

**Navsarjan Trust Schools
Gujarat**

**Site Visit Report
May 2012
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Background

Asha for Education – Boston/MIT chapter started the scholarship program for female students at the three Navsarjan schools in Gujarat beginning July 2007.

These schools were started by Navsarjan Trust to instill confidence and self-respect in the Dalit children – who are regularly mistreated in the local government schools. Since fewer female students attended the Navsarjan schools due to the higher fee structure, *Asha for Education's* scholarship program subsidizes the fees for female Dalit students.

The 3 schools are in:

- Rayka village in Dhandhuka district
- Kataria village in Limbdi district
- Sami village in Patan district

Site Visit to Sami school

On May 28, 2012, Priti Patel and I, on behalf of Asha Boston, visited the Navsarjan School at Sami village in the Patan district of Gujarat. This school is located on the highway near Sami villlage, which itself is located about 100 kilometers north of Ahmedabad. The school is built on a 10-acre plot owned by Navsarjan Trust.

A teacher at the Sami school, Mr. Ratilal, the school manager and a few other people at Navsarjan, hosted us at the Sami school. As we entered the school premises, our first impression was that the school was a picture of greenery in an area which is generally dry,

arid and sparsely cultivated. Because of summer vacation, no students were present at the school. The Navsarjan team warmly welcomed Priti and I. Many teachers, cook and the school manager either live on campus or commute from nearby villages. In addition, we reviewed the timetable of a student's typical day which included, in addition to education, activities such as prayer, sports, and exercise. Also, the Navsarjan team informed us that the students also help in cleaning the school campus, maintaining the school gardens, and cleaning their own dishes.

In the beginning, Priti and I toured the school campus. We noted 3 residential buildings, and one administrative office building. Similar to Rayka school that Asha-Boston team visited in May 2010, the Sami school had modular buildings used for different purposes at different times of the day. Also, we noted that the buildings were clean, functional and well-organized. We also noted separately designated areas for play-time activities, compost-making and bathrooms. We also noted 8 computers organized in creatively made wooden cabinets in one of the modular buildings.

Thereafter, we toured one of the residential buildings that included the kitchen and dining hall. At night, the residential building doubles up as a dormitory. The interior of the residential building was clean, well-organized and functional. The Navsarjan staff informed us that students are given 4 simple but nutritious meals every day.

In addition, we toured the *Eco-san* sanitation facilities. In the *Eco-san* model, solid human waste is converted into plant fertilizer and nutrients respectively. More

interestingly, there is no human involvement in *Eco-san* model. As an anti-climax, we viewed the ecologically friendly model of sanitation in a school focused on education children of the Dalit community that is traditionally tasked with maintaining sanitation facilities!

At lunch organized at a *Bhimsevak's* (village helper) home in Vadlala, a nearby village, we interviewed few students and their parents. The students told us that they were enthusiastic about studying in the Sami school. These students also told us that teachers taught well and went out of their way to address the students' needs. Evidently, the children from Navsarjan schools exhibited confidence and enthusiasm. We found verbal anecdotal evidence that Navsarjan schools motivate children to stay in school and complete their education through standard 12 (even if it is in a different school). In addition, parents were quite enthusiastic about sending their children to Navsarjan's schools and said if more standards were added, they would definitely send their children back to Navsarjan schools.

Thereafter, we interviewed students and their parents in yet another village. In particular, we chatted with a girl student recently who had dropped out of the Sami school, due to family pressures. Compared to other children, this girl showed greater confidence and enthusiasm in talking to us. She added that she plans in the future to take vocational classes at Dalit Shakti Kendra (DSK) located at Navsarjan's headquarters.

On the same day in the evening, Priti and I witnessed the *Chhotte Bhim* drama competition. At that time, Mr. Martin Macwan, the founder of Navsarjan, informed us that Navsarjan is looking to expand the capacity of the Sami school by adding a second story to existing buildings affordably through the innovative use of wood rather than concrete and bricks. He pointed out that using wood is three times cheaper than using concrete and bricks. We note this idea as yet another example of Navsarjan doing “more with less”.

On a different day, at DSK, we saw infrastructure for vocational training classes for computer training, learning English, carpentry, wood carving etc. These DSK observations are consistent with those in our prior visit to DSK in May 2010.

Picture Links

Navsarjan Middle School

<https://picasaweb.google.com/maulik.nagri/12MaySchoolVisitToNavsarjan?authkey=Gv1sRgCPevnp6x396A6wE>

Pictures





