

Site Visit by Anuradha Bulusu to Gram Vikas Trust, Vagra Block, Bharuch District, Gujarat November 10, 2014

Background

Bharuch city is the headquarters for Bharuch district (~80 Km from Vadodara and ~200 Km from Ahmedabad). Vagra is a sub-district (block) of Bharuch and contains 73 villages with 57% of the population being Muslim. A significant portion of the Hindu population belong to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) who along with the Muslim community, are economically and socially marginalized.

Poor emphasis on the education of the girl child. All villages have primary and middle school while the district headquarters has two Govt. High schools. Most girls drop out after grade 8 since the families will not risk sending their daughters on the 15-18 Km commute to the high school.

GVT was founded in 2001 by Mr. Ramesh Kasondra who hails from the area. He instituted numerous programs for promoting girl child education in Vagra block. Some of the programs include:

- Bicycle program to help girls from remote villages commute to high school and minimize girl child dropout.
- Sikshana Teacher Training program to improve the quality of education in Govt. schools
- Para teacher program to fill shortage of teachers in Govt. schools. GVT identifies suitably qualified individuals from the local community and pays for their employment as para teachers (thus ensuring employment for the local youth).
- Vocational training programs for girls such as beautician training, English and computer skills, tailoring classes etc.
- Counselling classes to encourage girls from the local community to enroll in various vocational training programs. GVT conducts 5 day residential workshops for the girls and their families to meet with other graduates of such vocational training programs who are now successfully employed. GVT actively works with local Govt. officials such as the General Manager of the District Industries Center to conduct seminars educating women on how they can establish their own small-scale industries by obtaining loans from the Govt. (http://ic.gujarat.gov.in/?page_id=96).

Support from Asha for Education

Since 2006 various Asha chapters (Dallas, Central NJ, Atlanta and Sheffield) have supported various programs in GVT such as the bicycle project, Sikshana teacher training program, Para Teacher salary support etc.

Asha Atlanta started supporting GVT from 2011 through the bicycle project for 20 girls annually. The support was extended to include support for one school annually under the Sikshana Teacher Training program starting 2012 followed by a one-time Para Teacher salary support for 36 teachers in 12 schools in 2013.

Progress since the initiation of support by Asha for Education

- The dropout rates for girls from high school under the bicycle project decreased to near zero once girls from each village were provided bicycles.

- Quality of education appears to have improved significantly under the Sikshana teacher training program. The children in Grade 5 are to be able to write in English and Gujarati clearly and solve addition and subtraction math problems.

Vocational Training Initiatives by Asha Atlanta from 2014

In June 2014, Atlanta chapter voted to authorize transfer of additional funds to GVT to expand the current chapter support to include vocational training programs for girls. The programs could be run by GVT or they could send the girls to an external organization skilled in providing such training. Since GVT was already successfully running a vocational training center in Bharuch, they opted to utilize Asha's funds to establish a new vocational training center in Khojbal village (~30 Km from Bharuch) where it was expected that roughly 150- 200 girls from the neighboring 15-20 villages would benefit from it. Vocational training programs such as (1) beautician (2) tailoring and (3) Computer skills focused on accounting software such as Tally etc. would be offered.

Site Visit Highlights of Vocational Training Program, Bicycle Program and Sikshana Teacher Training Program

I visited GVT on November 10, 2014 and their vocational training center in Khojbal. At the time of my visit, the beautician and tailoring classes were ongoing with teachers from the local community hired to run the classes. Two batches with roughly 20 girls each were being conducted each day. At the time of the writing of this report, GVT reported that 50 girls had registered for the computer training classes that were scheduled to start from December 15, 2014 and run until May 2015. The photos below show the sewing machines and computer purchased for the program with the funds provided by Asha Atlanta.



Students enrolled in the beautician training course. The computers for the Computer course can be seen in the back of the room.



Students enrolled in the tailoring classes

Bicycle Program

I met with some girls who were the beneficiaries of the bicycle program living in the villages in Jhagadia block. The girls were enrolled in classes ranging from 9-12 grades. The common high school for the villages is located in Bharuch which is roughly 20 Km from the village. The nearest bus stop to the village is located 3 to 4 Km. The girls use the bicycles to travel to the bus stop following which they travel the remainder distance to the school by bus. Without the bicycles, all the girls would have had to drop out of school due to the risks associated with traveling late in the evening by foot from the bus stop to their village.



Sikshana Teacher Training Program

GVT runs teacher training programs in close to 60 schools in and around Bharuch. The teachers are all employed in Govt. schools but are paid very minimal salaries. Since the schools are located in remote villages, it is difficult to find well qualified teachers who are willing to work in remote villages for low pay. Hence, the quality of education was very poor. In addition, the students normally hail from farming/tribal communities where they children are frequently absent from school. A combination of poor quality of education and lack of awareness and motivation from the parents led to high student attrition. A combination of poor student attendance combined with poor grades meant, the District Education Officer would eventually close down the school and transfer the teachers to other Govt. schools in the area. GVT realized that this problem needed to be tackled with a two pronged approach. (1) Hire teachers from the local population such that they would be motivated to live within the community and (2) Provide training to the teachers through the Sikshana teacher training program primarily in Reading, Writing, Math, Science and Gujarati to help improve the overall quality of instruction and grades of the students. The teachers from each school are given a two day training program providing them with the necessary tools for instruction such as lesson plans, goal charts etc. The teachers are helped with a mentor trainer who works with the teachers from a given school for a period of two to three years. I visited a school in Mulad district where Asha Atlnata provides support for the Sikshana training program. Since it was late in the evening when I visited the school, the students had left for the day. I however had a chance to interact with the teachers and also go through the workbooks of the students from grades V-VI. The results of the program are very evident in the quality of writing and skill in almost all of those workbooks. The photos below show some sample pages from few worksheets.



