

SVT Project - site visit report

On October 21st I visited the Sarva Vidya Trust project. The visit was preplanned. Mr.M.Srinivasan, the director of the SVT Project had arranged for the visit. The project operates from a room which is located in the campus of Ramkrishna Mission School, in T.Nagar, Chennai. T.Nagar is very centrally located in Chennai.

Nursing School: The main activity of the project is helping girls from rural regions get training in nursing. They run a diploma course on nursing in their office in Chennai. They also support students with various kind of scholarship and other help. Using help of other NGOs they contact the people in various villages around Chennai. Using the help of the panchayats and schools they contact the families of they students. Students who secure good marks in class 12 and can get admission to other colleges are given support using scholarship. The rest of the girl students are given opportunity to join the two year or one year diploma course that is taught in the office in Chennai.

The diploma course (two year and one year course) is the Chennai chapter of the Shivkumar School of Nursing, Vellore. The degree is given by Bharat Sevak Samaj, an nationally recognized degree. The two year course costs 9000 rupees that the family of the girls have to pay. The course consists of theory classes for whole of one month and one day a week for the rest of the year. The rest of the time is spend on practical training that is given in various hospitals. The people of Srva Vidya has good contact with certain private hospitals in the city and these hospitals are usually happy to take these students as interns by paying a small stipend. The students are given free hostel facility during these two years. This program is running for the last 5 years and the number of graduating students has been gradually increasing from 6 in the first year to 39 in the last passing out batch.

Overall my experience there was very nice. I did speak to some of the students. Most of their family are either in farming or small shopkeepers. The girls seemed to be enjoying their class and their stay in Chennai. The classes were being given in Tamil but the PPT slides and diagrams used were in English. I was told that the final exam is in English. There are two teachers and the principle who takes care of the teaching part.

NCLB (No Child is Left Behind): This is new project started by a group of people mostly working in Verizon, Chennai. The main person is Ram who and his wife is the main force behind it. They have managed to convince some of their friends to pay for the yearly cost of education for some kids coming from poor families. This project is active in the Ramkrishna Mission School (where the office of Sarva Vidya is located) and some other nearby schools. Each donar is associated with one student and the donar pays for the yearly tuition fee of that student. Which student should get the scholarship is decided by the principal of the schools. Most of the students involved comes from really poor families. Their fathers are either autodriver or small shopkeeper or tailor etc. An attempt is made to have a good connection between the donar and the student.

To improve the quality of education for the students a special extra class is arranged after school (from 4 to 6 pm). There they are given help with their homework and so on. They are also given some tiffin. This costs a lot of money. Sarva Vidya Trust is expecting some financial

support from Asha for this purpose. The students seems to be gaining a lot from this project. For example last year one girl from this school secured the third place in the Tamil Nadu Board 12 exam. Her father was a tailor.

I found this project very encouraging mainly because normal people were involved in donating money for tuition fee of poor kids. They are a bit cash trapped now and hopefully with a little help they can do a much better job.

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