

## **Progress report**

**September 2015**

### **Providing basic education to poor, deprived and vulnerable children in slums of Delhi.**

The year 2015 was filled with achievements and challenges. Everyone at CFH – children, teachers, and all of us enjoyed the year at the learning centres. The highlight of the year was that all children attending the learning centres got gifts bigger than their imaginations – they got school bags, which looked beautiful and attractive. Children were speechless and thanked in many ways for this thoughtful gift. Keerthan and Narendra, the volunteers of ASHA Frankfurt, were the heroes of children as most of them had met these two tall and friendly volunteers from Frankfurt. Another good news from the centres is that majority of our children passed their examinations with flying colours. A few girls have graduated to XII<sup>th</sup> grade and are busy preparing for the board examinations, due coming March. This will be the completion of their intermediate level. There were a few staff changes at the Learning Centres and we had visitors too to our centres.

#### **About the project –**

Noon.ch and ASHANET have been kind enough to support the learning centers project for Concern for Humanity. Both Noon.ch and ASHANET share the total cost of running the five centers and each provide funding assistance upto 50% of the total cost for running 5 learning centers (now 7 learning centres). As part of the project, funds have been provided for meeting teachers' salary, centers' running cost, for purchase of books and stationary for children, for organizing some events for children and for meeting the project related overheads.

This year ASHA Frankfurt provided CFH with a onetime grant. This one time grant was used towards centre facelift and towards bringing a lasting smile on children's faces. A big thank you to ASHA Frankfurt and to Rohini, for creating this linkage with ASHA Frankfurt.

#### **Activities at Centres –**

**Visit by Narendra and Keerthan** – This year we had two visits by ASHA Frankfurt team. The first visit was in November 2014, by Narendra, who was in transit at Delhi on his way to Chennai. It was his first visit to the centres. During the visit, he interacted with children and the teachers and tirelessly answered endless questions of children.

The second visit was a 5 days visit in the third week of December, 2014, by Keerthan. Keerthan, a passionate photographer, came with a pre-discussed itinerary. He spent full days at the centre sites, meeting with parents, community and spending time with children at the centres – playing games, doing activities, and clicking moments with children. Children very fondly remember Narendra and Keerthan talk about how much they enjoyed with both of them.



**Number of Learning Centres goes up to 10** – CFH is very happy to announce that the total number of learning centres has gone up to 10. The new centres run in morning shift in the same community. This arrangement doesn't add to the cost of setting up new centres – such as, paying for the room rent, arranging for blackboard, racks, mattresses, etc. for the centre. Only the recurring expenses, like, teachers' salaries, stationary for children, project monitoring costs, etc. get added to the overall budget. The response to the new centres has been positive and there is a pressure from the community to start similar centres at all locations. The centre teachers are also willing to work in double shifts as it doubles their salaries. However, due to paucity of budget, at present we have limited the morning shift centres to two.

The morning shift is exclusively for the boys and the afternoon shift is for girls. \_

**Morning centres for boys** – This August, two centres exclusively for boys have been started, one at Bapu Colony and the other one at Sanjay Colony (Centre No. I). Boys of grade 2 – 8 are attending these centres and the response has been positive. The timings of the morning centres are from 9 am to 12 noon. There is so much enthusiasm among boys that they rush to the centre before time, so that they can stay for full time at the centre, and then go home to pick their bags and push for schools which start from 1 pm onwards. Earlier, the boys were non-productively engaged in the forenoon. In fact, there is a need for starting more similar centres. These centres are running in the same rooms

where the learning centres run during the second half. We are using the existing facilities of the rented rooms.

**New name of Bapu Camp** – the name of Bapu Camp has been recently changed to Bapu Colony. This colony has now been given the status of an authorized colony and soon the development process will begin for this area. The basic infrastructure facilities such as piped water and sewers should be coming to this area. It will be a big relief for the residents.

**Nutrition program for children** – this summer, noon.ch team put up a proposal for providing some kind of nutritious snacks to children everyday, while they attend the learning centre. This idea was proposed by Doris and Klaus during their last visit to the centres. The idea was good, but working out the logistics was to be seen before embarking on a project like this. We decided to try out nutritious snack distribution on a pilot basis in three learning centres. We did a quick survey of the possible eating items that can be given within the budget. The pilot was run for two months during which we provided snacks 5 days a week. Items included sweet and savoury items and fruits on rotation basis.

