

GSK Visit Report (26/27 November, 2013) by Deep (Vibha)

Transportation Logistics:

I arrived at Sawaimadhopur from Jaipur late afternoon on the 25th of November. I took an auto to Hotel Ranthambhore Safari Lodge residence. I meet with Maneesh Pandey at the hotel late evening for a briefing and planning for next two days visit. I had timed my visit to GSK to coincide with that of the Head of Hemant Kothari Foundation, Mr Sandeep Deshmukh. Mr Deshmukh arrived early next day. We visited 5 schools , including Boudal school, over the next two days and spent several hours in discussion with Maneesh and staff. I also took this opportunity to have a discussions with Mr Deshmukh about GSK and their experience so far. I also discussed HKF's longer term plans with funding of GSK and their strategy to go forward.

Objectives of the visit:

- To visit Boudal school and get an understanding about how the merger with the government school is working out
- To visit the Vistaar schools to understand how it is progressing vis a vis Vibha's interest in supporting a pilot
- To take this opportunity to spend some time in discussions with the head of HKF who are the major funders for the Vistaar program at the moment

Methodology Used:

- On site visit to Boudal primary school and 5 other government schools (Vistaar)
- Observation of activities
- Document review
- Discussions with Maneesh Pandey, other staff
- Interactions with government school headmasters/mistress, teachers and children

Daily activities (School/center activities) :

10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

4 – 5.30 pm teachers review their work and make lesson plans for next day based on the CCE (Comprehensive Continuous Evaluation) methodology. **This is work in progress- GSK has begun working with government school teachers and this level of intensive work by teachers takes some time to implement**

Observation and Process Evaluation:

Visit to schools:

26th November 2013

Rajkiya Prathmik Vidyalaya, Sherpur

This one of the government primary schools which has been taken up under the Vistaar program. There are 6 teachers including a Headmaster and 146 students. GSK begun work in this school last year (about 18 months ago). I visited this school along with Mr Deshmukh from HKF, Maneesh Pandey and Naresh from GSK.

Classroom observation and discussions with teachers were both very encouraging. Ms Godavari Meena who teaches classes 3 and 4 is one of the keen and enthusiastic teachers who was very excited about the new methodologies and classroom management techniques which she has learn from GSK. She took time off personally from work and spent an entire day at GSK Jaganpura school to get an understanding of the teaching methodologies that she had heard about. When I was in her class, it was good to note that she was making a conscious effort to incorporate new ideas in her teaching. She said , "I was not very interested as a teacher in the school. I was also very sceptical about GSK's methodology, so I took leave and went to their pathshala to see if all that they had said was really possible. I went to Jaganpura school and it was an eye opener for me to see GSK teachers in class and the very responsive children. Everything seemed so interesting and I did not see even a single child ignored, bored or doing nothing. When I came back I have tried to instill these ways into my teaching. I enjoy my work more now!"

I was quite impressed with the children in her class. Mr Deshmukh and I asked the children to do some simple English language tasks that were from the class 3 text book. Not all were able to do it but then we used the class 2 lessons and were able to get full participation from all the children. It is noteworthy that even though children were not up to the mark in class 3 lessons, they were on their way to learning well. Ms Meena, their teacher, said that she was having to take it a bit slow as children did not have a good foundation in the language. She felt it was good that children will be able to get good basics in the language and that learning was more important than the syllabus. She was confident that the children will be quite up to it by next term.

The teacher in class 1 and 2 is new and GSK needs to work more closely with him as he is not able to cope with the multi level children in these two classes. The teacher for class 5 , although not new is still stuck in the old system of rote learning and 'copy from blackboard style'. I mentioned this to Maneesh and Naresh and they informed me that along with training they are also dealing with change in attitudes and that takes longer, not all teachers are as receptive as Ms Meena.

