



# Gramin Shiksha Kendra Sawai Madhopur

## Six Monthly Report

May to October 2015

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Gramin Shiksha Kendra went through some significant changes at the beginning of this session. The constructive changes were exemplified by the need to reconstruct the Faria School which was almost destroyed by bad weather in the summer.

Some basic changes also happened at the organizational level. Vijendra Pal took over as the Secretary and Vishnu as Academic Coordinator and Radheyshyam as Community Coordinator came to head the two main pillars of our work. Sachin and Jyotsna also were seen playing more active and significant roles in the management of the organisation and the educational initiative.

But the need for change was obvious and it saw us making for ourselves some tough plans to follow. It was our collective feeling that the organisation was going through an uncommunicative and shaky phase and we needed our programmes and systems to be such that gave us strength, motivated us and brought us back on our feet. The hit taken at the beginning of the financial year was unfortunate and tough. We were determined to emerge out of it stronger.



At the management level a significant change was in the role of the teachers of Uday schools. This in a way reflected on the direction that we felt that Uday needed to be going towards. We had demonstrated school operations in many ways and in many situations and were now going to take the idea to other government schools in the area. The teachers from the schools were all set to become our ambassadors for improvement in education in government schools. Training and support to teachers was also now going to be an activity that we undertook at the Resource Schools.

The changes were significant and we are happy to report that the results are now becoming visible.

This report charts out these changes and the other actions/activities that we have undertaken over the past 6 months.

Some basic information on the schools

School	Boys	Girls	Total	Teachers	Assistants	Admn.
Uday Community School Jaganpura	101	95	196	11	1	&
Uday Community School Faria	73	35	108	7	&	&
Uday Community School Girirajpura	27	18	45	2	&	&
Uday Government Community School Bodal	51	62	113	4	1	&
Uday Government Community School Housing Board	38	34	72	3	&	&
GSK Office	&	&	&	&	1	5
Total	290	244	534	27	3	5

- As is the regular practice, we continue our work with children in small groups.



We currently have 108 children in the pre primary group, 313 children in the primary group and 113 children in the upper primary group. 24 children will be appearing for the class 8 board examination this year. The group system has worked very well for us and we will continue to keep it going.

- 78 children from the upper primary section have participated in the district level sports events in *khokho*, basketball, handball, football, and athletics. Our teams have usually finished either as winner or as runners up.

Of the players who have played at the district level, 9 from the *khokho* team, 12 from the basketball team 14 from the handball teams, 6 from the football team and 5 from athletics have gone on to play at the state level.

- An association with Kids for Tigers (KfT) is something that we are continuing and which provides the children an interesting view into the forest and the environment of Ranthambhor. KfT is a regular partner with the Uday schools. Children are also taken into the forest at regular intervals to sense the forest and see it in its conserved state. This provides them a good exposure to issues that are relevant to the environment that they live in.
- As is done each year, the Bal Panchayat (A children's governance initiative) was formed. This has been every child's entry into studying and understanding democracy and becoming a part for the governance of the school. We do this as an activity but the thought behind it is far more intense. It's our way of introducing children to governance, management, decision making and most importantly it is done in an environment that replicates albeit at a much tinier level the same concept of democracy which the country functions with.
- It is interesting to report that the children participate with the same level of interest as politicians would. In this year's counting of votes, one of the children claimed that they he should have won and that there may have been an error in counting. He claimed that one of the teachers had inadvertently excluded counting one vote. A recount proved that the child was right. The voting was done again and the child actually registered a win.



- We have been working hard to green all out facilities. The Jaganpura school is the most difficult as the land is just not conducive to growth of trees. But like each year there was an attempt at afforestation and this time it has been done with soil brought in from outside to provide the saplings more stability.
- A three monthly assessment of the children was carried out by the Academic team. This is our way of constantly assessing the children - this is not an exam - but an assessment of the levels of learning done by the teachers - and our way to undertake any remedial action on the teaching processes for the children. This assessment helps us fill in the child's portfolio and is a part of the CCE undertaken.
- Carpentry, pottery, art and creative writing continue to be part of the co-scholastic essentials. The publication of *Mbrange*, the children's magazine is our way of providing encouragement to the children to express themselves in the written form-either as prose or in poem and of course art. ^ issues of *Mbrange* were made available for children during this period.

