

Asha for Education – Silicon Valley
Savidya Upasamiti – Site Visit Report
6 February, 2012

Note:

The site visit was conducted by Mr Charchit joshi, Ms Kanchan Tiwari, Mr Ketan Suyal and Mr Varun Verma, MBA students at Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai who worked as volunteers with a Champawat based non-profit organisation, HIMWATS Savidya (www.himwats.org).

Evaluation of Savidya Upasamiti Projects in Champawat for Asha SV

07-08 January 2012

Four volunteers of HIMWATS Savidya undertook and reviewed Savidya Upasamiti's projects in Champawat which consisted of two parts:

1. Field visits to Kulethi Junior School in Champawat, meeting with the community and talking with the teachers, principals, and students on 07-08 January 2012.
2. Closely working with the Savidya Upasamiti organization at its headquarters in Haldwani in Nainital district with Dr H.D.Bist and Dr K.K.Pande during the period 03-21 January 2012.

About Champawat

Champawat is one of the three new districts that were created in the state of Uttarakhand. After becoming a new district it still has not "caught up" and is counted among the least developed districts in Uttarakhand. However, there are some government development efforts such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Right to Education (RTE), which can be harnessed to improve education.



About HIMWATS Savidya

Himalaya Water Service Tatha Vikas Avam Paryavaran Sanrakshan Samiti (HIMWATS) is a non-governmental organization working towards the development of Uttarakhand. The Savidya Upasamiti of HIMWATS was started to help the children and youth of the UA hills through education and training using regular govt. schools and professional institutes and workshops. It currently supporting / enhancing seven government schools in Champawat: two primary schools and five junior schools.

7 January 2012

Meeting with teachers and trainers at Rasiyar Technology and Computer Education, Champawat

Time: 3 pm to 6:30 pm

On 7th January 2012 afternoon we were formally introduced to the coordinators, teachers and senior volunteers who were retired principals and acted as mentors and trainers for the teachers.

The meeting was attended by the following members and volunteers of the organization:

| Sr.No. | Members | Volunteers |
|--------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Mr. G.B. Rasyara | Mr Heera Ballabh Kuletha |
| 2 | Mr .B.D. Fulara | Mr Ramesh Bisht |
| 3 | Mr .G.C. Pandey | Mr Praksh Punetha |
| 4 | Dr.G.B.Bisht | Mr Bhagwat Chaudhary |
| 5 | Mr.Kamlesh Rasyara | Mr Ashok Tamta |
| 6 | Mr.T.R. Joshi | Mr Chandra Mohan Joshi |
| 7 | Mr.B.C.Joshi | Mr Mukesh Pachauli |
| 8 | Dr.M.P.Joshi | Mr Manoj Pandey |
| 9 | Mr.H.C . Rasyara | Mr Lalit Singh |

The agenda of the meeting was to familiarize us with the working of the organization, challenges faced by the stakeholders, possible solutions proposed by them and forward it to Dr Bist, president of HIMWATS, as well as the concerned government officials. Based on our understanding and study of the organization during one week, we provided our inputs as well.

The volunteers and teachers were enthusiastic about the changes the efforts of Savidya have brought about in the region. They explained briefly about the schools, improved results of the students, support and challenges from the community etc. The schools were officially closed because of the winter break, but Kulethi primary school was open for Navodya Coaching Program for the entrance examination of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya for Class 5th student, which is to be held on 8 February, 2012.



A clear outcome of the improved education in the adopted government schools is the improvement in the attendance of students in the schools. While the average attendance level in the government schools stood abysmally low, the attendance level in Savidya adopted school was above 80 percent. The attendance of Savidya teachers was also impressive, as their salaries are directly linked to the number of days present in the school. Mr G.B. Bist brought out the fact that while the total number of enrollment in primary and junior schools in Champawat is on a decline, the strength of students in Savidya adopted schools is rising steadily. He attributed this to the improved quality of education, infrastructure, health facilities and awareness level among the masses. The local masses now prefer to send their ward to Savidya adopted government schools over so-called private schools in Champawat. Senior volunteer and mentor, Mr B.D.Fulara mentioned the instances where the parents of the kids going in other government schools expressed their inability to send their kids to Savidya adopted schools because of distance factor and urged him to include that school in their adopted list as well.

A challenge which Savidya faces is the lack of required awareness level and support from the local population of Champawat. Mr G.B. Bist, an eye surgeon by profession and volunteer with HIMWATS felt that local masses hardly know about Savidyas operations and are not very keen on supporting them in this cause. They affluent class can extend their support by giving scholarships to the needy students, placing advertisement in Savidya annual magazine, sponsoring uniforms and kits to the students etc.

Mr Joshi, a volunteer with Savidya is a government employee who is in charge of Child Centered Training Program proposed under the National Curriculum Framework 2005. This training program imparted to the government teachers at regular intervals aims at creating an inclusive environment in the classroom for all students, active learning through the experiential mode and introducing changes in tune with curricular reforms. With the approval of the government, he plans to introduce this for Savidya teachers as well, which will add to their qualification. He suggested us to forward his proposal to Dr Bist and the government officials.