Rajkiya Prathmil Vidyalaya – Kundera

This school has 73 children. On the day of visit, there was only one teacher in the school as the second teacher cum Headmaster was on leave for a family function. Ms Beena Gupta is a new teacher who has had initial orientation from GSK already. However, we found her to be less active and lacks creative thinking. Bishnu, spent some time playing some games with the children who clearly enjoyed the experience. The game they played is called "Ram-Ravan" which is a elimination game. There are two teams called Ram and Ravan. Depending on which name is called out by the facilitator that team has to capture as many of the opposite team and decimate the numbers until one of the team emerges a winner. It was fun!

I asked Ms Gupta if she initiated any interactive and creative games to teach her students and also asked her how she could use the game Ram-Ravan to do so. She had no idea at all that

she could use this game to clarify concepts in Mathematics – addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. In fact one of the needs she identified for herself is training in ‘how to teach Math’.

I feel that GSK also needs to focus its training on creative and out of the box thinking for the teachers. I have mentioned this to Maneesh and Bishnu. I will expand a little bit more on this, later in this report, in the section General Observations and Issues.

Rajkiya Prathamik Vidyalaya – Basokala

This was the third school we visited. Here we met the Headmaster Mr Kamal Meena. Mr Meena appeared to be quite clued into GSK approach and methodology. He said that with GSK’s help he hoped to slowly improve the standard of education in the school. They have a 154 children in the school and 5 teachers (including himself). The school could easily have another 100-150 students but the number of private schools that have sprung up in the village has taken away some of their students. The lack of teachers to manage 154 students has created high stress levels for him as he doesn’t have enough time to teach as well complete administrative responsibilities.

Mr Meena showed a good degree of cooperation and was keen to make his school into a model school. He also acknowledged that the teachers in the school had been there for a long time and they were not yet ready to change their attitudes and styles. It was a difficult task. While I was at the school, I saw the teachers bring out the students and play some sort of game with them. However, it was rather mechanical with none of the fun, laughter and noise that one associates with children at play. The teachers looked grim!

Basokala is one of the further most areas and will need more attention from GSK to bring about any sustainable changes. But it is still early days and perhaps by the end of 2014 more perceptible change will be visible.

That brought us to the end of Day 1 - 26th November. We returned to the hotel and I spent some time with Mr Deshmukh discussing the visits and HKF’s take on the Vistaar program (more on this below on Vistaar).

27th November 2013

Boudal Primary School:

There are currently 77 students in Boudal plus 40 children in pre-primary (117). 21 children passed out from class Vand have taken admissions in the upper primary school. 8 girls dropped out of school but now are continuing education under Boudal Uday Pathshala. Their parents were reluctant to send their daughters to the government upper primary school which is some distance away. GSK has managed to convince the parents to let these girls continue at the Uday pathshala, although Boudal school is now merged with the government school, the classes 6-8 continue at the old building until such time as these children can go to school elsewhere.

I sat in some of the classes in Boudal school to observe activities. Mamta who teaches the younger lot from class 1 and 2 is an excellent teacher as has been said in earlier reports. She manages the classes very well and the children under her care always are enthused and keen participants. The students who have moved to class 2 and 3 have had their basic foundation

already set by Mamta in the last academic year and continue to do well. I also observed these two classes and noted that their teacher is very involved in classroom activities. Children are very bright and the questions I put to them from their text book solicited very excited responses from the kids. I was informed by Maneesh that the teacher has only of late showed a change in her attitude and now takes a greater effort in teaching and learning. She takes a lot of pride in the achievement of the students – “I like teaching and these kids are a source of great pride for me when they show me how well they are learning.”

GSK has provided two teachers to this school, Mamta and Beni who takes classes 4 and 5. I met with Ms Sharifa Bano who is the Headmistress On my last visit she was not very enthused about GSK intervention but this time I found that although she is still reluctant to give due recognition to GSK, she grudgingly acknowledged that things had improved. Good teaching, more regular attendance and lots of activities. Boudal school also is being noticed by the district authorities. She also expressed keen interest in doing more activities with the children and talked about getting the large area behind the school (which belongs to the school) cleared of all the brush and debris and converting it into a playground so that children could have space for sports activities. This is a good change from last time when she was not interested in stretching herself beyond her room in the school.