### **Pilot nutrition program in implementation**



The nutrition program was a big welcome at the centres. It not only assured a scrumptious snack for children but also helped to increase and regularise attendance at the centres. In an energy deficit diet of these children, the snacks helped to contribute to their daily basic calorie requirements.

Based on the success of the pilot, noon.ch agreed to provide snacks at all 5 centres of the second shift of noon.ch – ASHA sponsored centres. The good part is that CFH could convince its other partner donors for start a similar nutrition program at their sponsored centres. The nutrition program will be implemented in full scale at all learning centres from October onwards.

**Kathy's visit in January** – Our annual visitor, Kathryn MacPhee from Perth, Australia, was here with us in January. She visited the Bapu Colony centre, where we organised a common get-together for all our neighbouring centres in a big hall, but unfortunately, she could not do English communication activities with children as she was unwell. She had caught a stomach infection during her stay in Kolkata and was in a lot of discomfort. However, it was very kind of her to make it to the centre in that condition to at least say hello to children. Kathy had come prepared with a new story– story about balloons, colours and feel of rough and smooth surfaces. She could not do the story telling on her own as she was unwell. Instead, one of our senior students did the story telling under Kathy's guidance and another teachers did translation to Hindi for understanding of all our children. This was a reflection of capacity building f our teachers to be able to do this kind of activity. Later, children insisted to Kathy to do the 'Brown Bear- Brown Bear' story once again.



**Training of teachers** – Three of our teachers attended a week long training program at Jodogyan. We paid for the training course fee for two of our teachers. Jodogyan was very kind to accept the third teacher as a guest, hence we saved on participation fee for one teacher. The teachers were taught skills on teaching math concepts to children from Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade. They received hands-on training on using different skills which were not only logically connected but made learning of concepts easy for children. Jodogyan provided the teachers with teaching material and reference material also. Based on the training, the three teachers conducted training program in parts for their fellow teachers. Three training programs have already been conducted for the teachers. We bought some of the teaching materials from Jodogyan for use by our teachers in the classrooms. This training was found useful by all our teachers.



**Teachers meetings** – this year, we have started to do teachers meetings on a regular basis. Every month all the teachers come to the field office, where we choose a topic for discussion, do experience sharing and learn from each others' experiences, logistics issues discussions, planning for the month and sharing on feedback on the monthly reports written by teachers, appreciations and other issues. This monthly meeting has turned out to be extremely useful in bringing all teachers face to face with each other, and also helped us to know our teachers more closely.

**International Yoga Day –**

On 21 June, 2015, Yoga Day was observed at all CFH centres. Children got together early in the morning in open community area to do yoga and to attract local community. Some of our teachers explored the internet to learn a few basic yoga exercises. Children thoroughly enjoyed the event.



**Felicitation of teachers on Teachers' Day** – In India, teachers' day is celebrated on 5<sup>th</sup> September. On this day, the contribution of teachers is acknowledged and children show their gratitude towards their teachers. CFH too celebrated the day at all centres. Teachers were felicitated for their tireless contribution towards moulding the slum children into well disciplined and promising students.



**School bags and notebooks for children** – ASHA Frankfurt sponsored school backpacks for all the children attending the learning centres of CFH. These school bags were got designed to ensure that they are sturdy and long lasting. We got three designs of bags – separate for younger boys and girls and for older students. We did a market survey and negotiated for the cost, for the bag material and zips and pockets and inner space in the bags and the stitching specifications for the bags. The manufacturer agreed to provide cartoon characters for bags meant for younger children. He agreed to embroider CFH – ASHA logo on the bags. The manufacturer has also offered us bags repair services for 6 months, post bags distribution. Children were extremely happy to receive the bags. They are using the bags for their school.



Logo embroidered on the school bags.

Like bags, ASHA Frankfurt also sponsored notebooks for all children. Each child enrolled at the Learning Centre will get a set of notebooks for different subjects,

to meet their school requirements. We have already provided one round of notebooks to all children and children have been asked to put in their request for note books to their respective centre teachers. The idea is that children should not nudge their parents for notebooks. It is expected that this facility will work as an incentive for children to be regular in their school as well as at the centres.

In addition to these, ASHA has provided rugs, book racks, blackboards and pin-up boards for the noon.ch – ASHA sponsored centres.





