

## Site Visit Report

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Date: 6 June 2009

Time: 1030-1400

Site visit by: V. Premnath (email: premnathv(at)gmail(dot)com), Kalpana Viswanath

Affiliation: Asha -Pune

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Organization: Door steps school, Pune

Projects: 1) Range hills, Pune and 2) Pashankar Brick Kiln, Pashan-Baner Link Road, Pune

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### VISIT TO THE PUNE HEAD OFFICE:

We first visited the DSS office in Anand Park, Aundh and met Mrs Paranjpe and Ms Sangeeta who gave us an overview of the projects including statistics and expenditure patterns. The following documents are available and were discussed:

- Door Step School, Annual Report July 2007-June 2008
- Door Step School, Status of work, April 2008-March 2009
- Report for Asha-Seattle Classes April 2008-March 2009
- Budget for Asha-Seattle Classes for Jan-Dec 2008 and Jan-Dec 2009
- Expenditure Statement for Jan – Dec 2008.

Highlights of organizational performance:

- DSS-Pune had an annual review meeting on 30 May 2009. The report “Door Step School, Status of work, April 2008-March 2009” was prepared for that. This report has some useful data.
- DSS-Pune activities can be divided into the following:
  - Direct education (NFE Literacy classes, study classes, Balwadis, Child care center facility, Facilitation and preparation of kids for external exams and entry into municipal schools) – 8494 kids in 303 units at 110 locations. DSS helped enroll 437 children in municipal schools. 383 children were helped to appear for external exams of which 237 have passed and results are yet to appear for 90 others.
  - Libraries (community based libraries, reference libraries, reading class libraries etc)
  - School transport – 600 children bused to and from 48 locations
  - Parivartan training center for teachers, supervisors and coordinators for both DSS and other institutions – 574 teachers trained, 57 supervisors trained and 37 coordinators trained.
  - Books, content development
- Last year, DSS has worked at 110 locations (100- construction sites, 9 urban slum sites and 1 pavement dweller sites). Last year DSS added a net (added minus closed) of 33 locations.
- The number of children enrolled was around 8494 but by the year end the number retained was 3439 – around 40%. The children lost include those who moved out of the construction site or joined regular school or even those who might have dropped out.
- DSS has now 494 employees on its rolls.
- Overall, the organization is growing rapidly and clearly having a useful impact.

Highlights of project accounts:

- I think the budgeted amounts are reasonable and the budget categories also look reasonable. Given the size of DSS-Pune's operations now (around Rs 2.15 crore inflows in July 2007-June 2008) and Asha's relatively small contribution, I think it would be unreasonable to look at project accounts with a fine tooth comb.
- I understand that DSS-Pune has kept the budget for CY 2009 same as for CY2008 following Asha-Seattle's suggestion that it be so given the tight US economy this year. I think the budget heads are okay.
- DSS has kept satisfactory accounts of expenditure against funds allocated by Asha-Seattle. This is in the form of an Excel sheet. I saw the expenditure of a few months and on average the numbers add up to the budget. Details are available with DSS Office.
- Asha-Seattle is basically funding direct education programs at 2 locations – Range Hills and Pashankar Brick Kiln. The direct education programs include one or more of NFE /literacy classes, study classes, balwadi and reading rooms.

***Please note:***

- ***We did the site visit on 6 June 2009. The DSS school had started. But the local Zilla Parishad school to which the kids go was still having holidays—ZP school starts only on 16 June 2009. So some of the kids were probably still on leave. The general observation is that it is better to do the site visit around 1 month after school starts.***
- ***In this context, another site visit is planned tentatively for 18 July 2009.***

After this we left for the project site with Ms Rohini who is the Coordinator dedicated to the main office.

## RANGE HILLS SCHOOL:

Coordinator (of around 10 locations including this one): Jyoti Jog

Supervisor (5 locations including this one): Amruta (not available that day)

Teachers:

- Balwadi --Savita (full time)
- Study class -- 1<sup>st</sup> -- Anita (half time)
- Study class -- 2<sup>nd</sup> -- Sunita (half time)
- Study class / reading room -- 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> -- Sonali (half time) -- has left, needs to be replaced

Activities:

- CLASSES: DSS has now access to 3 rooms at the ZP school to run their activities. DSS pays around Rs 300/month as rent for the rooms. Balwadi -- mornings and afternoon -- enrolled 36, retained -- 24, present on site visit date -- 9; Study class -- 1<sup>st</sup> -- mornings -- enrolled; Study class -- 2<sup>nd</sup> -- mornings; Study class / reading room -- 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> -- mornings -- enrolled -- 54, retained -- 34, present on site visit date -- 17.
- TRANSPORT: With the help of the association related to the local ammunition factory that runs the Range Hills Community School, DSS is currently busing kids to the DSS center early in the morning. The bus belongs to the association and DSS is paying some amount in bus fees. The amount is around Rs 3000/mo for all kids. 90 children benefited from this last year.
- ZP SCHOOL: DSS has also paid ZP school fees for some of the DSS center kids who could not afford even that. This is so that the kids do not drop out.
- OTHERS: Diwali show by Asha-Pune volunteers, competitions and prizes on 26 Jan and 15 Aug in-house celebration of festivals, Visit to fire station.

