - We felt the need of a student scholarship program that can motivate the young leaders to spread awareness.
- To Note -
 - The students and women in villages have formed groups that can fight domestic violence and sex trafficking. [West Bengal](#) topped the list of states where trafficking is highest. Last year 14,000 adults/children have been trafficked from West Bengal. Regions adjacent to Nishtha's operational area lose women/children all the time. These are big issues as they have unsafe domestic and village environment. In such circumstances, I am not sure if students/teachers will take more interest in the technical aspects of education, which Shikshamitra is offering.
 - At Nishtha, we did find a group of young men and women who might benefit from such a program. Yesterday we got so involved with discussions hovering around safety issues, that we could not find time to discuss the Shikshamitra training program. We will let you know soon if Nishtha will be interested in the training. There are a few young girls/boys, studying in X/XII grades, who are articulate and have good leadership skills. They led several group activities, some in our presence, which to our opinion are of high importance. I think these students, especially the girls need to be groomed and nurtured as future community leaders. They go around the village campaigning against domestic abuse of women, against human trafficking, and against the use of plastic, encouraging students to stay in school, do organic farming etc. They are capable of motivating the rest of the community members and I feel it would be great if we could adopt some of these girls through support a child program and provide financial support for higher education.
- Jagaran Visit -
 - Description - Meet the students and some activities are shown that are followed in Jagaran.
 - Requests - To continue this program since it has a great impact on the students.
 - To Note - A support a student program is needed for students at higher class.