**Site Visit to Jan Seva and Jeevan Vidhya**

On a warm Friday evening we left for Nandurbar from Pune. There are daily private semi-luxury sitting/sleeper night buses that leave to Nandurbar. We left around 9 PM and reached Nandurbar at around 8:30 AM.

From the main bus stand we took an auto to reach a petrol pump from where Fr Godfrey and Jeevan took us to the Jan Seva. After crossing some kucha roads and creaking gates we entered the main campus. Lush green fields in both the sides welcomed us. After the fields was the main single floor building.

We were warmly welcomed by Fr. Tony. We were given a room to freshen up. After taking a warm bath using the solar heated water we went on to have delicious pohe and steaming chai.

After energizing ourselves we went on to have a little chat on the current workings of Jan Seva. The following are the people currently in charge:-

1. Fr. Tony Tuscanao – Director
2. Fr. Jeevan Mendonza – Boys Incharge
3. Wazir – Warden for 40 yrs
4. Avinash Dhandekar – Farm Incharge
5. Sarja Bhai – Cook

Fr. Godfrey has moved on to a different project in Nasik. As per Godfrey/tony, the main Jesuit organization transfers people every few years from one centre to another. Fr. Jeevan has a rural management degree from Xavier Institute of Management.

During this discussion, they also showed us the budget documents. At this site we had suggested them to send their full budget to Asha, so that we can get the whole picture and then see what he can fund them.

They also mentioned that the demand to take in more students has been increasing every year. This year they have taken 75 students. They are shortlisted from a set of students who apply. Each boarder is charged around 1000 Rs.

When asked to brief us about the benefits of Asha funding, they mentioned the following:-

1. Quality Enhancements like Computers – learning technologies
2. Level of nutrition/quality of food has improved
3. Infrastructure space has doubled
4. Improved furniture, library, teaching aids and storage
5. TV viewing
6. Solar Heaters. 1000 litres of hot water
7. Improved toilets
8. Inventors, helpful for studies
9. Solar lamps
10. Pace setter, shown a way for other projects

After this discussion, Jeevan took us on a tour of the premises. We first went to the boy’s rooms, one a big and other a small room. Boy’s stuff is kept around the corners. Each boy is responsible for his stuff.

We went to the first floor, which has a very big room, with charts, pictures all across. This room is used for training purposes. Jan Seva organizes training for teachers and this room is specially used for it. On the ground floor there is a kitchen and eating room. And behind this there is a big play ground, where kids play football and kho-kho. We played with the kids kho-kho in the evening, and in the course of the game Srihari had a minor injury as well☺.

As we were finishing the tour, the kids were back from their half-day school. We had a brief chat with the kids. Some were forthcoming and some were shy, which was expected. They had showed some of the drawings that they have done in school and in the ashram. Some of them were absolutely fantastic. They also talked a little about their studies in school and then about their life in the ashram.

After the chat with the boys, Jeevan took us to the Jeevan Vidhya site.

Unlink Jan Seva, Jeevan Vidhya at the first go looks like a typical hostel. But once you go in, you can see the beautiful gardens and the small farms.

The following are the people currently in charge of the hostel:-

1. Margaret – director – for 12 yrs
2. Martina – Boarding – just arrived
3. Lilian D’souza – Herbal medicine, also takes classes for 5th and 6th

Margaret and Lilian have been in the hostel for a very long time. They are active participants in the community activities. All the sisters belong to “Daughters of the heart of Mary”, Vasai, Mumbai. They do not have FRCA no yet. Check comes to Nirmala Niketan, Churchgate.

Current strength is 65 students, 10 to 15 yrs of age. As per Margaret 40 boarders were rejected due to space constraint and to give good attention to each and every kid. They do interviews for short listing. They charge Rs 800 per boarder.

Most of the girls after passing out go to college; dropout rate is very low as compared to other hostels in Nandurbar area. They either take up teaching or even go for police training.

They have two external teachers come in for tutoring every day, one for Mathematics and one for English.

According to Margaret the following points are due to Asha’s funding:-

1. Students and their families are happy
2. Gives push for development, to give different types of skills
3. Spend energy on something else (productive)
4. Good food (more nutritious)
5. Academic improvements

We had a sumptuous lunch in the Hostel along with other members. After the lunch we were given a tour of the facility. We were shown the computer room and the big hall where all the girls sleep and study.

All the girls were congregated in the hall. They did variety of cultural programs including Bhili dance, 4 girls painted a fabulous village with natural settings in less than 5 minutes. Some girls sang some local songs (pictures are in the picasa link). The girls also gave a demo of some Yoga poses, they all start off with Yoga every day at 5.30 AM.

It is quite noteworthy that some of these girls know 4 languages – their local language Bhili, Marathi, Hindi and smattering of English. This is quite impressive. Even some boys have the same skills.

The main reason why the girls have lower number of computers when compared to boys, is lack of space.

Jeevan Vidhya gets funding from other organizations as well like Ratan Tata project. And so they have to give their space for Anganvaadi teachers resource centre. These training programs are conducted by Gram Mangal. It also acts as a self help group, for pachayat Raj, Legal education, swarna Jayanthi scheme, helps adivasis in RTI. This group helps the women to get dignity of labour, importance in family, and fight for basic rights and gives awareness. And they also conduct tailoring class twice a year, whose demand is increasing every year.

When asked about the impact of computers on kids, they said that the kids are proud and excited to be in front of the computer. The computer syllabus is given to them by the school. They are planning to get the computer teacher from Jan Seva to teach the girls as well.

After the girls program, we were taken on a tour of the garden. They have varies different varieties of flowers growing in the garden. According to Margaret, girls are involved in herbal medicine, experimenting with nirgudy oil for joint pains, adusa powder and also make gulkhand. The girls take good care of the garden.

After bidding good-bye to all in Jeevan Vidya, Fr. Jeevan dropped us back in Jan Seva. We rested for a while, packed some sandwiches for our way back. We left Nandurbar at around 7.30 PM.

Altogether the trip was very pleasant and successful.

Here are few questions for which Kavita wanted some answers:-

- What do the kids do after passing out

They go for college and for vocational training. The exact numbers are not known, we need to get it from them.

- We do 30% funding - where do they get the rest of the money

As mentioned above, some from Ratan Tata program, well wishes. This also needs more clarity. That is why I had asked them to send the total budget and funding requirements.  
- What is it that they teach in computer literacy program

They get the syllabus from the school, they teach basic Microsoft word, paint.

- Is equal distribution between girls and boys with regards to computers

Due to space constraint in the girls hostel, they have around 13, boys have 22.

- Organic farming - is kids involved in this project? it would be good if the kids get  
involved in it

Yes, they are involved. They do help the farm incharge with farming.

- Are they striving for self sustenance, are they totally reliant on outside funding

Yes, as of now they are totally reliant.

The following are some of the suggestions we gave them:-

1. Use the computers more effectively, have records maintained for each student. How are they doing in school, what they do after passing out and such.
2. In Jan Seva, due to its resort style setting, they can probably get some volunteers on a weekend/week basis to stay with them, and probably give the kids some lectures/workshops.
3. To give Asha the full budgetary requirements and to give us how/where they get the remaining funding from.