

VARUN
SITE VISIT REPORT
DATE 22-09-09 and 24-09-09

I (Govind) started from Kaithi, Varanasi on 22.09.09 to Naugarh. Reached at around 7.30pm. This is a block that comes under Chandauli Dist. This has been declared as forest area in all respects. Farming and rearing animals are among the main occupation of people here. People who are landless or don't have any animals, live by gathering wood and medicinal herbs found in the forests.

In Naugarh block, VARUN setup Non Formal Education centers and Self Help Groups for women. Dr..S P Singh coordinates all of these programs.

Govt. declared this area as Naxal effected and due to lack of rains since several years, it has been declared draught hit. Because of this, a lot of people are migrating to cities in search of work. The percentage of migration of workers has increased from last year. It has not gone down even after the introduction of NREGA. In talking to people it has been found that finding work through NREGA is not very easy and even if one gets a job, compensation is not received on time. It takes anywhere between 3 to 6 months to get the compensation.

Due to draught, people are not being employed to work in fields also. Since the forest area has been taken over by the Govt., people are no longer able to depend on forest related work for survival. But for daily living, they gather wood and sell it in the cities. Few of them rear animals and sell milk in the market.

I started my site visit on the morning of 23rd September.

- **Shahpur Center**

Shahpur is around 30kms from Naugarh. There are about 84 families here with a population of around 384. There are mostly Yadavs, Chamars, Baniyas (traders), Dhobis and Kharvars. Main occupation is farming and working as laborers in city. When I visited the center, classes were going on. This center has been running Primary school and Junior High school with 5 teachers employed.

Teacher Name	Class	Registered Students	Boys	Girls	Present on visit day
Sanjay	1	20	-	-	01
Sanjay	2	19	12	07	01
Sanjay	3	29	17	12	07
Sanjay	4	14	13	01	05
Satyanarayan	5	04	03	01	01
Ramkrit	6	32	19	13	19
Punnu Singh	7	24	16	08	08

Kanahiya	8	12	07	05	08
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Dr.Singh mentioned that they were in the process to close down the Primary school because there was a Govt. Primary School opened in the area. In July, there were 2 teachers appointed too, but they came only for 2 days and were not to be seen later on. Due to this, the locals had requested to keep this school running. I enquired regarding this with the locals and they mentioned that they requested this school to be running until Govt. school properly functions. There is no Junior High school in this village. Nearest one is about 4kms away, over the other side of a hill in a village called Gahila, because of which girls of this village and nearby villages stop their education. Due to this reason, VARUN opened a Junior High School here.

Class 1 students are taught 'Hindi Varnmala' (alphabets, vowels/consonants), English alphabets and Mathematics. But, nobody was really able to identify the letters. Std. 2 kids were not able to read even by reading 1 letter at a time to frame a word. Class 3 and 4 students were dictated Hindi, English and Math, in which most of the students got it all wrong.

When students of Std. 3 and 4 were asked to read from Hindi and English books, their difficulty to read and comprehend the text they read was visible. Many students were not able to solve beginner's exercise problems given in the text-book. They were able to memorize multiplication tables up to 10. Students of Std 6, 7 and 8 had good fundamentals, but only 3 chapters were taught from the prescribed text until now. When I reached Shahpur , there was a construction going on and Dr.Singh mentioned that they are building a Junior High School at that place which has already costed Rs.36000. Out of this AFE has contributed Rs.20000 and Rs.16000 has been given by VARUN organization. Around Rs.4000 more are needed.

- **Sukhdevpur Center:**

This is a new center which is approximately 10 Kms away from Shahpur located on the border of Chandauli and Robertsganj. There are 39 students enrolled here. The village has 50 families with total population of about 150. People belong mainly to Agaria and Chamar caste.

The nearest Primary school is about 2Kms located in Saraigarh (Robertsganj Dist.).Children find it tough to attend this school because of the route. Children enroll in this school to give exams and get text-books. In talking to villagers here, they were telling that mid-days meals were available in the Govt. school but food is very bad and education was also not good. Even after clearing 5th Std., they were not able to read a single alphabet. But, after VARUN started this school, children are able to study much better within the village itself. They are able to understand what is being taught. This school was built through contribution made by the villagers and with their help finished the construction.

Mr.Dhurbhari Singh is the supervisor of this school. It started at this facility itself.

Class	Registered Students	Present on the day of the visit
Nursery	24	15
1	06	05
2	01	01
3	07	05
4	--	--
5	01	01
Total	39	27

Nursery students knew alphabets of Hindi and English verbally but when asked to identify by looking at the chart, they were not able to identify. If asked from certain way, they were able to say the whole list of alphabets. Math skills was not much yet. Class 1 were able to identify individual letters in Hindi. But, they were having trouble after adding vowels (maatras). Class 2 kids were able to add and subtract numbers but, they were having difficulty with calculations involving 'borrowing 1'. 3rd class students were able to read letters with vowels and consonants, but they were not up to the par with parts of speech and also not all kids had text books. Std 5 student had difficulty solving basic mathematics problems from his text book and also he was having problem with reading Hindi.

