

Site Visit Report – Shiksha Kendra Udaipur February 2020

During my last visit to India in Feb 2020, I visited Seva Mandir's Shiksha Kendra with a few team members from HPFY. We spent the day with the kids, seeing how the school is set up, interacting with them and helped renovate one of the classrooms.

This Shiksha Kendra is located in the outskirts of the town of Udaipur and serves as a school for about 70 children from a group of nearby villages. A small two room building with a covered porch and an open courtyard defined this school. In the courtyard there was a big banyan tree with a raised cemented platform around it that served as additional shaded classroom space.

The children were divided into three learning groups based on their age and or progress so far in learning. The Shiksha Kendra had one teacher, a young man who seemed very committed and very much in control of the big class size. He simultaneously managed three classes, assigning/overseeing work in two while teaching one group at a time. The students all recited a few poems for the visitors. Some sounded very enthusiastic to impress while others were shy and had to be nudged by the teacher, who they addressed as "Master Ji", to be louder.

We spent half a day at the Shiksha Kendra. After the poem recitation demo by the students, we left them to their learnings for the day and spent a few hours painting one of the classrooms. A local artist was hired by Shiksha Kendra to help my team. He drew the outlines of several popular animals and vegetables and cartoon characters on the walls and guided us on how to paint them. The children were super excited to see the makeover their classroom was getting, and would come in to sneak a peek when their teacher wasn't watching. My team and I enjoyed the painting process thoroughly and watching the excitement in the kids made it all a memorable experience.

When I met these children in the beginning of the day, many of them did not have shoes on their feet and did not have sweater or warm clothes on. It was the cold month of February. Thankfully, we had gone bearing gifts for these children. Seva Mandir had organized for a new backpack, sweater and shoes for every kid. Their joy as we distributed these gifts was contagious, and those smiles and those heartfelt thank you screams will stay with me and my team forever.

All pictures and photos from this trip have been uploaded in an album on google drive and can be accessed here:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/TXjWSN9dF3xRNXkM9>

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