

Kaknia Masat School Visit in Masat GP (Padmanava Sen – 13th March 2017 – padmanava.sen@gmail.com – Asha Bangalore/Asha Central Team)

Snapshot of Visit:

- Visit Summary
 - Reached Netra train station from Sealdah, Kolkata (1.5 hr via Diamond Harbor local) around 9-30 am. Ajoy Saha, a long-term Asha volunteer (UFlorida) accompanied me. Mr Sajol Saha from Kaknia school received us at station and we went to the school by Auto (7 km).
 - Discussed with Sajol about the background of the school.
 - Interacted with the students (Class 11 and above) who went to the school or coaching center for one hour.
 - Separately interacted with students of Class 6 -10th (currently going to coaching classes)
 - Hopped from Class to Class (starting from LKG to Class 4). Checked the language and mathematics skills in each class
 - Discussed with Teachers about the current needs and any other requirements for the school
- Overall impression
 - The school is built based on the needs of local students by the local people. The dedication of teachers and other people involved is very clear. The school runs from kindergarten to Class 4. The coaching center starts from there onwards till Class 12.
 - School has a very good infrastructure construction-wise. There are few improvements that can be done (mentioned later).
 - Not only education, the organisation has a good history of hosting cultural events (it started with a Raksha-Bandhan event with senior citizens). Children are also taught music and dances aimed at different events around the year.
 - Most of the infrastructure is built by local contribution and some one-time support from different organizations (India and abroad). They got FCRA years back and have renewed it as well. The school has RTE recognition as well, so legal issues visible in supporting this school.
 - The quality of education is very good compared to Government schools (from my experience). Given most of the teachers are equipped to teach older students (before and after school hours) helped the teaching as well.
 - Many students from neighbouring primary school come for the coaching classes. The fees charged 50-100 Rs is much lower than 200-300 Rs in other places. In some cases, they need to waive the fees as well depending on the financial situation.
 - For primary school, main strength is the reputation of the school, quality of education and very low fees.

- **Current need**

- **First priority-** Increasing the teachers' salaries is most crucial to continue this noble effort. Some teachers who have been teaching for 10+ years are still getting 1500-2000 Rs since the support mostly came in one-time efforts. The area being a bit remote, there is no scope of CSR involvement.
- Among infrastructure gaps, the water available in the school is salty and hence, most have to bring water from home. Also, there is a small bridge crossing a canal to reach the school. That may need some reinforcements. Some reference books for higher classes are also needed for the library.
- For now, there is no mid-day meal system. As such, there is not much requests from the parents. But at one point, some nutritious foods can be thought of checking the BMIs. There are regular health checkups done. For coaching center students, there is no need for food as such as most of them are locals.

Details:

Background – Please refer to the first visit done by Dr Ajoy Saha. The school has started more than 12 yrs back and started in a small wooden structure run by very dedicated locals. In 2008, they have moved to the building of today after a land is bought in the organization's name. Rotary club supported with furniture and computers. They also conduct health camps. Smile foundation also got involved in supporting some furniture and stationary for the school. A part of recurring costs is covered by the fees collected. But they cannot increase the fees beyond the 50-100 Rs (for full sustainability) since the local people won't be able to afford.



Me (Padmanava Sen) with the Teachers

Interaction with Coaching Center Students –

In the interaction with the Class 11 and higher students, there were around 25 students (15 girls, 10 boys) among which there are ~10 college going students who attended the coaching center running in the school (before and after hours). There are two Mathematics honours, one engineering student, few political science honours and rest general. Two of them are working to pay their fees – one as construction worker and the other student giving tuition in his locality. Almost all of them got cycles from commute from Government under the Kanyasree (girls) and Sabuj Sathi (boys) scheme. One girl got an ST scholarship. One more student mentioned getting one-time money for securing 83.2% in Class 10. All total 7 of them got some kind of scholarship. However, when asked, the girl students mention many of their classmates getting married at the age of 16-18. However, most cases did not have any pressure from parents as in these areas, parents are much more aware than before. For Class 11-12 students, almost everyone is in arts. The reason being higher costs of Science in intermediate, higher tuition fees for coaching in science and the commute involved to go to the coaching centers outside villages. 21+ among the 25 students attended the coaching centers. Only 3-4 students present attended the school but not the coaching class. Most of them want to be a teacher and know the path to be a teacher. There was discussion as well why English speaking is important.





Intermediate and College Students

Then we talked to the Class 6-10 students and the students who just finished with Board exam of Class 10 (Madhyamik). There were around 30 students. Half of them went to the coaching center but did not attend the primary school. The rest attended the coaching center but not the school. It seemed almost everyone who attended the primary school continued with the coaching center. The computer is usually taught in Class 8 and after 9, it gets sidetracked. The English knowledge seems satisfactory for the students.





Class 6-10 Students



Me posing with the students

Interaction with Primary School Students –

We went to all the six classes – LKG, UKG, Class 1 & (After lunch) Class 2, 3, 4. Children seem happy, neat and clean. We spent around 15-20 minutes in each class and I noted down the following during my interactions (asking them and calling students to the board):

- LKG – They know English, Bengali letters and Math numbers. They can say ABCD.
- UKG – They can say small words (3-4) in English with starting letters. They can read words in Bengali (no Yuktakhar). They can count till 100.

- Class 1
 - Bengali – Can read bigger words
 - English – More vocabulary than UKG. Spelling of some simple words. Can read letters fast (small and capital)
 - Math – Tables till 8. Additions without carryovers
- Class 2
 - Bengali - Can read fast.
 - English – Knows spelling and meaning of many words and good collection of vocabulary.
 - Math – Addition with carryover and simple. No multiplication yet.
- Class 3
 - Language – Good reading skills Bengali and English (outside syllabus)
 - Math – All additions and simple multiplication
- Class 4
 - English – Good reading skills. Simple sentence construction
 - Math – Good multiplication skills across the class



LKG Students



UKG Students





Class 1 Students



Students during Lunch Hours



Class 2 Students with Dr Ajoy Saha



Class 3 Students



Class 4 Students

Interaction with Teachers –

After school hours (3 pm), we discussed with the teachers their involvement with the school and the need of the hours. One teacher is there with the school for almost 12 years and mentioned the requirement of a decent salary to retain good teachers. They all wanted the school to grow and sustain the good work they are doing in the community. There are around 10 coaching center teachers among which 5 teaches in primary school as well. They mentioned the water problems, the repair needed in the bridge and other improvements that can be done. Teachers live mostly in 5 km radius from the school.



Teachers in School Premises and the Bridge