The biggest question posing Savidya is the future of the teachers, who are employed at a meager salary of Rs 2,000 to 3,000, when compared to a government teacher in the same school who is paid a salary of Rs 25,000. Savidya does not have enough funds for increasing the base salary of the teachers or for offering them any additional incentive for delivering outstanding results.

Another concern for Savidya teachers is non-recognition of their work experience at government schools by the District Educational Officer. The work experience of present 17 Savidya teachers ranges from 0-4 years. Although principals of these schools (who are government employees too) are happy with their efforts and have given their signatures on their work-experience letters, the District Educational Officer doesn't approve of it. If the work experience of Savidya teachers is recognized, they will become eligible for the entrance examination for Diploma in Elementary Education (DLEd) offered by IGNOU, which mandates a minimum teaching experience of 2 years. This diploma will add to their skill-set and will increase their employability.

The volunteers felt that the government promptly uses Savidya's service when they need, the district officials are happy with the appointment of additional teachers at no extra cost for them and enhanced quality of education in their schools, but fail to recognize Savidya's efforts when any kind of support is asked from their end.

Under District Primary Education Program 1986, Para teachers were employed at the district level in many states. They were not necessarily professionally qualified as teachers but were generally from community. Since this program was recognized by the government, para teachers had hope of getting a permanent job. But after the introduction of RTI, the government has scrapped this scheme, thus taking away any possibility of pushing for Savidya teachers as para teachers and securing them a permanent job.

These issues of remuneration and unsecure future of the teachers is responsible of high attrition rate of the teachers. Savidya has so far employed 56 educated unemployed local youth as teachers. They leave the job if they get better opportunities elsewhere. The unchanging circumstances raise concern over the sustenance of Savidya model.

Session with the teachers:

We conducted a separate session with the teachers later in the evening, where we asked them to share their experiences and grievances, and promised to take them forward. They agreed that two biggest challenges for them were low salary and non-recognition of their work experience, as mentioned earlier. Another concern is their lack of competence in English. Most of them agreed that a major hindrance in their performance in competitive examinations is their poor English. Their lack in grammar skills is evident in our occasional email exchanges with the teachers. They requested us to take steps to introduce study material, arrange coaching to improve their grammar, spoken as



well as written English. Although all 17 teachers had knowledge about basic computer programs like Ms Word, Powerpoint and excel, only 4 teachers out of 17 knew the usage of internet.

8 January 2012

Visit to Primary School, Kulethi

Time : 11 am to 3 pm



As the other schools were closed for the winter break, our visit was restricted to the Primary School, Kulethi, where the classes for Navodaya entrance examination were being conducted. Primary school, Kulethi is one of the first schools to be adopted by Savidya and stands as a model school for Savidya. Scholarship distribution program for was also scheduled for that day.

The meeting was attended by the following volunteers and recipients of the scholarships:

| Sr.No. | Members | Volunteers | Scholarship receivers | Visitors |
|--------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Mr. G.B. Rasyara | Mr Heera Ballabh Kuletha | Km Ankita Kuletha | Mr Charchit Joshi |
| 2 | Mr .B.D. Fulara | Mr Ramesh Bisht | Km Chitra Kuletha | Mr Ketan Suyal |
| 3 | Mr .G.C. Pandey | Mr Praksh Punetha | Km Aparna Paneru | Mr Varun Verma |
| 4 | Dr.G.B.Bisht | Mr Bhagwat Chaudhary | Km Lata Joshi | Ms Kanchan Tiwari |
| 5 | Mrs.Asha Pandey | Mr Ashok Tamta | Sanjay Singh | |
| 6 | Mr.Bhuwan Kuletha | Mr Chandra Mohan Joshi | Bhuwan Singh | |
| 7 | Mr.Trilochan Joshi | Mr Mukesh Pachauli | Paras Kaloni | |
| 8 | Mrs.Geeta Kuletha | Mr Manoj Pandey | Raveesh Joshi | |
| 9 | Mr.Kamlesh Rasyara | Mr Lalit Singh | | |

All but 2 recipients of the scholarships were present along with their parents.

Learning and Science Resource Center (LASRC)

We visited the Learning and Science Resource Center (LASRC) established by Dr H.C.Verma, which housed more than 200 experiments in basic science. There was a Lab Manual which provided the detailed instructions to perform the experiment.



Rotating Library:

The library had a good collection of books in science and literature. Most of the books were either donated by the volunteers or were procured by support from Asha Foundation. Daily record was maintained for the issue of the books. Good reading habit was inculcated in the students, which was evident from the issue of 17 books on the previous working day, ie January 6. The library also had 2 computers, one of which was not in working condition at that time. One of the CPUs was sent to Haldwani for repair. There was no internet connection for the computers.



Classrooms:

Kulethi school had separate classroom for each class. The rooms were spacious and had wooden chairs and benches.

