

Kalyania - Prayas Centre

A Site Visit Report

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Asha for Education, Athens & Atlanta Chapters

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At about 10 o'clock in the morning I reached Kalyania. I visited this project several times before and by now I am fairly familiar with the site and also its management people (Dr Partha Pratim Dhar, General Secretary, Mr. Sailendra Kumar Roy and Prof. Chitreshwar Sen Vice Presidents) along with the teachers and staff members. I visited primarily the Suhasini Sisu Niketan (SSN-K) and also cursorily the seats of other activities of Kalyania where they are active.

Mission of Kalyania

Kalyania is pledged to live up to its motto, *Making Life Better*, through free or almost free services to the poor directed to change their life-style from one of hopelessness to one with hope. Simultaneously, they want to provide a congenial *Home* for the Old and the Helpless at reasonable costs. This, they appear to have largely achieved, albeit on a small scale, cutting costs at all levels, with the active support of the senior volunteers and support from different quarters including Asha for Education. Now they feel there is need to expand the activities at all levels.

Key Objectives of Kalyania

1. Health care for children, women, the old in the identified communities that are deprived financially, psychologically or both.
2. Epilepsy club for holistic attention to the epileptics.
3. Holistic education for deprived children living by the river banks or ghettos.
4. A life support system for the gerontologically advanced.
5. Empowerment of women and children through vocational training.
6. Other societal cooperative activities.

Approach

A holistic approach toward supporting and serving the poor and the elderly people. The approaches include:

Healthcare Initiatives

1. Out-door Clinic (1998–) and Epilepsy Club (2003–).
2. Weekly Clinic for Eye- and Dental-Care
3. Various other health related services as elaborated in their Annual Report(s) (ca. 2001–)
4. Home services through medical instruments at minimal cost (ca. 2002–)
5. Health check-up for the old and ambulance service (2004)
6. Need-based awareness programs related to health, child-care, maternity (2009)
7. Health care for the school children and the residents of Old Age Home

Children's Education

1. The Primary School, Suhasini Shishu Niketan (Est. 2003)
2. The Kamala Sengupta Memorial Computer Training Centre (Est. 2006)
3. School of Visual Art and Drawing (2001)
4. School of Performing Arts (2003)
5. A well stacked Library (2004).

Old Age Home

1. For gerentologically advanced
2. Providing them a congenial HOME AWAY FROM HOME atmosphere(1998–)
3. Special care with respect to their food, health care and other mental props (2000).

Women's Empowerment

1. Home nursing services through allocation of trained Sevikas (2001)
2. Providing vocational training in stitching to women of backward classes (2010) in planning stage.

Societal Co-operative Activities

1. Kalyani Reformatory Prison Contract that includes sports, Rabindra Jayanti Celebration and Drawing Classes (2008)
2. NCC Kalyania partnership (2006)
3. Andhya Alok Samity 2005–) - medical and other assistance for blinds
4. Merit-cum-means fellowships

Primary Education for the Underprivileged Children:

I was talking to the Management people and the Head Mistress, Sm Kabita Basu – a very impressive person who joined Kalyania after retiring from her job as a College teacher and also some of the teachers and the following emerged:

The primary school, Suhasini Sisu Niketan (SSN-K) was started in 2003 with a teacher and a few students. SSN-K is now a full fledged free primary school (KG to class IV) and provides primary education free to 90 children (male and female) attended to by 12 teachers (male and female) 3 attendants (ladies) and a devoted head mistress.

Most services are free or at nominal remunerations. This year compulsory computer training for the students of class III and IV has been included in the curriculum.

Sm Basu showed me around her Office, Teachers room and classrooms. All the classrooms were brimming with children, dressed properly and in uniform and each classroom had a teacher who guided the children using chalk and a blackboard. There appears to be no specific dress code for the teachers. KG classes were going on the ground floor, while the first floor was occupied by children of class I through IV. The annexe created in the first floor for specialised training was empty except for some desks and benches.

