Payir - Call with Senthilkumar Gopalan

Date: 13th November, 2016, Sunday

Attendees: Devesh Chugh, Gayathri Srinivasan, Ramya Sivakumar, Ravi Venkatraman, Senthilkumar Gopalan, Shivashankar Halan

Agenda

- Recent developments from Payir
- Updates on nutrition program
- Updates on Payir school
- Future direction for Payir
- Next steps for Senthilkumar and Payir team

Notes

Recent developments from Payir

- Conducted gender sensitization workshops
  o Mela conducted amongst girls
  o Concepts covered included gender sensitive topics: menstruation, anatomy, society and stereotypes, different relationships, child abuse etc.
  o Collector appreciated the effort
  o Other organizations said they would like to do the same

- Peer group training
  o Provided a 2 day residential program for few kids: 400 odd children.
  o Touched upon lot of issues: attitude of children towards health, food, possibilities in life.
  o Encouraged them to take these values to friends
  o Many news stories and pics available on FB page

Updates from nutrition program

- Meeting on progress previous with DC. Govt is not able to decide on the future of the program due to current paralysis. Most likely it will not continued.
- But consensus on the ground is that the pilot was a success and is a flagship for many other initiatives. Every officer who came for evaluation had good words.
- Attempting scale down version from a grant from US through “Friends of Payir”. Can support 1000 children in 18 schools who are weak.
- Nutrition program has huge impact. Without govt support, it is impossible to reach the number of children as expected.
- Request chapter to take up this and push forward this initiative in Asha group
- Noon meal has brought children to school, but better nutrition increases learning levels.
Updates from Payir school

- Recognition for Payir school not obtained, so there is a decision to revert to traditional methods.
- UAN is obtained for every student, so they are recognized as going to school from a statistic perspective. Transition of kids from Payir school to regular school: If a child has UAN, they can move into any other school seamlessly. TC offered by board at the district level
- IGSC (Cambridge) has been approved. School has to pay. The cambridge board has 5L fee for an exam for all students (as opposed to the Oxford board which charges 5L per student per exam)
- Current strength : 26 residential + 31 non-residential
- Two students finished 7th std and moved to govt school for 8th. They performed very well there in studies and extra curricular activities. Payir team was afraid if the two girls will be able to adjust. They did have difficulty initially because of strict environment. But performance academically and socially was really good.
- It gave confidence to Payir team that the traditional methods will work to gradually move children to mainstream system as well. Looking at those two girls, parents are becoming comfortable sending to school.
- There is also an attempt to fill gaps in learning levels at govt schools by appointing teachers.

Future direction of Payir school

- Creating leaders: teachers and students coming out of alternate school will be more sustainable.
- The school is nearer to an alternative approach now, and will proceed in that direction.
- Intervention program: Not sustainable in long term, continued evaluation is very difficult.
- Tracking and measuring impact over time: learning from various other organizations such as Timbuktu, Olcott.

Next steps for Senthilkumar and Payir team

- Senthil and Preethi want to take a break for personal reasons.
- Testing waters for the entire team: saw the team grow when he was away in Chennai. The team grew from 45 to 100. He didn't attend calls either, but was just a phone or bus ride away when in Chennai. Now he would like to test how they can evolve completely independently.
- Not been able to see different things and update their knowledge. Want to be able to meet new people and learn different things.
- Struggles: Working with the govt has taken a toll. DC said there is no way out of this. Face it and work with it. The environment is very low. Need to learn how to cope with it.
- For the next year till 2017 end, Senthil will be communicating remotely with Payir team and will be the point of contact for AfE as well. He would be lesser in touch from 2018.