Scholarship distribution program:

The ceremony started with a welcome note by Dr Rasyara. Mrs Asha Pandey, Principal of Kulethi school also welcomed the guests and thanked Savidya for their continuous support to the school. The recipients of scholarships came from very poor families who were initially given scholarship of Rs 400 in the year 2004, and were now presented with a scholarship amount of Rs 1000 as a token of appreciation for continuing their studies.



मेधावी बच्चों को छात्रवृत्ति दी



राष्ट्रावि कुलेठी में छात्रवृत्ति प्रदान करते अतिथि। जागरण



♦ राष्ट्रवि कुलेठी का चम्पावत, जागरण कार्यालयः एमवीए विद्यार्थियों हिमवत्स संस्था द्वारा गोद लिए गए ने किया भ्रमण राजकीय प्राथमिक विद्यालय कुलेठी का एमवीए के विद्यार्थियों ने भ्रमण कर कार्यो का अपलोकन किया। इस बीच मेधावी विद्यार्थियों को छात्रवृत्ति भी प्रदान की गयी। विद्यालय में भ्रमण के दौरान एमवीए छात्र जर्चित जोशी, केवल सयाल, वरुण वर्मा, कंचन तिवारी आदि न विज्ञान ससाधन केंद्र व पुस्तकालय का अपलोकन किया। साथ ही संस्था के प्रयासों को सगहते हुए बेहतर शैक्षिक उन्नति के लिए सुझाव भी दिए। इस बीच संस्था द्वारा साविद्या छात्रवृत्ति से पांच व डा. गिरीवाल पंत छात्रवृत्ति से 5, मुरलीधर शास्त्री छात्रवृत्ति, हरीश चंद्र स्मृति छात्रवृत्ति दुर्गा त्रिपाठी छात्रवृत्ति एक-एक विद्यार्थी को सत्र 2011-12 के लिए प्रदान की गयी। कार्यक्रम का संचालन बीडी फुलारा ने किया। इस मौके पर प्रधानाध्यापिका आशा पांडे, कुर्माचल एग्लो संस्कृत विद्यालय के प्रधानाचार्य जीसी पांडेय, हिमवत्स संस्था संरक्षक जीवी रस्यारा, प्रबंधक हीर बल्लाम कलेठा, रमेश बिष्ट, प्रकाश पुनेठा, भगवत चौधरी, हिमवत्स के डा. जीवी बिष्ट, कमलेश रस्यारा समेत अनेक विद्यार्थी व अभिभावक मौजूद थे।

Interaction with the students:

There were more than 30 students present for Navodaya Coaching. Students from other schools also came to avail the coaching free of cost. The kids introduced themselves and were enthusiastic when asked to come up to the stage to perform any science experiment they like, sing a song or dance. We interacted with them for an hour. The teachers were constantly encouraging their students to perform and were enthusiastically assisting them while performing the experiments.

We addressed the students and emphasized on the importance of education to build confidence in their lives. We motivated them to work hard and qualify for Navodaya entrance examination.



Interaction with parents and teachers:

We interacted with the parents present in scholarship distribution function and enquired about study environment at home and their involvement in their kid's school activities etc. While response of parents attending the meeting was positive, they said that not all parents were cooperative. As most of the parents were unorganized laborers, they had little knowledge about importance of education and their role and motivation in their child's performance in the school and his overall development .



We met the teachers again, who made the many recommendations for the school like subscription of hindi and English newspaper in the school, sports uniform for the students representing the school at district and state level, introducing more books in the library. The log book of teachers was also up to date.

Recommendations:

A. School related recommendations:

Based on our interaction and analysis of the situation, we propose the following recommendations related to the school:

- Personality enhancement programs should be included in the curriculum, to develop confidence in the students. This can be done by introducing a course / regular workshops to improve oral and written communication skills, team games, short inspiring movies etc.
- Quality English education is required not only for the students, but also strongly recommended for the teachers. If possible, an English trainer should be recruited to train teachers and conduct workshops for the students. Interactive CDs, story books should be introduced in the school.
- Computer education should be promoted for students and teachers. Internet connection should be provided in at least one of the adopted schools. Administrative records of the school should be also maintained on the computer.
- There should be a regular subscription of Hindi and English newspaper in the school and competitive magazines like Pratiyogita Darpan, to make the students and teachers more aware and cultivate reading habit.
- A number of students are active in sports and have gone to district and state level to represent the school. Sports kits should be provided to the students who represent the school at district and state level.

B. Administration related recommendations:

We propose the following administration related recommendations:

- Savidya Smarika, a hindi magazine launched on National Science Day on 28th February every year, covers all the activities undertaken by Savidya in that year. In order to improve awareness and involvement among local masses, Savidya should not only distribute the magazine to the acquaintances, but also make it available at newsstands at a nominal price to increase its network.
- Remuneration of teachers should be revised, if possible, to retain talent. Competition should be fostered among the teachers to enhance their performance. Teachers should be rewarded for delivering outstanding result, maximum attendance etc to keep them motivated.
- Future of Savidya teachers should be given a serious thought. The efforts of Savidya should be communicated to the education department of Uttarakhand and their support should be sought.

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