## 2- Working with the Teachers

- As part of standardizing some of the academic work we do, and in an effort to make it available to others as well, we have been part of the digitization process initiated under the guidance of the WCT. We have so far developed 150 special lesson plans on a variety of issues in Hindi, Math, Social Sciences and Science. Almost all teachers are part of this process and each time a good lesson plan evolves, it is documented, the details clearly laid out and after an academic assessment, is made available for uploading onto the common cloud where all modules are stored and accessible. Six other organisations are part of this process.

Though we have been part of this process, we feel that we have to develop it much more - the lesson plans have to become clearer and relevant to a wider variety of teachers. This is being done and we have decided to assess the lesson plans more rigorously through a committee set up at the organizational level which has to approve them before they are forwarded to the WCT team for uploading. Access to the lesson plans on an internet enabled tablet is an extremely easy and simple way of using this material.

We are, however, not too happy with the hardware being used and have been in touch with the WCT to reconsider the choice of equipment made.

We hope to build on this experiment and see how best it can be evolved further. We do confess however that using these lesson plans on a tablet with

the government teachers is extremely helpful in attracting their attention and giving them a feeling that they are receiving something really special. Special it is 😊

- We have long been testing waters on what we can do in the health space. We have followed some steps particularly to get a sense of the nutritional levels of the children coming to our schools. Indicators like the mid upper arm circumference and the head circumference have been documented. But this is far from sufficient. We are aware and conscious that there are many children in our schools who are moderately under nourished and some even severely undernourished. We are concerned about this and have chosen to from this term to develop a plan on this issue.
- All teachers of GSK have gone through a first phase of training on understanding child health. Through a session conducted by Jyotsna Lall who runs a similar programme for the Aga Khan Foundation in Delhi, teachers have been trained to keep a more watchful eye on the health indicators of the children in the schools. Though not all complete and ready we are hoping that we will soon be able to build this up.
- We have as a more proactive step to build this into our programming invited Dr Sanjana Mohan a pediatrician to join the GSK Board. Dr Sanjana Mohan works with the Basic Health India initiative in Udaipur and we have had initial discussions with them about the possibility of BHI beginning a child health programme in Sawai Madhopur under their guidance.
- With a little bit of embarrassment we would like to report that we had our first full session on gender issues in development with the teachers only at the beginning of this session. We have long recognized that a better understanding on gender issues is crucial for our teachers to play the right roles, create the right atmosphere of equality between boys and girls and also create a better and supportive working environment for the staff of GSK. I would also confess that some of the issues that caused heartburn in GSK at the beginning of the year could have been avoided if there was a better understanding of gender issues, greater confidence on roles and greater respect for each other.
- Rama Vedula a long-time friend of GSK undertook this rather vibrant session for us. This is however only the beginning. A lot more needs to be done and we will now ensure that there is a sufficiently strong focus on gender. Quality education is far from achieved if the respect for the opposite sex is not a fundamental part of the mind and soul of every child. We believe in equality and will continue to work on it.

- We have been struggling each year with the development of the school plans. Although we have got better, it is still not something that has become internalized within the school teachers and systems. Another attempt was made on this with the new session. This is one area where we have to get better so that each school can evolve on its own steam with the support of the community and the SMCs. The school plan for each year will become the operational document for the school.
- The teachers have also gone through a stress management programme with Prof Arti Bhadauriya.
- As we develop we are creating a support programme for the teachers which is local and which can be accessible to them easily. Team Leaders and the Academic Coordinator are playing a major role in this process. The space for discussion; experimentation; an openness to change are all critical for this to happen. We are working towards creating such a space in every school. It's important to be able to resolve any teaching issues fairly immediately and we see this as an important part of the teachers support programme, not just for our own teachers but also for the government teachers.
- A mainstay of our work is the CCE. And we are relentlessly taking up work on this front very seriously. We are the frontrunners in the CCE implementation in the district and perhaps with the other two main educational NGOs in the



state as well. This is something that is going to get us the step in the government teachers' doors and we are keen to make sure that happens.

