



# Asha for Education™

## Site Visit Questionnaire

P.O. Box 322 • New York • NY 10040-0322

www.ashanet.org

Dear Volunteer

Thanks for conducting this site visit.

The following set of questions is only a suggested guideline. Some of the following questions may not be relevant or applicable to the particular project you are visiting, but please do try to answer as many of them as possible. Please note that Part sB & C necessitate that the information be gathered through conversations with the children and their parents, and not simply the group's teachers and staff.

Please feel free to attach any documents/photos you feel are pertinent to the project.

Thanks.

- Asha for Education

**Date: Sep. 29, 03**

**Name of the Project: Akshardeep**

**Name of the Organisation Running the Project (if different): Akarshdeep is part of a larger organization called Swadhar with more comprehensive services for women.**

Was your site visit announced? Yes, it was planned

No, it was a surprise visit

	<b>Project Contact</b>	<b>You Name (Asha volunteer conducting the visit)</b>
Name	Mrs. Anjali Bapat, Mrs. Torvekar (supervisor)	Guruswamy Kumaraswamy (Guru), Kamal Khosla, Sujata Bogawat
Address	Mrs. Anjai Bapat, c/o Swadhar Niwara Davis Sasson Anath Pangu 96, Navi Peth, Pune, MH 411 030  Mrs. Anjali Bapat, C-21 Abhimanshree Society, Pashan Road, Pune, MH 411 008	Guruswamy Kumaraswamy,  Kamal Khosla, 9 Jeevan Vihar Society, Off Senapati Bapat Road, Pune, MH 411 016  Sujata Bogawat,
Phone(s)	565-3035, 546-2626, 546-2627	Guru: Res 589-9951 Work 589-3382 ext 2182, Kamal Khosla 567-2952, Sujata Bogawat 729-1890
Fax		

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E-mail	sdbapat@rediffmail.com	Guru: guruswamy_k@hotmail.com, Kamal: kkhosla@omjai.com, Sujata: wfinance@thermaxindia.com
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**PART A: Particulars about the organization and its environment**

**1. What are the different focus areas of the organization? (give a rough estimate of the % of their total effort/funding)**

Community development \_\_\_%      Education 100%      Health \_\_\_%  
Other \_\_\_% (please specify)

**2. What is the administrative structure of the group (e.g. Board of Directors/Grassroots-based)?**

Akshardeep is grass-roots based. Mrs. Bapat is an unpaid volunteer and so are most of the other volunteers in the organization. Supervisors and teachers are paid. The motivation, drive and commitment of all the participants, whom we met, is very impressive.

**3. Are there any other organizations working in the area providing any one or all of the services provided by the visited organization? (Briefly mention their names and their objectives)**

Organization	Objectives of the organization

**PART B: The organization and the community it serves**

*(Information to be gathered from parents and children)*

**1. Approximately how many families live in the area?** The schools are located in several slums in the Pimpri-Chinchwad area. The slums are large - 100-200 or more families live in these slums

**2. What do the parents do for a living? (Agricultural worker, Daily wage laborer etc.)**

Mostly daily wage laborers (domestics or construction workers) or self-employed hawkers

**3. At the time of enrolment, does the school ask for the names of both parents?**

Yes       No, just the father's name       No, just the mother's name

**4. How often do the teachers meet the parents?**

**5. How do the parents participate in the organization's activities? (e.g. by contributing their time, money or labor in the school's activities etc.)**

Residents of the communities we visited seem to have a general interest in educating their children and helping out with the classroom arrangements. However, the parents may have other more pressing priorities like food, shelter, care of smaller infants etc..

**6. Are there any Government Schools in the area?** Yes  No

**7. If yes, how far are the Government Schools from the community?** 1 - 3 Km.

**8. Why did the parents choose this school over the Government School?**

Non-formal education is provided to children to get them ready for the Government Schools. These schools offer flexible timings to suit the convenience of the children and their parents (necessary, for example, if the children work as domestics or need to take care of younger siblings). Also, the atmosphere in Akshardeep schools is more stimulating than regular government schools and they are located conveniently in the slum.

**9. When you visited, how many children were present in the class?** 20 - 30

**What is the regular class strength?** 20 - 30

**Comments:** In a single class room, children were divided into "classes" at different grade levels from grade 1 through grade 4. The same classroom was also time-shared for multiple classes during the day.

