

Asha for Education™

Site Visit Questionnaire

P.O. Box 322 • New York • NY 10040-0322

www.ashanet.org

Dear Volunteer

Thanks for conducting this site visit.

The following set of questions is only a suggested guideline. Some of the following questions may not be relevant or applicable to the particular project you are visiting, but please do try to answer as many of them as possible. Please note that Part sB & C necessitate that the information be gathered through conversations with the children and their parents, and not simply the group's teachers and staff.

Please feel free to attach any documents/photos you feel are pertinent to the project.

Thanks.

- Asha for Education

Date: Jan. 19, 2024

Name of the Project: Baikunthapur Tarun Sangha - Pathabhavan

Name of the Organisation Running the Project (if different):

Was your site visit announced? Yes, it was planned No, it was a surprise visit

	Project Contact	You Name (Asha volunteer conducting the visit)
Name	Mr. Susanta Giri	1. Akila Venkataramany 2. Sambit Saha
Address	Vill & P.O. - Baikunthapur Dist. South 24 Parganas West Bengal PIN-743383	1. 505 Phillips Avenue, Ashland, OH 44805
Phone(s)	+91-973-352-4070	1. 419-709-4518
Fax	N/A	N/A
E-mail	btsruraloffice@gmail.com susantagiriindia@gmail.com	1. asv36@cornell.edu 2. sambit1820@gmail.com

PART A: Particulars about the organization and its environment

1. What are the different focus areas of the organization? (give a rough estimate of the % of their total effort/funding)

Community development 20% Education 40% Health 15%
 Other 25% (please specify) Sustainable agriculture (15%), Disaster risk reduction and livelihoods (10%)

2. What is the administrative structure of the group (e.g. Board of Directors/Grassroots-based)?

Board of Directors - 9
 Project Director/Coordinator - 1
 Desk In Charges - 6
 Project Staff - 28

3. Are there any other organizations working in the area providing any one or all of the services provided by the visited organization? (Briefly mention their names and their objectives)

Organization	Objectives of the organization
Vibha (Help Them Grow Inc.)	Supports pre-school centers and ICDS centers toward quality education
Smile Foundation Individual donations Zomato (negotiations in progress)	Mid-day meal 1-2 times a month Zomato - applying for mid-day meal funding and getting the SSI license from West Bengal government
Save UK	Supports after-school program for BTS

PART B: The organization and the community it serves

(Information to be gathered from parents and children)

1. Approximately how many families live in the area?

2. What do the parents do for a living? (Agricultural worker, Daily wage laborer etc.)

Most parents in the surrounding communities are daily-wage laborers or agricultural workers.

3. At the time of enrolment, does the school ask for the names of both parents?

Yes

No, just the father's name

No, just the mother's name

4. How often do the teachers meet the parents?

Weekly

5. How do the parents participate in the organization's activities? (e.g. by contributing their time, money or labor in the school's activities etc.)

6. Are there any Government Schools in the area?

Yes

No

7. If yes, how far are the Government Schools from the community?

8. Why did the parents choose this school over the Government School?

BTS offers low enrollment fees and are more accessible than the government schools, which are a lengthy commute, especially for small children. Parents also feel that the quality of education at BTS is superior compared to other schools. Additionally, the parents and grandparents noted that children were very happy and satisfied to attend BTS Pathabhavan.

9. When you visited, how many children were present in the class? 235 total enrollment (LKG-Class V)

What is the regular class strength? Roughly 30 students per class from LKG to Class IV, 17 in Class V

Comments: We visited a Class V classroom, which was being inaugurated on the day of the site visit, and a Class IV computer class for about 15 minutes each. Students were seated at benches/computers, greeted us, and told us about what they were learning that day. Susanta Da expects that enrollment to the school will increase in the upcoming year.

10. Do the children seem to enjoy coming to school?

All of the children at BTS seem to enjoy the school environment and are benefitting from the multifaceted education they receive. The children we spoke to said that they loved the arts classes offered at the school, and others were able to recite poems, do mental math, read from English textbooks and articulate the meaning in Bengali, etc.

The Class V group, who were a mix of students from BTS and other schools, said that they enjoyed math and English subjects. They have also learned computer skills, such as using Microsoft Word to type and Paint to draw, and have opportunities like Physical Education and Nature Class at BTS. Many of them wanted to become doctors or teachers in the future. For students not from the area, commute to BTS is about 30 minutes.

PART C: Project particulars*(Information to be gathered from students and staff)***1. What is the mode of teaching in the school? (Check the appropriate choices)**A. Formal (State Board, Central Board etc.) **till what class? Class V**B. Non-Formal Education (NFE) do the students also attend formal school?C. Vocational D. Other . Please specify _____**2. If A (Formal), up to what grade(LKG, 5th, 7th etc.) does the school conduct classes?**

3. If B (Non-Formal Education) how many of the children also attend formal schools in the area?

Almost all BTS students attend the local government schools in either Baikunthapur or Vinodpur from Class VI onwards. The project partner said that the students continue their studies, and drop out rates are very low. BTS is actively trying to expand to Class VIII. The school had received a No Objection Certificate from the West Bengal government to expand to Class V last year, and they successfully inaugurated the Class V in 2024.