Schedule (for study class):

- 8.30am -- Kids for study class picked up
- 8.45am -- Kids reach ZP school premises
- 8.45 -- 11.00am: DSS classes
- 11.00-11.10am: Snacks from DSS side
- 11.10- 1700: Regular ZP school (community school -- regular school) in same premises
- 1700 -- kids go back home

Visit observations:

- As mentioned above, several kids were still on holiday. Plus, DSS had specially called the kids on a Saturday (normally a holiday for kids and only staff mtg takes place) to facilitate the site visit. So attendance was thin. Only 50% of usual numbers. (So we decided we will visit again in late July) The attendance register also did not show very high attendance but the teachers were systematically tracking number of days and performance etc. (NOTE -- DSS tracks number of days to track progress in literacy -- roughly they think alphabets can be learnt in 50 attendance days, matras in another 40 attendance days and so on ---- so they use days to place kids in learning groups/ stages --- this I think is a very smart thing to do).
- DSS is trying to improve attendance as listed in their report -- making things more interesting for kids, prizes for kids, meetings with parents/ home visits by teachers, games etc.
- **The DSS kids have done very well in exams with a 100% pass record. Also 2-3 kids have topped their classes in the ZP school.**

- This center does not run an NFE class anymore. This is because most of the kids in this area are now enrolled in school now. DSS played a role here with their efforts for the last 6-7 years.
- I found the Coordinator enthusiastic, interested and competent. I also found the various teaching aids and “projects” prepared by teachers’ quite interesting and demonstrating interest from teachers. I have affixed some photographs of these below.
- I met a mixed bunch of kids. I found those I met quite lively, open to talking with us and interested. Some of the kids had written up various words which they could read and tell meanings of. The kids also performed a poem on a “Kisan” (farmer). We were a little late arriving at the school so we did not want to keep the kids waiting for lunch. The kids began lunch as we went to meet the other teachers.
- DSS has teacher’s meetings every Saturday (organized by the coordinator – teachers from 10 locations come to one place). The first Saturday is about compiling data from their schools into consolidated reports and learning lessons from that and planning actions along with the coordinator. I think the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays are kept for preparing teaching aids, sharing teaching methods etc. On 6<sup>th</sup> June, one such mtg was going on at Range Hills. I have shots of teachers compiling data in the photographs that follow.

**Images 1: Classroom and students (Range Hills)**



Entrance to ZP school announce that admissions are open



The buildings on the right house the DSS classes. 3 rooms are available to DSS.



Kids from the studyclass. This was a photo taken by one of the kids - Mariappa



Kids sitting in a circle with the teacher





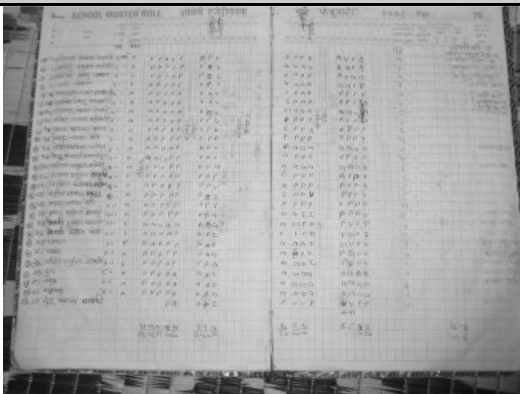



In the background – left to right – Jyoti Jog, Rohini, Kalpana



Kids performing the poem "Kisan". "Kisan kaisa soya ?, kaisa soya ?"



“Kisan kaisa naatcha ?, kaisa naatcha ?”		Recitation	
			
Kids having their lunch		Kids having their lunch	

Images 2: Classroom attendance record, teaching schedule, displays, teaching aids, projectsetc (Range Hills)			
			
Attendance register. Weak attendance – a challenge		Teaching planning schedule for teacher of Balwadi	
			
Balwadi time table		Charts –some made by teachers	



Project on homes of animals



Project on homes of animals



Slates with alphabet writing practice



Project on pollinations



Project -- aquarium



Project – different professions – this is a potter working on his wheel. The wheel has a motor underneath and rotates.