**10. Do the children seem to enjoy coming to school?**

Yes. The children were full of joy in the classroom. They were learning most effectively as they really seem to be having a lot of fun. The teachers seem to know how to make learning a pleasurable activity. Also, the children appear to be enjoying the structure and discipline that a classroom provides in their otherwise unstructured lives and environment outside the classroom. It also appears that education is a novelty or a "luxury" in the target localities and, maybe, it makes the children feel special. The children had handcrafted special cards for our visit that they gave us roses as a gesture of thanks. They also enjoyed giving us demonstrations of their skills developed for reading, arithmetic, story-telling and song and dance items.

**PART C: Project particulars**

*(Information to be gathered from students and staff)*

**1. What is the mode of teaching in the school? (Check the appropriate choices)**

- A. Formal (State Board, Central Board etc.)  **till what class?**  
 B. Non-Formal Education (NFE)  **do the students also attend formal school?**  
 C. Vocational   
 D. Other . Please specify

**2. If A (Formal), up to what grade(LKG, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> etc.) does the school conduct classes?**

3. *If B (Non-Formal Education) how many of the children also attend formal schools in the area?*

None

*If none do, does the project plan this for the future?* Akshardeep facilitates "graduation" of the students into formal schools in the area. Without the NFE, these children may never make it to the formal schools. Exams conducted by Akshardeep are recognized by the local municipal schools - so students who do well in Akshardeep schools can be admitted to the local schools. Akshardeep also actively facilitates admission of their students in the local municipal schools. For talented children, they sponsor schooling in private schools - this is a new scheme that has been initiated by Akshardeep (for 20 children per year to begin with) and they are looking for funding for this (sponsor a child sort of funding - cost approximately Rs. 6000 per child per year)

4. *If Non-Formal Education, does the organization create its own study material (books, games)?*

Yes. The classroom study material was impressive as it was prepared with great ingenuity at minimum cost. However, many of the daily use items like slates and books have to be purchased. There were no games as such but the learning experience itself seems to be more of a "game" to the children compared to, maybe, their life outside the classroom.

5. *If C (Vocational), what do the children do after they finish training?*

6. *How many staff or volunteers are recruited from the community?* Some teachers are from the community (perhaps about 50%).

*How many of the staff are women?* All teachers and supervisors are women.

7. *How many teachers have left the school in the past one year, and why?*

8. *How many new teachers have joined in the past year?*

9. *Does the organization train the teachers?* Yes  No

*If yes, how do they provide the training?* Akshardeep has developed their own training for the teachers. The teachers are required to attend the training sessions on a regular basis. In addition, Akshardeep gets their teachers to attend training sessions organized by government agencies (for example, through the Mahatma Phule Yojana). Interestingly, as we visited many classrooms, it was noticed that all the teachers were teaching in a very consistent and uniform manner, almost like an "Akshardeep standard".

10. *How much is the staff paid?* Rs. 1000/- per month

*Is it on par with the salary paid to the staff in the Government schools?* Yes  No

#### **PART D: Financial resources of the organization**

*(Feedback from the person conducting the site visit)*

1. **Do you think the proposed amounts in the budget are reasonable?** Yes  No  Maybe

2. **Are all items covered in the budget?** Yes  No  Maybe

Comments: Classroom environment can be made more bearable i.e more conducive to concentration on learning. The classrooms could use more light as many of them had no windows. Electric connection and light bulbs are needed. Ceiling fans are needed especially in the summer. Leaky roofs need to be fixed.

3. **Is there anything you think should be added or removed from the budget?**

Yes  No

**If you recommend any changes to the budget, please explain your reasons for this.**

There is a need for more NFE classrooms at the present locations and at new locations. Akshardeep seems to have the organization, drive and a proven model for accomplishing this very challenging task. They would also like to scale their activities, so more children can benefit through the NFE and encouraged to eventually join the regular school system in the area. At this time, we suggest monitoring the performance of the existing classes.

4. **Did you discuss the proposed changes with the project? If so, please describe their response.**

Mrs. Bapat mentioned the classroom needs for electricity, lights and fans. Also, she would like to see an expansion of the present program into more areas needing NFE for children who would, otherwise, not go to school at all.

## **PART E: Comments**

*(Feel free to attach documents if necessary)*

Photos - to be attached

We visited 5 locations. These locations were within a short 5-10 minute car ride of one another, and were all located in the Pimpri Chinchwad area.

