

Site visit by: Chitra Mandyam and Srikanth Belwadi
 Chapter affiliation: Asha Silicon Valley
 Date of visit: July 16th, 17th, 2019

About the organisation

The Founder / Beginning

In 2003, a 25 year old **young alumnus of IIT Kharagpur and IIM Calcutta**, inspired by spiritual and humanistic ideals of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, resolved to devote his entire life for **serving 'Divine in Man' as taught by Swami Vivekananda**. He gave up the prospect of highly lucrative corporate career by not taking any placement from IIM. Immediately after passing out of IIM in 2003, with just **3 children** in a small rented building on the outskirts of Kolkata, he started Parivaar.

In the beginning, he used to take some lectures for students appearing for Management entrance examinations and through that could meet the expenses of the set-up. Inspired by this dedicated service a number of people started to support the initiative and the number of children at Parivaar grew. At the end of 2004, Parivaar could purchase its own land to develop its permanent campus called Parivaar Ashram. As of **1st Jan 2019**, more than **2000 children** are residents at **Parivaar Residential- West Bengal(1230 boys and 770 girls)**

Expansion to Madhya Pradesh

In **2016**, Parivaar began to expand to a new geography of Madhya Pradesh purchasing **17 acres of land at village Sandalpur in District Dewas** along with a plot of land on the banks of Narmada at village Navada.

From **2017 onwards** it has started Day Boarding (Meal cum Education centres) for children in selected impoverished tribal and rural pockets called **'Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Seva Kutir'** in Dewas, Sehore, and Mandla districts.

S.No	District	# of Seva Kutirs (Aug'19)
1	Dewas	49
2	Sehore	40
3	Mandla	24
4	Sheopur	4
5	Chhindwara	2
6	Total	119



The map shows the state of Madhya Pradesh with various districts labeled. Three districts are highlighted in different colors to indicate the locations of Seva Kutirs: Dewas (orange), Sehore (green), and Mandla (red). Other districts shown include Morena, Bhind, Gwalior, Datia, Sheopur, Shivpuri, Chhatarpur, Ashoknagar, Tikamgarh, Panna, Satna, Rewa, Sidhi, Singrauli, Mandsaur, Guna, Rajgarh, Vidisha, Sagar, Damoh, Katni, Umari, Shahdol, Anuppur, Jabalpur, Dindori, Narsimhapur, Hoshangabad, Mandla, Harda, Chhindwara, Seoni, Balaghat, West Nimar, East Nimar, Betul, Burhanpur, Barwani, Alirajpur, Dhar, Indore, Jhabua, Ratlam, Ujjain, Shajapur, Bhopal, Raisen, and Jhansi.

Each Kutir can cater between **80-100 children**. More than **10,000 children** are getting nutritious meals (breakfast and dinner) along with strong Supplementary education over morning and evening shifts.

Also, a residential educational institution, modeled on lines of our Bengal institutions, is right now under construction at **Sandalpur which will house 500 resident children initially**, and will be gradually scaled up.

Site Visit Report

We **arrived at Indore on 16th July**, were picked by Parivaar team(Siddharth, Shekar, Kapil, Vikas) and were driven to the Seva Kutirs in Dewas and Sehore listed below :

1. Sankota
2. Habeeb nagar
3. Kuri
4. Nayapura
5. Mograkheda
6. Baniyagaon
7. Dhaba
8. Dundlava
9. Devpura
10. Bijabhairu

After an **overnight stay** and visits to the above kutirs, we **departed from Bhopal on 17th July** late evening.

The villagers belong to Gond, Bhil , Korku and Bhilala tribes and other deprived communities. Traditionally the villagers depended on forest resources for living (collecting honey, medicinal plants and preparation, chironji and other seed collection, edible gum tapping Salai trees) With increasing deforestation, teak plantations replacing forests, these communities explained how they are being forced into agriculture

Majority are landless or holding 1acre or less

Their homes are mostly made from mud, some were in pakka(brick) homes constructed from Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana



Rain dependent agriculture, drinking water from a bore, or a well, most places in the summer have no water. Some villages have electricity connection, some that were remote and not easily reachable did not.

The kutirs are being run in a venue has been offered by one of village family members, existing government school, community building.