- Another key element of work with the teachers is their ability to develop suitable and appropriate assessment tools and papers. Now this is easier said than done. Linked up to the CCE is this an important element. Assessments define how pedagogical elements are being implemented.
- I am proposing that we will do a major paper on our CCE initiative for wider sharing and therefore am not dwelling much on that issue here.
- We have from this session begun a special intervention to enhance the level of English teaching and learning in the school. The teachers' team has been carefully analyzed and 11 of the teachers have been identified as teachers with capacities - better than the others - to take on an English Teaching. The initiative has been begun by Jyotsna along with two PhD students from the Department of Human Development from the University of Delhi. The modules are currently being prepared and tried out with the teachers. There is a lot of excitement with the beginning of this activity.
- The weekly and monthly workshops with teachers continue to be held

## c Working with the Community

As discussed at many places, we see working with the community as essentially made up of two components. The first is with the SMCs and the second is with the larger community.

### 1 Working with the SMCs

- In keeping with the larger strategy, we have ensured that we are keeping and maintaining a regular contact with the SMCs. We ensure that we have regular monthly meetings with the SMCs and are constantly updating them on the current school status and also ensuring that their suggestions and ideas are incorporated into the school operations
- SMCs are encouraged to focus on issues such as increasing enrolment (Uday Urban) and maintaining regularity (Uday Faria) and making sure that they receive reports on the performance of the children in the schools (All)
- SMCs of government schools are regularly invited to visit the Uday schools. This is one of the most important roles that are played by the team in the Uday schools apart from teaching. Discussions, Q&A sessions, presentations and demonstrations are used to constantly and continuously inform the SMC members on the roles that they need to be playing in their own schools. The sessions are usually eye openers for the SMC members who visit. It marks the initiation of the change process. Understanding quality - the way we see it -



gets translated in to their own version of quality. All this needs to be strengthened and reiterated through various forms and methods. Roles and responsibilities, how best they can manage them is the focus of our interaction with the government school SMCs. They have always left appreciating what they see and we hope that this emotion will continue to influence them in the work that they do with their schools.

- SMC members for all schools were involved with the development planning for the school infrastructure. This is now part of their role and we are happy to report that they have taken this seriously and are supporting the process. The best example is in Faria where the SMC and its president are constantly watching the entire construction process and providing support where



necessary. In Bodal they are planning on some renovation and also looking at the possibility of having an additional room in the school.

- It is heartening to see that SMC members just walk into the school to see what is going on and review what the status is. They come uninvited, stay for a bit - make up their views and leave.

2

With Parents

- As has been the practice, parents have always been involved with the key issues of the school operations - from learning levels, helping them with an understanding of the work approach and philosophy of organisation, addressing irregularity, and keeping them motivated and attached to the school. Teachers proactively meet parent groups regularly and keep them engaged and informed every week.



- Parent teacher meetings are being held regularly each month to help parents have an understanding of the learning levels and co scholastic achievements of their wards. It's quite an event to see parents read *Mbrange* and read what their own children have written and contributed. The level of pride and a sense of achievement is what we feel will motivate parents to keep themselves involved with the process.
- An active component is the engagement is with the mothers of the children in schools. These activities are happening regularly. Issues related to cleanliness, food habits, regularity, learning levels, and nutrition form a major component of the discussions with them. The mother groups are extremely concerned and we hope to give them even more importance than we are already giving.

Other activities at the Organizational Level.

- We have had over the past six months visits from many organisations.
- Deep Ranjani from Vibha visited in July to take an early look at the Vistaar Programme. Some of the suggestions she gave - particularly related to categorizing schools on the level of ease/difficulty for doing Vistaar was followed and this is now part of the way we are doing business.
- The Vistaar Programme is soon becoming the flagship programme of the



organisation and while we do that we are realizing that we have to be conscious that we do not lose the strength of the Uday schools and so have to ensure that no harm comes to their functioning.

