Site Visit Report

Project: Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti (Apna Skool)
Done by: Mr. Mayank K Shukla (Asha Kanpur Volunteer)
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Project Location: Kanpur Nagar U.P. India

I recently got an opportunity to visit two of the Apna Skool centres out of 25 being run in Kanpur. The project is unique in itself. It aims to help those at the bottom end of the pyramid. The immediate beneficiaries of the project are children of migrant workers working at brick kilns in Kanpur. They come here from different parts of the country in search of seasonal employment. This deprives their children from continuous education. Apna Skools fill the gap and act as enabler towards proper schooling.

My first stop was at Apna Skool centre running at Murari brick kiln. There were 32 students present out of 33 who have enrolled this year till now. Out of these 17 are old and 16 new. The new students have come here for the first time and had joined the classes only 10 days ago. Most of the students study in classes 1 to 3. The number of girls present was almost equal to boy.

There was stark difference between the knowledge levels of old and news students. The older ones were able to solve mathematical problems, read poems and write their names in Hindi and some of them in English. The new students had difficulty doing
these. I interacted with some of the students Ghanshyam, Vandana, Sandhya, Yash and Anuj. They were eager to show what they have learnt. For play they had a carom board and some other games. There was a newly built toilet attached to the centre. I was told three such toilets have been built at different places. The teacher Manju Bala described how they try to overcome the difficulty in bringing new students at par with their older counterparts in terms of learning.

My second stop was Apna Skool at Tatiyaganj. The centre has a permanent structure. The infrastructure is good. There are three classrooms, a library and clean toilets. The current strength was 110 and almost 100 percent of them were present. It was heartening to see girls and boys ratio which was 50:50. There are 5 teachers and students are between the age of 5 and 14 studying in classes 1 to 5.

When I reached the centre the classes were almost over and weekly BAL Sabha was in progress. Some senior students briefed me about Bal Sabha and its working. I was told it was a forum to discuss issues and share responsibilities. Later I got an opportunity to interact with students. Small kids studying in class 1 were confident enough to tell their names, school name and class. The students from class 2 & 3 shared what they had learnt earlier in the day. One of the students came forward and showed me string phone made by him. We tried communicating using the phone and it was fun.

The students from class 4 & 5 wanted me to see their projects. They had made a replica of the Rafale fighter jet. Map of India displaying major mountain ranges and rivers, water pump and experiment showing how magnetism works. Teachers Sanyogita and Nirmala told me about the piggy bank initiative to inculcate money saving habits among the small children. Each one of them has been given a gullak kept at the school with their names written on it. In which they can deposit their small savings. They get it back when the family returns to village.

In the evening I got to meet the people who are running this project at Apna Kendra near IIT Kanpur. I met Vijaya Didi who is heart and soul of this project. Then there were field coordinators. Sangeeta, Manoj, Laxmikant, Rajkumar, Ratnakar and BN Sharma were present. Mahesh Pandey from “Asha” Kanpur with whom I had visited Apna Skool centres earlier in the day was also present.
There was healthy discussion on several issues related to the project. The lack of funds for providing nutrition to children was an area of concern. Ratnakar gave suggestions on how to streamline the centre monitoring process. Manoj told us about the two seasonal schools which were run during breaks at Nawada, Bihar & Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh. Sangeeta shared details related to 10 day Terracotta workshop for students. BN Sharma shared his views about increasing the reach of the project. During the discussion need for regular teacher training programme was felt. Fine tuning proposal cycle and financial year as well as segregating Asha Silicon Valley centres were also discussed in detail.

The project has lot of potential and with clearly defined goals and long term objectives can help bring change. There are challenges which can be overcome with better planning. We need to work towards creating a communication channel with these children and their parents so that they remain in touch. We also need to create a process so that we see larger number of students joining Apna Skool complete formal education and go for higher education.

**Link of Site Visit Photos:**

- [https://goo.gl/photos/UqpjnVSvZAM9cPQy5](https://goo.gl/photos/UqpjnVSvZAM9cPQy5)
- [https://goo.gl/photos/TDSzhmb6wZymVvPio7](https://goo.gl/photos/TDSzhmb6wZymVvPio7)

**Link of Video:**

- [https://youtu.be/Th82o8L7vh0](https://youtu.be/Th82o8L7vh0)

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