

# Site Visit Report of Saugath, Palamu, Jharkhand

Site Visitors: Sakshi Jain and Smeet Bhatt

Date – September 3, 2021

## Attendees:

AfE San Francisco chapter volunteers: Sakshi Jain, Smeet Bhatt

Project partner and beneficiary side: Mr. Pandey, kids, parents, and teachers

## Overview



Thank you for the opportunity to closely understand and perform a due diligence of the work being done at Saugath, Palamu. Smeet and I jumped on video call with Mr. Pandey on Sept 3, 2021 (Saturday) at 9 pm and the call continued until 10:30 pm. During this time, we surveyed the physical location and spoke to project managers, teachers, students and parents of the kids attending the school. Please find our observations and recommendations described in this report. Overall, we thought that given the limited resources, the program was being run well with integrity and intention. All the stakeholders (kids, parents, teachers) felt that Saugath was

supporting their critical life needs - food, hygiene and the value of education.

## Education

There were about 30 kids on the day at the Palamu location, outside a hut. They have another location with roughly 20-30 kids. Most students are in the age range of 3-6 years and came from nearby villages within a radius of 1 km. The school generally runs from 8:30 am to noon. On education front, Saugath focussed on teaching kids reading & writing alphabets and numbers (including English & Hindi alphabet). They also try to familiarize kids with the idea of going to a school every day and sitting to study. Currently there are 2 teachers in the Saugatha.

**Games:**

The only game that students play is Kabbadi and they enjoy playing that.

**Infrastructure & Amenities:**

The school was the backyard of a Kusumi's hut, one of the school teachers (also in the image above). The students would sit on a thin floor mat. All of them had books, slates (small blackboards) and pencils. The hut fell in the middle of the farm, with not much around. I also noticed almost all kids having masks worn, which is great and reflective of the medical services being provided by the program. The school ran during the day and hence had enough bright sunlight. They would however struggle during rains since they would take the kids inside Kusumi's hut, which is quite small and cannot accommodate all the students. Any investment in a solid permanent structure, would give this NGO its well deserved stability.

**Conversations with kids, parents and teachers**

We spoke to 3 kids during the visit - Anjali Kumari, Sandhya Kumari and Priyam Singh (2.5 years). While Anjali was understandably shy (these kids haven't spoken to anyone on phone via video before), she said she enjoyed going to the school. Sandhya excitedly recited all of Devnagiri as well as English alphabets. We also spoke about the food provided at school (daal, rice, eggs) and she mentioned she likes it. Priyam Singh was able to call out some of the words starting from an alphabet called out by the teacher. It was really humbling to see the energy put in by the teacher to nudge these kids for learning.

We also chatted with Sadhana Devi, mother of 3 girls, all of whom attended Saugath. She is glad that this school exists and that her kids (especially girls) are receiving early education and food. 2 of her kids are now in govt school.

We spoke with both the teachers, Kusumi and Priyanka, both of whom together seem to perform over 80% of the work needed to run the center. Kusumi is extremely driven for this cause and in fact has used the back of her home as the site for the school.



They are grateful to Asha for supporting this cause and thoroughly enjoy surrounding and teaching kids of this age. They looked happy and engaged, with the only complaint of salary being mostly the same for the past couple of years (called out in recommendations as I strongly believe this investment is important for the program).

### KPI (Key Performance Metrics)

They graduated about 16 kids to the nearby government school last year. The teachers prepare kids for tests for entering the govt schools and ensure that they are enrolled. They also follow up with the kids after, to nudge a continued investment in education by these children.

Awareness: Teachers often spend time after school visiting the homes of students talking to parents to increase awareness of education, especially if a kid is absent for a few days.

### Navigating COVID

For 2-3 months the classes were closed during COVID

- Dry snacks were given during COVID
- Each teacher is assigned to a mohalla
- Workload increased for teachers during COVID

### Food & Health:

Kids were happy with the food situation at the school - daal, rice etc. Saugath also has a medical professional who provides basic medicines or refers the kids (and sometimes some parents too) to the nearby clinics if needed.

### Recommendations

- **Increasing the salary of the teachers:** Teachers are the most critical part of keeping this initiative up and running and they're taking the bulk of the load. When we asked the teacher if her salary was increased, she said "No" -- however, what she probably meant was that the increase was very limited. The salary (Rs. 3800 per month) would be low even adjusting for the standards in their neighbourhood. Given how critical a role teachers play in taking this initiative forward (both in amount of work and the roadmap ahead), we'd strongly recommend allocating
- **Introducing more games for the school** that can help students with diverse fun experiences. Examples of scalable games include - simple board games, football, coloring pencils and clay. During this growth phase, it is important (and not expensive) to help kids leverage all parts of their brain and physique.