Welcoming the excluded

The Swagat Kendra is a shelter home/drop-in centre set-up two years ago to reach out to destitute and exploited children. It is located in the community centre adjacent to the Okhla whole sale vegetable market in South Delhi.

Swagat literally means ‘Welcome’. The centre welcomes children working at the market, adjacent railway platform and bus terminal. They have been subject to various kinds/degree of abuse and exploitation at these venues. The rehabilitation program presently caters to 14 boys in the age group of 7 to 15 years.

At the Kendra the children are being provided with boarding and lodging facilities, health care (including awareness), education (both formal and non formal), vocational training, recreation, counseling and talent development. Of the 14 boys, seven have been mainstreamed into formal schooling since the last academic year. Rajesh and Munavar are also enrolled in the Electronic and Electrical Training and Photography training respectively. The academic performance of all the children has been very encouraging to the Jittern of Class III has secured 85% in the second term examinations and has also been awarded a scholarship of Rs.300/-. The children also attend remedial education classes which provide additional academic support.

The other children are attending the non formal education classes and will be mainstreamed into formal schooling in the academic year 2007-2008. The centre also reaches out to the other children in the community. These include children who are forced to work due to unfeasible condition at home / who are abandoned, orphaned and otherwise neglected. Efforts are made to counsel their parents/employers so that they allow the child to come and live at the Kendra. Here they are involved in non formal education, recreation, deliberation on their rights and problems. Currently 35 such children access this facility at the centre.

A much welcome support has come to the Swagat Kendra from the employees of Aricent/Cisco TAC. Known for its skill in networking for the Internet, the company is networking with a humane touch.

More than 150 employees have pledged a monthly support to the Swagat Kendra since January 2007. The very first month saw an overwhelming response with a collection of Rs.68,000/-. The employees will also spend time with the children, thereby strengthening the bond.

A special mention should be made about the role of Mr.Keshav Sharma, Team Manager at AVVID and also a sponsor parent since March 2006, who has played a lead role in building this partnership.

Jobs for Deepalaya Students

Deepalaya has been imparting Vocational Training to community youth. Skill training is being provided in electrical / electronics, computer hardware/ software, videography and photography, dress designing and beauty culture.

 Apart from the training, Deepalaya has also been networking with corporates / institutions for the successful placement of these candidates. Many others have established their own unit.

A recent association with Devyani International Limited (DIL), an associate company of the R.K. Jaipuria Group, saw seven students absorbed by DIL, to be employed at various Pizza Hut outlets in Delhi. The selection process included a written test followed by a group discussion. The candidate will undergo a one year training (monthly stipend of Rs. 3100) after which they will be promoted and posted at various locations. This is indeed a big opportunity for our children and we are thankful to DIL for extending their hands in partnership.

SEEDS of climate change

Deepalaya Schools believe in a holistic approach to Education. Students are exposed to a wide range of activities which help them discover the world. To this effect, Chandria Prakash, Anand Prakash, Srinil Mathew (Class X) and Sunil (Class IX) of Deepalaya school, Kalkaji Ext, attended a 5 day workshop on Climate Change at Mumbai. The workshop was organized by Schlumberger Excellence in Educational Development (SEED) in which 8 schools participated from across the country.

A large number of activities like presentations, model making, watching films and a quiz competition on climate change took place. Srinil Mathew, a member of the winning team received a citation which read as “excellent participation in the quiz”. Additionally, the children were fortunate enough to see the processes of oil extraction, water recycling and waste management and disposal at close quarters. Their visit was made memorable by a sightseeing tour to the Nehru Science Centre and Gateway of India. To sum it up, the children had an enriching experience.
Deepalaya wins First Prize

The Special Olympics Women’s Championship organized a Boccie and Soft Ball competition for the mentally challenged at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium on March 19th and 20th, 2007. Five different abled children namely Rahki, Pinky, Jyoti, Sangeeta and Shivani from Deepalaya actively participated in this competition. Jyoti, a cerebral palsy patient got the first prize and all the rest, the third prize. Mrs. Karan Bedi, Senior Police Officer graced this occasion and gave away the prizes. Other programs organized included Dental camp and cultural show in which Deepalaya and other schools participated with enthusiasm. In all 400 differently abled children from different NGOs took part in this two day event.

