

## **Site visit report**

Project: Mera Sahara, Joint Women's program

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2026

ASHA for Education Representative: Ms. Rohini Muthuswami

The Mera Sahara school is closed for the summer holidays; however, the organization is running a summer school/program. Therefore, I visited their summer school. There were about 50 students today.

### **Interaction with Tanya and Vimla:**

Vimla brought me up to date with work done by JWP. I had previously visited about 6-8 years ago when Jyotsna was still the director. Of course, she is 87 now and her son is the director.

The skill program has been expanded due to Tanya's efforts -Sewing school, computer training, and cooking/baking. I met Santhosh who has been running the sewing school and saw the work that was being done. The computer training was closed due as the trainer is on leave. The cooking/baking program is very good (I sampled their rice cookies).

Vimla told me that they have started "Wings of Hope" to educate adolescent girls about menstruation hygiene and to provide cloth pads that are reusable. The pads are made at the sewing school and are of good quality. I was apprehensive about the washing, but Vimla assured me that it can be easily washed and is reusable.

Vimla told me that currently 110 students are enrolled at Mera Sahara. In the 2025-26 academic year, there were 214 children enrolled of which 201 have got admission in the Government school (90%) /private school (10%). The major roadblock in the admission process is the documentation. I met some kids at Mera Sahara who are still struggling with the documentation. For admission, many different kinds of documents are needed: Birth certificate, Caste certificate, income certificate of the parents, aadhar card and so on and so forth. As most parents are migrant laborers, it is very difficult to get the documentation. Births are still at home, and birth certificates might be in their village. So, this is a constant struggle for Mera Sahara. This is compounded by New Education Policy, which states that only children of 6 years are to be admitted Class (grade) I. The younger children are supposed to go to aanganwadi but it is dysfunctional. So, Mera Sahara is also running a creche.

Dropout remains a problem. The government school where Mera Sahara is located is only upto 8<sup>th</sup> class. Parents are reluctant to send their daughters to the higher secondary school which is located further away. Therefore, the older children drop out and are pushed either into taking care of their younger siblings or to work.

I was curious about smartphone addiction and asked whether children make reels. Vimla told me that the organization does regular counseling regarding cybercrime, what they need to be

aware of, and what kind of reels can be uploaded. But it is continuous process as smartphones are easily available and data is cheap.

In addition, a Sun Sakhi program has been initiated where girls can discuss their problems.

**Mera Sahara school:**

The building is in very bad shape. Not only is there seepage but plaster is falling off. The 3 toilets/washrooms are unusable and need to be. The owner has not increased the rent of the building but wants JWP to take care of repairing and maintenance of the building. It is going to cost approximately Rs 3,00,000.

The children were busy learning poems and drawing. No formal classes were being held but it was a pleasant surprise to know that two of the girls are back as teachers. Preetima is a BA 3<sup>rd</sup> year student (Delhi University School of Open Learning) and Shivani (who had to be rescued from a bad marriage by JWP) is planning to give the 10<sup>th</sup> class exam through National Institute of Open Schooling. Three teachers were on leave. I met the rest of them.

The school is run in two sessions: Morning and Afternoon. Food (Breakfast and lunch) comes from Sai Baba Mandir even during the summer break. Tutorial program runs from 2 to 4 pm.

**Overall impression:**

The school and skill programs are running well. However, we do need to do something about the Mera Sahara school building. Relocating to another place is not possible because the rents are very high. JWP would love to retain the premises, but they need financial help to repair the building.

Also, Santosh requested, if possible, to provide funds to purchase an interlocking machine for their Sewing Skill Center.

JWP has the FCRA till 2027. However, they are starting with the renewal process because the documentation process is extensive.