- **Hathini Center:**

This is also a new center. Hathini village is in the middle of jungle and hilly area having 24 families and a population of 124. There are no literates in this village. There is only one literate in the village, Ramesh, who is the teacher. 22 families of this village belong to Yadavs and 2 families of Kharwar. During the monsoon season this village is inaccessible. The only way into the village is through a canal. Neares primary school is in Gahila, which is 8Kms away. To go to the school the way is quite difficult because of which parents don't let their children go all the way to the school. This school has been built with the help of villagers.

This school has 25 children and the teacher is Ramesh, Intermediate pass.

Class	Registered Children	Present Students on day of the visit.
Nursery	13	09
1	07	05
2	03	03
3	02	01
Total	25	18

Knowledge of children is not at satisfactory levels, according to the standard they are admitted to. Student's admission to the Primary school has been according to the registration date. But since this school has been opened in this academic year, children should be admitted according to the level of knowledge.

Nursery school children are not able to identify all the alphabets of Hindi and English.

Class 1 children have knowledge of all the alphabets but they are able to read it only in a certain pattern. If something from the middle is asked, then they are not able to answer it. They have the ability to add and subtract numbers, but they are not able to read and understand the text book. There was 1 girl in Std. 3 who was able to read the text book and understand the text. Children did not have the complete set of text books.

- **Dobahi Center:**

This center is 17Kms away from Naugarh. To reach this village one has to go through the dried up river bed or through thick forest. There are around 20 families here with a population of 105. Majority of them belong to Kharwar caste. Main occupation include gathering firewood, medicinal plants and rearing animals. The nearest school is 4Kms away from the current village that is in Horila. But, the main teacher does not come and there is a boy who is paid Rs.500 to be a caretaker who opens the school only for 2 hours.

Students of this school are enrolled in a Primary school in village by name Semar that is 6Kms away from current village. But due to hilly area and forest it takes 4 hours to commute, because of which they are not able to attend the primary school. Presently there are 24 children enrolled in this school with Bhuvan Kumar, Intermediate, as the appointed teacher. To build this school children and villages were involved in 'Shramdan'.

Class	Registered Children	Present Students on day of the visit.
Nursery	11	08
1	02	02
2	01	01
3	06	06
4	02	02
5	02	Nil
Total	24	19

Nursery students of this school were able to identify Hindi and English alphabets. Few were able to write too, but most of them are currently putting effort to write.

Students of class 2 knew the multiplication tables up to 15 and they were able to add and subtract numbers at the basic level.

Class 3 and 4 students were able to read good Hindi but had difficulty while reading in English. They were able to solve math problems given in their text book.

- **Pathraur Center:**

This center is 22Kms away from Naugarh in the middle of hills. When I reached this center, I could hear children reading aloud. There are about 45 to 50 families in this village with total population of around 230. Majority of the population belong to Kesari Kharwar caste and there are few local tribes. Main occupation is rearing of animals, labor, gathering fire-wood and medicinal plants.

Primary school is 3Kms away from this place in village called Jamsauth. Children are enrolled in this school for getting books and certificate but don't attend this school because of tough route and low level of teaching. Many children did not have text books in this school and there are 45 children enrolled here.

Class	Registered Children	Present Students on day of the visit.
Nursery	15	08
1	11	05
2	07	07
3	06	04
4	05	05
5	01	01
Total	45	30

Majority of students in Nursery have knowledge of Hindi and English alphabets and Mathematics. Students of class 1 and 2 were not good at reading from books and students of class 3 and 4 had memorized mathematical tables up to 20. Every student was asked to say tables up to 20. Class 5 students were able to solve basic math problems from the text-book.

Feedback/ Recommendations:

1. In talking to children at all the centers, they mentioned that they are not given time to play. Considering that the school is open from 9.30 to 3.30, there should be play hours.
2. Younger children at all the centers, are not given equipment to play, because of this they lose interest to go to school and study. For these kind of students, there should be interactive play tools for teaching.
3. Government prescribed text books are used. The level of teaching needs to be improved so that it would help children to be enrolled in the next standard.

4. There is a big need for Teacher training sessions. If possible there should be a session every 6 months.
5. The lesson plan laid down should be followed rigorously.
6. Children have complained that students are given punishment by flogging. This should be avoided, since it is demoralizing for the children to associate themselves with school. Hearing about school itself would create a fear in minds of children.
7. Children should be kept far from the concept of punishment and schools' environment should be made more friendly and co-operative.
8. Until there is a Primary school in Shahpur, this center should be supported. People are going to make every effort to start this off by next academic year.
9. In Shahpur, where there is Junior High School built, there should be a facility for at least 1 toilet.
10. Children are not having text books. They are not provided text-books in timely manner. If UP Govt. is not providing text-books in timely manner, then they should be provided text books published by "Eklavya Prakashan" and these should be inducted and taught accordingly.
11. Every child should be taught about cleanliness.
12. There should be a parent-teacher meeting every week to discuss about the progress of the child and how it can be improved.
13. All teachers and parents should come together and make an effort to change the state of Primary school.
14. All centers needs support and they should be allowed to run.

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