

Asha Samajik Vidyalaya Rajatalab & Lok Samiti site visit report

Location: Nagepur village, Rajatalab Tehsil, Varanasi District, Uttar Pradesh

Date: 22nd February 2023

Visitor: Akshay Bhole, Asha Boston

Introduction:

Asha Samajik Vidyalaya located just outside of Varanasi city is a co-ed school with classes up to 8th grade. Nandlal Master has been instrumental in setting up and operating the school since it was started almost two decades ago.

Nandlal Master is also the founder and coordinator of Lok Samiti. This organization focuses on grassroots activism on women's empowerment, self-help groups, and social and community issues in villages in the Varanasi district. The school also doubles up as a valuable base for coordinating these activities.

This was a follow up visit to the earlier first one in [December 2021](#). Please refer to that report for a comprehensive overview on activities undertaken by ASV Rajatalab and Lok Samiti. This report will focus exclusively on the progress undertaken for the Library expansion at the school since Asha Boston's grant was made exclusively for that purpose.

Library:

The library at this school serves not just the school students but also the student community in this and neighboring villages. The books and materials stocked in the library range from regular school syllabus books to prep material for various competitive examinations that students in these communities target after they graduate from school. At the time of the visit in Dec 2021 the library enrollment stood at about 650 students. It has now surpassed 930 in Feb 2023. The original library was located in an extremely small and congested room. The school had a large room available in the recently built annex but lacked funds to furnish the new space with shelves, cabinets and additional learning materials. Grant supplied by Asha Boston in mid-2022 allowed the school to take up the opportunity to realize its goal of expanding the library. The expanded space allows for a small study area for upto 10 students in addition to making more books and learning materials available for more students. The new space opened just in time for the opening of the 2022-23 academic session in July 2022.



Pic 1 - Students with the librarian Panchmukhi Singh in the new library



Pic 2 - New bookshelves in the larger library. A lot of the books are still older and we at Asha Boston hope to replace and recycle some every year



Pic 3 - Visiting one of the classes in ASV Rajatalab



Pic 4 - New books purchased by ASV



Pic 5 - Indexing & Cataloging of new books

For the academic year 2023-24, the request from ASV has been to upgrade some books to improve the quality and quantity of the material (older editions will be replaced with new ones, replacement of worn-out books, and increasing the number of copies of some popular books) which will enable the library to meet the needs of the increasing membership numbers. The operating hours of the library are quite limited due to the non-availability of staff or volunteers. As a result, Asha Boston has decided to make a grant for staffing the library for one academic year. Asha Boston will collect feedback on the changing usage patterns due to the larger open-hours window for the library at the end of the year and the impact on enrollment.

Conclusion:

The library serves a vital purpose in the functioning of the school as well as allows ASV and Lok Samiti to reach out to young students in the community in an effective manner that upholds their interests and provides resources that many in the area cannot afford. We at Asha Boston think the library's expansion has improved the quality and quantity of the material available and we recommend continuing to support the library for the academic year 2022-23.