**Summer Camp for Community Children** – This year, for the first time we organized summer camps at the learning centres. We had been noticing that every year the attendance of children went down during summer vacation times. And the centres were not being used to their full capacity. We discussed this issue with our teachers and they all suggested for running summer camp at the centres. This year we experimented and opened up the centres for all

community children. This worked out well as many new children got the opportunity to visit the centre and experience it from inside; interact with other fellow children; interact with teachers and participate in the activities of the centre. The teachers were asked to do book reading and activities with children. No academic work was done during the summer camp days. The overall results were encouraging. The enrolment at the centres went up. Many new children took admission at the centres. The already enrolled children at the centres also enjoyed interacting with new children. We intend to do the summer camp next year as well.

**Annual vacation for Teachers** – Over the years, the summers have become hot and unbearable. - We have given one week off at the centres (8 – 13 June) as a lot of request was coming from our teachers. We mulled over their request and realised that we should close the centres for a week since the weather was quite hot and some of our teachers were to appear for the annual exams for the courses they are pursuing. It would have been difficult for us to manage with so many teachers absent. The centres were closed during the mid of the summer camp.

**Diwali celebration at centres** – The month of October was full of festivities. Children prepared for celebrating Diwali. All centres planned their centre specific activities. Children made strings using colourful papers to decorate the centre, redecorated the centre walls, and cleaned-up the centres. They made rangoli and lighted 'diyas' on the eve of Diwali. Besides, all the centres celebrated the birthday of Gandhi ji. Children were talked about Gandhi ji and essay writing competitions were also held at the centres.



**Children's Day celebration** – In India, November 14, is celebrated as the Children's Day. CFH too celebrated Children's day with fervour and festivities. Teachers organised a variety of competitions for children, including, races, hurdle races, painting competition, henna – hand decoration, etc.



**Christmas Holidays activities** - December was examination time for children followed by Christmas vacation break. At the centres, children were engaged in the preparation for celebration of the festival. At every centre, children jointly made Christmas tree. They used their own imagination and creativity to make

and decorate the tree. At some of the centres, teachers engaged children in making handicraft items using waste material, such as, ice-cream sticks, broken bangles, etc. Every centre celebrated the Christmas in their own ways – having party at the centre, singing songs, playing games, cutting cake, etc.



**Computer learning program at Centres** – CFH bought refurbished laptops with the donations of Kathryn MacPhee. These laptops are used in rotation at the centres. Younger children watch animation movies or learn through interactive CDs. We have bought educational CDs for teaching English, Math and Science to junior grade children. For older children, we bought 'typing' software. Prior to providing the laptops at the centres, all the teachers were provided hands-on training on operating the laptops. Except for Shaila ji, our senior most teacher, others have knowledge about computers and have done some kind of short courses in computer soft skills. The laptops have been docked at two places and from there the teachers take them to their centres on rotation. The maintenance of laptops has been a big issue as they are delicate and are required to be sent

for servicing very often. We opted for laptops against desktops for three reasons - safety of machines was a big issue. Secondly, often there is electricity cut in the slums. Laptops have battery backup and do not occupy space in the already congested rooms, which makes them practically a better option over desktops.

**Annual Day celebration** – Annual Children’s Day was celebrated at all the centres. This is a big annual activity at all the centres. Every teacher attempts to involve all children in the celebrations. Children prepare skits, songs, dances, poem, etc. to put up their best show on the day. This year also children had a fun filled celebration. At the end of the program they received goody bags which made them much happy.





**Progress of children** – amidst all the activities done at the centres, our children continued to perform satisfactorily in their schools. All children graduated to the next grades. All the credit goes to our teachers. They put in their sincere efforts in teaching children. Our teachers not only help children in doing their homework, but also in preparing for their summative assessments, FAs (formative assessments), projects, and any other school related work. This year our teachers found it difficult to obtain students progress reports from their schools. Children were told their grades by their teachers, but they were not handed over their report cards. Hence, the feedback of our teachers is the basis of reporting on the progress of children. And most of the children continue to attend the centres.

### **Challenges**

**Teacher for Senior Students** – We are facing a recurrent problem regarding continuity of teacher for the senior students. Firstly, it is difficult to find a qualified teacher who can teach senior students. Secondly, they ask for substantial salary which is around 3 to 4 times more than the salary of other teachers teaching to junior students. With the result, once these teachers gain teaching experience, they get offers for a better salary. And they leave. We cannot afford to change the teacher so often as this affects the students' pace of learning. We have decided that in the next year's budget we would propose for a higher salary for one teacher in our budget to noon.ch – ASHA.