

## **GSK Questions (05/26/05)**

1. What is the range of contributions from the community? How many community members contribute and what is their background?

The community has been the major contributor in the running of the school. To start with the community contributed almost 4 acres of land whose market price is more than Rs. 10 lakhs. This land is *khatadari* (land owned by individuals) and belongs to 19 families of the Jaganpura village. The community constructed the temporary school structure in July 2004. The cost was estimated to be Rs. 16000. All the raw material (thatch, logs, bamboos etc) was contributed by almost everybody. Those who did not contribute in money or material, worked to build it. After every harvest season the community collects the produce from each household. Contributions are made as per capacities of the individual.

The school structure collapsed in June 2005, a new structure is being made. The cost has been estimated to be Rs. 35000 and is being collected by the community.

Efforts are made that everybody from the community contributes towards the school, in fact that's the idea we long to achieve. At present we get major part of the contributions from the parents who are mostly small farmers, agricultural labourers and daily wage earners. We get regular contributions from richer farmers even if their children do not come to the school.

2. Right now, the school can take about 70 kids. But, there are a lot more kids in the district. If more kids want to join, how does the school decide which kids get to go? What happens to the kids who are left out?

Gramin Shiksha Kendra is not opening Uday community schools to provide education because there are no schools, GSK intends to establish models of quality schools and in turn create a demand for the same from the existing schools in the area. We plan to have just 300 children per school. We know that more parents will want to send their kids to this school; we plan to direct this pressure from the community towards improving government schools by joint effort of GSK, community and government teachers. If this school and teachers can do why cannot the other schools that have better teaching staff and facilities. It's very clear between community and GSK that a limited number of children will be admitted. The village committee will do the selection of the students. The poorest children who cannot afford going in any school and those who have been labeled (can't study) by government and private school will be admitted first.

The kids who are left out are encouraged to join the government schools in the area. This will be done more easily when we start working directly with government schools in the area because we believe that more than anything else the classroom atmosphere is more responsible for dropouts.

3. Can we get an example syllabus? How is this set?

I shall try sending you some innovative syllabus being tried by Digantar and Bodh. I shall try getting the soft copies. At present we have made a framework of the syllabus which has been taken from different syllabi and compiled together, we have tried to adapt things suitable to us and the area. We think we will be able to make a syllabus for Uday community school in next five years.

4. The proposal doesn't seem to give details on the existing social structure in the village. What is the occupation of the different villagers? Can we get more stats on these?

Two communities- Gurjars who are traditionally animal grazers and Meenas who are agriculturists mostly inhabit the area we are working in. Some areas have a Berwa population. Meenas are ST, Gurgars are OBC and Berwas are SC. These three are almost 70%. All other communities are in the remaining 30%. In every village there are one or two families who are richer than rest and hence a feudal social structure is expected in every village. This is true for all the communities. For example Khawa is a village inhabited by 3 communities. Meenas , Gurjars and Malis. Meenas own the maximum land and that too by one family. Gurjars own very little land but a couple of rich families have 400 animals. Malis are the poorest and their average land holding is .5 acre.

5. How are women treated in the community?

This one is on personal observations- Almost all the activities in agriculture and animal rearing are done by women, men do work related to market. Their day begins at 4 in the morning and ends at 11 in night. They do parda even to their husband when anyone else is there. When you ask to send their adolescent girl to school, people calculate by the number of man-days they loose from their farm.

6. The agricultural laborers don't seem to get the minimum wages as per law. Can we check on this? Is anyone/ any organization working on this? What are the other issues addressed by the 'Samithi'?

Uday will not only be a school for children but will also be center for development activities for 5 villages and all these issues may come, but at present we are not planning anything on it. But sure issues like these needs to be addressed. There are organizations in Rajasthan working on the issue, but not in Sawai Madhopur.

Its very difficult to say at present say what are the issues GSK will be taking up in this area in future, at present what we are sure of is that we are going to work on education and we intend to plan for all sections of the society and for all age group. We also plan to work on all the levels i.e. from classroom level to advocacy level.

We also plan to work with youth, but are not very clear at the moment, two things are in mind- libraries and employment generation.

7. Alternative education needs more teachers than in a formal system. How is this managed?

We will definitely have appropriate teacher – student ratio, i.e. 1:20. In fact this is the major reason for increased cost of our project. We intend to do advocacy so that government and other schools also adopts the same ratio.

8. We need more details on the three-month training program.

9. Do you have any stats or study on the Digantar alumni? We are trying to get an idea of how much better this education system is than a standard school.

Sorry on this, I think they are trying to make some data base on that.

10. What is the model of community ownership? Cooperative? Etc.

By community ownership of school we imply that the community becomes responsible of all decisions regarding the school i.e. academic, financial or administrative. This will begin with the involvement of the community in all decision-making processes of the school and gradually the entire responsibilities shift to the community. The government and organizations like Gramin Shiksha Kendra take the role of external technical support i.e. in the fields of academic input, finances or other similar support. We advocate the community ownership of schools because in a democratic society the people are the highest decision-making body and the local community cannot and should not be ignored under any circumstances. The local community is more responsible for the school because it is their children who are studying. We have been ignoring all this in the past as a result of which the school system in our country has reached this sorry state. Although the community may not understand the minute pedagogical aspects but it can very well understand the effort which the teachers are making with their children and whether their children are learning or not. This will be an attempt towards evolving the concepts and models of community managed schools at the time when the state is also trying to give the panchayat and local bodies at the grass root level all the responsibilities of primary education.

**Budget Related:**

1. The school is already in operation. Where does it fit in with the 3 years mentioned in the budget?

We would have liked the last year to be the first year of the project. But now that we have completed one year of the school, we guess the three years can start from the next year because we have not been able to carry on activities that we had planned due to lack of funds. The change that is expected to happen is the number of children. In fact it needs to be worked on a bit.

2. The coordinator's salary mentioned in the latest proposal is significantly different from the first proposal sent in 2004. Can you briefly mention the motivations behind that?

Initially we had planned that two of the board members will be working in the organization, so in order to keep the costs low we had decided on the older salaries as we felt that was enough to keep one going in Sawai Madhopur. But one of the members got a government job and decided to support from outside, so we now have to look someone from outside and the experience we are looking for most suitable professionals.

**Concept Note Related:**

1. Pg 2: "A large number of studies...situation": can you provide us some references?

Please go through PROBE report from UNDP.

2. Pg 4: Can you elaborate on the indirect beneficiaries and how they are benefited by the project?

The children going to other schools are the indirect beneficiaries and they will benefit from the improvement in other schools due to the pressure from the community and the pressure to remain in business.

3. Pg 7: "Children can be made to work on worksheets...society": Can you explain how this happens a little?
4. Pg 7: "In fact...national level": do you know of any NGOs working on this currently?

Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Jaipur, Digantar Jaipur, Eklavya , Bhopal are a few such organizations.

5. Pg 9: Can you elaborate a little on the benefits or effects of the proposed Outreach Programme?