Study class charts

Study class charts

**Images 3: Teacher's weekly meeting in progress**



Teachers gather together and compiled data on attendance, enrollment, retention, performance etc



Teacher at work



Teacher at work



A view of the compilation sheet



## **PASHANKAR BRICK KILN:**

Coordinator (of around 10 locations including this one): Anuradha Tai

Supervisor (5 locations including this one): Poonam

Teachers:

- Balwadi --Nagalakshmi (full time)
- NFE and Study class (only 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>) --Surekha (full time)

Activities:

- CLASSES: DSS has now access to 2 rooms at the ZP school to run their activities. Balwadi – enrolled 21, retained – 18; NFE and Study class – enrolled – 36, retained – 28.
- TRANSPORT: 36 kids avail of transport facility. Some more kids are also availing of transport facility but they go to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in local school.
- OTHERS: Competitions and prizes on 26 Jan and 15 Aug, in-house celebration of festivals, Visit to Katraj snake park and zoo.

Typical Schedule (for study class):

- 7- 7.30 am –Pick-up
- 7.30 – 11.30 – School
- 11.45 – picked up and left at home; lunch etc
- 2pm-5 pm: DSS classes for study classes

Visit observations:

- The two school rooms were packed. I did not get a chance to count but attendance must have been around 70%.
- This center has a very enthusiastic and charged up coordinator in Anuradha Tai. I remember that when Asha-Pune had done an event for one of the schools in her charge she had helped plan that just 2 days before she was about to give birth to a baby. There is no doubt that Anuradha Tai is quite committed to the kids.
- Anuradha Tai has taken a special interest in the Pashankar brick kiln location in last few months since performance dipped perhaps due to the supervisor not being as good. She has recently changed the supervisor and brought in somebody who she says is more enthusiastic. She made it a point to mention that while kids from this location did not get 100% pass record this year, she will be aiming for that in the coming year.
- We had a chance to also speak to the supervisor and also see many of the teaching aids, the attendance registers etc. We also observed the kids in class. Since the rooms are very small and crowded, we had only limited interaction with the kids.
- At this location we also met Shehnaaz Jalna -- a young student with outstanding results despite coming from very difficult circumstances. Shehnaaz scored 100% last year and 99% this year. Her report card is shown in the photographs below. Shehnaaz has never gone to school before. She started learning only at the DSS school. She apparently learns very quickly and also practices by herself at home. She has run through all the books in the DSS collection at that location and is always asking for more. Her dad is a little against her studying but her mom is very supportive. She is now ready to join regular school at 5<sup>th</sup> standard --- that is what DSS is trying to do. I was thrilled to meet her --and really wished I could do more for her.

- [illegible]

[illegible][illegible]

Sanjay's report card. Note that DSS exams are recognized by the Education Board, PMC.



Shehnaaz's report card—99% (this is the PMC one)

Left to right : Anuradha Tai, Shehnaaz the star student, Proud teacher Surekha

Typical report card of study class students



“Mybook” –a very interesting and useful initiative of DSS. It has a record and history of the child's schooling with DSS etc. The Child is taught to keep this carefully and show to any nearby school to the next site his/her parents move to. This way schooling is continued irrespective of the location. Kids are also taught how to call up coordinators and tell them where they are if they have moved.

Teacher Nagalakshi telling the Balwadi kids a story.



Balwadi charts



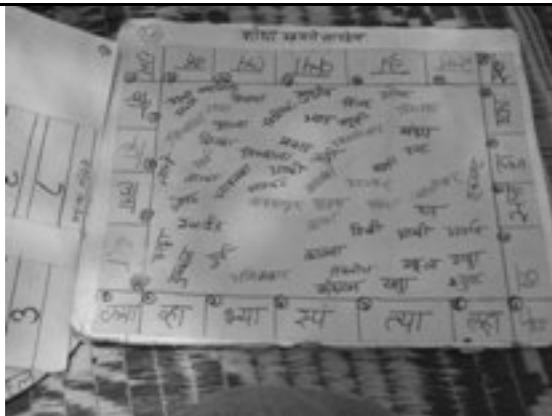
Balwadi class in progress



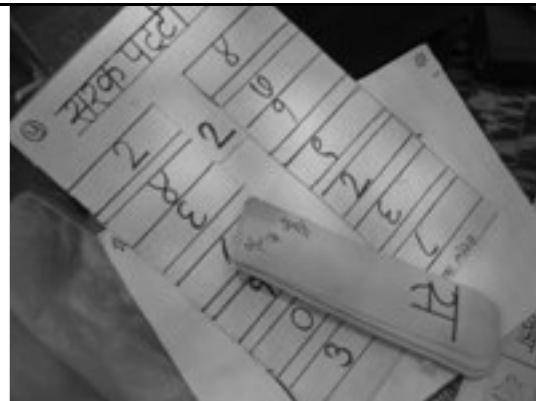
Teaching aid. Turning the knob changes words in the window.