1st location: Gandhinagar (one classroom - 2 schools in the same premise 9-12 and 12-3, teachers: Vidya Shirole and Bindu Kame). We got there at about 1:30pm. The school was closed since someone from the local community was storing something in the school room and had locked it.

In all the locations that we visited, Akshardeep does not pay rent or own the school premises - instead, they get the local community to provide them with a premise. Typically, this is either a community hall or a temple. Due to this there are occasional problems like the one at Gandhinagar - however, we are told that such unplanned stoppages are infrequent.

2nd location: Morwadi (teacher: Savita Mane, room for school provided by local municipal corporator - the room was very dingy and stuffy, more like a tin shed than a classroom. The area wasn't quiet and someone outside was playing a radio loudly. However the kids seemed somewhat enthusiastic. This school has been running for about 3 years now)

Total number of kids on the rolls: 30

Attendance on the day of the visit: 21

Kids had slates - these were provided by Akshardeep. The slates were of reasonably good quality - Mrs. Bapat said that they cost about Rs. 50 each. The children were sitting in rows - with each row indicating

a level of proficiency. The age range varied from 6 to 12 years (my guess), while the "level" of the children ranged between 2nd and 4th std.

The teacher was teaching all the kids at once - she would give one row something to do, then attend to the next and so on. The text book she was using was a 2nd std text book. I spoke to the teacher - she told me that about 5-6 kids from her class last year had been admitted to the local municipal school. However, the municipal schools have changed their rules. This year, when they tried to admit one of the bright kids in this class (a ten year old boy) to the local school, they denied him admission since he did not have a birth certificate. Akshardeep had represented the case of children without birth certificates to the PMC (Pune Municipal Corp) and had secured admission for their children in local schools there - however, it looks like they might need to persuade the PCMC (Pimpri Chinchwad Mun Corp) too. We also met a 14 year old girl who had been almost married off, but had decided to continue in school rather than get married. One other notable thing: for admitting students, local municipal schools recognize the exams conducted by Akshardeep and the grades awarded by the Akshardeep teachers. Akshardeep plans to open another school in Morwadi, but plans to use a different room for that purpose.

3rd location visited: Anand Nagar - planned site for 2 new schools. Room for one has been identified, Akshardeep needs to negotiate with the local community for use of the temple for the other school. We saw the room and the supervisor and Mrs. Bapat spoke to the person in charge of that room when we were there. They seemed agreeable to the idea of Akshardeep using their premise to conduct their classes. This Anand Nagar area was suggested to Akshardeep by another organization working in the area (Mahila Mandal) who do not deal with education. We did not have time to see the other proposed site - Akshardeep has already obtained use of the room at this site.

4th location: Bhosari (two schools in the same community hall: 9-12: teacher: Rekha Sutar, 12-3 teacher Deepali Bhaskar)

We got there a little after 3pm. When we got there the school was locked and the children had gone home. However, the teacher asked the children to come back to school so that we could talk to them. Children sang song, we viewed their attendance records (reasonably high attendance on most days - about 25 out of 30 children)

I spoke to the teacher who told me that she got there by cycle - a 1 hour journey each day!

Rekha Sutar's qualifications include Grade 10, ITI, Teacher's Training from a training institute and, of course, Akshardeep Teacher's Training. This particular classroom has been in operation for 3 years. The second class in this classroom (9:00 am to 12:00 noon) was started in January 2003. Student attendance recording was meticulous. The attendance is taken at the end of the class and children keep coming in after the class starts. The teachers come in 15 minutes before the start of the class. They go around the locality to collect the children. In this particular class, 80% of the students are girls. Some students were wearing Akshardeep T-shirts. Each student is provided one T-shirt per year. Some children were dressed in their best. They were all very enthusiastic about learning and full of joy. This particular locality has a relatively stable population though many of the parents are employed in the construction industry.

The 9:00 - 12:00 noon class has an enrollment of 25 and the 12:00 noon - 3:00 pm class has an enrollment of 31 students. So, the classroom serves 56 students.

5th location: Bhosari (classroom in a Hanuman temple, teacher: Asha Sagar)  
26 children - 13 girls

We noticed teaching aids in the corner - books, plastic fruit, marbles slates etc.

When we were there, the children read the Marathi alphabet - the teacher would show them hand-made cardboard cards with an alphabet written on it and the children would say the alphabet. The children also did some arithmetic for us (addition of two small numbers, without needing to carry-over)

The teacher showed the kids some drawings based on which they told a story - this exercise builds their language skills.