

# CLARIFICATIONS - PRAGATI

## Main priorities of the project

- Intervention programs for mentally disabled children
  - o starts at the age of 4years
- Focus on all-round development of the child
- Development of child in following stages
  - o Self-help (using toilet, drinking water, etc.)
  - o Socialization (how to sit, how to behave, etc.)
  - o Speech (expressing their needs, etc.)
  - o Academics (functional academics: teaching them different tasks, concept of shape & size, etc.)
  - o Pre-vocational (identifying the skill set & abilities of the child)
  - o Vocational (training the children to develop means of livelihood)
- Participation in sports and co-curricular activities
- Individualized curriculum based on age, IQ, ability, etc.

## QUESTIONS THAT CAME UP ON MARCH 25 2009 (chapter presentation)

### What is the reason for re-locating to new premises?

They were asked to vacate the old premises in context of exponentially raising rent/real-estate pricing. At that time, they were paying Rs. 3000 p.m. Pragati tried to find a new place in the same neighborhood, but could not get a suitable location even after willing to shell out Rs. 10000 p.m. - main reasons being higher rent prices and unavailability of suitable size. In effect, it was a forced move. In lieu of the above situation, they found it best to move to the current location based on:

1. lesser operating cost
2. scope for expansion better
3. higher demand
4. no school in vicinity

### Why have they cut down vocational training at the new location? Isn't that the vital focus of the organization?

In the new location, almost all 20 children currently admitted are less than 14 years. Only a small percentage of students is in vocational grade. There is some vocational training for these students like preparing door-mats, but not at a full-fledged level. Students falling in the vocational grade are not able to attend school because of lack of conveyance

- they live about 5km away
- parents are older and are not able to usher the children to school

The focus of the organization is to provide intervention programs to mentally disabled children, starting all the way from age 4yrs on to continue providing vocational training for children aged 18+. Considering that the vocational students needed transport (which is not yet available) and that the location was new, efforts on implementing vocational training were postponed by an year. Pragati is tying up with an missionary NGO named Sruti to implement further vocational training. Sruti sends trainees to train

students at making items such as table cloths & decorative pieces using lace. Efforts are underway to implement these starting academic year 2009-10.

**What is the situation of the old students? Is something being done or been done for them?**

The previous location had a mix of ~10 students from slums + ~10 students from middle-class families. Most of the children from middle-class families have joined one of the other special schools nearby. (Praveen commutes to the new location occasionally and Bharadwaj, son of Secretary attends the school at new location.) Of the slum students, one lady (46yr old) passed away recently. Of the remaining students, there are about 4-5 children who are interested in still attending school and have motivated parents. These children are actively involved in cultural events in the society. The school has opened bank accounts for these children and taking up with the Government so that they have pension money available for living. If transport is provided, these children are willing to attend the school at new location.

**What is the purpose of the vehicle? Are helpers needed? Have the helpers been accounted for?**

The main reason for having a vehicle is to implement vocational training at school. This will also ensure that the children do not complain of being tired by the time they arrive at school. At a time, the school plans to pick up 8-10 students -- ayah and driver will be able to take care of these children. Multiple trips would be required. Currently, 4 children have multiple disabilities.

**Is there a plan to bring the children from old location?**

4-5 children from the old location are interested in attending the school at the new location. The school plans to pick them up if sufficient funds are available. The school plans to buy a second vehicle in the next year so that they can manage routes effectively.

**How many teachers are trained? What training have they received? If they plan to increase the strength, do they plan to recruit more students as well?**

One teacher has received short-term training; two teachers are new. Currently, the strength of the school is 20 students but the attendance is around 15 every day. The secretary (15+ years experience) and 3 teachers mentioned above are always present at the school, so, there are 4 teachers + 1 ayah to take care of about 12-15 children. If the strength of the school is increased, more teachers need to be recruited. If funds are available, the school would like to hire trained educators.

**How frequently do therapists visit the school?**

Once every 3 months.

**Is any teacher trained for medical emergencies? What does the school do in case of emergency?**

No. Secretary (who is always present) and Admin (1-2 times a week) are trained for providing First Aid. The school consults with a doctor in the neighborhood in case of emergency.

**What kind of medicines are administered to the children? Are they prescribed? Is there a doctor nearby qualified?**

The children receive prescribed medication from psychotherapist every year from NIMH. In the event that the children run out of their medication, the school provides monetary assistance to buy the medicines. The school consults with a neighborhood MBBS doctor in case of emergency.

**What is the sanctity of the free model? Is it free even if the families can afford it? Is Rs. 250 p.m. reasonable for middle class families?**

Middle-class families are charged a minimum of Rs. 250 p.m. (If average income of the family is greater than Rs. 15000 p.m. / parents are Government employees). The parents who can afford are urged to pay for the following reasons:

1. so that they can question the quality of the service provided by the school
2. so that they feel they are investing something and have some expectation out of it

Even so, some parents are reluctant to pay the school fee. In such an event, service is not denied to the children.

**Of the children who want to join the school but can't because of lack of conveyance, how far do the children live?**

The interested candidates who are not able to make it to school live in slums about 3-5km away from school.

**What is the background of the current mix of students?**

Of the current admissions at Pragati, the ratio is very similar to the ratio at previous location. There are ~10 children from lower middle-class & slums and ~10 children from middle-class families. There are about 10-12 vocational grade students interested and 4-6 students from Patigadda (previous location).

**How long does the pension process take?**

It is a Government process, and is underway. At the moment, there has been some response from the Government, and relevant paperwork is being submitted.

## **ADDITIONAL FAQs:**

**What do the children do in summer, since the curriculum is based on life-training and does not follow academic calendar?**

Students start staying at home as the temperatures increase. Home-based programs are given to the parents.