Visit Report: Asha Community Centre, Kondhwa – Bibewadi Road

We visited the community centre on the 28th of Jan’17. It was a Saturday and only the teacher/support staff were present. The Centre is open to children from Monday to Friday while the teachers are present on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month.

They run 3 programs for different age group of children/adults. Each of the programs has different support staff to run the classes and is spread across the day in terms of the time slots. There is a centre coordinator responsible for the overall day to day running of the centre including maintaining of the expenses.

Balwadi program is run for children in the age group of 3 to 6 years of age. Here children are kept engaged with educational aids, pictorial games, story books etc. The teacher showed us on how they plan their weekly schedules and maintain the attendance for the program. The Balwadi is run out of small room which is a little away from the main Asha Centre where the rest of the programs are conducted. The room did not have toilet facilities and the teachers take help from the neighboring tenements incase a child required to use the washroom.

The study centre program is run for children who are currently enrolled in schools. Here depending on the students’ weakness and study requirements, the teacher guides him/her. A separate book is maintained by the teacher where she records the child’s study needs over the course of the year. This group of children also extensively makes use of the centres library facilitates. They even borrow books from the library and this record was maintained separately by the support staff.

The Phulora program which is a skill development program has been running for a few years now specifically for women. The teacher showed us the courses they run under this program like Cooking, creating Decorative handicraft items, Beauticians course, tailoring etc. As part of the daily schedule the students discuss a current news piece from the newspaper for about 15-30 mins. Under this program they also get external speakers to interact with the girls on topics which are important for their self development. For a while now they have stopped cooking classes as it is not safe to have a gas stove with 10 to 12 girls around it in the small closed room.

Most of the kids/girls who come to the centre are from the neighboring settlements. These settlements have a large proportion of migrant laborers and families from the economically backward class. The centre has also organized short day picnics for the children, sports day in the open space outside the centre etc. She did mention that they do not have a digital camera to record the activities, the one they had was not functioning properly. We found all the teachers to be very dedicated and organized in terms of schedules/daily activities. We also found that over the last few months the attendance at the centre had grown with more children participating in the programs. The centre coordinator also shared the full year’s expense accounts and their budget sheet. It was evident that they were finding it a little difficult to manage the expenses within the allocated budget for the year.