સ્વસ્થ, શિક્ષિત અને
સુવિકાસી બાળ એટલે શ્રેષ્ઠ ગામ



ડોહરિયા ભવિષી

વિદ્યાર્થીનું નામ : ગોકેશવર ભૂમિકા બેનારી બા

શાળાનું નામ : દાદમિક સાલ મુલબદ

ઘોરણ : 5



TU'S CLASSROOM

Look at Hitu's classroom. Hitu and his friends are in the classroom. It is a big classroom. The walls are pink. The board is black. The ceiling is white. There are two windows in the room. The window frames are brown. The doors are brown, too. The floor is clean. The benches are clean, too. There is a bulletin-board near the window. It is green. There are pictures on it. Hitu is on the first bench.

There is a platform in the classroom. The teacher's table is on the platform. The chair is near the table. The chair and the table are new. There is a book on the table. The book is very thick. It is a dictionary.



લેખન કાર્ય



Sikshana

યાત્રાનું નામ : પી.કે.કે. શાળા સુલક તા. : ૧૨/૦૨/૨૦૨૦
 વિદ્યાર્થીનું નામ : પટેલ ભુવેશભાઈ ભટ્ટ ધોરણ : ૩

આમલક દલકુંડું ઝાંઝર, ઝલકુંડું,
 ચક્રિયાળો જમનાનો મલકુંડું,
 એવા સુંદર શાધા પીલે,
 મુખકુંડું ઝલકુંડું ઝલકુંડું ઝલકુંડું

આને પૂનમ આંદ ભગ્યો છે,
 રાસ આગ્યો છે દમ્મક દમ્મક
 ગોપા ભેળી કાન ઘૂસ્યો છે,
 ઠોલક વાળો ઠમ્મક ઠમ્મક ?

શાધિકાનો હાલ પૂરે છે,
 મોલા ચાળકે ચલકુંડું ચલકુંડું ?
 બાધાં જડયો પડગાં એક પૂરે છે,
 ઝુલકે શાધિકા ઝલકુંડું ઝલકુંડું

લીલું હોય તો આમલકો કાળા ?
 મોલા માકુંડું ચલકુંડું ચલકુંડું ?
 તોશી અચિતર છે કયાં દોના ?
 પાકુંડું આલો ચલકુંડું ચલકુંડું

GVT ગામ વિકાસ ટ્રસ્ટ
ભરૂચ

લેખન કાર્ય

સ્વસ્થ, શિક્ષિત અને સુસંસ્કારી બાળ એટલે શ્રેષ્ઠ ગામ

વિદ્યાર્થીનું નામ : કોલકિયા વસિષ્ઠાવેલ વિક્રમભાઈ
શાળાનું નામ : ગુણવિદ્યા શાળા ભરૂચ
ધોરણ : 5

16/10/14

સિક્ષાના

સ **ક** **શ**

અભિયાન

11 1 11	12 1 12	13 1 13	14 1 14	15 1 15
11 2 22	12 2 24	13 2 26	14 2 28	15 2 30
11 3 33	12 3 36	13 3 39	14 3 42	15 3 45
11 4 44	12 4 48	13 4 52	14 4 54	15 4 60
11 5 55	12 5 60	13 5 65	14 5 70	15 5 75
11 6 66	12 6 72	13 6 78	14 6 84	15 6 90
11 7 77	12 7 84	13 7 91	14 7 98	15 7 105
11 8 88	12 8 96	13 8 104	14 8 112	15 8 120
11 9 99	12 9 108	13 9 117	14 9 126	15 9 135
11 10 110	12 10 120	13 10 130	14 10 140	15 10 150
16 1 16	17 1 17	18 1 18	19 1 19	20 1 20
16 2 32	17 2 34	18 2 36	19 2 38	20 2 40
16 3 48	17 3 51	18 3 54	19 3 57	20 3 60
16 4 64	17 4 68	18 4 72	19 4 76	20 4 80
16 5 80	17 5 85	18 5 90	19 5 95	20 5 100
16 6 96	17 6 102	18 6 108	19 6 114	20 6 120
16 7 112	17 7 119	18 7 126	19 7 133	20 7 140
16 8 128	17 8 136	18 8 144	19 8 152	20 8 160
16 9 144	17 9 153	18 9 162	19 9 171	20 9 180
16 10 160	17 10 170	18 10 180	19 10 190	20 10 200

Challenges and next steps

- **Expansion of the Sikshana Teacher Training program to improve quality of education in Govt. schools is critical.**
- **Hire more para teachers to address the shortage of teachers in Govt. schools.** Presently GVT hires para teachers from the local community but retention is a problem due to low salaries (paid from donations from organizations such as Asha for Education, Vibha, etc). Increasing para teacher salaries will incentivize more youth from the local community to pursue higher education to gain employment and also solve the problem of lack of teachers in Govt. schools.
- **Focus on vocational training programs for girls followed by mandatory employment** is essential to ensure their financial independence and empowerment. Efforts towards this end must be in the form of computer courses, English, accounting, beautician, tailoring training etc. as well as in the form of support-a-child sponsorships to attend 3 year college.