

Balia Gram Unnayan Samity Site Visit Report

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1 Purpose and Itinerary of Visit

This is the 2017 site visit report for Balia Gram Unnayan Samity, a project under ASHA UIUC Chapter. This is a follow up of last year's site visit. The main purpose of the visit was to check in on the current conditions of their pre-primary schools, coaching program, library and book bank and discuss any administrative issues with the project correspondents there. Last year extra funds were disbursed for the class room development of the pre-primary school at Narayanpur and installing electricity connection in Bahirkhand, Dullya and Narayanpur. So I also wanted to check on the status of the constructions. Finally I also wanted to hear from the locals and the teachers at the respective schools if they had any concerns or would like us to consider funding any new avenues for development in the pre-primary school level.

I was accompanied by Mr. Tarapada Chakrabarty (Board Member, BGUS and Project Contact for ASHA UIUC) and the ex-headmaster of the Balia High School as well as the respective teachers in the schools. I finished my site visit with a meeting with the Board members, staff members and the teachers of the pre-primary schools at the BGUS office at Balia, where we discussed administrative issues and noted any concerns and requests from the staff members.

Specific details of the site visit are given in the following sections in a concise form.

2 Narayanpur and Balia pre-primary school

Balia has already resumed classes at the normal location last year, but it started after my last site visit. So I went there and checked on the newly

renovated school. Schooling has also resumed at the Narayanpur pre-primary school after class room development last year. Both of these sites have undergone complete renovations (courtesy of extra funds in the last two years). Funds were also disbursed for uniforms of students, which have started coming in, custom made for each of the kids. The following pictures were of ongoing classes there.



Figure 1: Schools in Narayanpur and Balia during classtime

There was tremendous positive response and sense of gratitude from the

parents in those school premises. Thanks to our funds, they now have a concrete ceiling for the classroom (and hence uninterrupted classes during monsoon), a separate kitchen for the midday meal, a proper playground for recess and a clean concrete latrine.

3 Electricity issues

Last year, this was a major point of concerns from the project sites at Bahirkhand, Dullya and Narayanpur. Absence of electricity and proper water lines were hindering classes during cloudy or rainy days. With some of the funds sent last year, they were able to sanction the installment of electricity lines and have already commissioned workers for the installment of electricity lines. This year, they intend to finish the electricity projects at Balia, Jigra, Ichapur and Kashipur. Funds for such installations have been requested in the budget proposal. These seem to be very necessary for the unhindered schooling at these villages.



Figure 2: Electricity being installed in the school premises

4 Classroom renovation requests

There are tiled shed in Bahirkhand and Dullya, which has gone through the same deterioration as the other one pre-renovation. So this year they

have requested funds for what's hopefully the last cycle of renovation of the classroom ceilings. These have been elaborated in the budget proposal. The pictures in the next page illustrates the state of emergency of classroom construction.



Figure 3: Deplorable conditions in the classroom shed

5 Meeting with the Board members

All the three programs, pre-primary schools, coaching program for primary and high school and the book bank program which assists students upto post-graduate level were functioning properly, although they were eager to increase the funds for the book bank since the demand for books has substantially gone up with the increasing popularity and support for the program.

Active parental participation continued to be there in all the pre-primary schools. There are now about 300 kids currently enrolled in the pre-primary school program. The following pictures are of the meeting and the nutritional charts that they maintain of each students in the 7 villages.

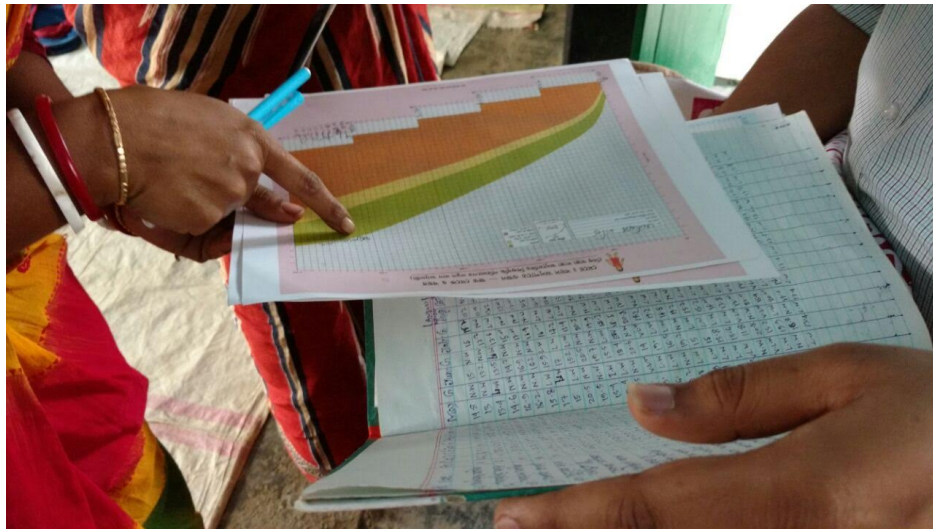


Figure 4: Deplorable conditions in the classroom shed

The main minutes of the meeting were:

- Pre-primary schools at Bahirkhand and Dullya needs immediate attention for their proper ceiling construction.
- The warehouses which are used as classrooms needs renovation and proper doors (there was no improvement in this issue from last year).
- More elaborate sports event and possibility of multiple sports event since communication difficulty between villages reduce participation.
- NO Electricity in four villages (Balua, Jigra, Ichapur and Kashipur), which was their urgent concerns. Expenses were included in the proposed budget of 2017-18.
- Requests for increasing salary of the teachers and inclusion of some professionals in their accounting, library management and book bank management.

The teachers' salary in the current year (2016-17) ranges from Rs. 800 (\$12) to Rs. 2030 (\$31), which is very low given the amount of effort and dedication they put in their work. It was amazing to see how much engrossed they are in their work in such a selfless manner. There are about 20 teachers for the pre-primary schools who are all girls from the respective villages (some were ex-students of schools under BGUS). There were a couple of new teachers from last year, which was nice to see. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Subhash Chandra Pal (Secretary, BGUS), Mr. Tarapada Chakrabarty, other board members and the teachers and staffs affiliated to BGUS.