

Site Visit to Concern for Humanity sites

Dear all:

I visited Concern for Humanity on 2nd April 2014. Arpana took me to all the five centers that we have been supporting. Two of these centers are located in Sanjay Camp and three in Bapu Camp. Each of the centers 25-30 children.

Children: Kathy from Australia had visited in December the two centers in Sanjay camp and had spent two days with them teaching English. The effect was visible as the children wanted to speak in English and did manage to say few sentences in English. As Kathy had not visited the other centers, the children in Bapu camp were not aware of these activities despite the fact that the teachers had attended the session with Kathy. In Bapu camp, there are three centers. Of these three centers, one has been dedicated to older children (class 9 onwards). Few of the girls whom I had met last year have given the 10th class examination and are awaiting their results. The girls told me that they wanted to take up humanities in class 11.

Last year the children were using workbooks for learning. This has been discontinued. When I asked Arpana about this, she said that they had been one time donation from a Canadian group. However, I distinctly remember that Arpana was planning to make copies of the workbook and use them. The classrooms continue to be dominated by the girls. Boys are few and the problem is now magnified because the government schools have segregated the genders. The girls go to school in the morning and the boys go in the evening. The few boys I saw in the center were there either because the classes had not started or the segregation had not taken place in their schools. Arpana says it is very difficult to get the boys interested but I also get the feeling that they are not trying to get them in to the classroom or teach them some thing that would be of interest to them

Teachers: There were two new teacher. In Sanjay camp one of the teachers had got married and moved away. As a replacement CfH has hired Menaka. In Bapu camp, their oldest teacher has stopped teaching. As a replacement they have hired Rosie who is doing graduation in social work.

There has been no teachers training and despite talking to Arpana many times about this, no initiative has been taken on this front. Further, it is a matter of concern that the teachers from Bapu camp did attend the workshop conducted by Kathy but have not implemented any thing. However, despite these drawbacks, I did find that the children could read and do basic math. Considering their background and the kind of schools they go to, their level of learning is woeful. This is a fact that Arpana has admitted. Much improvement is difficult to expect since the teachers also come from the same milieu and they are also not well-learned.

Further plans: CfH is planning to start vocational/skill training for the older girls so that they can be gainfully employed after finishing school. CfH does run a tailoring class but the girls want to learn computers. In fact when I was there, they told me that they wanted computers.

Overall impression: Despite all the problems that I have listed above, I still feel that the centers can be supported and if we can get some skill training incorporated into their daily activities, it would be beneficial.

I do not know how to communicate to Arpana the problems that I noticed since she is reluctant to address them.