

Kankura Masat Social Welfare Society: Tiyas School and Society Visit Report

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Students with me outside Tiyas School

Background:

The Kankura Masat Social welfare society is a society located in the rural areas of West Bengal. It is a society meant to help the poorer village families in the area. The society runs many different things including the Tiyas school, a coaching center, a new pharmaceutical center, senior citizen programs, and farmer education programs. During the visit we mainly focused on the school and the coaching center. The Tiyas school runs from Preschool to 4th grade. After that, many of the school students attend a different secondary school however,

they can still attend coaching classes from grades 5 to 12. The coaching center offers coaching in several subjects and is open to kids who attended other primary schools (not Tiya School) as well. Overall the coaching center has 14 teachers and the school has 12 teachers. In both the school and center combined, the number of girls significantly outnumber the amount of boys. In fact, 70% of all the students in both the coaching center and the school are girls.



My Visit:

My visit took place in the mid morning of March 31, 2018. Throughout the visit I was accompanied by Dr. Ajoy Saha, who proposed the project to ASHA London and MN and knows the school very well, and Mr. Sajal, the secretary of KMSWS. Both Dr. Saha and Mr. Sajal have been very helpful throughout this whole trip and visit. At the start of the trip I

was led into a tiny room which is used as an office, library room, meeting room, and break room for teachers. The room is incredible small and yet is used for multiple purposes. The classrooms are filled with anywhere between 4 to 8 long benches and a blackboard up front. Most of the rooms don't have a fan even though the building is extremely hot. There is a courtyard in the middle of the building and a partial second level. This includes a couple more classrooms and a tiny computer room with four used computers.

I had the opportunity to speak with many upper class students who are currently part of the coaching center. The students said that they love the coaching center because it has inspired them to want to do amazing things just like their teachers. In fact, going to school has inspired some of the children to become teachers. Ria H. is a former student who attended the coaching center and is now teaching KG students while completing a distance education for her MA. She said that she is teaching because she loves children and attending the coaching center inspired her to become a teacher. The center has seen many successful students leave the center. They also said that the center gave them cheaper access to education. In the coaching center, they and their families could afford to study since it costs around 350 rupees per month for all subjects rather than the 300 rupees per month per subject that you would find outside. I also asked the students what they thought needed to be improved in the center. The answers for this varied slightly depending on the student's various interests. For example, a boy in eleventh standard who is a sports champion and has won several medals for the 100 mts and 200 mts events in track and field at the state level. He wanted new sports equipment, a track and a training center. Another student, a girl in tenth standard named Angina Kah, says that she likes the standard of education at the center but wished that the computer quality and computer rooms were better. Other students want to take more science classes, something which isn't taught after year 10, which would require more teachers who are advanced in the

subject. However, all students agreed that the water quality of the school needed to be improved.

At the end of the visit we went to the little garden that is on the roof. There they are growing fruits and eatables to help feed the students. The farmer at the school is also trying to grow mushroom as they are very nutritious. He is trying to grow the mushrooms organically and has taught farmers in the area his technique. They are trying to implement this on a larger scale. I also got the chance to meet with several students who have left the career center. A lot of these students are very successful. They have earned scholarships, degrees and are now working to support their low income families. A girl named Ria for example left the coaching center and is doing long-distance MA. Meanwhile, she is also teaching at a local school and is earning money for her family. She loves children and said that the teachers at the center inspired her to accomplish her goals. Lastly, I was able to meet several younger students from class 1. The students were very sweet and although they didn't understand much English Dr. Saha was able to ask them questions and translate for me. He asked the children questions such as how many had brushed their teeth in the morning. Most of them had. At Tiya's school they are taught personal hygiene and it seems like a lot of kids are using this information. A lot of the children also raised their hands when asked if they have breakfast. However, very few claimed that they would have dinner as they are part of poor families. Considering that the children are not provided with a meal when they are at school, most of the children end up eating only one meal a day as their families cannot afford to provide them with anything more.



Student who has won several 1st place medals in track and field

Current Needs

The first priority would be increasing the teacher salary. Teachers who are at the school are currently far less than even those that teachers of a government organization would get paid. The proposition for teacher salary provided to me by Mr. Sajal is a total of 662,400 Rupees or more is given to pay for the 12 teachers who are currently at Tiyas school. This would provide each teacher with 4,600 rupees a month since that is the minimum compared to government organizations.

The second priority would be to provide some dietary support for the children at the school. This would include something such as dried fruit to be served to the children in the middle of the day as many of them don't get enough nutrition and foods. This would cost a total of 1,325,000 Rupees. The next priority would be to provide stationary for the school. This would cost 84,000 Rupees annually. All of these top three priorities would be recurring costs.

Overall Impression

The society is run very well and is full of teachers who are extremely passionate about teaching and students who are dedicated to learning. Many students who leave the coaching

center are very successful. The school is run very well however, they still have a lot of things that they need to make the school better.

The society is a large and very supportive community. With the supplies, material and money that they have they are really doing an amazing job to help many poor people from rural children to senior citizens. I was extremely impressed by the warm welcome I received at the school as well as the way the school and coaching center are conducted.



Other Support

The school receives minimal funds from the local Rotary Club. The club provided 2 of the 4 used computers for the computer room and makes small but constant donations of things such as chairs or tables. There are plaques throughout the school for things the rotary club has donated. ASHA London has also very recently gotten involved with KMSWS. ASHA London

just started in 2017 to help pay for teachers salary for the coaching center alone, as well as improve water quality at the school. The government has also helped the school, but not by very much. As I mentioned above they donate a very minimal amount to help pay the teacher salaries. They also granted permission for KMSWS to start a pharmacy to provide basic drugs to the families living in the area. However, the government isn't providing much other support. That is why the help of ASHA is key to the success of Tiyas school and KMSWS.