

I visited ISC on March 31st 2016. Kranti picked me up on her two-wheeler from a close by bus station in the morning. I spent almost half a day visiting the school and the ISC office. We first went to Gyanba Moze school. The school was pretty big about 3-4 floors, 7-8 classes on each floor and 30-35 students per class. It was last day of the month when they have a half day school.

When we entered the school, students who saw Kranti were excited to see her and came running to talk to her. We went to first standard class where ISC staff member was teaching a nursery rhyme kind of a song with actions. All students were participating in the activity. The class teacher was present there but did not seem interested in participating in the activity. She was mostly scolding the hyperactive kids.

Then we went to another class where ISC staff member was conducting "Learn to Read" program. There were groups according to their reading levels. Each group had set of small books and reading cards for that level. Children were reading, some aloud, some silently. The ISC instructor was with one group showing them the picture of the market and pointing and asking them to name each item. A sack of white flour like thing looked like a sack of sugar to many kids while one of them thought it was rice. Then they played a game of dice where each one would roll the dice and tell a word starting with that letter. Other groups reading on their own were also doing fine. I asked some kids to read it to me and they were able to read. Some of them who picked the higher level cards also were able to read just letters from the card ignoring the vowels. Friends were helping them if they get stuck. Again the class teacher was standing there and kept disappearing in between.

Then we went to 6th standard class where the ISC staff conducts child rights and gender sensitization activities. That day they did not have anything planned so we just did the revision of the things they learnt. Kids were able to tell the good touch bad touch, what actions to take if someone is bothering them in any way, what to do if they see child rights being denied to them or any other children. One of the girl comes to the afterschool support group Bal mitra and she explained how her groups works in her residential area to increase awareness about child rights.

We then met with the school headmistress. She was happy with the work ISC is doing in the schools. She mentioned the most of the children are from families where parents dont have time and motivation to invest in children's value education. The parents themselves are engaged in activities that children should be protected from like alcoholics, sex workers etc. School teachers have limitations since they need to focus on covering the school curriculum, various record keeping etc and cannot spend extra time to cater each child's needs as per his\her background. According to her ISC staff members are focusing on what the formal education system is lacking and where it is needed the most.

After this we went to the ISC office. I met with Audrey Fereira. After chatting with her for some time I sat with the accountant Rajashri Phule. She explained and showed me their record keeping practices which were pretty neat and transparent.

By that time about 15-20 children came for Balmitra session which is the afterschool community support class. They started the class with singing a motivational song. Then there was a value education session. The teaching techniques were keeping the kids engaged. e.g. the teacher asked 2 kids to come forward and gave them a paper and explained the game saying that they have to get rid of the paper in a time that she counts from 1 to 3. When she started counting one of the girls crumpled paper and threw on the floor. Other girl also followed her. Using this example The teacher explained how the garbage is thrown in the roads and how we should dispose it off instead of taking the easiest and fastest way of throwing it anywhere we like.

This group had done a survey in their neighborhood children, parents and teachers on child rights awareness. They created a booklet "By the children for the children" with the information and findings of this survey. It was published in September in a public event in Pune by child rights activist Shobha Bhagvat. Couple of girls attended the event and interacted with the journalists. I asked them about their experience during the project. They were able to explain me the details of their work.

We then went to see the library upstairs. The children come to the center to read the books. They do not borrow the books since they are not ready yet to take the responsibility of taking and returning the books safely and the environment at their homes is not favorable for reading anyway. I also saw the staff members filling in the logs for "Learn to read" sessions. They showed me how they keep track of how the children are progressing through the reading levels. We then went to their store room where the educational material was stored. Kranti had mentioned previously that the materials are found useful by the school teachers and they also are using them to teach the kids. There was some exhibition where they showed the material and there was a good interest and response from the teachers in the nearby schools.

We did not have this kind of explicit value education in our school and did not feel the need for it then. So I asked Kranti that why do they think it is necessary in these schools? Her response was similar to the school headmistress. Most of the children in the schools we attended back then had educated parents who were concerned about not just the well-being of the children but their progress in the education and in general growing up into an adult being. The kids in these schools are missing that at-home value education and hence the importance of providing it to them.

I think **ISC** is doing excellent job partnering with the schools to fill in this gap making a great impact on the lives of all these beneficiaries.