

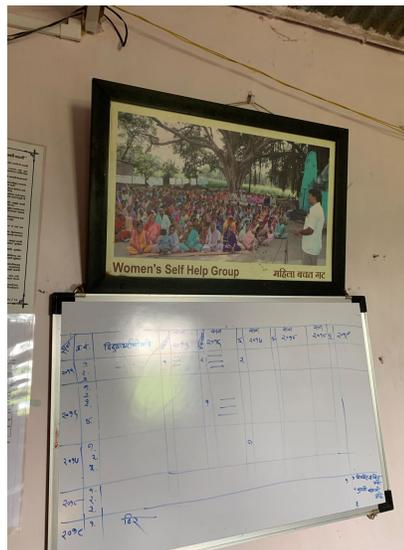
Parner Site Visit Report - December 31st, 2019

Sahana Mangipudi
Minneapolis, MN

My name is Sahana Mangipudi and I am the project steward for the Parner project. On December 31st, 2019, I visited the Parner tribal preschools in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra as a part of my 2020 Site Visit. I was accompanied by Dr. Ramesh Awasthi, Managing Trustee and Co-Convenor of MASUM (ASHA's Project Partner), Ms. Bhakti and Mr. Dilip Gavane, employees at MASUM, my father, Subu Mangipudi and Mr. Abilash, a driver for MASUM.

The children in the preschools range from ages 3-6. MASUM also supports a class for children in the 4th standard. The schools are located in interior Ahmednagar in a county known as Parner and support the Bhil and Thakar communities that reside there. Throughout the road trip, I had the chance to witness the transitions from city life to village life to the tribal scenes of Parner Taluka.

Dr. Awasthi, Bhakti, and Abilash picked up my dad and I at 7:00 AM from the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Pune. We stopped by the MASUM Office in Pune, where I had the chance to learn about the women self-help groups conducted by MASUM. MASUM uses several techniques to empower women in subtle ways. The support groups address the Y chromosome to explain there is an equal chance of a child being female or male. No mother should be held accountable for having a daughter; it is a blessing as is having a son. Additionally, they explain that a mother truly has the power to uplift herself as *she* is the primary caretaker for her children. I was inspired by the work MASUM conducts to empower women and children.



After about 2.5 hours of travel, we reached Mendoh around 11 AM.

1. Mendoh - started in 2014

At the Mendoh Balwadi, Ms. Nanda Jadhav teaches a class of 12 students. 9 were present that day. I handed out Ghiradelli Chocolates and candy to the students after getting acquainted. As the kids were snacking, Ms. Jadhav explained the curriculum and interactive activities the kids take part in. A male student demonstrated his knowledge of the Marathi alphabet and was able to connect a letter to an example of a word it appears in. Ms. Jadhav then asked the students to organize a small set of beads. The students were quick to recognize that the beads were distinguishable by color and separated the pile into two. A female student then demonstrated her knowledge of numbers as she hopscotched across written numbers on the floor and simultaneously recited the numbers in Marathi. Ms. Jadhav also held up plastic animals and asked the students to recognize what it is and what it does. The students were able to give in-depth answers and distinguish one animal from the other by describing where it lives and its functions. The students also demonstrated their skills in recognizing size by organizing a stack of rings in order from largest to smallest. They also were able to name the color of each ring.



Children organizing beads by color



Student naming letters of the alphabet



Group Picture at the Mendoh Balwadi

2. Shelwak - started in 2017

After visiting the Mendoh Balwadi, we drove for about one hour before reaching the Shelwak Balwadi. The class is taught by Ms. Mangal Tai. There are 7 boys and 4 girls in the class. After distributing chocolate and candies to the children, I had the chance to hear from Mr. Chikne Gorak Madhav who runs an evening support class for the tribal children of Borwak and has been the lead for the past five years. The students range from 4th standard to 12th standard. Currently, the class consists of 12 boys and 19 girls. After hearing from Mr. Madhav,

the children in Shelwak took part in learning activities. Ms. Tai presented the children with a plastic toy and asked them to recognize the animal and its function (similar to children in Mendoh earlier that day). The children were also asked to identify colors and numbers of circles (shown in the second picture below).



Animal Recognition Activity



Color and Number Recognition Activity



Group Picture at the Shelwak Balwadi

3. Godsedara

By the time we arrived at the Godsedara Balwadi, it was around 1:30 PM. Ms. Ganga Kedar is the teacher. Since the school day was over, the children were taking part in a fun activity. Unlike Mendoh and Shelwak, students in the Godsedara Balwadi sit on an unfinished floor made of gravel.

The children also have to cross a deep stream of water as a part of their journey back home. It is Ms. Kedar's responsibility to cross the stream with the children and make sure the children have reached the nearby government school. Once their older siblings are done with school, the children walk home together later in the afternoon. Since we were on site, Mr. Abilash drove the children across the stream to the nearby government school. Additionally, I met a girl in the 5th standard who rides a bicycle very long distances in order to reach the school and her home. After hearing this, I wish there was an easier way for children to and from school.



Fun Activity for the Afternoon



Group Picture at the Godsedara Balwadi

My Recommendations

Overall, I think the schools are doing very well. MASUM has given tribal children greater opportunities through education and a chance at a better future. ASHA for Education can look into ways to provide additional education tools such as individual slates. For younger students this can be used to improve their writing skills. In the future, we should start to look into improved modes of transportation for the children. Perhaps a shuttle or school bus that would expedite the childrens' journey.