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Project: Concern for Humanity

Date of visit: 11 Feb 2013

Project overview:

Concern for Humanity (CfH) runs non-formal education centers for children living in Bapu Camp and Sambhav Camp located near Bhatti mines. Both these camps are populated by migrant labours. Currently, CfH runs 7 centers in this area: 2 are located in Bapu camp, 2 are located in Sambhav Camp, 1 is located in Shanti Colony, and 2 are located in Sanjay Camp. The centers located in Sanjay Camp have recently opened. Arpana, the project director, told me that they used to observe a DTC bus going past Bapu Camp. They followed the bus and came up on Sanjay camp which is a large slum with a population of approximately 2 lakh. CfH felt a need for non-formal education centers and hence started two centres in this place. This past year they have had many volunteers from abroad. These volunteers have helped with pedagogy especially teaching English. They have provided CfH with materials as well as have helped the teachers.

Of the 7 centers, 5 are supported by Noon.ch and Asha for Education. 2 are supported by other organizations.

Project report:

I visited 2 centers in Bapu camp and 2 centres in Sambhav camp. Previously there had been only one center in Bapu camp. However as the children grew up, CfH felt the need to split the center into two as this helped them to focus on children and create appropriate age-related activities. Additionally, it also gave the children a feeling of accomplishment- they have passed out from the lower class and gone to higher class.

The teachers at these centers are Babita and Poonam. They joined 3 months back and Babita said that she has got a government job and will be leaving.

When I reached the centers, Poonam was teaching Hindi to the younger children. She was using a grammar book and had written on the blackboard "Bhasha ki Paribhasha". She then went on to write a long exposition on what is the definition of language. The class had children ranging from 7 years to 11 years. Of the older children, 4 were able to read what Poonam had written on the board while the others copied it down but clearly lacked the language skill to read it. I also felt that none of them understood what was written on the board.

Babita was teaching the older girls. These girls were attending the local government school and were in classes 6 to 8th. These girls were very confident and articulate. They showed me the games they were playing and then performed a skit that they had written and acted on the annual day. It was impressive. The skit was written in the local dialect and articulated the evils of child labour.

Next I visited two centers in Sanjay Camp. One center was being taught by Shazia while the other one was being taught by Jyoti. Shaila, a long time volunteer with these centers, was also there. Shaila will be teaching in lieu of Babita when she leaves for her government job.

Both these centers had very young children. In one center they were being taught opposite words in English and Hindi. In the other center the children were doing an exercise on "Myself". Essentially, they were attempting to identify themselves in English.

Finally I visited the center in Shanti Camp where there were again mixed bunch of students. Some were very young and some were in classes 6-8. For the older children the teacher, Ruksana, was doing exercise on identifying opposite words, while the younger children had been given another exercise appropriate for their age group.

I did not visit the centers in the Sanjay Camp as they have just recently started and have not yet stabilized.

Impression:

1. In the classes for younger children, I observed that there was a fair mix of girls and boys. However, as the children grew older only girls attended the center. I tried to ask Arpana whether they figured out what happens to the boys but she had no answer. In fact it seemed as though she did not care. So in a certain sense the centers appear to cater to girls only.
2. All the children attend school. Therefore, these centers are functioning as additional resources. CfH has made considerable attempts to improve pedagogy. The children have encouraged decorating their classrooms with collages and they made impressive ones. Most of the older children are extremely confident, articulate and aware. They also want to have computer classes. However, as space is a constraint CfH has not made any attempts to start computer classes.
3. CfH has appointed one coordinator who visits the centers every other day. Shaila, who is from the community, takes care of the day to day affairs. In that sense, the centers are well-run.
4. I felt that the newly appointed teachers have not been provided any training. In fact training appears to be ad-hoc and seemed to have happened last year only because of volunteers from other countries. I do think that when new teachers are appointed, they should be given a training as to what is expected them from.
5. My impression about these centers is that these provide a community feeling for the children, help them with their studies, and also enable them to learn some new things. For example, many of them are now articulate in English because of the volunteers from Australia and Canada.

Recommendation:

Support can be extended for one more year. However, teacher training programs have to be initiated. I did tell Arpana about the problem with one of the teachers who was trying to teach from a Hindi grammar book. She appeared cognizant of the issue but it will not be resolved unless proactive steps are taken.