Children in the **age group of 4-14 years** attend the Kutir.

Majority are first generation learners.

Segregated into **3 groups** based on grades : 1st-3rd, 4th-6th, 7th-8th.

Timings 7 am to 10:30 am and 4 pm to 7:30 pm

Activities

Yoga, Pranayaam, prayer chanting on arrival.



Followed by nutritious breakfast.



Then the group breaks out based on grades for supplemental education



Some days they do outdoor learning with music and dance or clay modeling



Pratham Mini Library



Some video links

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/48JxBwRBvTjtdWvH8>

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/JbWAhKdDcM2uaQkS6>

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/75TyZzV9eKAvsTcp7>

We noticed a lot of focus into creating an engaged, interactive and fun learning atmosphere.

When we asked the children what they liked about the kutirs, the most common answers from the kutirs :

1- Learning, subjects like math, english, hindi, social studies

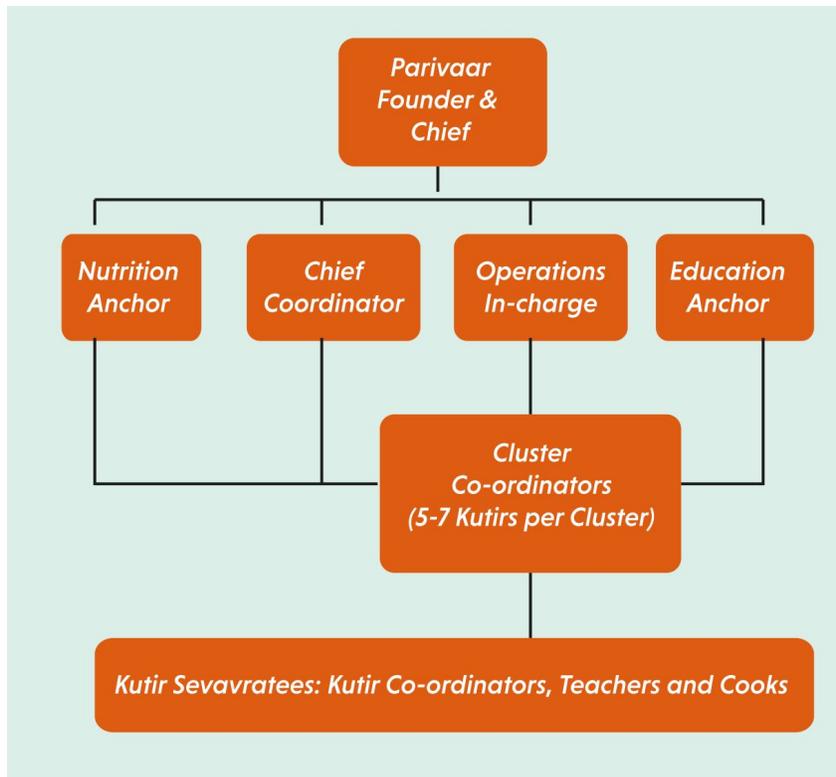
2- Games, stories, and outdoor activities

And then Food :-)

Our observations of core strengths in the program

Organisation and Team Building

The org structure has been done very thoughtfully, in a way that enables to monitor the program very efficiently. It is decentralized and provides the flexibility to scale very quickly.



Typically, there are 3 cooks, 3 teachers in each Kutir. 1 of them is the primary cook and 1 primary teacher.

Education anchor is working to create a well-defined structure for the teachers, starting with a detailed curriculum (mutually designed with discussions with the government school teacher), how to impart that lesson, how to make the session interactive, what test to take (every 2 weeks). The timetable is set and followed by all kutirs.

Hold monthly trainings

Teachers said :

- Math and Science are the hardest, need additional handholding
- Prefer hands on activities / science kits etc for teaching
- Very thankful for this opportunity, very proud and happy to give back to their children.

The cluster co-ordinators along with the main anchors provide continuous handholding to the staff on the ground.

Cluster co-ordinators, both **share a 2 wheeler** and **visit every kutir every day**.

Similarly nutrition anchor, decides the daily menu, ingredients, based on locally produced grains/vegetables, etc

Local community involvement and ownership.

