

**Shamayita School: Virtual site visit March 2021** written by Manidipa Mukherjee

This year due to Covid, we arranged a virtual site visit. The link is given here.

From our chapter, Mani Ratnesh Sandhu and Sai Kulkarni and myself joined the zoom call. From project site four teachers and 42 school children joined. Compared to the interior location of the village the reception in the mobile was pretty good. Initially there was some audio problem, but it was solved by the teachers, Rajib and Manoranjan. It was 7 am in the morning. Still it is little cold in the villages in the morning, so the children were wearing woolen hats and sweaters. There were 8-10 students in each class, lots of them had mask on, some doesn't. The number of boys and girls are almost same. There were three classrooms and one other group was sitting in the porch. One group of children were getting ready for their music class.

I asked the teachers to talk about their experience over last year for teaching these children close to their home. Manoranjan (teacher) explained that they divided each village into four groups for mini schools. Children sat outside keeping 6 ft. distance and using masks. There are total 15 teachers. There are 4 villages. So each teacher stayed in the same village for the week and then rotated among the groups for each day of the week. The support from parents was very satisfactory. Other than March and April of 2020, the students didn't miss any school days. On top of that, students who goes to grade 5-10 in government schools, asked the same teachers to help them continuing their education. The teachers helped as much they could. Now with the parents' request and enthusiasm, the school buildings are open for 3 hours a day. The menu of tiffin has to change, using food that doesn't need too much cooking and teachers are bringing the food for children with them, freshly cooked if any cooking is involved.



I also asked the students how are they dealing with the virus. One of them said that she washes her hands more than once with soaps (supplied by school) and water. She wears mask (supplied by school). They mostly are outside which is helpful to keep the virus away.



In India primary schools are hosting grades 1-5 instead of formerly grades 1-4. So grade 5 has been added. In order to accommodate those grade five students in Shamayita Schools, they will need to add a classroom. The best will be if they can add two classrooms. Currently they have three rooms for four classes. In winter or rainy season, students sitting outside get cold or wet.

The students and teachers look happy. They thanked us for supporting their schools. We completed our virtual visit and said “Bye” to them.

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/B-JX19zulxg>