

Kondh Play Schools Site Visit

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Site Visit Date: 17th March 2020

Background:

Kondh Schools original name in Telugu is Sankaran Thatha Atala Badi. The schools are located in remote villages in Vishakapatnam District in Andhrapradesh. All these villages are inhabited by tribal people, mostly kondhs (name of the tribe). These villages do not have any government schools. There are ashram schools (boarding schools for tribal children) in a town where children are admitted to class 3. These Play Schools are for the children to provide primary education through songs/plays to make the learning enjoyable. Focus subjects are Telugu, English and Mathematics. All the teachers are from the local communities and they work as full-time teachers for a nominal honorarium. These teachers do not have any formal teachers training, they are either completed 12th and some of them completed degree. Before they start working in the school, they were given training about the teaching methods. Every month, there will be a review meeting for two days facilitated by Ms. Ramalakshmi, the Project coordinator. We have attended the second day of one such review meeting on 17th March 2020.

We have reached Anakapally (District Vishakapatnam in Andhrapradesh State) by train morning at 7:30 am and reached the Acchayapeta village. Mr. PS Ajay Kumar, who has started kondh schools lives in the village and next to his house is the S.R. Sankaran Education and Training center, where the monthly review meeting for the kondh schools takes place.

Teachers came to the village two days before i.e., on the 15th evening. On 16th, the initial review was conducted and discussed the schools status and progress made in the last month. On the second day, the plan is to decide the teaching material for the following month and practicing the content.

The day started after breakfast at about 9:00 am with teachers introducing themselves and their schools. Considering some of the schools have been running for several years, we focused more on what has been achieved so far. How many children were admitted to the government-run residential schools and how they are performing in the schools. All the teachers make a list of children who are old enough to go to residential schools and identify which schools they can attend. They accompany the children with their parents to the schools and get them admitted. Teachers also follow the progress of the children in the schools. Most of the children, when they come back to villages during holidays, attend playschools. We were happy to hear that since the playschools are started, more children are getting admitted to boarding schools and the dropout rate is reduced drastically. It was also heartening to hear that these children have been performing exceptionally well in the schools.

Asha Frankfurt has been supporting playschools in 5 villages (Thotalagondhi, Mullumetta, Addatheegala, Jarrai and Ullikallalabanda). Currently, there are about 100 children in total attending these schools. Children are divided into three groups (A, B, C) based on their age,

how long they have been in the school and how much they learned so far. Each has different learning plan.

Example:

Group A: Telugu (15 words reading and 10 words writing), English (12 words reading and 10 words writing), Mathematics (Reading and writing of Telugu/English numbers from 500 to 1000, Multiplication tables – 2 tables)

The next item on the agenda is to plan the teaching material for the following month. That includes alphabets, words, numbers and also what songs and games. Songs and games are meant to learn new words and recognize and remember numbers. We had also taken part in a game wherein standing a circle, you need to count number and whenever it is multiple of 5, you have to clap. It was fun to play and needs a lot of focus. Ms. Ramalakshmi made sure that each of the teachers participated in practicing and comfortable with the content.

Once the practice session was over, it was time for open discussion among teachers and sharing the newly learned content. With that, the training session ended and teachers are fully equipped with needed material for the following month.

Conclusion:

It was heartening to see the very high motivation of the teachers, who are paid only a nominal honorarium (Rs. 5750). They understand the importance of education and how it can change the lives of children. In Ms. Ramalakshmi, they have a very good facilitator and trainer, who has creative ideas and patience in explaining them during the training. We are sure that all the efforts put by the Kondh Plays school team with the financial support of Asha Frankfurt will go a long way in bringing the socio-economic change in those communities.

Photos of teachers practicing games and songs:

