

## **Site visit report for project Swadhar- Akshardeep**

**Date: 03.12.2003 and 04.12.2003**

### **Day 1 - 03.12.2003**

Site-visit by: Vishweshwara Herle (Asha Zurich), Kamal Khosla (Asha-Pune), Mrs. Anjali Bapat (Akshardeep), Shailaji (Akshardeep) (we were accompanied by Kaushik (Asha-Pune) and his friend, Hartmut Balke)

#### **Mohur Balwadi**

This was a Balwadi (kindergarten) run by Swadhar for the children of commercial sex workers at Budhwar peth area (red light area of Pune city). . When I visited there, the children were in the courtyard of a Gujrathi Samaj school. They play in this courtyard from 10.00am to 12.00 and then they are shifted to a big room of the Dutta Seva Mandir. There were about 15 children and most of them were girls. There is one teacher and a aaya for this balwadi and everyday aaya picks up these children from their mothers or sometimes from the streets (where they sleep during night). She then brings them to the school and here these kids were given a shower, breakfast and some medicines (if needed). Mrs. Bapat told me that few of the kids are HIV positive and they have given proper training to the teacher and the aaya to handle the situation. There were many toys for the kids and I came to know that through "play therapy" the teacher tries to understand these children and their situation at home. After 12.00 when once they move to the other class room the children do a small prayer and then they start learning which includes drawing, painting etc. There were many teaching materials prepared by the teacher for these kids and very Friday these kids are taken to a swimming pool and a big play ground nearby.

#### **Adolescent girl's class at Bibbewadi**

This is in a slum area and most of the girls in this class were in the age range 12-14. These girls have been to formal schools before but due to one or the other reasons their parents no more send them to the school. So they come over to this class which is in a very small room. There were two teachers and they teach these girls embroidery, making of perfumes, agarbattis, paper cards and other handicrafts. When we were there, the girls were being taught a special kind of wall-painting. In the same class they have 2 computers for learning. Many of these girls want to write SSC (10<sup>th</sup> grade) exam conducted by National Open School.

#### **Akshardeep NFE classes at Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) area**

I visited two classes. One class was in a small shed in the slum area and the other was in a temple premises. In the first class there were about 20 children and they were given badges according to the level of their learning. Some are of 4<sup>th</sup> grade level and some were still learning how to read and write. It was a heterogeneous mixture of children and the teacher teaches them in group. She would first give some problems to one group and then would go to the next one to teach something else.

Another class was in a temple premises. The children were in the streets earning their livelihood during mornings and in the afternoon they would come to the class. The kids have prepared an artificial aquarium (of cardboard) and a post box. They used write letter and put them in to the box. Later next day some one would pick up any one of the letter and would read. This idea made the children to read and write. The children gave us some paper cards giving thanks for our visit.

### **Day 2 - 04.12.2003**

#### **Site visit to PCMC classes (These classes are funded by Asha Zurich)**

Site-visit by: Vishweshwara Herle (Asha Zurich), Mrs. Anjali Bapat (Akshardeep), Shailaji (Akshardeep) and Mrs. Torvekar (co-ordinator, PCMC classes)

#### **Background:**

Pune Chinchwad Municipal Corporation Area (PCMC) is an industrial suburb of Pune. Due to the influx of labourers there are many slums here and Swadhar runs 10 Non Formal Education (NFE) classes in this area. Out of the 10 classes I managed to visit 7 classes. Many of these classes are conducted in public places like Buddha Vihar and other temples. Formal government schools nearby are of about 2-3 Km. from this area.

