

## **Rashmi Mohan**

### **Site Visit January 21, 2005**

The Mathru Educational Trust for the Blind is located in a residential area in the Yelahanka district of Bangalore. The Mathru School was formed in 2001 for underprivileged children from grades 1-4 who are visually impaired.

I was accompanied on the visit by Mr. Keshava Kaiwar who is a Bangalore resident. We had driven off the main road on an unpaved street to reach the school. The current resident for Mathru is a residential house that has adjacent buildings that make up the school. When we reached the school Mr. Rana Nanjappa, Asha volunteer was also present. It was a pleasure meeting Ms. G.R. Muktha, an attorney who was head of Mathru. We were served Akki Roti with yogurt and tea. We had discussed how the government had given the school land to build the new school building. We discussed Asha Central New Jersey had allotted \$17,000 for the new school building and the ground breaking ceremony was to begin in a few days. We discussed that the funds included did not include a residential facility nor anything additional to the school.

I was then taken on a tour of the classrooms itself. A one story building behind the main house was the where the computer class was being held. There were about 10-12 students in this classroom. The children wore red plaid uniforms with identification badges.

The children had greeted me by name and asked me questions. I realized that their English was very good and many of the students communicated confidently and articulately. I was shown a demonstration of the computer system by a student on Microsoft Powerpoint and Word. The typed text was then being played through the audio speakers. Ms. Muktha stated that the children were passionate about being able to use the computer.

As I walked through the school many day-to day facts were given about the children and their activities. The gardens on the school grounds had been maintained by the students themselves. Also, I was shown copies of standard texts that had been printed in Braille. I was also shown a device in which mathematical calculations were conducted. This device showed how metal pegs inserted at different angles and how the calculations

were obtained. It was also described that the children would listen to the world news on a daily basis. Mr. Rana described how the children enjoyed playing cricket and chess among other things.

I was then taken to two classrooms on the side of the building. These classrooms were made of cinderblock and metal sheeting. There were approximately 4-5 children in each class. Ms. Muktha even stated that some older teenage students were enrolled in the first and second standard because they had not taught basic primary education.

We traveled upstairs to additional classrooms at the main house. In addition to two classrooms there was also a large room that housed their bunk beds. The front hall was a music room with several instruments.

Ms. Muktha had asked that the musical troupe assemble to sing a few songs. I was surprised to see how effortlessly the students traveled around the facility. One young boy played the tabla while another girl played the harmonium. The children sang a few Kannda folk songs. They stated that they had won several local music competitions as well. Ms. Muktha stated that children have a repertoire of over 100 songs. She had asked me to sing a song as well which was a pleasant surprise. In addition to singing they also performed a few lines from the Mahabharata that had been recently staged. When a student did a good job Ms. Muktha lovingly embraced the young student.

Ms. Muktha had then discussed some of the backgrounds of a few of the students. She described that a few students were on the street and not in any educational programs. She described how she wanted the students to be as self-sufficient as possible. She described how she allowed two children to travel to the local store themselves. After this discussion I departed feeling highly uplifted.

**CONCLUSION-** This is a project Asha can support whole-heartedly. It is evident that the children at this school are well-rounded, passionate about everything they do, sophisticated, and kind. Ms. G.S. Muktha has produced an empathetic and nurturing environment for these children. In addition, the education is not only focused on current education but their future well-being as well. All of the questions I could possibly ask were answered plus additional information. Also, Ms. Muktha showed a deep respect for Asha and communicating with Asha members. Following pages show few pictures of the children and their activities.









