

Asha for Education™

Site Visit Questionnaire

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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: Jan. 8, 08

Name of the Project: Vidyaniketan Sishuvihar, Ushagram, Birnagar, Nadia.

Name of the Organisation Running the Project (if different): Ushagram Trust

Was your site visit announced? Yes, it was planned

No, it was a surprise visit

	Project Contact	You Name (Asha volunteer conducting the visit)
Name	Subir Bhattachariya	Soumik Biswas/ Purba Rudra
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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 35% Education 45% Health 10%
Other 10% (please specify) Income generation schemes

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

Board of directors

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? Approximately 500 families live in this area where the trust is. (Data has been taken from Subir babu)

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

Agriculture, Small business, Grocery shops, small shops, Government Jobs

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?

2-3 times in the year. Teachers do home visit twice in a year. And if some students are having some problems then their parents are called in the school to discuss about the matter.

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.)

Parents participate in the organization activities during the sports or any sorts of cultural activities. They do organize meeting with the parents when something needs to be changed or modified and parents can give their own suggestion.

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

7. If yes, how far are the Government Schools from the community? There are 6 Govt. Higher Secondary schools and no of primary schools.

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

Parents believe that the teaching method in this school are better than the Govt. school.

9. When you visited, how many children were present in the class? It was a regular day. So no of attended students were really as regular day

What is the regular class strength? 488. This is the no of total students for the 2007-2008 .

Comments: The school was from nursery to class-VIII. They have started class-IX this year. There is significant drop in number of students after class-IV as they don't have West Bengal School Board approval.

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

Yes

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 They have introduced some of their own method of teaching with the regular form of teaching.

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

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

If none do, does the project plan this for the future?

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

Organization has introduced some of their own method to teach the students. For example school has three museums, History, Geography and Science and they have have introduced some new teaching process. Some books like geography are written by the secretary.

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

6. *How many staff or volunteers are recruited from the community?* Mostly from the community

How many of the staff are women? Almost all the teachers are women

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

None

8. *How many new teachers have joined in the past year?* No regular teacher has joined in the past year. But one teacher joined in the last year to replace someone who was in a vacation. She is probably going to join the school permanently.

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

If yes, how do they provide the training? The teachers are sent to Teacher's orientation courses. Also in house training is sometimes arranged.

10. *How much is the staff paid?* 650-1365 + 5% that Asha-CNJ sponsored

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:

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.

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

We have found out there is a discrimination in the saem class. The students paying more money are separated from the students paying less money. They said initially it was not separated. But then found out that the kids from the well off class are smarter and they progress faster than the others. Then it bacme difficult to teach both group of students together. They claim that they take more care for the kids who are lagging behind (in this case the poorer students). I suggested them to separate the class on the bais of merit not in the basis of momey. Although if we think dipper relying on their statements then we could see the merit and money are kind of corelated. But I still suggested to have an evaluation after 2-3 months of the session started and then you can separate them in terms of merit or find other ways where the separation could be in terms of merit, not in terms of money and take more care for those students who are lagging behind. They said they will discuss about my suggestion.

PART E: Comments

(Feel free to attach documents if necessary)

They have a computer center. For the computer center they are trying to rope in Jadavpur University. A certificate for the course from the university will give higher credibility and value to the course.

Right next to the computer center/library building there is a demonstrative plot which is used to grow herbs and for apiary. It mainly targets women. They are trying to revive the older alternative Indian systems of medicine. They have planted herbs on the plot to help people recognize the plants and their medicinal value. They also distribute saplings to grow at home. This way they could avoid the rising cost of allopathic medicines while using a system of medicine that has lesser side effect.

They also do/train people in apiary. After the training they also give them a kit that has a beehive, a box and then they buy the honey from them, process and package it to sell in the market. As a profit making undertaking cannot operate under the trust (according to the rules put down by the trust) they put the vocation training center as their sister concern. There isn't a lot of profit but at the end of the year after the returns have been used to pay back, and divided among the people who have made the stuff they make a small donation the trust(~2000/year) the returns are not that high so this donation is not very high either. It's not possible to increase returns at the present scale of operations and expanding that would require a lot of investment.

Another 40 bigha demonstrative plot is meant for organic cultivation. They are growing bananas and other crops only using bio manure. They are also generating bio gas using cow dung and this is used as fuel in the kitchen. These are not very large scale as most of it is for demonstration to be followed by the villagers. They are hoping to increase returns from organic farm produce as there is an increasing trend towards using organic produce, mainly in the big cities. But again the trust would not be making much profit from it.

They had a very long running project with Children international-Sahay. It ran for about 17-18 years and was recently called off due to ideological differences. The CI sponsored children in the area but it was seen that over the years it was creating a rift in the village as one family, or rather on child, was getting way too much and the house just next was getting nothing. Differences were also cropping up between siblings. The idea of sponsoring the kids' education was a very good one but they started getting too many gifts-jewelry, gadget etc. when they asked the project partners to fund other children or in other areas as these kids already had enough, CI did not agree and that's when the project was called off..

There are 265 self help groups operating in the project area. An important thrust area of the project is mother and child care. The trust realized that to achieve that it's very important to empower women and that's when the vocational training center was thought of.

Some of the books, like that of geography, are written by the secretary. Subir babu pointed out that if they had government affiliation that would not have been possible as they would dictate terms in the matters of curriculum, books used; teachers appointed etc. that's why they are hesitant.

They promote group work. Children make projects in a group that ways they learn from each other and also learn to work as a team. They had some of their works displayed in the museum. They are planning to remodel the museum for which they have got some funds (or looking for some?) from Asha Syracuse. There is a lot of stress laid on hands on learning. In the geography museum they had maps of various scales. One of the first exercises includes trying to place them in the world. So they start off with a map of the project area, then go on to the district map-state map-that of India then to the world map. Apart from a lot of maps, showing resources etc there are a lot of models of landforms to help students in understanding the processes. They also have a history museum which includes artifact collected by the students on their educational tours.

In the meeting with the parents they seemed satisfied. They said that the teachers like them. a lot of the students also take private tuitions after school. While talking with the teachers later they said that when they visit children at home they try to discourage parents from keeping tutors for children this young. But parents just don't seem convinced. Typically parents spend 100-150 rupees a month behind tutors and the tutors come for upto 6 days a week.

The mid day tiffin varies from day to day. The poorer students don't pay anything for it. The 60 Rs paying students have to pay 30 Rs per month for it (1Re/day)

There is an intra-category transfer of funds. From books etc into mid day tiffin etc.

The parents seemed satisfied with the quality of teaching. Their concern where regarding security. There is no security personnel in the school compound and the main road is nearby. Though there is a barbed wire at one end there are places where students could slip out. Also they wanted ID cards for students and children and wanted them to be matched when they came to pick their wards up from school. Record of the rickshaw-walas be maintained. Though all of them have been working for the school for very long the parents suggested that as an added security measure. One parent mentioned the need for a park/playing area. They also wanted the school to conduct health check ups every 6 months. We later realized that this articulate group of parents where that of the KG section. We could not meet with the parents of the primary section. They also said that the school should have physical training, parades, scouts etc. they were also concerned about the board affiliation and thought that to get better quality teacher they should increase the teachers' salary. They were also ready to pay more fees if required.

The economic status of these families is better than the ones in the primary section.

Subir babu said that the RMV and the hostel is an experiment to show people that open school certificate is as good as the other board certification that students would perform equally well; get admission in higher secondary in other schools once they have passed out of the open school.