We came back to the room marked for the Head Mistress and talked about the present and future of the School. The Headmistress stated that the intake of the students at KG stage has been increased from 15 to 20 as more space became available through shifting of Kalyanias Office to another building. In order to complete a holistic training, the head Mistress said that a number of support systems have been introduced from time to time. These supportive Centers were open to the children of the School and also those who could not get into the SSN-K in the past due to seat restriction reasons. These were expected to help in a child's overall growth and development:

1. **The Sunday School of Art:** This School, under the guidance of Mr. Panchanan Pal a product of Kala Bhavana, Shantiniketan, is a roaring success. It is attended by 100-150 disciples (mostly females). For logistic reasons, plans are being made to split into two Saturday and Sunday. This would entail other teachers and more incidental expenses.

2. **The Kamala Sengupta Memorial Computer Training Centre:** (30 students in batches of 10) with three remunerative teachers. Works with three computers which restricts intake as the objective here is to give hands on training in data entry and word processing. It is mandatory for class III and IV students of SSN-K.
3. **School of Performing Art:** (Such as singing, dancing, debate, oration-narration) (30 students) Guidance is provided by three voluntary Lady Teachers. These children are perceptibly improving in their performance.
4. **Story-telling** by a resident of the Old Age Home, nick named Natarajan who is also a renowned writer and scholar. This is becoming increasingly popular among all the various components of SSN-K. This is called “Galpo Dadur Asor” (see the picture).

The SSN-K, I was told, runs five days a week, four hours a day. Other training Centers are open once a week on Sundays under a huge banyan tree in the adjoining Park. The Park itself has now a beautiful rain shed under the banyan tree. I was told it was possible only through funding from Asha for Education.

All the students are provided with a free food (light Tiffin) packet worth ca. Rs. 5/- only. It is used to be nutritive. Now, due to unavailability of funds, it has become largely token and is an area which needs immediate funding.

Pecuniary Benefits:

Kalyania is also concerned about a huge population of poor students trying to pursue education beyond the primary but failing to complete due to lack of funds. Kalyania hence started seeking sponsorships for scholarships to be given to select competent students. At present 21 scholarships are being provided to the students ranging from class V to higher secondary and beyond.

Vocational training:

Vocational training to adolescent girls/married women of this society is a dire need to keep them engaged and to replenish their meager family income - was designed under the head Sevika Training for Home Nursing. These women folks (those who have a tentative education up to class 8 and can read and write) are trained to attending to the ailing seniors and new born of the working women. This was started in 2003 and through Kalyania, all who completed their training, is gainfully employed giving sufficient financial support to their families. This training is unfortunately irregular as it was totally sponsor dependent.

Other supportive activities of Kalyania:

A Caring Home For the Lonely Seniors:

A home for the advanced in age:

This was considered a priority for Kalyania and two bedrooms were converted into an Old-age home at B-1/275 in 1998. Now 21 seniors are accommodated spread over four houses, procured, rented or received on lease. There is provision for healthy food, regular health check up, attendants on call and regular personal attention and companionship all at a modest at par costs through mutual agreement.

The Health Support Module:

Outdoor Medical Clinic: Started in 1998 with a few patients, it is now manned by several professionally qualified Doctors, six days a week and both allopathic and homeopathic medicines are served, mostly free of cost. A nominal membership fees has been introduced to avoid misuse of this excellent facility. On average nearly 6500 and 600 prescriptions are served annually in allo- and homeo-pathic disciplines.

This Clinic is lodged in the spacious new Annexe with provision for two Doctors chamber, covered space for waiting patients and rack for keeping medicines in a classified manner

Eye and Dental Clinics serves nearly 300 patients annually and the clinics remain open for a few hours once each week.

12-Hour Ambulance services, to nearby Nursing Homes and Hospitals. Payment at par costs.

Home rentals of portable equipments like oxygen cylinder (1), wheel chair (2), nebulizer (2), water bed (2) at nominal rentals. (Kalyania seeks more replicates of these and other equipments for improved services)

Annual health check-up of senior citizens as relating to general health, diabetes, heart, neural, blood, gynecological problems. The day-long programme is attended by more than a score of doctors and a band of technicians specializing in different disciplines who attend nearly a hundred patients.

Epilepsy club is the most sought after service which now is attending over 100 epileptics from near and far.

Miscellaneous Undertakings:

Library services is now accommodated in an annexe to the Seminar Hall with a large reading table and stacks of books for children and seniors lining the annexe and the Seminar Hall.

