

2014

Sampark

Impact Assessment Report

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1. Assignment at Sampark

1.1.Introduction:

Sampark is an NGO directed at the social wellbeing of bhiils in and around Petlavad block. They have three pronged approach to facilitate education of tribal kids:

- 1) Improving Quality of education- in-school support
- 2) Residential school
- 3) Bridge course for drop-outs

Improving quality of education

Sampark conducts training programs for teachers that equip them to teach primary school kids. It is believed that with these techniques a strong foundation for future learning can be created. Kids are taught mathematics and languages using activities rather than lessons. Sampark has created a special Learning Basket- “Bhanva No Kandiya” that contains flash cards, abacus, pictures and charts to visually stimulate the children and peak their interest and attention. In the experience of these teachers kids are better able to grasp concepts and understand context and meaning of alphabets and numbers. Such kids perform better in higher classes.

Teachers called “Shala Mitra” assisted government school teachers who are burdened with a lot of documentation and reporting. In our conversation with primary school teachers this fact was testified to.

Residential School- Sampark Buniyadi Shala

With 150 students enrolled, this school follows the Mahatma Gandhi Buniyadi education system, imparting education through work, application of knowledge in everyday life activities and appreciation of individual’s skills. It focuses on character building, self-reliance, castelessness, religious equality and vocational education, it follows mainstream syllabus prescribed by Madhya Pradesh Government with several value additions.

Residential Bridge Course

This course is meant for students who have never been enrolled in a school or have dropped out in the age group 8-12 years. The course was conducted in the premises of the buniyadi shala. First the kids were identified through a baseline survey done by the field worker. They visited the homes of the identified kids to sensitize and convince their parents to send them to Sampark. This was followed by a 3 day Motivation Camp to familiarize these kids with the environment. Various activities like movie screening, plays and open discussions are conducted.

A benchmark test is given to the kids to divide them as per their capabilities. During the next 9 months of bridge course the students are tested monthly for their progress. Final exam assigns them to mainstream classes 3rd/4th/5th. After passing out, the kids are given a report card guaranteed by the Block Officer for preferential admission to government schools. Field workers follow-up on enrolment and attendance of passed out kids in government schools.

1.2. Improving quality of education

Dashrath and Goba Damar- Shala Mitra

Dashrath and Goba worked as assistant teachers under the quality of education initiative. They have both completed D.Ed. and underwent a 15 day training that equipped them with TLM techniques. They were coached to adopt a nurturing attitude towards children in Primary school. They encouraged creativity and questions in class. They taught vocabulary and grammar through songs, stories and fun activities. They noticed that the kids were more attentive and grasped concepts quicker. The atmosphere was frank and open.

Visit to Government Primary School at Baiganwadi

Baiganwadi is a small village of 1500 residents, most of them Bhils. Major occupation is farming and migratory labour.

We met and interviewed the principal who believes Sampark has been a boon for the residents in and around Petlavad block. Their initiatives in education has improved enrolment and reduced child labour. He feels the need for assistant teachers (Shala Mitra) in his school.

According to him, major challenges for educators include:

- Dwindling number of teachers
- Overload with government documentation work
- Parents are not involved and still many prefer to send their kids to cities as labour or help with the household chores. Kids can earn upto Rs100/day
- Kids have learning disabilities and require frequent revision. This coupled with poor attendance makes them perform poorly, but are passed and moved up a grade anyway.



Figure 1: Principal at baiganwadi govt school

On the day we visited, about 70 of the total 114 kids had showed up. Classes were disrupted due to a passing wedding procession. The nearest high school is 3kms away in Sarangi.

1.3. Assessment of residential school program- Buniyadi Shala

The Buniyadi Shala is based on Gandhian principles. The MP state curriculum is augmented by vocational training and life skills

Indigenous skills- children are taught about locally found medicinal plants. They are made aware of local needs and problems. This is done to ensure the children are not alienated from their roots, which is a major worry among their parents.

Vocational training- candle making, balm making, computer training, stitching etc.

