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Site Visit to ASHRAY AKRUTI, Hyderabad, India
A Voluntary Organization Working for the hearing impaired since 1996
Website: www.ashrayakruti.org

I visited “Ashray Akruti” on Tuesday, April 28th, 2015. Ashray Akruti has three locations in Hyderabad, India.

- Srinagar Colony, (Ameerpet)
- Yakutpura, (Charminar)
- Chandrayanagutta, (Bandlaguda)

Together the three locations serve 350 children. All children/students are hearing impaired with varying levels of disability. The goal of Ashray Akruti is to main-stream the children, help them secure jobs thus giving them hope through education. They have successfully done this as reported in the attached annual report 2013-14.

The school buildings are clean and properly maintained. I visited the Srinagar Colony (Ameerpet) center first. I spent time with three remarkable women: Kalpana, Shashikala, and Sunita. Each one of them has hearing impaired children and they discussed their struggles with trying to raise a disabled child until they came to Ashray Akruti. At Ashray Akruti, they not only got help for their child, but it gave each woman space to grow and become part of the organization.

- *Kalpana* is the Vice Principal. She had no skills or hope when she came to Ashray Akruti. Here her child was able to get an education & she educated herself to help her child & other children. Today she oversees classes in Srinagar Center & at the other Centers via Skype/ video.
- *Shashikala* is the Program/Academic Coordinator. She came to Ashray Akruti with her hearing impaired child. This gave both her & her child a new direction & hope. Her child is in Polytechnic School now. Shashikala has been with the organization for 12 years.
- *Sunita* is the receptionist who came to Ashray Akruti with her hearing impaired child. Here she found a position for herself and her child gets an education. This way she stays connected with her child and his education.

These three women had one goal: to help their disabled child! In the process they too found meaningful jobs.

Media/Computer Lab

I also visited their media & computer labs, sponsored by Qualcomm. I was not able to meet any children at the Srinagar Center since the school was closed for holidays.

Grandmother with her granddaughter at Yakutpura center

Hence from the Srinagar center, I went by car to the Yakutpura center in the Charminar area, a 45 minute drive. Here I met with *Mr. Imtiaz Mehdi*, the Administrator of the Yakutpura & Chandrayanagutta centers. Each of these centers has 75 – 87 children aged 3-14 years. The Yakutpura center started in December 2011 with 1 child.

- They provide full support for the child (Food, tuition, etc.)
- Boy to girl ratio is approximately 1:1.
- The Yakutpura center has 87 children and 10 teachers.
- The Chandrayanagutta center has 75 children and 9 teachers.
- Kalpana from the Srinagar center also oversees the classes here via skype.
- The cost per child is Rupees 50,000/per annum.

The centers have government funding currently, however going forward this funding may not be there. They will need sponsors/donors in order to keep the programs going since the children are from very poor families.

At the Yakutpura center, I met with the children. The Center was clean and children seemed happy & eager to learn. They had an Awards Ceremony going on & children were given awards for academic performance.

Additionally, they also gave 6 hearing aids, free of charge, to children who would benefit the most from it.

I was also able to meet and speak with the children's parents, particularly the mothers, who came to attend the Awards function. They all said that Ashray Akruti has made a very big difference in their child's and their lives & that their children seemed happy and liked coming to school.

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Students at Yakutpura center

Awards ceremony at Yakutpura center

Classroom at Yakutpura center

It was a very rewarding experience to see a place where children & women can hope and build a better life.