Supportive Spiritual and Cultural Activities: The Ladies Forum of Kalyania undertook to organize every Friday evening a spiritual programme specially designed for the senior residents at B-1/275 Kalyani where prayers, chanting, brief sermons are delivered in a cozy atmosphere that is largely appreciated.

Childrens functions: The children of the SSN and the support centers enthusiastically participate in many religious and cultural programmes organized to commemorate either national events or anniversaries of great people through songs, dancing, recitation, and games etc., joined by their School teachers, trainers and often by their guardians. These include Foundation day-cum-Dr B. C. Roys birthday anniversary, Independence Day-cum Rishi Aurobindos birthday, Bijoya Sammelani, Teachers day, Republic Day, Netaji Subhas Chandra Boses birthday anniversary, Mahatma Gandhis birthday, Saraswati Puja etc. The children wait eagerly for the Annual Childrens Sports and Annual Sit-and-Draw Competitions.

Kalyani has viable partnership with the NCC Battalion located at Kalyani who provide fruits to school children, to seniors and some medicines for the Outdoor Clinic. It also teams up with the Mahakuma Reformatory and Prison.

I also very briefly toured the area (in a car) where majority of the beneficiaries of Kalyania live. I had done so earlier once. The area now appears to be much cleaner with some thatched mud houses replaced by those that have a tinned roof.

The Outcome

We put our heads down to discuss the nuances, the constraints and positives at present in running Kalyania sponsored programmes more precisely as it relates to the School.

Salary of the paid teachers:

The financial support from Asha for Education was last provided in the FY 2012-13. This fund provided annually in earlier years was used on various recommended Heads including salary, uniform, study material, Tiffin expenses, rentals, and sometimes in maintenance. Withdrawal of support impacted most in withdrawal of increment to teachers, uniform and Tiffin. Again, the last installment of funds from Asha for Education (Rs. Rs 140992.06) was recommended for infrastructure only and was utilized accordingly as that was the mandate of the donation. The fund utilization for 2012-13 is tabulated that also shows how the Asha for Education fund was utilized.

No	Items*	AfE Outlay	Actual expense
1	Staff honorarium	-	110100
2	Free Tiffin expenses	-	105600
3	Book etc	-	20000
4	School uniform etc	-	30000
5	Rentals and Electricity	-	30000
6	Teaching materials	-	10000
16	Construction:		
	(i) Shed under Banyan tree	120000	160000
	(ii) Invertors	10000	15000
	(iii) Benches 1500/- ea (Ten No.)	11000	15000
	TOTAL	141000	**496700

*Only Heads where A for E support funds were utilized earlier are shown

** Total outlay for the School including all Head was Rs. 739800/-

The table shows that since 2012-13 support for items 1-6 was withdrawn. While Kalyania could manage to meet the expenses related to items 3, 5 and 6 expenses, there was a crunch on items 1, 2 and 4 (in order of their priority) resulting in

- Withdrawal of annual increment of ca. Rs. 100/- to teachers (SSN-K and Computer Centre),
- Tiffin was restricted to Rs.5/- per day (10cents!). The price escalation of edible is making it almost a farce.
- No uniforms could be provided. This caused major difficulties as the children grow up very fast

Given the above constraints the deficits were identified on priority items and tabulated hereunder

No.	Item	Total Outlay (in INR)	Deficit (in INR)
1	Teachers salary: proposed raise Rs.200/-p.m. for 14 teachers	INR 143000 over existing of INR 110100	32900
2	Dress for children (ca. 200 sets @ 300/- per set	60000	40000
3.	Mid-day meals (ca. @8/- per person per day	150000	70000

It appeared that the sudden withdrawal of our funds led to a readjustment /reallocation of funds to manage the School that led to the above deficits that could not be managed thru available funds. The management stated that any support in the priority areas mentioned in the above Table for even one or two years would be a great help in overall running of the School.



As it was earlier
The Banyan tree



with rain shed (AfE funded)



Dr. B. C. Roy's
Birthday Celebration



Maternity Awareness
for Ayahs



Furnitures purchased
from AfE funds



Inverter purchased
from AfE funds



Annual sports event



Prize Distribution



Guardian's meeting



Bal chetana Shibir



Galpo Dadur Asar



at Kalyani Book Fair



Health Check-up



Republic Day parade



Abhyuday and Kabita madam