

## Site visit to ILM School for working children

Pahargunj, Jaipur

Date: 30 June'11

### 1. A brief profile of the local community

- Minority (Muslim) community and very backward (economically and socially).
- Households with low income and large families.
- Youth, children and women are all engaged in gems and jewellery making. Youth not trained in any other skills and generally self employed. Overdependence on gems & jewellery trade.
- Poor education level. The average literacy rate is 30% (as per JKSMS).
- Children as young as 7 years old are made to work in the family business. To save the labour cost, parents prefer to put their children into the trade rather than hire external labour.
- Formal schools have a fixed schedule, which means a child attending the school cannot work in the family trade. Hence, parents withdraw their wards from such schools to make children work.

### 2. School administration

ILM (Interactive Learning Method) school is an informal school. It does not follow any standard education board curriculum. However school has designed a syllabus of its own. It has categorised the syllabus on levels ('Ikai'). For example, students graduate from level 1.0 through level 1.1, 1.2 and so on after passing the exams.

Older students (11 years onwards) are taught designs and drawing which form part of the technical training for jewellery making. Younger students are taught basic drawings. School uses non traditional methods such as games and songs to teach mathematics and languages.

- School has three teachers and no principal
- Teachers are from same local community
- A staff from JKSMS manages the operations and provides guidance.
- Since students reside nearby, they have their lunch at their homes.

### 3. Infrastructure

- Students sit on 'dari' (carpet), there are no chairs/tables. Rooms (three) are small and just enough for children to be accommodated.
- One of the rooms is for teachers to rest. This room also stores all the files and documents.
- Other infrastructure: Almirah, Computer table and chair, desktop computer.

#### **4. Meeting with parents**

Following feedback was received from parents:

- Parents would like students to receive textbooks and homework. Which means government recognised curriculum can be introduced, which would be appreciated by parents.
- Parents were happy that their children are receiving at least some education.
- Most parents and community elders have a strong desire that children from their community become educated professionals.
- One of the women present there expressed her gratitude towards JKSMS for running this school. She requested them to open more such schools.

#### **Conclusion**

I was satisfied with the ILM School. Initially JKSMS experienced difficulty during the set up of the school as the local community was apprehensive and non-cooperative. I believe a government recognised syllabus and textbooks must be introduced in the school. This will help students, who move to formal education system, to cope with new curriculum there. ASHA can include this as a condition in its MoU with JKSMS.

In current scenario where parents prefer flexible timing in school so that children can work, ILM School fills a major gap in the education by providing education with flexible schedule.

**Siddharth**