Teaching aid for matras – like a roulette



Locate the word corresponding to the syllable.



Number game and flip cards



Learning through games. Teaching aids made by teachers.



Tell a story by looking at the pictures.



Attendance records



Attendance records

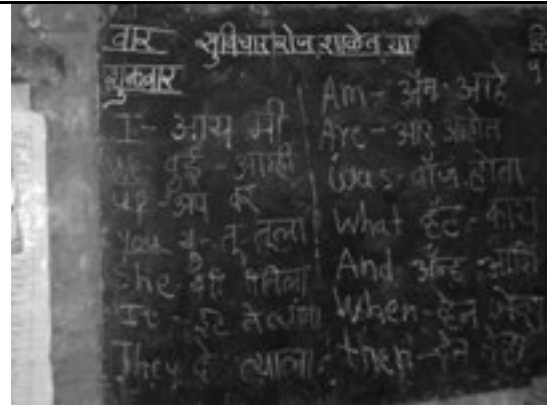
#### SUS ROAD SCHOOL:

We were not scheduled to visit the Sus Road School but since the teachers meeting coordinated by Anuradha Tai was running at Sus Road we went there for a quick look. Some pictures are shown below

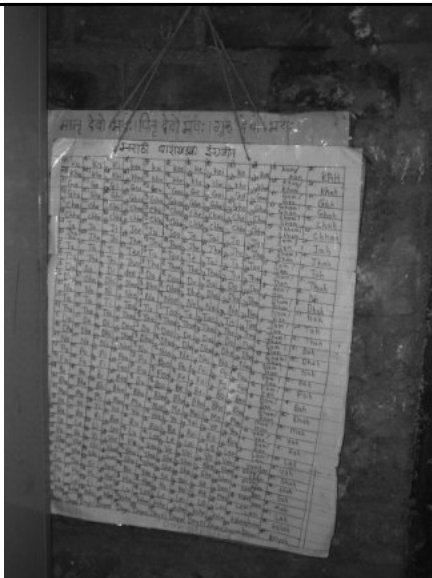
Images 5: Sus Road site



Room at Mont Vert Labor camp site where DSS runs classes



Basic English lessons on black board



Barakhadi practice



Basic English chart



Cupboards that store books and school records for reading room



More school charts



Metal box that stores some of the book collections of the Sus Road site. These books are made available to kids by teachers.

#### Overall impressions and recommendations:

- In my opinion, DSS is one of the better organized and operated organizations in the Pune region. It serves as a role model for other NGOs in the education sector. Other NGOs use the DSS books and also techniques. The organization is doing a great job and deserves kudos. In the last few years they are seeing a great need and pressure to expand operations quickly. This involves a lot of operational and leadership challenges. So far they seemed to have handled the transition quite well. Last year they have gone from 77 to 110 locations and almost doubled the number of kids enrolled. Asha should continue to strongly support this organization and its efforts especially given that DSS fits so well into Asha's mandate. I in fact think that Asha should expand its extent of involvement as and when the next opportunity arises.

- More specifically, about the projects being funded by Seattle: I think both the locations are doing quite well and meeting project goals satisfactorily. I am happy that DSS is monitoring certain metrics continuously and also responding to improve the performance. In this context, I think sooner or later they will end up improving the performance. But that said, I think given the practical difficulties of running such classes for the urban poor, I think the numbers are quite good. I was also happy to see that DSS coordinators in both locations were very good and keen to see the kids move ahead in life. I have noticed that the enthusiasm of the coordinators is very important for these projects to succeed and having enthusiastic coordinators is a good starting point.
- Overall, I wish to recommend that Asha-Seattle continue funding this project. In fact I think Asha should consider increasing the number of locations it supports to more. Today DSS is working from 110 locations --- I think Asha as a whole should probably consider supporting at least 10% of the sites whenever the finances allow it to do so. But more importantly, I think DSS is in need for committed managerial leadership with some experience. I am aware of this because I have been following DSS's struggle through the process of scaling up operations. I think Asha may be able to help here by putting Mrs Paranjpe in touch with suitable people and also helping fund salaries that will attract/retain good people to leadership positions at such NGOs.