Letter to the Editor

Art & Joyce Daniels of United States have been involved with Deepalaya for the past 15 months under the auspices of the India Liaison office of Latter-Day Saints Charities. They have been teaching the children of Deepalaya School, Kalkaji Extension music and dance of New Zealand, Africa and America. The visitors were full of appreciation for the students in their letter to us. To quote a few lines:

“We are so very proud of what’s being done at Deepalaya. May you and all of your organization be blessed as you continue to serve and bless the lives of so many children and their families. We see your dream of a great Deepalaya Choir becoming a reality. And the behaviour of the children has been remarkable. We’ve had many guests to visit with us. Every one has remarked as to how happy the children are and how well behaved. We are so very proud of what’s going on at Deepalaya”.

Alumni in the Spotlight

I am Amrish Sharma, 23 year old and in the final year BA correspondence course of Delhi University. My father was selling crockery but had to give it up due to the recent demolition drive. My mother is a housewife. I have two brothers and two sisters.

I completed Grade VIII from Deepalaya and Grade X from a Government School, and rejoined Deepalaya to complete Class XII through the NIOS. Deepalaya was like a second home to me and after leaving it, it was not easy to adjust to other environments. Teachers in Deepalaya were warm and friendly and instilled self confidence in us.

On completing XII, I got a job as a Customer Care Executive in a franchise company of Airtel. Deepalaya had enabled me to attain fluency in English and this was the main reason why I got my job.

Ultimately I would like to become a professional singer. I take heart from my teachers who said, “dare to dream, believe in yourself and pursue your dreams with passion”.

I am thankful to the sound education I had which has taught me how to develop cooperation.

In February, an intercultural study week focusing on worldwide cooperation in Education was organized in Netherlands. This was a joint venture by the Windesheim University of Professional Education, OIKOS Foundation and Edukans Foundation. The objectives of the meet were:

1. To make students acquainted with development cooperation.
2. To build a network with schools and teacher-training institutes in developing countries.
3. To stimulate the mobility of students to developing countries.

Mrs. Gitanjali Krishnan, Principal, Ramditii J.R.Narang Deepalaya School represented Deepalaya in this meet. Apart from enlightening the gathering about Deepalaya and its various activities she also made a presentation on Indian Culture and Education System. The audience she feels “have been very receptive. We have been able to connect to a cross section of people in the Netherlands who have expressed support to Deepalaya’s activities.”

Newsflashes

Mela for the Differently Abled

Deepalaya along with 50 other NGOs recently participated in a two day exhibition (Mela) organized by the Blind Relief Association, Delhi. On display were various handicrafts fabricated by the physically and mentally challenged. The items on display at the Deepalaya stall included candles, potter craft, greeting cards, bead works and paintings. Both print and electronic media covered the event. On this occasion the Art of Living Foundation a non-profit organization also distributed aids and appliances like Hearing Aids, Calipers, Crutches, Tri Cycles and Cerebral Palsy chair worth over Rs. 54,000/- to the children of Deepalaya.

An Example to follow on Best Practices

It is a matter of pride for Deepalaya to be one of the two NGOs (out of 80 shortlisted) chosen by the GIT and the Ministry of Labour to study under the project – Restructuring and Expanding the National Vocational Training System (NTVS) in India. A report has been prepared laying down the essential methodologies and processes that can be identified as the Best Practices. The Deepalaya-Chameli Dewan Vocational Training Centre (VTC) located in Katkaji (5 Delhi) was studied to provide inputs for the report. The report is to be a guide for organizations that seek to have an efficient networking and information flow between trainers and trainees in vocational skill training. The VTC at Deepalaya has focused on flexi timings, flexi training scheduling, gender equity, soft skill and motivational training and other unconventional methodologies which have been systematically structured in the overall vocational education and training package. While the actual methodologies adopted by Deepalaya is recognized and built into the report, the basic philosophy and approach of Deepalaya was found by the report to be worthy of emulation.

Colophon

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Updated on IFCW

As you may be aware, Deepalaya, as a member of the International Forum for Child Welfare (IFCW) will be hosting this year’s World Forum from 21-24 August at Intercontinental, The Grand, New Delhi. The World Forum (WF) is an annual capacity building, leadership training and network building exercise for NGOs, where people interested in child welfare issues exchange ideas that would facilitate the promotion of advocacy on child rights.

As part of this event an array of luminaries will deliberate and review the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the UN. Hence, World Forum 2007 is an important stock taking opportunity for NGOs, where people interested in child welfare issues exchange ideas that would facilitate the promotion of advocacy on child rights.

An Example to follow on Best Practices