### Bhosari – In Buddha Vihar

Teachers: Mrs. Deepali and Mrs. Sutar

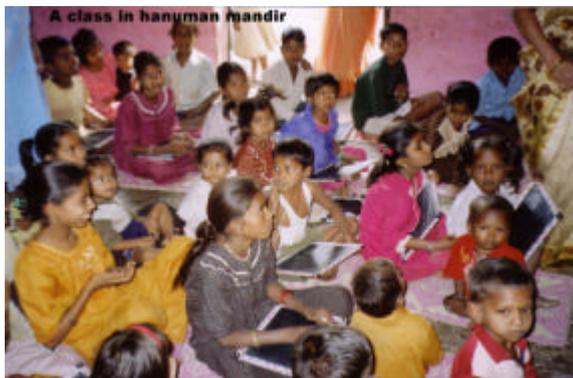
The class room was very small and 2 classes are conducted here at different timing. But when I was there two classes were combined as they were practicing some dance for some community event. (Mrs. Bapat told me later that they won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for their performance!) There were about 30-35 children and some of them were with their siblings (see the pictures below). The children are given slates to write and their siblings get some toys to play around! I tried to talk with one boy called "Amresh". He could read and write and he told me that he has three elder brothers and 2 sisters. His father is a construction site worker and his older brothers help his father. One other girl called Shobha had a similar story too. There were more girls in this class. The teachers Mrs. Deepalai and Mrs.Sutar seemed motivated and experienced and I learned from them that they have been with Akshardeep from the past 2-3 years. They have a trunk to store all their teaching material and slates as the place is used by local people in the evenings.



### Phule Nagar – in Hanuman temple

Teacher: Mrs. Asha Sagar

This class was in a Hanuman mandir and there were about 15-20 children. Most of them were girls and many were from other states like Karnataka and Punjab. These girls had their basic schooling in Kannada medium but when their parents migrated to Pune they had to learn everything in Marathi. Mrs. Asha Sagar can understand a speak a bit of Kannada and some how she was managing the classes. When we were there she was teaching maths to kids. I talked with the children and asked them about their family background. Their parents were farmers in Northern Karnataka (Bijapur) region and because of the continuous drought situation they migrated few years ago to Pune. Now most of them are working as construction site workers and some in the factories. The girls were very enthusiastic and proud of their class. There were many teaching posters hanging on the wall and the kids sung a song for us.



### Gandhinagar – In a Samaj Mandir

Teachers: Mrs. Bindu Kamle and Vidya Shirole

According to Mrs. Bapat, Gandhinagar is one of the biggest slum of 3000+ people. This particular class looked like an adolescent young girls class as most of the children were in 12-14 age range. Most of the girls were Muslim by religion and the teacher told me that they were going to the formal schools before. But after a certain age their parents are hesitant to send the girls out of the slum so

they attend Akshardeep's NFE classes. Apart from the normal learning, Mrs. Bindu Kamle was also teaching them embroidery (see the picture)



After these classes I visited 3 more classes in **Morwadi** and **Anand Nagar** (2 classes). In all these cases the situation was similar as above. Class in Morwadi was in a tin shed and in Anand Nagar it was in a Buddha Vihar.

#### **Some points to be noted:**

- The project co-ordinator Mrs. Torvekar seemed to have a good knowledge of the ground realities of each and every class. The classes are on an average 2-4 kms away from each other. And since there is no proper public transport in the area I should highly appreciate the motivation of Mrs. Torvekar to go and visit the classes regularly.
- Teachers of PCMC classes were good in their job and were happy to be in Akshardeep. These teachers are given training by Akshardeep but I found that some of the teachers are creative.
- Akshardeep has extra curricular activities for the children also. When I was there they were preparing for a "sports day" and I learnt from Mrs. Bapat that this is one event in which the pupil at least will get to see a big place for playing!

#### **General Opinion:**

This was my first site visit to any project and I was very impressed by team Swadhar, especially Mrs. Bapat and Shailaji who are managing the Akshardeep activities in Pune. I met the Swadhar team in their office and had an opportunity to know their different projects. I should say that project Akshardeep is run by a very professional and dedicated team and they are highly motivated.

My sincere thanks to the following people who made this site visit a memorable one for me.

Guruswamy (Asha Pune)

Premnath (Asha Pune)

Kamal Khosla (Asha Pune)

Mrs. Bapat, Shailaji and the rest of the Swadhar team

**Vishweshwara Herle**  
**16.02.2004**