

Project History w.r.t. AfE

Prerana is one of the largest projects funded by Asha, and especially Asha Urbana-Champaign. We have funded Prerana for two years with heavy assistance from Silicon Valley.

Volunteer

I am currently the projects coordinator of Asha Urbana-Champaign, I visited Prerana as the first of five site visits I conducted in Dec/Jan 2009. I visited the Falkland Road Centre along with another Asha UC volunteer, Vidisha Vachharajani, who had visited a year prior.

Travel to Project

Vidisha and I met at my hotel to go visit the Falkland Road centre, I then went with one of the employees to visit Vashi Turbe location and meet with the Project Leader Priti Patkar.

Site Description

I visited two of four locations. The first was located right next to the Falkland Road Red Light District, about two blocks from the brothels were the children and their mothers live. The Vashi Turbe center is located within the Vashi Turbe slum, and is a bit further from the brothels in that area. The Falkland Road Center resembles an old church or school building and houses other NGOs as well as the Children's Shelter. Notably the main door is heavily reinforced and the windows barred with iron.

The Vashi Turbe Center is simply a small building within the slum, of somewhat newer construction, it also has a heavy door, etc.



Falkland Road

As stated the Falkland Road centre is located directly within the Red Light district. It provides a variety of programs for the children.

The major one is simply a protective shelter to enter into in the evening. The center also provides other services including counseling, food, and tutoring services

We met and spoke for some time with one of the senior workers, Aparna. She was able to give a very good sense of the centre, as well as show us through the Brothels themselves. Aparna was clearly well known in the community and people were comfortable telling her their concerns and vice versa.

For privacy reasons, we did not take photos of the families in the brothels. We were however able to see the children that Prerana serves in their homes. The conditions are really only a step above living on the street, with few doors, cramped spaces, and trash littering the hallways. The buildings clearly have numerous structural issues.

It appears that 2-3 adult women and 6-6 children might stay in a single cramped room on 2-3 makeshift bunks. Both women and children often had visible scars as signs of abuse and/or unfavorable working conditions.

Nonetheless, Aparna was able to share quite a few stories of the women and children being able to make progress with Prerana's help. In particular, we were fortunate enough to meet one lady, a former prostitute, who was visiting friends. She was wearing a simple shirt and jeans, which made her stick out somewhat. She lives her son now, and was in high spirits.



Site Visit Report: Prerana
Volunteer - Karl Dach-Gruschow
December 26th, 2008

Vashi Turbe

After visiting Falkland Road, I continued with one of the younger/newer teachers to Vashi Turbe. Vashi Turbe is very similar to Falkland road in terms of the services it provides, but substantially different in feel.

Due to some technical issues, when I arrived there was no power and thus no lighting although it was early evening.

The children seemed noticeably more outgoing and friendly, both with the staff and myself.

Due to the timing, I was able to observe the children as they went through their evening routine. This consisted of eating, doing homework and as I left there was some preparation for pulling out mats to sleep on.

The children were clearly a bit safer and more comfortable, and left an overall good impression that they were being well cared for.

The building is relatively newly constructed and Priti was quite interested in pointing out what had been completed since the project steward and previous site visitor, Nayana Shah, had visit.



Concerns and Overall

Much of the visit turned on sitting and speaking with Priti. I was able to have a very lengthy discussion about the future of Prerana and the nature of Asha's involvement. This largely went about issues such as quantity of funding and how Prerana relates to other NGOs.

I was impressed with Priti's professionalism and vision about many of these issues. She is on the one hand quite idealistic, but also very down to earth. Prerana actively seeks to reduce its services by connecting children with other NGO's services.

It is clear that her primary interest is the end outcome for the children and their families, and Prerana plays merely the role it needs to to assist, no more and no less.

We were also able to discuss at length the needs of the children, particularly the need to more efficient referral of children to boarding schools or foster homes in the teens, so that they can be further removed from the sex trade and receive better education.

Likewise Falkland road could use a bigger building, but this may be impossible.

Overall it was clear that Prerana is an extremely well run organization.