The space for the kutirs are provided by local families. The teachers, cooks, helpers in almost all the kutirs were local, belonging to the same village or nearby area. They are involved in all the

day to day activities, provided training and mentoring on a regular basis and empowered to take complete ownership of this program.

Locals/villagers are stakeholders not beneficiaries in this program!

The team actively engages with parents and bring changes to village, for example, the villagers grow soya bean but were not eating it themselves. Now this high protein meal is introduced in the menu.

The borewell broke down, and kutir did not have water. The villagers got together and collected pipes, they then pooled money and bought some more pipe and pumped water from the neighboring village tank.

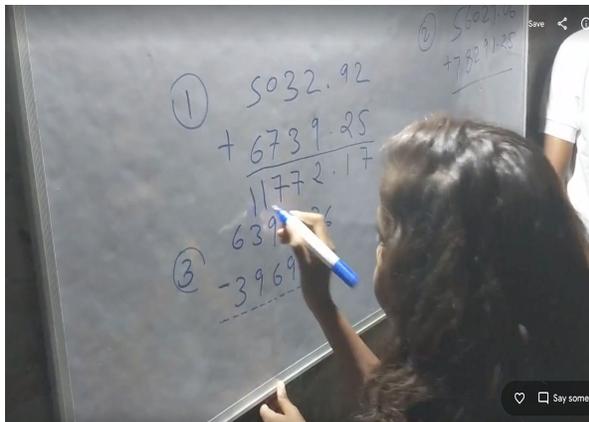
Low cost per child

Minimal infrastructure costs, using existing school buildings, etc. Most raw food materials were also being procured locally, such as vegetables, milk etc, rice, wheat flour, grains, sugar, etc need to be supplied from outside. To reduce cooking costs, **every family volunteers on a rotation** and assists 1 paid cooking staff on a daily basis

There is a lot of effort going in from Praivaar team to empower local communities to organise themselves into producer groups.

Willingness and eagerness in the children

We had the opportunity to observe the children read a book (Hindi and English), solve basic math, test their general knowledge (names of continents, countries, their capitals, world leaders, etc). The children showed high level of eagerness to learn all subjects.



Our observations of a few challenges

Getting there

Many of the villages are about 40-50kms away from the nearest town. No motorable roads to the homes. Floods block off roads during the rains.



Caste system, divided community

Villagers from upper caste object to children from lower castes having meals together with their kids Parivaar team has been very firm that this will not change in anyway and the kids will be given meals without any discrimination. Their belief is growing strong that an initial step of simple act of dining together right from childhood can go a long way in a more integrated society.

What after seva kutir?

Seva kutirs run till the age of 14 supporting the child till 7th grade. After that most children will have to leave the village and move to nearby towns for high school. Some interventions to support them currently

- Mini hostels taking care of cost of their food/stay etc as needed to continue high school education
- Hire tutors per hostel for academic support
- Parivaar residential (similar to West Bengal)

In addition, start vocation training for youth (not necessarily by Parivaar itself but by bringing other specialist agencies for this) and local agriculture or food processing.

Growth and plans for scale

Set up 200 such Seva Kutirs by March 2020, ranging between 70 children to 150 children.

- Average costs per child in a Seva Kutir is around Rs 12,500.
- For a 80 children Seva Kutir the costs would be around Rs 10 Lacs.
- For one 100 children Seva Kutir the costs would be around Rs 12.5 Lacs.

The strategic vision of this program is **focused on the wholesome development of the child** . To provide a long enriching experience to the children. This is **intended to be a supplement not an alternative to Government schooling system**.

The presence of Parivaar in over 100 tribal villages in MP has created a wide wide field-base and tremendous social capital for other non profits/ government organisations to work in this area. There is an ongoing outreach to institutions like Panchayats and non Government bodies like self- help groups, women- led federations which have seen a growth in tribal areas to be involved in the processes of the program.

Seva Kutir proposed for Asha SV to support

Sendrani, Tehsil Satwas, District Dewas, Madhya Pradesh

Sendrani Seva Kutir has been started on 27th November '18 and has 104 children attending from Korku, Bhil and Bhilala tribes and other deprived communities. The venue has been offered by a village family itself. Children in the age group of 4-14 years attend the Kutir.

