

## SAIS Basundhara Virtual Visit

**Project:** SAIS Basundhara (<https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=1196>)

**Type of project:** Residential School

**Supporting Chapter:** Purdue (<https://purdue.ashanet.org/>)

**Type of visit:** Virtual via Google Meet

**Date:** October 11th, 2020

**Time:** 10:30 PM EST

### **Goals:**

1. To interact with the students and teachers and understand their individual role and experiences
2. To understand the current status of activities and how they are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown

### **Asha members attending the meeting:**

Adarsh - Volunteer and Project Steward ([adarshbarik1@gmail.com](mailto:adarshbarik1@gmail.com))

Prajakta

Rachana

Kushagra

Surabhi

Priyankar

Niharika

### **SAIS Basundhara members organizing the meeting:**

Snigdha Biswal - Project Partner

### **About SAIS Basundhara:**

SAIS Basundhara is a residential school for orphaned/abandoned children and its prime objective is to provide a decent and normal childhood, along with qualitative teaching to the kids of Basundhara. The school is located at Gatiroutpatna in the Cuttack district of Orissa. The project was established in 2010 and Asha Purdue Chapter has been supporting it from 2014.

They conduct classes from pre-school to class VIII. The pre-school is equipped with a play-hall and a play-garden. Mediums of instruction at the primary level are Oriya and English. The kids are also taught yoga, art and music. Both the teachers and kids stay in the hostel. Asha Purdue supports the salary of teachers and support staff (House mother, hostel superintendent). Review calls are held with the project partner and Purdue volunteers twice a year before initiating a disbursement.

### **The Virtual Visit:**

Teachers, volunteer teachers, support staff and few students joined in on the meeting with Asha volunteers. The students and support staff joined from the school while others from their home. In normal circumstances, teachers and kids both stay in the hostel but due to COVID-19, most of them have gone to their homes. The virtual visit started with an informal introduction from students, staff and teachers. They expressed their interests and things they are currently learning.

After the onset of COVID-19, the schools had to close abruptly in the middle of March. As per the instructions of the government, they had to send the children to their own homes or relatives' homes immediately after this declaration. Only 7 girls, who are in Nursery (2), class IV (1), class X (2) and college (2) remained in the hostel. They were accompanied by 1 teacher, 1 superintendent and 2 house mothers. For the children in the hostel, they follow and try to maintain the usual routine for school and hostel - like morning prayer, morning and evening study time, school study time, play time, yoga, handwork and drawing period etc. While doing all this, they have been careful in maintaining proper sanitization procedures with basic precautions. The college going girls continue their study by attending the online classes which are being conducted by their teachers in college. Class X girls avail the benefit of online teaching from their teachers and the tuition teacher who is coming thrice a week to the hostel.

### **Interaction with Students:**

We interacted with the students who were in the school. Since none of Asha volunteers spoke Odiya, we talked in Hindi and English which was translated by the project partner and support staff. The students spoke in Odiya and Hindi. They were a bit shy at first but we were able to have some conversation with them. Our conversation has been summarized below:

- Poonam Nayak: She is in class 4 and likes to play ludo in her free time.
- Rakhi Das: She is the youngest student in the hostel and is currently in nursery.
- Sulochna Sathpathy: She is in +3 Commerce (degree college). She wants to work in the banking field and currently the oldest student in the hostel.
- Rachana Jena: She is in +2 Commerce. She likes dancing. She likes to dance to Hindi songs and also likes Odissi.
- Prithi Reddy: She is in class 10 and likes to read stories.
- Kunu Badar: She is class 10 and likes sports, reading story books and singing.
- Ranu Mohapatra: She dropped out from the school but she is interested in dance, singing, drawing and helps kids with that. She would like to become a dance teacher. She is also getting vocational training in sewing.
- Pallavi: She is in nursery.
- We asked kids if they understand everything that is taught in the class and they said that they ask questions if they don't understand anything.
- After our conversation, Prithi and Rachana showed yoga postures. The nursery kids, Rakhi and Pallavi, sang some English and Hindi songs. While they needed some help understanding our questions during conversation due to language barrier, they were very confident and happy while performing yoga and singing.

