

Site Visit Report (Anandadhara-SPAN, May 2007)

In course of my visit to Anandadhara, Dumdum, I had conversations with Mr. Prabir Basu, Founder-member SPAN, Mrs Jayati Biswas, another lady who was the Secretary of the school and a few teachers and students.

- It is situated in an urban slum area of Dumdum-near the Kolkata metro car shed.
- It is a primary school housing students till class IV.
- The building is a 3 story one (2 are completed and functional) and the 3rd is undergoing construction-likely to be finished by the end of this year.
- The 2 stories house about 15 classrooms and 2 toilets in each floor.
- The class rooms are moderately sized each housing about 30 students.
- The upper floor does not have separate classrooms but the classes there are separated by wooden partitions.
- The classrooms are moderately airy and well lighted.
- The children wear uniforms (Pink shirts/blouses, Blue pants/skirts)-which they have to buy themselves.
- They also have to buy their own books and study materials.
- They pay Rs 40 /month as tuition fees.
- They have fair knowledge about maths -but sadly lack in languages (I actually tested a couple of students randomly).
- Most of them come from quite poor backgrounds of the locality with parents of many being daily laborers.
- They suffer from regular diarrhea, skin disorders and eye disorders. The school makes no attempt to help them with their health problems except to detect them and inform the guardian if possible.
- However Mr. Basu claims that they hold a few health camps now and again where they take the children to be evaluated.
- The school has no exam system with pupils being promoted to the next level automatically at the end of the year.
- The teachers claim that they assess students 'continuously' during classroom teaching.
- The school doesn't provide any sporting equipment, no nourishments and 2-3 outings per yr-and a couple of cultural programs.
- The authorities claim that they used to have a physical Ed teacher who was on leave for the last few days!!!!
- They hold regular dancing and singing classes during the evening for the students on the school premises.
- The teachers are 'Graduates at least' and 2 of them are supposedly on leave to pursue higher education.
- The administrators claim that they have 13 teachers on payroll and 2 volunteer teachers .The volunteer teachers take vocational classes for the 8th

STD pass students during the afternoons (I was there till 3:30 PM-saw no sign of anything of the sort).

- The teachers are paid in the range of INR 800-1,000/mt.
- The students and teachers however seem a happy lot.
- Now to come to the administration aspect- they have a well furnished office-cum-teachers lounge.
- There they have about 7-8 computers donated to them by Cognizant-however all of them are dysfunctional. Mr. Basu claimed that they have asked CTS for replacements!
- Mr. Basu claims that on passing out from the school they keep track of alumni through 'house visits' and help them in securing admission to local high schools.
- They have monthly parent –teacher meets to discuss the students.
- By the way, there are 6-7 primary schools in the locality of which 3 are Govt. schools and there are 3-4 high schools (Secondary) nearby as well.
- On being asked about annual budget-Mr Basu claims that they currently have an annual cap of about 18 lakhs INR-however he couldn't satisfactorily show the breakdown of the spending-since the amount that they take from the students are sufficient to carry out the day to day expenditure of the school.
- They are very well supported by big name sponsors like Hope Foundation, TDH, CRY, the Ford Foundation and others.



The record room



Classrooms



Front view of the building

**- Dr Saurav Kumar Chatterjee
ASHA Kolkata Volunteer
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