



*Asha for Education*TM

UFlorida Chapter

Gators for Asha, 300-9 J W Reitz Union, P.O Box 118505, Gainesville, FL 32601

www.ashanet.org/uflorida

ISC Pune Site Visit Report : Yogi Deshmukh

Project page: <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=932>

I visited India Sponsorship Committee (ISC), Pune on 8th November 2013 from 10 am to 12:30 pm. They had prior notice about my site visit. I met the coordinator, Audrey Ferreira, at their office in Yerawada, Pune, in addition to other fulltime employees - Kranti Salve, Sachin, Rajeshree and Kelika. There are more than 8 part-time volunteers who teach and help the approx. 1000 students. This location is within a short distance from their two slum community (Basti) schools that I visited. Since I didn't have any information about ISC and the activities of its Pune chapter, Audrey and Kranti gave me a brief introduction of their non-profit organization and various projects managed by the Pune chapter.

- 'Vidyadeep' project - Support class for school going children in grades 3rd to 7th
- 'Sabala' project - Gender sensitivity program for adolescents
- 'Saksham' - Women and girls program for income generation
- 'Read to Learn' - In government schools for children in grades 1st and 2nd
- 'Aarambh' - Very Early Child Development program from birth to 3 years of age

Of the above projects, I was able to see the Vidyadeep project in action.

Audrey also provided ISC's annual report for 2012-2013 (attached as a PDF document) along with 3 beautiful greeting cards, whose cover drawings were creations by kids between 11 and 15 years. Please find attached the PDFs of these cards.

I got apprised of the 2 school locations that were on the visit agenda and the underprivileged children they served. Sachin accompanied me to these centers in the nearby Bastis. Before we left, I was able to take a peek inside the 'Smart Center' housed on the top floor of the office building. It imparts computer education to older ISC students, thanks to the collaboration with NGO Nirman and Tech Mahindra. 35 of the ex-students will take advantage of the course beginning November 2013. I also saw the classroom with sewing machines and the library.



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1. Pandulaman basti school

This slum community is predominantly inhabited by the Lamani tribe people whose breadwinners are employed in making liquor, but they want their children to get a good education and live a better life. It is a one-room support school managed by teacher Pushpa for children grades 3rd through 10th. I even met a couple of girls who go to junior college. The children greeted me with a big Namaste and smiles upon arrival. I asked each one of them to introduce themselves. There were relatively less number of students than usual since a lot of them had gone to their native villages to celebrate Diwali. The school building was not in the best of shapes, probably because of lack of funds. I observed pretty old charts illustrating ABC, 123, birds, etc. on the inside walls.

2. Yeshwantnagar basti school

After about 30 minutes, Sachin & I went to the other community which was managed by teacher Swapna, a ex-student of ISC who is now giving back to the organization and the community. Yeshwantnagar slum men are primarily employed in the construction industry and occasionally have to be away from their families for days or weeks together. The support school fills in a very important gap in the life of these kids. Apart from introducing themselves, a group of about students enacted a play which they have performed in many nearby schools, at community events and as street theater. The play was focused on raising the awareness about the atrocities committed on a girl child and the various difficulties & hurdles a female has to endure throughout her life. I met an ex-student from this school who is now studying engineering at Maharashtra Institute of Technology, Pune. After interacting with everyone for about 45 minutes, we drove back to the ISC Pune office.



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Salient points:

1. The atmosphere in both the Basti schools was very vibrant and interactive with kids eager to learn and achieve something meaningful in life.
2. It is clear that the ISC staff is extremely dedicated and committed to its goal of the overall growth and development of disadvantaged children.
3. There is a growing acceptance of ISC and its efforts in the communities that it serves, which is obvious from the number of children coming to its schools.
4. The teachers I met in the two support schools come from the community itself and hence act as role models for next generation of students.

Urgency of funds:

1. Audrey happened to mention that with very low salaries, retention of the teachers is a big challenge, esp. considering the fact that their employment is part-time.
2. One of ISC Pune's other source of funding won't be able to support them much longer for company policy reasons, which is a cause of worry and thereby making Asha's financial help all the more crucial to continue their social upliftment work.

ISC is bringing about a change in the lives of the children in the slum communities of Pune. They should continue to receive funding from Asha for Education.



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**Support class of Pushpa teacher in Pandulaman community
(with students from 3rd and 4th grades)**



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**In Yeshvantnagar community with Kranti Salve
(Swapna teacher is not in the picture)**