Bal panchayat- a panchayat is elected from the student body who oversees working of different committees that look after the cleanliness of the premises, the mess, the farms and the plants, water resources and news.

Science Centre- the science centre is used by resident students and visiting groups to create interest in Science. The centre houses experiment to explain scientific concepts, human body functions etc. it is well-equipped with apparatus to augment classroom learning.

Library- a well-stocked library is open for the students. Local and National newspapers are available.

Bal Mela- Education fairs are held every year in each cluster to attract children. They have games, science experiments, plays, puzzles. The aim is to gather numbers and acts as an effective medium to create awareness.

Grading system- Sampark employs a unique grading system for the primary classes. Each grade is broken down into skills. Only when a kid is competent in all skills does he get awarded the grade. This makes monitoring performance easy and the teacher can focus on the skill the child lacks.

Parent Teacher Association- parents are involved with the PTA and offer suggestions and inquire about the progress of their wards.

Organic farming and self-sustaining mess- the campus grows its own vegetables. Farms are purely organic with no use of chemicals. Students volunteer in the farms.

Rainwater harvesting- the petlavad area can get extremely arid in summer and faces acute water shortage. Campus collects water through the monsoon season for the dry months.

TLM technique- primary school teachers employ TLM and specially designed workbooks, flash cards and other activities to stimulate learning and improve their grasp.



Figure 2: TLM- Bhanva no Kandiya

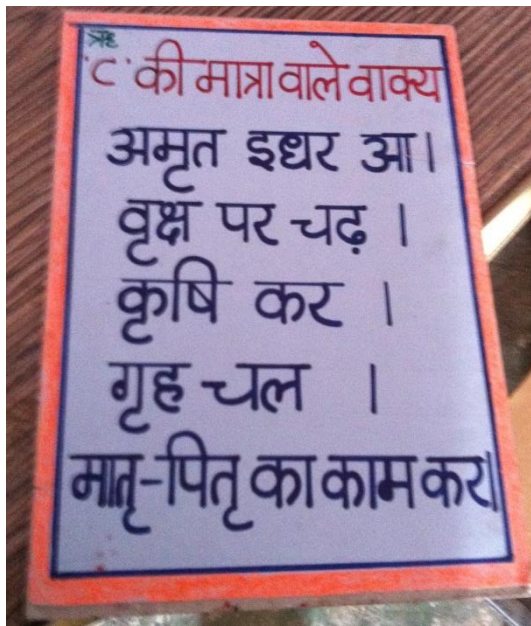


Figure 3: TLM charts

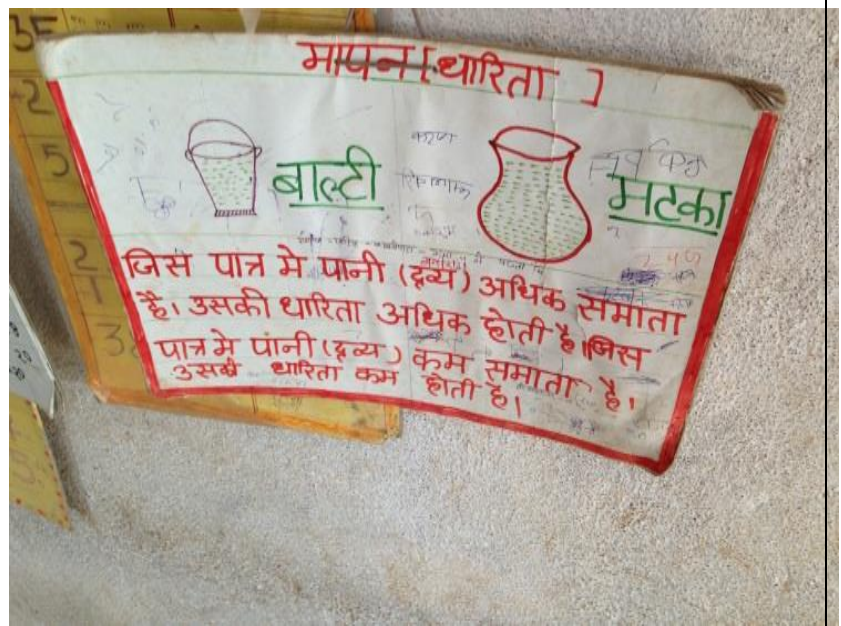
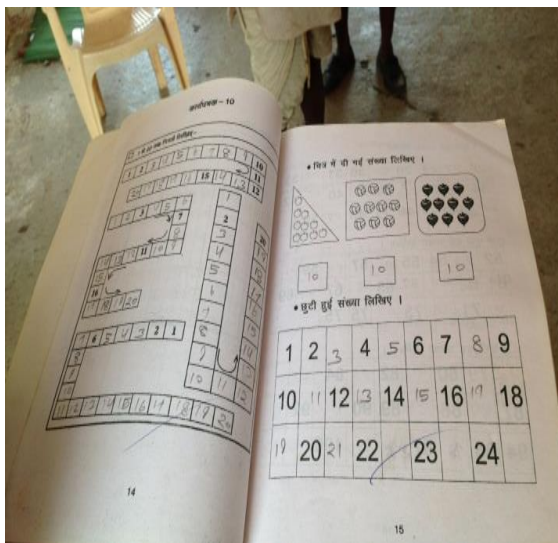


