# Kadam Site visit by Monel Amin – April 2011

Visiting Kadam in Piplaj was a good overall experience, with time spent with Meera and her team as well as visiting schools at two locations.

**First Location:**

In the first location, there are four classes, embedded in the community. The need for schooling exists at this location primarily due to relocation of families from Ahmedabad city. The city is developing some areas and have relocated the families to Piplaj area. Per Meera, the city has also not provided for basic necessities and  the elders in the family lack a constant source of employment at this location.

Kadam has started the school to fill the education gap. However, she does face few challenges:

1. Inability to get the teachers locally, so all have to travel from various locations.

2. Parents do not have local employment. Kadam is encouraging the women of the area to participate in small scale projects to make souvenirs which Kadam sells to donor community or corporations.

3. Per Meera, there are possibilities of child sexual abuse. The irony of the situation is that the place lacks basic necessities, but a local alcohol bar has made its way. The female children are encouraged to work at the bar to earn for the families.

4. Also Meera shared the earlier challenges in getting children to mingle, since all are from different religions and some are children of sex workers. However, she mentioned that these issues have been nearly resolved with the teachers working with the parents to share the understanding.

Kadam runs four classes at this location for various age groups, and the children seemed engaged. All classes have fans, lights, blackboard, educational charts and some have benches. Kadam also provide meals for the children, which is an additional source to keep them motivated in attending. Kadam also takes the children on day trips, and have designated Saturday's to be the "photo-session" days.

**Second Location:**

The second location has recently re-started. Two key reasons for earlier closure:

1. Kadam had lost their rental for earlier classroom

2. Funding constraint

Once Asha funding was approved, Kadam started the second re-location, which is a rental room on the terrace of a house. This location still needs infrastructure, but the children and the teacher seemed excited. The children were of mixed age groups and all in one class.

Few thoughts on this project, although you may already know this:

1. Meera has tried to diversify the sources of funding with the pasti project, in-kind donations (benches, clothing and footwear) as well as support from civil society. However the continued success of the project is dependent on AfE funding.  Perhaps, it may be a possibility to help the project in being self-sufficient to ensure continuity. Meera mentioned a support-a-child concept, but not sure if Asha Cleveland is already involved.

2. Female students are consciously treated better than male students. Although this is supportive of giving more power to women, I would have hoped to see a concept of equality. Additionally, from practical purposes, this may not be well received by donor community, and Meera is conscious of its impact. Is Asha-Cleveland comfortable with this bias in the project that it's funding?

Overall, kudos to Kadam and Asha Cleveland in getting it this far! I hope this has been helpful.

Cheers, Monel