

Site Visit Report 2014: Shamayita Village Schools

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I visited Shamayita village schools in July 26-31st 2014. I first went to Shamayita School. The teachers were so excited to describe their surprise when they received the token of appreciation for their service to the school. Our purpose was served. Teacher attendance improved and they are showing interest to take responsibilities around the school. I talked to several students about their concerns. Most of them mentioned that mathematics is the subject they fear most. I met few mathematics teachers and showed them some online resources to help students.

My primary focus was to visit three primary schools initiated by Shamayita Math in tribal villages. First one is in Hanspahari, started on January 2012, serving grade KG to IV with 50 students. Second one is in Kendrabonathol (KBthol), started by two Danish volunteers, serving grade I to IV with 42 children. Third one is in Shiulibona started on May 2011 as an after school program, now serving 50 students.

The students are provided with books, school dress, warm clothes in winter, slipper, toothbrush, toothpaste, medicines if necessary, and exercise books. Once a month students get a health check up by some volunteer medical professionals arranged by Shamayita Math. Each school also has sanitary toilet for students and teachers. Mid-day meals are provided in first two schools and snacks are given to the students in after school program. Student attendance is ~90% each day. The parents volunteer and take turn for cooking the food. The first school has no jungle gym (slides, swings). The small jungle gyms in two other schools are all rusty. The kitchen shades in two schools get soaked in water in rainy season. Shiulibona has covered area with tree branches to cook snacks.

The students join government schools after they graduate from these schools. I observed several classes. The teachers do their best, definitely they need some training for teaching. The salary is so minimal compared to a government school teacher that they (12) all need a second job after teaching. The government schools are about 5 kilometers from each school. So the parents didn't used to send the children to school at all. When the students used to join government school in first or second grade they were ill prepared and drop out within a few years.

The parents whom I met while they were cooking are very hopeful that their children will get the education due to Shamayita School initiatives and will not be poor as themselves. The families only work as day labor in someone else's field. Part of the year they don't have any job. This area has severe water shortage. I think a plan for rain water storage will serve this area well to grow fruits and vegetables. There is also a dire need for deep tube-well for drinking water.

The teachers are working for a minimal salary. They requested me for a raise so that they can feed their family.

