

TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (TEP) SCHOOL, MANIPUR
May 2023 SITE VISIT REPORT
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Sharkaphung is a small hamlet located in district Kamjong inhabited by two major tribes of Manipur Kuki and Tankhul represented by more than a dozen clans. I visited one school known as Tribal Empowerment Public School in village Leingangching District Kamjung in the state of Manipur on 22nd and 23rd May, 2023 at the behest of Asha Darshan Trust who manage this school.

There are ten teachers for 426 students, 200 boys and 226 girls. Most of them coming from Tangkhul tribe. The students and teachers spend an hour to reach the school every day using different modes of transport except some times when school would offer their van to take them home. There is no transport facility by the Govt. The ramshackle building housing the school is made of tin sheets with some support of bamboo and wood planks and has old worn out metal sheets for the walls of the classrooms. At many entrances of the classrooms their edges of the sheets are so sharp that it can injure someone quite grievously. There have been many cases of students suffering injuries. Tong Ming Thang, a 10 years old boy showed me his bandaged hand which was hurt while entering the classroom.

Despite these little handicaps one could not miss the high levels of untrammelled joy and team spirit among the children and teachers.

Project/School Goals (1-2 years) – The main focus of the persons working for the school is focused on infrastructural issues like renovating the school building, adding more classrooms, overhead water tanks for the toilets and a film projector. They have plans to use the adjacent piece of land measuring almost 2000 sq meters into activity centre for the children.

Project/School Goals (5+ years) – As of now the school imparts education up to 7th standard and consecutively they will have 8th, 9th and 10th in the years 2023, 2024 and 2025. They are looking forward to construct a Science Lab and one space for a library during this period. There is a proposal to have music classes with the help of community as music has traditionally been a medium to for teaching history of the different communities especially of the Tankhuls. The school will need more teachers after the promotion of students to higher standards and other activities on the anvil.

Salaries – The salary to the teachers is being paid by cheques.

Number of students Boys and Girls Grade Wise

Standard	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre Nursery	18	17	35
Nursery	19	20	39
Kindergarten	22	33	45
1	23	26	49
2	20	26	46
3	20	27	47
4	24	16	40
5	15	20	35
6	21	24	45
7	19	26	45
	200	226	426

Special Needs students- There is no student who really needs different kind of attention. However for last one month the whole of Manipur has been experiencing traumatic times at a large scale permeating every soul. Children are the worst sufferers as it is simply not possible for them to understand the gamut of the forces in cahoots with the conspirators of the unprecedented violence. All of them have special need to be addressed through dance, drama and other creative activities. They need to share the tales of love, inter- dependence, appreciating others culture and great bonding between different communities especially the children.

Drop Out Rate- There are not many drop outs among the students to really talk about. Even the turnover rate for the teachers is negligible unless a single woman teacher gets married and goes away.

Most of the students after finishing the highest grade in the school opt to continue further studies in the schools mostly in the Govt. schools.

Highest level of education of teachers is undergraduate. There is no trained teacher. There are no para teachers.

General Physical condition of school buildings and toilets – Though situated in a beautiful arbor of verdant green the school building is real eyesore and not in sync with the local architecture or the environment. Toilets do not have running water. They need to use locally available raw material like bamboo, grass and wood for constructing more building

Feedback on TEP- No one seems to be aware of the TEP model of education among the parents and teachers I spoke to. The van is very useful to the TEP community for transporting the children to their homes during inclement weather and taking sick to the hospital.

Mid-Day Meals - The school has adopted a good system of preparing mid-day meals by some teachers and family members of Magallen and it is working smoothly. I could not taste the mid-day meal as I left the school before the food was ready.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the School- The hallmark of success of the school is passion and commitment of the teachers and foremost the involvement of family of the managers of the school for whom the running of the school is paramount. The gender ratio of the students and teachers is excellent, 200 boys and 226 girls and teachers 3 men and 7 women. There are no music, theatre or story telling or local folk songs in the normal school life which has been very integral in the life of all the communities of the Kukis and Tangkhuls.

Role of Asha for Education – As the school is located in a remote area it would not be possible to find trained and qualified teachers and therefore there is great need for volunteers for the school in area of teaching, theatre, language skills and fine arts.

After School Activities – Since all the children come from villages and agriculture being the way life the children are engaged in many physical activities after reaching home. There does not seem to be any space for giving them any homework or any school related activities.

The condition of government schools in district Kamjung is pathetic. The schools are always short of teachers resulting in very bad teachers and student's ratio. Many of the schools do not have building and toilets. Many of the schools do not have science teachers and students have to forego the option to study science.

What I think about this School-

The school has succeeded in creating an atmosphere of freedom, affection and order which is very vital for children to grow and explore their own way to relate with the nature, pluralistic society and be proficient in scientific knowledge. We should be ready to prepare them to be good human beings and face the complex society and rogue systems of the governments without compromising on their convictions to deliver goodness. They need to find space for developing their intellectual, aesthetic and emotional world. We cannot go on teaching the same sets of beliefs, religious and nationalistic jargons without developing their analytical faculties. They have to learn to ask questions about everything that impacts their life. They need to watch films that will help them understand their relationship with the immediate nature and the cosmos. That's first in the list of my priorities – a Film Projector.S