

# Maitri Shaala

## Site Visit Report Jan 2020



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# Maitri Shaala at Melghat



- Geography : Tribal villages of Melghat on border of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Satpuda Mountain Range.
- Demographics : Korku (85%) Madia, Gond (15%) tribes
- Program : Total 4 days
  - Day 1: Train journey (12 hours) from Pune to Vadnera, by road 5 hours to Melghat
  - Day 2 : Meeting with tribal projects coordinators and Gavmitra at Maitri base station Chilati. Talked with Arogya maitrini about upcoming health camp.
  - Day 3 : Visited 3 schools, youth sports club, met with sarpanch, teachers, parents
  - Day 4 : Agriculture efforts, visited 1 school. 4 hour by road to Nagpur. Back to Pune by flight at night.

# Melghat Mitra at Melghat



- Around 350 villages around tiger reserve. Melghat Mitra (Maitri) active in north eastern region near Madhya Pradesh border
- Education efforts in 8 villages for primary schools, 2 villages for residential secondary schools (pink). Health efforts in 15 villages (pink and yellow)





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# Glimpses of Melghat



# Glimpses of Melghat

- Some interesting trivia
  - Dense forest of teakwood cultivated by British government for railway slippers
  - Used to exploit and run labor camps. Tribal people highly distrustful of outsiders ("Jakhinda" in Korku)
  - Korkus don't consume milk products as it deprives young calves of milk.
  - Worship Hanuman and Ravan as protector of the community.

# Maitri's Work at Melghat

- Melghat Mitra (Maitri), a grassroot NGO, works for community building, agriculture, healthcare, and education (Maitri Shaala). Mr. Ram Phad is local head of all divisions whom I get to meet and talk.
- Empowerment through education as the long term solution.



# Maitri Shaala In Nutshell

## ❖ Maitri Shaala

- Started with direct intervention : 100 day residential school with 40 dropout children. Enrolled them back in school in 2012-2013
- Bottom up approach. Supplementary school, trying to improve existing government school system.
- Based on principal of **active participation** from the tribal community

Works with three key elements : Maitri project **coordinators**, tribal **coordinators** and tribal **executors** called Gav Mitra (friends of the village)

- Tribal coordinators and Gav mitra :
  - Counsel parents, spread awareness, participate in School Management Committees (SMC)
  - Motivate children by songs, stories, bilingual (Korku-Marathi) language games, activity based learning
  - Help with their homework : basic reading, writing, science and mathematical skills
- Efforts to make government ZP schools more efficient and accountable
  - School Management Committee (SMC) with all stakeholders representation from school, village head (“Sarpanch”), Maitri coordinator, tribal coordinators, and parents.
  - Because of local representation understand local needs : festivals, crop season, weekly bazaar day

# Assessment of Maitri Shaala

- Meeting with Ashwini, 2 tribal coordinators and 4 executors (GavMitra) at Chilati. Asked about what is working and what are the problems. Tribal coordinators and executors are educated : Ramesh BA (English Lit) and Ashok B.Ed. All 4 GavMitras, Laxmi, Sonaji, Vilas, Parshuram are at least 12<sup>th</sup> passed. Quite impressed by their confidence, commitment, dedication, articulation.
  - They have great rapport with children (was evident during school visit) and parents' trust. After 8 years, their program 2 hours before school (9:00-11:00 am) working very well, children have affinity toward leaning. They no longer have to drag children to school. (After 7 years, enrollment rate increased from 20% to 100% and dropout rate of primary school fell from 80% to almost 0%)
  - Now quality of education is their concern. Tribal coordinators are in SMC, they want to make it more effective. They had upcoming meeting with model SMC at Nandurbar in February.
  - They feel having a library and tinkering center near/attached to primary school would greatly help.
- Visited primary schools at villages Karanjkheda, Sumita, Salita, Simori
  - Average students 20-30 maximum in a school. School has only one classroom and one teacher. Students are divided in four groups as per their level and teacher teaches them dividing time.
  - Visited each school with 3 project coordinators and Gavmitra. They have good rapport with children. Initially, children were a bit shy and but after tribal coordinators explained them that I am one of new "tais" (big sister) in Korku, they quickly opened up. They were curious, outgoing, smart, even quick witted and we played many activity learning games together.
  - Younger students sharper, more confident as probably get more exposure with older students
  - Gavmitras often stay at least 2-3 hours more during school and help the teacher. They have good rapport and oversight on teachers.
  - Out of 4, 1 teacher extraordinarily good, one good, other two were okay.
  - Problem with teachers : Melghat is a tenure, government school teachers are transferred every 3 years.



# Assessment of Maitri Shaala

- Mid day meal (Khichadi) provided in school
- Children still very connected to the culture, make clay animals, interested in farming. Maitri successful in providing betterment in education without take them away from culture
- Each school has a separate toilet for girls and boys. But not very clean and clogged sometimes.
- There is reasonably clean drinking water. Electricity supply not very consistent. No Fans. Due to extreme temperatures, they close school in summer from April – June
- Couldn't visit two residential secondary schools at Hatru and Jarda due to non availability of roads.

Can do better :

- Effective, systematic, diligent way of tracking children through secondary school and beyond.
- Secondary school program not very firmed up and mature as primary school. After a long discussion with project coordinator, she mentioned that cooperation and trust from teachers not as good as primary schools. They are working towards it.
- Tribal coordinator and Gavmitra as crucial agents for change. Program impacted if there is no backup for them if they leave. Ashwini and Ram assured me through community building they can find backups and replacements easily.
- Melghat is a tenure station, government primary school teachers are transferred every 3 years.
- Quality of education improvment efforts need concrete roadmap (they have very good plans for better functioning and accountable SMC)

# Chilati Village



# Karanjkheda Village school





