



VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN DON BOSCO ASHALAYAM

Don Bosco Ashalayam is an NGO run by the Salesians of Don Bosco working with the street and destitute children in and around Kolkata and Howrah irrespective of race, religion or gender. Currently over 550 once abandoned children are living in our 21 residential homes and 3 Night Shelters, and we have further contacts with around 3,000 children who are still living and working in the city streets.

These once abandoned children are given the chance of a new life through our educational and vocational training schemes, and through dedicated care and support develop and grow into mature, responsible and productive citizens. Part of this process is teaching the older children a skill or trade, with which they will be able to compete successfully in the job market, and so Ashalayam has a series of 25 workshops and training schemes in place.

The handicraft items that are produced are sold both in India and abroad, and the same society that once ignored these children now purchase the quality items they have created! The profit for every item that is sold is returned to the individual child, so by saving his income the child can build up a nest-egg for the future. With his material assets and the skills he has learnt, he is then able to go forth from Ashalayam with a good chance for life, his rehabilitation complete.

Amongst the children who have been living a long time of the street a lot of them do not succeed in reintegrating to formal schools. They left school very young (some of them never even started it) and most don't want to go back to school at all. It is for these children that numerous trades have been set up in the main centre of Ashalayam in Kadamtala, Howrah. Along with their work they are given basic literacy and numeracy lessons given by private tutors.

The children are paid according to their work during the training period. The money they earn is put into a savings account. The money saved is doubled (margin grant provided by Ashalayam) and given to the children when the time comes for these children to leave Ashalayam.



The craft workshops contribute to the Ashalayam methodology in various ways:-

- Helping children to forget their street past.
- Developing a sense of personal responsibility
- Forming self respect and self acceptance
- Promoting creativity
- Promoting the habit of saving
- Promoting a habit of work.

An important characteristic in the complete rehabilitation of street children is vocational training. It has been experienced and proved that children from street are able to stand on their own feet through education and training. Don Bosco Ashalayam has been in the forefront in imparting this training to them and has opened 25 trades in its different Homes.

Vocational training is given to the children of its Homes and now more than 100 boys and girls are being trained in various trades and soon will be employed in different sectors. Those who are willing may take up self-employment after their training and in this respect they are also given the requisite training of accounting and management.

NEED OF THE PROJECT

The need for Ashalayam to open up its very own Beautician Training Course had arisen since presently the trades being taught to the girls were only Knitting, Tailoring and embroidery and a wider choice of trades for the girls was felt. Which would help them further in their career or when they go back home to their respective families. With this aim in mind it was proposed to set up a beautician course in one of our Homes Asha Nayan, in Kolkata. This training would not only be open to our own Home girls; children but also to the local needy girls from poor families living in the vicinity.



OBJECTIVES AND GOALS OF THE PROJECT

It is desired that through this professional beautician training the children will meet self-actualisation that will ultimately help them to become responsible adults. This valuable skill is a rich field which may provide them with a professional occupation that will facilitate their entrance into adult life after leaving the shelter home of Don Bosco Ashalayam.

It shall be the endeavour of this project to do the following :-

1. **Build a sense of Responsibility:-** Beautician Course is a rich and vast field that offers these children a wonderful opening to the working world. Most of the children having spent a long time in the street have been severely damaged and have lost most of their self- esteem. Ashalayam's goal is to help them to become responsible and positive adults. Working as a Beautician we are sure is one of the avenues to reach this objective.
2. **Professionalism:-** Working as beautician in a Beauty parlour or from home requires exactness and precision. It also requires organisation and cleanliness. It teaches one to value one's tools and their maintenance. For any work, it is necessary to follow precise receipt and a methodology. This beautician course shall give the child a good opportunity for professional work.
3. **Technical skills:-** For the trained child after having acquired the know-how it will be possible for some of the children to be apprentices to some of Calcutta's best Beautician Parlours.
4. **Business Acumen:-** Delivery of the beautician service to the customers either in the shop or at the house of the customers will allow the children to acquire business knowledge and will help them achieve the creativity and the spirit of enterprise. This will promote a positive result through the strong relationship they have acquired during their time in the street. To earn money and save it will help them understand the value of their work.
5. **Teamwork:-** A successful workshop requires absolute organization and impeccable teamwork amongst the children and adults involved. This teamwork is what teaches the children mutual confidence and respect.



PARTICIPATION OF THE FRENCH VOLUNTEERS

In this endeavour 5 French Volunteers from an Organisation in France called “RU DES ENFANTS” have been very gracious enough to sponsor the initial finance for the initiation of this Training Course. Not only with finance but with their hard labour and very valuable time also they have contributed to the development of this project.

The 5 French Volunteers are:-

1. Cecile Laine (President)
2. Cecile Artigalas (Secretary)
3. Laurence Herman
4. Helene Doucerain
5. Jerome Feys

Financial Contribution from the French Organisation was used in the following areas:-

1. Salaries of Instructors
2. Purchase of Equipments and machineries
3. Purchase of materials for the Beauty Parlour
4. Purchase of training materials
5. Maintenance cost of the Course
6. Admission Costs
7. Electricity and Water Cost.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

Timing and syllabus of the training course

The 3-months syllabus for this beautician course shall be:-

1. Manicure
2. Pedicure
3. Waxing
4. Threading
5. Bleaching
6. Hair Care (oil Massage, Henna, Colouring)
7. Skin care (facial, ozone treatment)



8. hair Styling (perming, roller setting)
9. makeup for party and bridal occasions.
10. Body Massage
11. Sari wearing

At present this Training shall start with 16 girls majority of which are needy girls from the nearby Locality.

