

Site Visit Report, November 21, 2018

Asha Community Center, Swadhar, Pune, INDIA

Visit Conducted by Vivek Iyer

Conducted a site visit to Asha Community Center, part of Swadhar IDWC, located at Kakade Basti in Bibwewadi, Pune. Coordinated the visit through Dr. Suneeti Sarangpani, convenor for the project and on the management committee of Swadhar.

Dr. Suneeti Sharangpani arranged a site visit for me on November 21, 2018 in Pune. We travelled to the Asha Community Centre in Bibwewadi neighborhood of Pune. The area is home to low-income families, many of whom are migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Men in the community are day laborers, and trade skill laborers like painters etc.

Asha Community Center (“ACC”) has been supported fully by Asha Chicago for over 10 years. ACC has become an integral part of the community of Kakade Basti and is indeed a community center for education, training and care for women and children. ACC continues to be used by graduates of the local high school and they come back to help and support others. We also met a student who has “recruited” other children to take advantage of the education and support available through ACC.

Below is the entrance and main two rooms of ACC. It is a small two room center that runs after-school care, support programs and Phulora programs (described below).





The Asha Community Centre operates several types of programs, including the Balwadi program, the Phulora program, a Library, and support classes. Overall, the organization has about 170 employees who are both full time and part time. The Asha Community Center has four full-time employees – one employee who manages the Library, one employee who manages the Study Center, one assistant for the Balwadi and Phulora programs, and the Centre coordinator.

The day before the site visit had been a lot of rain and so the Basti has a lot of mud and water logging making it hard to access, especially the Balwadi section which is a bit of walk from the main center. So we decided to spend all our time in the main center and have the Balwadi teacher visit us instead.

The after school program children were waiting for us and shared some of the songs and prayers they had learnt. The teachers then encouraged the children to individually stand up, introduce themselves and share their stories and what they liked about coming to ACC. Some were shy but many others shared their story – one theme that was mostly common was the fact they coming there made them feel they had support and encouragement – and they felt happy visiting and spending time at ACC.

Then we spent a significant amount of time going through the files, registers and paper work for the center. We went through attendance sheets, expense reports, process flows, sample work from the children, annual plans, etc.

Some of the more recent updates included:

- Speaker series once every two months managed directly by Dr Sarangpani with the help of the coordinator. Topics included personal banking, easy cooking, water hygiene, Right to Education, etc.
- Lectures for adolescent girls attending Phulora including domestic violence, personal hygiene, personality development, interview skills, HIV, pre-marital advice, etc.
- Field trips including closeby locations like Sinhagad, Chokidani, Appu Ghar, and Balaji mandir. (Standard procedure includes getting signed consent letter for each participants legal guardian)
- Annual sports day with various events by age group and prizes awarded

Overall, the Asha Community Centre continues to do good work and deepening roots within the community of kakade Basti. The children utilizing the services seem very happy and content. The space was limited, but the managers seem to be doing a good job given the constraints, particularly for the Balwadi and Support Classes/Study Center courses.