

SITE VISIT REPORT – MASUM

Date: Oct 14, 2017

By: Pallavi Kulkarni, Volunteer Asha Boston Chapter

My name is Pallavi Kulkarni and I am project steward & volunteer for Asha Boston Chapter as well as Asha Toledo Chapter. I was visiting India in Oct 2017, Meenakshi from Asha Minnesota Chapter approached me with a request to perform site visit to various educational initiatives being conducted by their project partner MASUM in Parner, Ahmednagar area. Dr. Ramesh Awasthi (from MASUM) and I decided to drive to Parner and visit the 2 Balwadi's and 1 After School Support Class being supported by MASUM and sponsored by Asha Minnesota. These Balwadi's and Support Class are in very remote tribal areas of Parner. Parner is about 2-2.5 hrs from Pune. There are 2 prominent tribes in that area, Thakkar and Bhilla. Their main occupation is farming, or daily laborers. These tribes are known to have low literacy rates and tend to marry off girls at age of 13-14 years.

We started at 7:30 am on Oct 14 from Pune in a SUV. Mr. Ramesh & Suvarna from MASUM came to my house to pick me up. Due to some traffic delays, we reached our first destination, Shelwak at 11. Shelwak was a good one hour drive in from the main Nagar highway. The access roads were damaged due to heavy rains in the region. Mr. Ramesh told me that in 2016, Suvarna & Dilip performed survey of 10-15 different tribal pockets, and determined that there is a need for Balwadi's in 2 areas; Shelwak & Mendoh.

1. Shelwak Balwadi:

The Shelwak Balwadi is run by Ms Mangal Kedar, she is 7th grade pass. There are 12 to 16 kids in the Balwadi, which is held every day from 9 am to noon. Kids come from nearby homes, Ms. Mangal brings them from their homes. She conducts the Balwadi in a small hut type room in her own home. The room was rather dark and lacks ventilation. MASUM pays INR 1500 per month as salary to Ms. Mangal and supplies other teaching aids and materials. The Balwadi was started only 2 months ago and has kids up to 4 years of age.

There is no food provided to the kids during this time. Please see pictures below:



The kids seemed happy but were shy in front of so many strangers. Ms. Mangal has to attend monthly meeting held by MASUM at Parner and also has to undergo training as deemed fit by MASUM. There are 2 MASUM volunteers that look after the day to day activities of these projects, Ms Suvarna & Mr. Dilip.

Ms. Suvarna works out of Pune office in Hadapsar whereas Mr. Dilip works at the local Parner field office.

2. Mendoh Balwadi

From Shelwak we drove another 1 hour to Mendoh. This was also in remote area and the access to get to this pocket was even raw and barren. We reached Mendoh only at 1 pm, the teacher of the Balwadi there, Ms Nanda Jadhav was patiently waiting for us with the kids. There are total 17 kids in this Balwadi 12 boys and 5 girls. Ms. Nanda is 12th pass and is well trained than Ms Mangal. She has previous experience of conducting Balwadi's in the past. The room where she conducts the Balwadi is a former Anganwadi room. Anganwadi is a government initiated & sponsored Balwadi for kids. Since the Anganwadi moved to a different location, Ms Nanda is able to use the room. The room is nice and bright and well lit. The kids here were more active, energetic & mischevieous compared to Shelwak. This Balwadi is also from 9am to noon, and no food is provided to the kids. Ms Nanda maintains a file for each kid in which she writes their progress in reading, writing and other activities. Ms. Nanda live ½ km from the Balwadi, and the kids also live close by.

See pictures below.





भोजपुर - संस्कृत भाषा में मुख्य भाषा
प्रमोद पोखरे जाह्नव

लक्ष्मण - संस्कृत खोचकर
 हनेरी - भनियमित

भोजपुर	भोजपुर	विज्ञान
कृषि कार्य कराना	भूक १०१००००००	५ फल-फूल चवी
प्रयत्न कराना	मैना	आठवां
नौकर जिते लागला	५ कोक नाकाकर	५ तराई बुझी
पानी, घसी, वाहने	पुडा माऊन संक	५ संक-सुक
फले, आर्या फलमे	भोजपुरमा प्रयत्न	खरखरी
जान बोरा कुडुने	करने	कुडुखरी
मित्र कोवडा अक्त्रे	विकल्पना व्यक्तता	अभिनने
विद्या भोजपुरी केना		

खेक - खेक उडा, उच उडा, दावने, रवरी खेक
 चिह्न छको व सेनने डावडा

गोष्ट - गोष्ट लेकाएडा डावने

भोजपुरी - भोजपुरी लेकाएडा प्रयत्न कराने

नमस्कृत भाषा - नमस्कृत भाषा डावने नाही

आर्यिक विकास - रवने, दावने, घावने, दया, रवी
 नावने माती भरने, भाडा-भारडा करने डाव
 खरीरी नावने डावने मारने

आर्यिक विकास - भागे भागे गेहने, लक्ष्मण
 रवने निराय घरी भागे फलदेखी भागने
 मोडला, लक्ष्मण रवने नावने

3. Borwak After School Support Class:

After visiting Mendoh, we had lunch in Takle village at 2:30pm. After lunch we drove ~40 kms to Ahmednagar to visit another NGO, Snehalaya. I am project steward for a project run by Snehalaya. Snehalaya & MASUM work in similar social causes and we discussed various projects and other details of how each organization does work. We took a tour of Snehalaya then headed back to Parner area to visit the After School Support Class. We then drove to Borwak settlement in Parner and reached the After School Support Class at 7 pm. The settlement was 1 hr interior in a valley surrounded by mountains. The access road to reach there was “kaccha” road and had been further damaged due to heavy rains in the region. When we reached there, there was no electricity in that area. Electricity was gone since morning of that day. There are total 23 students in the after school Support Class, 15 girls and 8 boys. The students range from 4th grade to 12th grade. The teacher, Mr Gorakh has a Diploma in Education (D.Ed) and is pursuing another Diploma in agriculture in nearby college. MASUM provides 2,200/month salary to Mr Gorakh. The class is from 7:30 to 9:30 pm, since many girl students need to complete household chores before coming to the class. The Support class offers additional support to the students where they get an opportunity to clarify doubts which they have in school. This class is being conducted for the past 1.5 years. Current class has 5-6 girls in 7th grade. 2 students in 8th grade, one in 12th, one in FYBA. Few students are in 5th grade. So, there is a mix of students from different grades. When we asked some students what were their easy and difficult subjects, almost everyone said that English was difficult and Marathi was the easiest. Some also had difficulty in science. The students seemed shy, but it appears that this after school support class is helping them cope with regular school. They all go to school in a village ~5 km away.



Recommendation:

Overall, my opinion is that MASUM is doing good work and helping to uplift the quality of life of these tribal children through education. The effectiveness of Balwadi's need to be assessed regularly and suggestions need to be provided as appropriate. It might further benefit the kids, if MASUM is able to provide interactive and newer educational tools to activate the minds of these kids. Both Balwadi's need to develop capability to provide some food to the kids while they are there for 3 hours. I know there are some challenges in implementing this, however, I think it is essential to encourage more kids and to make

them feel happy & something to look forward to. Food can be in form of some non-perishable snacks, or if the teacher can provide “dal-chawal”. Mr. Ramesh suggested that it might also be a good idea to collect some food in the form of grains, vegetables, etc...from the parents of these kids so that they also consider themselves as stakeholders in the program. I think there are few options, which need to be discussed and implemented at the earliest.