Rajkiya Prathmik school, Gopalpura

Gopalpura is one of the smallest schools (in numbers of students). It is also a small size village with 69 households. The school has 2 teachers and 45 students. Many parents prefer to send their children to private schools and therefore the number of children is quite low.

The school is enough space for the small number of children and has ample space for play and other activities. A boundary wall to enclose the school compound has recently been put up and the area cleared of bushes and undergrowth. This apparently was done after GSK's intervention as the school is right on the edge of the forest .Toilets were also repaired and put to use.

The school still needs a lot of work and the teacher also isn't very enthusiastic. I felt that this school could perhaps have been on GSK's longer list to begin work considering the high resource input and corresponding cost and impact on the small number of students and teacher.

Organizational Issues

Second line management:

As has been discussed in the past, GSK needs a strong second line manager. The program team is excellent but lacks in vision and strategic perspectives for which they are heavily reliant on Maneesh. The progress so far has been that Maneesh has identified possible candidates but the only thing holding back is the cost of the salary. The cost of the Program Manager will be spread out through various programs as this person will have a responsibility across GSK programs

The major areas of responsibility are program direction and guidance/supervision, reporting and communications and a back up person for Maneesh. This will free up Maneesh's time for external liaison, donor relations, fund raising and interface with government of Rajasthan. If current donors are able to support the cost of this person, a second line could be in place almost immediately.

Program Issues:

1. Teacher attitude and change of mindset: This is by far the biggest challenge faced by GSK and they need to tighten up their current systems to work on bringing about a positive change.
2. Teacher capacity building: More structured needs assessment and training plan needs to be put into place. A well planned and regularized follow up system also must be put into place, specially as distances between schools are considerable which automatically affects the number and frequency of mentoring visits made by GSK staff.
3. Rapid expansion: GSK is currently working in 40 schools under the Vistaar program and has Boudal, Jaganpura, Fera and the Urban school under its regular program. My feeling at this point is that they should consolidate their work with current number of schools with a small expansion. I have concerns as HKF will probably add another 20 schools in the coming year. HKF's longer term plan is to go up to 125 school in 5 years time.

Monitoring and Evaluation systems:

Following our visits (Vibha and HKF) to the school, we felt that while the result of the intervention by GSK were encouraging and excellent in some places, GSK needs to devote some time to develop some good quantitative/qualitative indicators that establish the level/benchmark for measuring change and impact. GSK has not paid enough attention to this aspect as is a high priority in 2014 for GSK.

During our last visit to GSK in early 2013, Murali and I had long discussions with Maneesh, on impact and impact assessment. We had come up with some very initial and basic questions that GSK needs to look at and these questions are still valid:

- how will we know that the teacher training /hand holding provided by GSK is making a difference? What are the parameters set? Do they have regular need assessment of teacher's capacities? What is the follow up?
- What are the benchmarks set to evaluate the change/use of GSK methodology
- What and how are children benefitting
- Are there ways to see difference (improved) in children's performance?
- What are the assessment tests based on and what are the comparative data already in place?
- Are children from Uday Pathshalas doing better than children already in government schools?
- What assessment tools are you using that provide the above answer?
- If GSK is going to expand Vistaar program, how is it going to ensure quality aspect without creating a huge resource requirement (teachers, trainers and associated costs)?

I have re-emphasized the urgent importance of getting this in place and have also said that is this one of the organizational targets to be set for 2014.

Having said all of the above, I continue to be excited by GSK's Vistaar program as I can see the change happening and its good. It would be worth the support to see a host of schools that are like Uday pathshalas in character, energy and results. To see such an impact we would need to invest for a minimum period of three years.

Photo link:

<https://plus.google.com/photos/106463965904959289874/albums/5961999362633585713?banner=photo>