

## **STORIES FROM THE FIELD**

### **Social Initiative interns share their experiences**

*Jahangir Puri, Wednesday March 18th*  
*Johanna Berg, Frida Liljenroth*

Today, we have visited an area in Civil Lines, Jahangir Puri. We find this area very different from Zakhira that we visited on Monday. In some way it feels less organized, even more poor and there is more waste lying around in the area. Even if the area is more developed – there is governmental housing, they have water and electricity, the streets are broader, etc., the area feels more poor. This is maybe due to the rag picking is taking place in the middle of everything else. There are big garbage piles everywhere and people are working in the streets sorting all this garbage. There are pigs, dogs, goats and cows eating from the garbage piles. People in this area are also working with vegetables and along the streets there are several carts selling vegetables.

At first, we visited two classes of children attending the transitional school class. We get a lot of attention when we arrive, both from the children and from other people in the area. The children greet us with a big smile! It is great to see! Again, we can see that some children are very alert and forward, they are looking for attention, some are sitting still and don't say much. The girls are more forward than the boys. All the children give a lot of attention to the teacher, even though we have arrived and a lot of people have stopped and are watching us and what is going on.

Some of the children are not in school because they are working instead, some because they have been too ill. We are talking to some of the children.

One little boy is home alone all day long. His parents go to work early in the morning and are back late at night. During the day, he is working with rag picking and for the money he earns, he buys cookies. We ask him what he had for breakfast, and he says nothing, he was not hungry. For lunch he eats some rice that his mother has left at home. No wonder that he buys cookies, he is hungry.

We talk to one of the girls, she has never been to school before. She is 10 years old. When she was younger, she had to come to work with her mother, because her mother did not feel safe leaving her at home alone all day. Her mother is working with rag picking, both her parents have been in school for a few years. They live in a rental apartment for 800 Rs. per month. She had dhal for breakfast, and she will have the same for lunch. They mostly eat rice and fish for dinner.

Next, we go to an area where they mostly earn their living by selling dairy products. There are a lot of cows but the roads feel pretty clean. They take care of all the droppings. In this area, most of the habitants do not have an education. We are visiting a class that is going on inside the home of the teacher. She is 20 years old and has been a teacher for 3 years. She is on her second year of graduation. She is taking economics and Hindi and wants to become a teacher.

The teacher's house looks very clean. We can see that she has been sweeping the floors recently. There are a lot of flies, no wonder with all the cows close by. The class is taking place in a small room, all the children are sitting down alongside the wall. They look up when we arrive and smile! But they are still giving a lot of attention to the teacher. They follow everything she or Suman says.

We talked to some of the children. One girl is 8 years old. She has not been to school before. Her mother told her to go to school, but she didn't. Instead, she was working with her parents rag picking. Her parents are still working, but she is now attending the transitional school. They are 6 brothers and sisters, and she is number 5. Her sisters do domestic work and her brother is rag picking. Her father has been to school, but not her mother. For breakfast and lunch, she eats cookies and chapatti, for dinner rice and potato.

Comparing the two areas we have visited today, we both feel like the children in the dairy area were happier and better nourished. Maybe, this is because their parents are working with the cows and are close by during the day, even when they are working. The children are not left at home alone all day long. If they don't have money to buy food, they always have the milk.

Maybe we are fooled here. In Sweden it is also common to work with cows if you live in the country side, picking rag is not something you work with in Sweden. We are not used to see all this garbage lying in the streets, but we are used to see the cows and a farm. It would look very different in Sweden, but it is much closer to our world than the garbage.

At the end of the day, we accompanied Suman to the Civil line office for a meeting. It is great to see all the beautiful women, knowing that they are all from the area, started as teachers and are now supervisors and managers. Suman is holding the meeting and our feeling is that everyone is paying a lot of attention. They show Suman respect, listen to what she says and if one starts talking, all are soon talking. Everyone wants to say something. They are all involved in the discussion.

We have also seen this when visiting the balwadis, libraries and transitional school classes. Everyone is paying the teacher and Suman a lot of attention. They are show each other respect. The children do not talk all at once. If one child has the word, all the other children are quiet.

### **South Shahdara, Saturday 21 March -Johanna & Frieda**

We found that this area is more alive than the previous areas we have visited. People were more out in the streets, a playground in the centre gathered boys to play cricket, some plants and trees made it feel green. The houses looked more "real" there were several floors, doors and windows. The houses were painted in different colors and there were laundry hanging outside, making it look alive. Therefore, it is more difficult to imagine that the area is slum. We have understood that in some households, up to three families shared one kitchen and that this is one sign of poor living. Another sign is the public water supply in the community which the inhabitants had to pay for.

We visited a community based library which was situated in a temple area. Children were reading books together with the teacher. We got the chance to interview two children and there we understood that it was a cramped housing. The children had sometimes stomachache which may be explained by the public water supply which they also were drinking.

We also visited an Anganwadi where the small children were singing some songs. We were also shown the food that is distributed to the children.

Our last visit was in a family that participated in the yearly Pratham survey. For reflections of the survey see separate report. It was very interesting to see what a home looks like from the inside. This household looked like a real home, with different rooms, furniture and paintings on the walls. It looked nice and comfortable.