# Site Visit Information

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| Project/Site Name | **Center for Learning, Hyderabad, India** |
| Site URL | <http://www.centreforlearning.org/> |
| Asha Site URL | <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=900> |
| Site purpose | **Alternative education** |
| Site Visit Date | **24th July 2012** |
| Site Visit Report Date | **5h Aug 2012** |
| Site Visit Done by | **Hareesh Veldandi, Ashwanth Vemulapalli** |
| Site funded by | **Asha Seattle Chapter** |
| Project Steward | **Vamshidhar Kommineni** |
| Years of operation | **30 years** |

# Snapshot:

People

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| --- | --- |
| Students | 20 |
| Teachers | 5 |
| Volunteer | 1 |

# Teachers:

Gurveen

Ram

Amit

Jyosthna

Saroj (We haven’t met this teacher)

# Volunteer:

Lucas from Germany

# Before site visit

We (Ashwanth and Hareesh) contacted each other and informed Mr. Ram that we would arrive at the organization on 24th July 2012 at 11:30 AM

# Site visit Summary

We (Ashwanth and Hareesh) reached CFL at around 11:30 AM where Mr. Ram was waiting for us at the school. Gurveen joined for the discussion a little later. Ram has gone over the latest developments with the school and showed the annual report and budget documents. He promised to share soft copy over email with both steward and coordinator. Gurveen mostly talked about the challenges that school is facing after right to education act. With new act in place alternative schools with out proper facilitates are no longer considered legal. She also discussed about various options the school is considering for upcoming years. After the meeting with Ram and Gurveen, Ram took me around the school. The infrastructure seemed adequate at CFL. Over last couple of years the strength of school has come down to 20’s from 80’s as result of new education regulations. A room was locked down, as they no longer run at their full capacity. After school tour, we proceeded to have lunch with students. Kids are served lunch every day for free of cost at the school. A teacher who works for CFL prepares lunch for kids in the school kitchen. Post lunch it was project time for kids at CFL. We sat in movie making class thought by Lucas (a German volunteer). We were also shown storyboards made by students from art class. We left the school at around 2:30 after spending some time with students doing their weekly project work.

Here are some of our impressions in different categories:

# Location Details

CFL is located in a good-sized residential building, and has a clean and inviting entrance. It is a small school (closer to a large house than a typical school building). There is a small open area/courtyard for lunch, outdoor activities, etc. The school building itself has 6 classrooms and a library/media room. The school also has a open stage where students present cultural activities.

# Teachers

The school has the principal/founder Gurveen (who is still very actively involved in teaching and administration) along with 4 other teachers and a volunteer. Ram is one of the longstanding teachers and helps with many of the administration tasks. Jyothsna who works with pre-school kids also takes care of cooking. Amit Deshwal, an engineer by qualification joined January 2012 takes science classes. Mr. Lukas Englehardt, a volunteer from Germany came to CFL as a part of the Weltwaerts program through Samuha helps kids with art, graphic design and sports.

# Kids

At the time of the visit, they are about 20 children. These numbers are dwindling year on year as CFL is in its periods of uncertainty with approaching deadline of RTE Act. Kids range from all ages and social spectrum. Kids are very confident and creative at what they do.

The students were in their classes when Hareesh and I arrived at CFL. Ram showed me around the school building for a little while and then left me free to interact with the children, take pictures, etc. while he was catching up with Hareesh. Generally the classrooms were clean, airy and with more of an open layout than a traditional school. Due to limited number of students, the school is divided into three groups: Pre-School, Early school and seniors. The library room is large and has a good selection of books. It also has a television and doubles as a media room for children to watch a movie as part of their curriculum.

Pre-school group have classes before lunch and leave for home after having lunch. Early school group have interactive classes where they try to develop student holistically. The open layout of the classrooms results in a more interactive learning environment. I observed two different classrooms after lunch. The younger children were involved in story boarding while seniors were involved in filmmaking. This is part of their weekly project work. Students are also involved in various activities other than education like singing, dancing, cooking, and gardening. All the activities were engaging and students are enjoying during the learning process. Students have recently worked on a gardening project where they have developed the gardening space and planted trees.

# Logistics

CFL is an organization with 30 years of experience delivering Alternative education to students in Hyderabad. Gurveen and Ram very well handle day today needs of school and students. Resources available for students are very diverse and adequate to stimulate their brains. CFL partnered with other Alternative education institutions in India to approach government seeking amendments to RTE. There efforts are still going on to persuade government to come up with a workable solution for special institutes like CFL.

# Quality of Personnel

Teachers in CFL more than anything share the same values for which organization was brought into existence. Gurveen is successful in finding the like-minded individuals who are passionate about kids and education. All the teachers in CFL are well qualified to serve the kids.

# Food

Organization provides mid day meal to the kids. On our visiting day, Kids were served rice + ragi, (lentils) and tomato chutney. Children are served food in the courtyard and cooking facilities are available upstairs. They all seem to be adequate for the current strength of school.

# Cultural Activities

One of the main objectives of CFL is to achieve all-round development of students. Towards this end they teach students various cultural activities including dance and songs. Students are trained in Graphic designing and movie making. They are also thought embroidery. Sports are also given enough attention and kids are trained in sports like volleyball, football and running.

# Funding utilization

Funds are reasonably spent on various activities required for managing a school. Expenses are quite reasonable for the kind of services the school offers. Asha funds approximately 40% of their total funds. 40-50% of the funds are obtained through fees collected from students. 10-20% of the funds are collected from Individual donors and personal contacts of Gurveen.

# Future

The school is facing challenges during the current academic year with the fast approaching RTE act. There is a lot of uncertainty around the future action plan of CFL. Education bill that has significant impact on alternative education schools like CFL. Lack of clarity on alternative education schools, not having minimum requirements for certification (vacant space, certified teaches), red tape and bribes required to get any sort of government certification and subsequent renewals etc. are few problems eclipsing the future of CFL.

However, there is light at end of tunnel. Gurveen is exploring various options to repurpose the school and the role it plays in the society. Her main idea is to cater adult kids above age of 14 with proper guidance to succeed in life. Additional details can be obtained from CFL through steward of this project. Asha during these testing periods has to work closely with this project to ensure its success.

# Overall Impression

In general, I came away with a very positive impression of how the school is run. Teachers are all engaged with the children and doing a good job interacting with children, much more so than would occur at the any other school. The children themselves are clearly happy to be present and educated at CFL. They were all much more confident than their age and socioeconomic background would indicate. I couldn’t really distinguish paid and sponsored children in the their classes which demonstrates the execution prowess of CFL. CFL has huge experience in space of Alternative education and the services offered by this institution are highly valuable. Now it is going through transformation phase to reposition its offerings for the society. I am completely confident that people behind this organization will succeed in their future plans and will stand out as a role model for other organizations in space of Alterative education.

Notes/Action Items for Asha:

Asha, as an organization, needs to look at the issue regarding alternative education in India (after RTE bill has been voted). Unfortunately, the bill has made all the schools providing alternative education illegal. And, there is no definition written anywhere for alternative education. Gurveen, along with other educationists, is trying to fight on this issue. Asha, at the organization level, can, and should, provide direction and support to put pressure on the central government and make necessary amendments to the bill that will allow for the legal existence of schools such as Centre For Learning.

Also, because of the same issue, the number of students has come down a lot. While CFL is trying to raise the awareness of the school, Asha may need to help the school in achieving this and also not look at per-school expenditures, at least for a couple of years.