

Site Visit Report for Centre for Social Service
Nagole, Hyderabad

On Saturday, June 26, 2010, I visited the Center for Social Service's (CSS) 3 projects in Nagole, Hyderabad. These are: 1) CSS NAM English Medium day school, 2) Residential school, and 3) Swayam Shakti women's empowerment project.

CSS NAM School

The NAM school is an all-girls' English medium day school that caters to students from the surrounding slum areas. There is no government school in the area. Currently, the school has about 250 students enrolled in LKG, UKG, 1st, and 2nd class. The school is looking for Asha's funding in order to start 3rd class, and hope to eventually expand to 10th class.

The community is not very involved in the school, and most of the students come only because of the outreach efforts of Vijayalakshmi, Swarajyalakshmi, Prameela, and Janaki garu, because of the small snack that the school provides, and because the school is free and provides uniforms.

There are 40 students per class, and the teachers are all women from backgrounds similar to the students. Some are graduates of the CSS Residential School and others are members of the community, but all seem to have a connection to the students, and there is a low turnover rate of teachers.

The school is undergoing construction at present, and Swarajyalakshmi garu is managing the completion of the construction. Because of the work, some of the classrooms had to be moved to rooms in the Swayam Shakti building. The construction is being funded by a private donor.



Students in the UKG class



Swayam Shakti building and CSS NAM school (which is under construction)



NAM School

Residential School

The Residential Programme is a home mainly for older girls who are finishing high school or are enrolled in degree programs. There are younger girls in the programme as well. The building consists of a ground floor with a large kitchen and open area, a large, multipurpose room on the first floor where some of the girls live (but the room is also cleared out and used as a hall for festivities and programs), a second floor in which the rest of the girls live, and a fenced rooftop which is used for clothes-drying.



Residential school and CSS van (fenced park beside it)

The kitchen is equipped with a large fridge and a large freezer, as well as appropriate pots and pans for cooking and storage. There is also a water filter that was donated by the Rotary Club of Hyderabad.

The coordinators are very careful with money, and take measures to ensure that there is no wastage from missing clothes, food, stationery, toiletries, etc. Because of the large number of people enrolled, the main problems the residential school faces are the cost of rice and the cost of transportation of the girls to and from school.

Some of the girls live in Vijayalakshmi garu's home.

Swayam Shakti Project

I found out very little about this project, but I gathered that women come to it for advice in solving familial problems. A well-known TV channel recently aired a program on this project, and since then they have been getting more inflow. During the site visit, there were no personnel in the building – some of the classes from the day school were being held in the rooms of the building.

Overall

Overall, I was impressed with CSS's work. Although they have no paid administrative staff (except the principal of the NAM school) they are able to manage day-to-day operations and are very careful about wastage. They have no clear financial records, however.

They have had negative experiences with government funding, and because it is also very time-consuming to get they have decided to rely on private donors. If they can find help with this aspect, they may be able to provide a midday meal to their students.

The core group (Vijayalakshmi, Swarajyalakshmi, Prameela, and Janaki garu) are very dedicated and volunteer their time for no pay. Though they are limited on funds and resources they continue to accept as many students as they can. Some of these members will soon be having personal commitments, however, and this could be detrimental to the organization (as they are its infrastructure).

All of the buildings they use are self-owned, so they do not need to pay for rental. They encourage their donors to give large amounts at once so they can establish corpus funds (endowments) and have money guaranteed in the future.