

Gram Vikas Trust Visit in Bharuch Gujarat (Padmanava Sen – 21st January 2017 – padmanava.sen@gmail.com – Asha Bangalore/Asha Central Team)

Snapshot of Visit:

- Visit Summary
 - Reached Bharuch in the morning from Vadodara by bus.
 - Received by GVT secretary Ramesh Kasondra. Visited GVT office.
 - Spent more than one hour discussing about their current projects with different members.
 - Visited a mota sanjha village (Jhagadia) where students are given bicycles.
 - Visited a center in Vagra where sewing, beautician training and computer training are running for adolescent girls.
 - Met one girl in Saran village who has taken beautician training and started her own business.
 - Visiting Government officers in Education department. They mentioned the effectiveness of the bicycle program. Also, they highlighted the facts in many rural schools; the number of teachers is half of the recommended one. GVT has given 112 para-teachers in 2012-2015 for Jambusar block and later tried to get DPO involved. Need of proper training is more important than degrees.
 - Detailed discussions with Rameshji regarding skill training in this area targeting the local industry.
 - Left for Vadodara after lunch.
- Overall impression & future steps
 - The Reach-to-Teach program is very good and Sikshana funds can be channelized in giving more bicycles to girls in rural villages. Govt officials mentioned the need is much higher than current distribution.
 - Sewing, beautician training and computer training have their benefits. But to get more employments, there is a need to rethink the job dynamics of the area and according to identify students and impart skills.

Details:

Discussions – Their siksana program is limited to few schools since 2009. It started with Vibha and now Asha for education is the solo funding agency. It is similar to Karnataka Siksana program by providing para teachers, writing exercise books, recognitions and ASER tests in Class 6-8th. Gram Vikas Trust is running activity-based-learning programs in 70 schools focussing on learning method with ReachtoTeach, UK (<http://reach-to-teach.org/what-we-do>) and state government. They will add more schools in this agenda in coming years. Reach-to-Teach visits regularly and they have on-the-field employees as well. They have Reach Booster

programs. Currently the programs are applied till Class 2 and 2017 onwards; they plan to extend to Class 3, 4, 5. Later, Rameshji mentioned this model is sustainable than the Siksana program and Siksana funds can be channelized in other projects of Asha Atlanta.



Discussions with GVT members

Interaction with Students – Rameshji earlier explained why they make sure every girl has a bi-cycle. In Gujarat, only girls from BPL and ST families get cycles from Government in Class 9 (when requests are submitted from High school headmasters). There is significant commute for students in Padal, Vagra, Jhagadia and other villages around Bharuch. If they do not get cycles in primary, they won't be able to commute to schools 2-4 km away. They commute together in a group and go to central school for higher secondary. That gives confidence to parents and exposure to students. That makes them go for graduation and other career advancements. Among 27 girls who were given bicycles in one village, 9 are going for Government Nurse training. Some are also doing diploma. This also reduces the chances of early marriage. Government officers also stressed on the need of bicycles as they reach their homes early to avoid safety issues. This area is not unsafe for women but one incident can create scare across all the villages. Even in some cases, girls use the cycle for selling home grown vegetables. Not only the kids were very happy but it created a big change (drop out at Class 6 reduced).



Interaction with girls in training centres – The main reason, girls learn sewing is to help at home (thus saving money) even though the scope of earning is limited. In some cases, they get small scale work in their own villages (blouse sewing etc). Also among beautician training and computer training they prefer beautician training as they see a direct way to get some earning as for many, long term work is tough after marriages (though the culture is slowly changing). Given it is a free training program; GVT is very strict about attendance. They also train them for some exams/certification in sewing/embroidery, computers. To create sustainable models, they tried to collect fees of 150/month for total 20 students batch in 2-3 batches a month and the money goes to the trainer. However, the problem is the saturation of the area where center is located and unavailability of free centres in villages. Community mobilization is important.

Among the girls who are receiving training, some are taking computer training while attending colleges and some have dropped out of college or at 11/12th. A few dropouts happened due to bad results. Almost everyone wants to earn after the training. Some of the girls going through sewing training, they already started earning after the basic course.

I later talked to the lady who has got the beautician training and has started her business. She has a small setup at her home and also goes to marriage or other occasions. She is divorced and need to provide her child. She is able to support her child with the earnings (6-7K monthly). There is no other beauty parlour in that area and people like her finishing work as well. Even she gets orders from Bharuch as well.



Girls in training centers

Future of the training program – Rameshji mentioned the emerging fields of mobile repair and accessories in these areas. Also, he mentioned identifying students early and training them in separate sectors (driving schools, electrical repair). Just 2-3 specific training won't reach everyone. It can be a basic training for them to tap more advanced training for employment. It will be beneficial to work with the contractors who provide employers to different companies in all sectors (more

like the Unnati model in Bangalore). Also, placement, based on interests and skill-sets will ensure avoidance of students coming just from peer pressure (and no interest). Regarding computers, smart-phone exposure is increasing and the cost of internet in India is steadily decreasing, that can help them to make informed decisions via search. It also enable easy tracking and sharing information of youths. Local products (e.g. phenyl, organic fertilizers) can help the situation as well. Skill India initiatives (mostly free training centers) are there but the focus is more on training than placement. In Bharuch area, there are pharmaceuticals, petrochemical and other industry that has a good demand of ITI graduates. Migrant labourers go to the contractors as well. But there is a dire need of collaborations for skill training. Reliance hires mostly from good colleges but the students do not work long and leave after 2-3 years, but if they train the locals, there will be more retention. More discussions need to happen to plan the steps for coming years.



Me and Rameshji with village girls who got bicycles