INAUGURAL FUNCTION

The inaugural function of the Beautician Course took place on 11th of July 2005 (Monday). People present were Fr. Mathew George-Director of Ashalayam, Fr. Subir Mondol-Asst Director, Mr. Bernard Co-ordinator-VTC, Mr. Alekhya Das, Co-ordinator-Sanjog, the 5 French Volunteers, the Co-ordinator, staff and children of Asha Nayan as well as the girls who would start the course accompanied by all the girls from the knitting section..

The function started at 11:30 am with our Director Fr. Mathew George cutting the ribbon at the entrance of the section and saying a prayer and blessing the entire section. This was followed by the song "We Shall Overcome" sung by 5 girls from the Knitting section.

Mr. Bernard gave a very emphatic speech stating the heartfelt thanks towards to the French Volunteers for their time, labour and money in making this dream come true and the scope this beautician course shall offer to our girls and the local girls from the needy family who are interested in joining for this course.

The function ended with Jerome, one of the volunteers, giving a concluding speech thanking Don Bosco Ashalayam and all their staff for the love and co-operation received by them at all times to make this project come alive.

A small snack party was organised by the volunteers to celebrate the occasion.



SPECIAL POINTS TO BE NOTED

There are some special points that should be highlighted.

1. Don Bosco Ashalayam shall be the first Salesian Organisation in the world to start its own Beautician Course. This is really a great achievement for Ashalayam.
2. The course shall be for 3 months after which they shall be placed as interns in Beauty Parlours in Kolkata for a further period of 3 months. After completion of this internship they might be absorbed in the organisation. Salary shall range from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 8,000 (inclusive of commission and tips)
3. On successfully completion of this training each girls shall be given a tool kit with which they can earn around Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 per month from home which shall help augment the earnings of their family.

PLANS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- I. **Financial and Economical Sustainability:-** Activities of the children can never be completely auto-financed, as a child remains a vulnerable person, whose needs must be satisfied, and is a non-productive person from an economic point of view.

The objective of the French Volunteers, is to withdraw completely from managing the project at the end of the 1-year period but the sustainability process will be supported by Ashalayam through on-going training, financing and structuring. Ashalayam shall develop new autonomous financial capacities or exploit existing ones and shall thus be able to extend their influence as well as make contacts at a Regional and International level.

In its 19 years of work, Ashalayam already has developed close partnerships with different organization all over the world, UNICEF, UNESCO, Groupe Developpement-France, ECPAT-Luxembourg, CCFD-France, ASA-France, ASA-Swiss, our Associations in Germany, Italy, etc who have during the past, and still continue to assist us in our various projects. At the end of the project duration,



lobbying from Ashalayam shall encourage them to provide additional funds to face the issue.

- II. Institutional Sustainability:-** Don Bosco Ashalayam has been structured and organised over these past 20 years. This project further augmented over the year shall further strengthen the continuation and management of the project. Capacity reinforcement and participation of the final beneficiaries will be ensured through placement support of the child and teenager community groups by staff members.
- III. Social and Cultural Sustainability:-** This Beautician Training Course will significantly modify the beneficiaries' way of life and a positive impact will be observed on the families, communities and indirect beneficiaries. By promoting rights for all the children, with emphasis on training, the object will encourage a progressive transformation within the communities. The project is basically a tool for socio-cultural changes at a local level. The significant efforts made in terms of this Training will enable the communities themselves to be empowered to face the processes they themselves have started.

CONCLUSION

Looking back to the history of Ashalayam, in the year 1985 the centre had a temporary shed close to Howrah Station. In those days Ashalayam could only afford to provide night shelter and medical facilities to the street and platform children. Over these years Don Bosco Ashalayam has grown considerably and now it has 21 homes and 3 night shelters catering to more than 550 children, both boys and girls. Besides providing the basic amenities like food, clothing and shelter Ashalayam also supports the children through Education, Vocational Training, Medication, Counselling and other Recreational facilities. The organization serves another 3,000 children through its various projects and outreach programmes and activities in trying to bring the station and street vagrants into the main stream of the society.



Don Bosco Ashalayam has made a remarkable growth in the rehabilitation of such destitute children through its work. It has provided land and house to more than 60 children of which 47 are happily married. All these would not have been possible without the concerted efforts of the Salesian Community working in tandem with all its benefactors and well wishers. Don Bosco Ashalayam is indebted to so many people- the benefactors, well-wishers, friends and community workers for their continuous generous help all through these past 20 years.

To conclude we say that those unfortunate victims who have lost their families are helped to find “Home” and “Hope” in DON BOSCO ASHALAYAM. Our desire is that every effort must be made to get our children out of the street and prevent others from coming to the streets. There must also be concerted efforts from the part of every child. They need to grow up in their rightful habitat- the family - and to be educated and trained so that they can contribute their share as a worthy citizen of our country and the world at large.