Figure 3: TLM charts 2



1.3.1. Interaction with Class 9th girls in the residential school

We noticed major differences among Sampark girls and those studying in Government schools:

- Discipline
- Ability to form and work in committees
- Eager to take on roles and responsibilities
- Regular attendance
- Articulation in Hindi- many children in Government Schools are unable to converse
- Self-reliant- vocational training makes them confident that they can support themselves for further education and have a back-up income option

- Outspoken- Activities like dramatics are conducted which helps them improve their public speaking
- Physical fitness- girls at Sampark have to participate in some sport (Kabaddi, Kho Kho, Cricket)
- They can influence their siblings, parents and neighbours and spread awareness about education, drug abuse, sanitation and nutrition

1.4. Post-camp follow-up for bridge course students

1.4.1. Papita Narain



Figure 4: Interaction with Papita and her siblings

We interviewed her father Sohan Narain who had enrolled her for a year in the bridge course and is now mainstreamed at Mohanpura Government Middle School.

He heard about Sampark through the field worker, Vandana. He wanted Papita to continue with Sampark Buniyadi Shala but the fee wasn't affordable for him. He is unhappy with the government school at Mohanpura as it is irregularly conducted and lacks adequate supervision.

4-5 girls who had enrolled for the bridge course along with Papita have completely dropped out. Girls drop out mainly for the following reasons:

- Poverty
- Early marriage
- Household chores- supposed to look after siblings, fetch drinking water and tend to the cattle
- School at Mohanpura is about 3 kms away and the roads are unsafe to travel alone and during monsoon

Girls generally study till class 8th and average marriage age is 12-15 years. However, there is a rising interest among girls and their parents in education. The community does realise the positives of educating girls:

- Employment: Self-dependent
- Supplements family income
- Can read and understand land documents, BPL ration card, finances:
- Saves them from getting exploited

1.4.2. Lalita Khadiya and Rekha Damar

Lalita and Rekha were students at the bridge course now studying at Kanya Shala at Sarangi and government school at Mohanpura in class 8th respectively.

They believe their stay at Sampark opened new opportunities for them by teaching them vocational courses like stitching, candle making and balm making. They were given a school dress and wanted to attend computer training after being mainstreamed at Sampark itself. At Sampark, they actively participated in the Bal Panchayat.

However, the fees deterred them from continuing and they had to enrol elsewhere.



Figure 5: Interaction with Lalita and Rekha

During our conversation with the girls their families and neighbours also gathered. They spoke to us about the general state of education in their block. Government schools do not fail any student. All students keep progressing from class 1 to class 8 despite their poor performance. There is no incentive for kids to strive for academic improvement. Later, tribal students are unable to cope with government college curriculum and drop out. They believe they do not get benefitted from ST reservations in government colleges because of a weak academic foundation.

