

Seva Chakkara visit March 23 2005 by Amit Sinha (NYC/NJ chapter volunteer)

Overview:

I really enjoyed the visit. It was really nice spending time with the children, especially the younger ones, who were very friendly, not shy at all. I could have spent all day there, but ended up being there for just three or four hours. It is hard to get a true sense of everything in such a short time, but here are some of my impressions.

On the Orphanage:

It appears to be a well run orphanage. Their First priority is buying their place, after which they have plans of doing some renovations. The facilities seem adequate for the children, but I feel it can be much cleaner. The floors, and bathrooms can be made cleaner and maybe painting the place might be helpful as well.

There is not much open place at their current location, being in the middle of a built-up residential neighborhood in the city. However, it is near some good local schools and also is accessible to donors who want to visit.

On their finances:

As mentioned earlier, their main focus is buying the place. They have the funds, thanks to Asha, and are in the process of negotiating with the landlords.

It appears that they are meeting their needs, and from time to time when they have funding shortages, its primarily related to buying provisions, and they rely on other donors for that

On the children:

The children seemed happy, clean and disciplined. The orphanage has strict policies on sports, recreation, and when donors can take the children on outings. This I think is helpful.

Really touched by a deaf-mute girl in first or second standard, who communicates by writing, and seems to be getting along quite well, being educated with the other kids, instead of a special school.

Education of children:

Seemed to be going to good schools

They are interested in studying

One girl in 2nd year BCom, wants to pursue MBA, and look at the US- how can we help?

2 girls just gave their 12th, one wants to go into law, and a second into nursing

My Mother will be looking into law school programs.

The other girl is looking into nursing.

Thinking ahead: one boy in 11th, and 4-8 kids in 9th and 10th

How can we help?

In my opinion, on the financial side, this is a project which has reached a strong sustainability. The crucial point where we can help is in shaping the future of these children.

There are two places that I think we can help: One, at the early stage in showing them the various alternatives that are available for them professionally, and how they can prepare for those. The second, is to help those who know what they want to do, by providing them with the resources to do so.

Some concrete places where they need our guidance immediately I think are in

1. The girl in BCom who wants to do an MBA, and is also interested in studying in the US- what she wants and how we can help
2. The girl who just finished 12th grade and wants to do law, can we put her in touch with law schools in Madras? Or does she do a bachelors and then a masters in law?

Looking Ahead

Can we start regular counseling programs, where we have various people come and talk about various careers?

Also, can we get feedback from the kids on their interests?

What I would have liked to know more:

How do the students use the computers?