- A report on Vistaar is being done up separately and will be presented to the entire donor group after the review meeting on Vistaar which happens on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of December in Sawai Madhopur.
- We have also had visits from Empower - an organisation which would like to work with girls in secondary school. While we do not have a direct programme on that issue we are seeing how we can weave it into the future plan of having a supplementary education programme for children in Class 9 and 10 in government schools - and we plan to particularly focus on girls.
- We have submitted a proposal to HT Parekh Foundation - the CSR arm of the HDFC Bank and are following up with them about the possibility of them funding part of the operations of the organisation. They have requested the proposal from us following an introduction we got to them from the Tata Trust
- The Tata Trusts have regretted that despite it being a wonderful initiative their new strategy prevents them from supporting us as they have chosen some specific blocks and an a geographical zone for their work in Rajasthan. I don't intend to let them leave so easily and am continuing the follow up.
- We have also been approached by Porticus the CSR facilitator for the C&A Foundation. C&A is a large readymade clothing brand popular in Europe. They are coming for a visit in January and we are hoping that the shortfall in our funds caused by the exit of HFF will get covered by them. Fingers Crossed.
- We have submitted a proposal to the Azim Premji Foundation for an action research grant on the English language programme that we have developed. We have cleared the first round, have submitted a more detailed proposal and are awaiting their final verdict.
- Azim Premji Foundation continues to send their staff for exposure to GSK schools.
- We have also received congratulatory messages from the Collector and the MLA of the area. We were to have hosted the Chief Minister for a visit to the school in October but (it is our understanding) that some political issues prevented her from visiting. She did pass by the school and waved to the team as she did. She knows we exist and knows of the work we do.
- Recruitment of teachers by the government through an examination is likely in February 2016. We have lost at least 3 teachers to this announcement - including one Team Leader (Ghanshyam from Faria, and it is preventing one of our former

teachers to return (Ranjeeta) We have realised that we have to learn to live with this reality.

- As a follow up to this we have recruited 9 new teachers who are going through their initial induction training and hope that we can meet the shortfall effectively.
- We would also like to report the developments in the Jaganpura school related to TLM. As you are all aware we are at the moment almost Rs 20 lakh short on our annual budget. We have always been thinking of how maybe we could charge a small fee from children to meet part costs of the school. Since the HFF funding fell through, Jaganpura has been in a crisis. This crisis has been partly met by the WCT willing to allocate part of the Vistaar funds that it has committed to us to the operations of the Jaganpura School. We have also been helped by a generous philanthropist Mr. Ramesh Kacholia an industrialist from Mumbai who has given us Rs 10.25 lakhs from his own funds to meet the shortfall.

Jaganpura knows about this and has also contributed to meeting this shortfall. They have decided to fund the entire TLM costs of the school from their own contribution.

We see this as another fantastic example of communities showing their ownership and association with the schools. Thank you Jaganpura.

- Similarly, Girirajpura is also taking greater responsibility. They took the matter of recognition of the school within the purview of the RtE right upto the state government and it is their efforts that the State Government has now given recognition to the Uday School Girirajpura
- Towards the end of the last academic session the Uday Faria classrooms were destroyed by a storm. This made the school completely dysfunctional. Over the summer vacation the structures were revived and made functional with active support of the SMC. While all this was happening we were awaiting approval from the government for the construction of new permanent rooms at Faria for which the Yatra Foundation has kindly contributed.

The construction is currently on - but the complicated nature of government rules has just last week again obstructed the progress. We have been asked to stop construction until some other formalities are completed. We are following up on the matter.

- I have left the most exciting for the last. After a very rigorous process of evaluation and understanding of our work the Ashoka Foundation nominated us one of the Ashoka Changemaker Schools for 2015. I feel that this recognition is



a recognition for all the hard work that has gone into the creation, management and work of the organisation and the constant support that all donors have provided us. It is a recognition for the team and they deserve congratulations



Sachin Sachdeva and Vishnu Gopal  
November 2015