*If none do, does the project plan this for the future?***4. If Non-Formal Education, does the organization create its own study material (books, games)?**

BTS' curriculum in English, Bengali, science, history, geography, environment, general knowledge, and mathematics is based on textbooks and other learning materials.

5. If C (Vocational), what do the children do after they finish training?

The vocational activities at the school include music and dance, chalk making, crafts, and yoga. Additionally, the students have a computer lab in their library where they receive computer education (Paint, Word, NotePad, Excel, basic skills) three times a week. Vocational activities that were paused during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic have resumed.

6. How many staff or volunteers are recruited from the community? 10 teachers (total), all from community*How many of the staff are women?***7. How many teachers have left the school in the past one year, and why?**

None

8. How many new teachers have joined in the past year? 3

9. Does the organization train the teachers? Yes No

If yes, how do they provide the training? Organising Training by Resource Training Institute

10. How much is the staff paid? 2023 salary values - Teachers (9) are paid Rs. 4500-13,500 per month, staff (2) are paid Rs. 3,500-8,000 per month, and the volunteer staff (1) is paid Rs. 3,500-4,000 per month.

Is it on par with the salary paid to the staff in the Government schools? Yes No

PART D: Financial resources of the organization

(Feedback from the person conducting the site visit)

1. Do you think the proposed amounts in the budget are reasonable? Yes No Maybe

2. Are all items covered in the budget? Yes No Maybe

Comments: The 2023-2024 academic year's budget was outside of Asha Cornell's funding limits.

The usual yearly disbursement from Asha Cornell is sufficient to cover teacher salaries alone, so additional funding sources (specific to BTS Pathabhavan's educational budget and not the other aspects of the organization) are necessary as the school expands.

3. Is there anything you think should be added or removed from the budget?

Yes No

If you recommend any changes to the budget, please explain your reasons for this.

4. Did you discuss the proposed changes with the project? If so, please describe their response.

PART E: Comments

(Feel free to attach documents if necessary)

After-school program: BTS received Rs. 3,50,000 from Save UK to start an after-school tutoring program, a concern that was identified in the 2023 site visit. Tutoring is offered for two hours in the morning for six days a week, but in the summer, it will increase to three hours. Since regular school hours are 10:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. for all students, students and their siblings attend this program so that they can receive extra education and parents can do one drop-off/pick-up. The BTS teachers are the tutors for this

program. Currently, 45 students are enrolled, and the program can be scaled up to 100-150 students.

BTS centers in north Bengal: BTS expanded to offering two school centers in Alipuday North Block 1 and 2 on January 12, 2024. The parents of the children in this region work at tea estates or are daily wage earners. Currently, these centers have four teachers and 70 children total. BTS plans to expand to four centers in the future.

Computers: Computers in the BTS computer lab (eight total) are assembled and received from Kolkata, and this initiative is supported by Kollol of New Jersey. Kollol does not fund these computers annually, but they donate Rs. 1,50,000 - 2,00,000 when they can to buy a new computer or fix parts. They also support the salary of the computer teacher and expenses for 20 abandoned/orphaned children.

Concern 1: Transportation -- Parents in the area who want to send their children to BTS and the teachers mentioned transportation as a concern. Some villages are 45 minutes away, which is prohibitive for small children who need to make the commute alone. The teachers/Susanta Da said that for Rs. 600 a month, transportation to and from school will be possible. This can be done in two approaches - 1) Rs. 600 per month with a few toto drivers, or 2) buying a car and getting CSR money - Rs. 16-17 lakhs. If transportation is arranged, enrollment to the school should increase by 100 students.

Concern 2: Additional classrooms - the BTS teachers noted that the classrooms are not large enough to accommodate student enrollment, especially for Class V. They mentioned plans to expand the school building and create four more classrooms, a restroom, and a staircase to the upper level, but these plans were not specifically discussed during the site visit.

Concern 3: Post Class V plans - Students typically have to transfer to a government school after Class V, but BTS would like to find ways to support meritorious students who are planning on continuing education. They are looking for individual donations or ways to support these students. They will compile a list of alumni and distribute it to Asha Cornell/individual donors as a starting point.

Concern 4: Teacher training - Because BTS has employed additional teachers, there is a lack of training opportunities, especially in the Joyful Learning Principles. Susanta Da mentioned that someone from a nearby university would be coming to help with this.

Concern 5: Mid-day meal - the funding BTS currently receives from Smile Foundation/individual donations for mid-day meals is not enough for consistent meals. Though kids eat whatever they have at home before coming to school, having a regular mid-day meal would ensure adequate nutrition for the children and relieve the parents' burdens. Susanta Da said that at least Rs. 6,00,000 - 7,00,000 would be required.

Brief comments from speaking with parents:

- Parent 1 – daughter in UKG ; 5 minutes away from the school ; parent is in farming, mom is a homemaker ; parent graduated from bts in 2001, and he feels the quality of the education is better than the surrounding schools ; student to teacher ratio is high, so he thinks there could be more teachers
- Parent 2 – grandchildren are in UKG and class I ; happy with the education that children are receiving ; having tiffin or a mid day meal would be helpful
- Parent 3 – daughter studied from LKG to class IV, and now she's in class V in BTS ; parent also has a younger child who is 3 years old ; her husband is a farmer ; daughter is very happy to be in the school and would love to be there until class XII if she could
- Parent 4 – 15 min away walking distance ; granddaughter is in class I