### **Interaction with Teachers:**

After interacting with the kids, we spoke with all the teachers who joined for the call. Our conversation is summarized below:

- Bidhu Bhushan Mohanty: He is a part time volunteer and spends around 4 hours a day teaching English in the school. He has been volunteering for more than a year now. He said his experience has been nice and fulfilling at the school.
- Suraj Behra: He is a part time teacher who teaches Maths and Science to class 7th and 8th. He also does some other social work. He is also continuing his diploma degree.
- Bhagyasree Rout: She teaches Sanskrit and Social Science.
- Rasmita Joganiya: She teaches History and Maths. She has been with the school for a year and has good bonding with kids. She also helps the kids with extra curricular activities like singing, drawing in the after hours.
- Jyotirmayee Swain: She teaches Odiya, Geography and History to class 1st to 8th. She told that kids are very close to them. The teachers help kids with extra curricular activities during weekend and before events like Independence day and Republic day.
- Priyadarshini Khandual: She teaches Science, English and Math to class 2nd to 7th.
- Dharitri Sahoo: She teaches English, Geography and Odiya.
- Sasmita Mohanty: She is a Science teacher for class 4th to 8th. She told that the kids are like family to them.
- Jayashree Sarangi: She teaches rhymes and story telling in Nursery. She also teaches History to class 4th, 5th and 7th. She told that kids are good and cooperate with teachers and they treat them like family.
- Harapriya Rout: She is hostel superintendent. She helps kids with their daily routines like morning prayers, tuition, online class (10th class), dinner and craft learning. She told that the kids are brave and give courage to teachers.
- The project partner told us that the hostel superintendent is helped by house mothers, Bandana and Supriya. They also help in teaching when teachers are not in the hostel.
- The project partner told us that the staff from Swadhar greh (another unit of Basundhara) act like local guardians for the kids.
- The medium of instruction is Odiya.
- We asked if the kids try for any scholarships and the project partner told that since the kids come from very poor educational background, they cannot compete for the scholarships based on merit.
- We asked if they have training program for teachers and the project partner told us that all the residential teachers are newly recruited one year back. The old non-residential teachers had to leave the school because the government barred non-residential teachers from the residential schools in Odissa. Most of the new recruits have experience in teaching and have worked in the schools before.
- We asked if the teacher face any problems or difficulties in their job but none of the teachers mentioned anything.
- The project partner told that the trained teachers receive more salary as compared to the untrained teachers.

- They also have an Educational Adviser, Dr. Jayant Biswal. He volunteers for the school but not on a regular basis. He is an English professor who also teaches tribal kids and helps the project partner with school work.
- We asked the teachers how they deal with different levels of understanding in kids and one of the teachers replied that they put more effort on the kids who don't understand concepts in the first go. They spend more time on those kids.

### **Interaction with Project Partner:**

After interaction with teachers, we talked with the project partner, Snigdha Biswal.

- We told her about the recent changes to FCRA bill and requested an audit report for past two years. She told that the school's audit happens as part of Basundhara's (the umbrella organization) audit. They will send it later (As of now, we have received audit reports from her).
- She told that due to COVID-19 they are awaiting instructions from the government to finalize their future plans. They are thinking of letting older girls return to the hostel if they provide them a written consent. However, at this point they cannot form a concrete plan without further instructions from the government.
- She told that some of the girls go to college after 10th. They usually don't get any scholarship but the lecturers from college help them financially/with books/with the application process etc.

### **General impression:**

- We did face a little bit of difficulty interacting with students due to language barrier. However, once they understood our questions they seemed confident when interacting.
- The teachers seemed happy with the work they are doing and share a good bond with the children.
- The COVID-19 has affected their future plans but they are trying to work through this pandemic while adhering to the government directives.

### **From the volunteers:**

I was impressed to see the kids singing poems in English and Odiya. Two students are studying commerce in college and it looks like they are provided good education. Overall, the students were very enthusiastic to talk and share their co-curricular and yoga skills. Teachers staying onsite have ensured that the residential students did not miss classes. The teachers and the superintendent seemed to be caring and supportive of their wards. I appreciate their efforts to teach online during the pandemic, and now onsite, taking precautions towards the pandemic - Prajakta

### **For further information:**

Video link of the meeting:

[https://purdue0-my.sharepoint.com/personal/pwaghmar\\_purdue\\_edu/\\_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fpwaghmar%5Fpurdue%5Fedu%2FDocuments%2FAsha%2FSAIS%2DB](https://purdue0-my.sharepoint.com/personal/pwaghmar_purdue_edu/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fpwaghmar%5Fpurdue%5Fedu%2FDocuments%2FAsha%2FSAIS%2DB)

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