Lalita and Rekha's Daily schedule:

Time	Activity
0500	Wake up
0500-1030	Household chores- tend to cattle, fetch drinking water, cleaning the house
1030	Walk to school
1130-1600	School
1630	Replenish water from well, collect firewood
1730	Make dinner
1900	Dinner

They mentioned they miss the prayers, play time and dedicated school hours at Sampark. Parents say they were members of parent teachers association at Sampark which is not conducted at government schools.

1.4.3. Ambaram- bridge course student who dropped out

Ambaram left Sampark in 2012 as the course ended. He doesn't enjoy studying in government school as he finds them dull and restricting. He preferred the atmosphere at Sampark. He claimed he would have continued at Sampark had the course continued. He doesn't know what he wants to do in future.

Ambaram seemed extremely disinterested in talking about school or his future aspirations. He recalls being approached by Sampark field workers. He along with his peers and friends joined together. They have continued to study in government schools but he couldn't articulate why he wouldn't.

Ambaram couldn't read or write or solve basic mathematic problems. He learnt Hindi, Math, songs and poems and stories at Sampark. He liked the use of TLM techniques.

We met Prabhu, father of Ambaram to better understand why he dropped out of school. Prabhu recalls how irregularly the primary school was conducted. Ambaram was disinterested in school and didn't attend for weeks at a time. Prabhu was eager to send him to Sampark and noticed an improvement in his academic performance in the following 2 years.

As the bridge course ended, Ambaram's family couldn't afford the fee of the Buniyadi Shala and forcefully enrolled him at the government school. However Ambaram soon lost interest and dropped out completely. Prabhu wants the fee at Sampark to be subsidized.

1.5. Afterword

After speaking to various people, regarding the state of schools and children's education in the region, it was evident that the following were the major challenges with regards to children's education:

- **Drop Outs** – While majority of the tribals are aware about the importance of educating their children and are willing to educate them, many children cannot complete their education due to the lack of schools, mainly High Schools, in all villages. Travelling 5-6 kms to reach the school is not considered feasible and safe by the villagers
- **Number and Quality of Teachers** – The teacher student ratio in the schools is very high, usually upwards of 40, sometimes even 75. This effects the quality of education received by the students. With the teachers having to tend to a large number of students, they are unable to perform their duties effectively and are demotivated. They are also burdened with extra work such as conducting surveys by the government and local bodies. Lack of attention by the teachers is also leading to a high number of drop outs and irregularity in attending schools

- **Quality of education-** With the RTE making it mandatory to pass every student, even students with below par performance are promoted. When these students attend higher classes or private schools or colleges, they are unable to cope up and frequently drop out. The above mentioned factors make it difficult to provide quality education to the tribal students.

The three pronged strategy adopted by Sampark, directly addressed each of this pressing concern. The programs were hugely successful in tackling these issues, while it was operational, and the effects could be seen by the village community. This was reiterated by them during our interviews. Some of the key benefits as seen by us are as follows:

- ✓ **Reduction in the number of drop outs;** many students were able to continue their education due to the Residential school
- ✓ **Resumption of education** of numerous students due to bridge course. The students literacy and understanding levels of the students was highly improved after the bridge course
- ✓ Assistance to primary school teachers in terms of teaching material and auxiliary teachers helped improve **the quality of education imparted**. The greatest testimony to the benefit of these materials is the fact that these materials are still in use even though the program has ended. Used and filled up work books are still used by the teachers
- ✓ Many students have passed out from the Sampark programs and are currently pursuing **further studies in colleges**.

Apart from these benefits, the community has also seen some indirect benefits of the program. Child labour has been curbed to some extent. More parents have become willing to send their children to school. Average marriage age has risen from 12 to more than 18 as girls are aware of the quality of life they aspire for. Major decrease in cases of runaways has also been witnessed. Alleviation of superstition and other social evils like drug abuse through spread of education.

1.6.Gallery



Figure 6: Teacher using TLM to tutor academically weak students



Figure 9: Teacher using TLM to teach at sampark residential school



Figure 7:Shala Mitra



Figure 10: guest teacher for primary school