

A mission to bring children back to school: the case story of Khed Taluka of Pune District, Maharashtra April, 2020



A properly planned school infrastructure is an out-and-out key factor contributing towards a child's growth. Structured walls, well ventilated and lighted up rooms and enough room for seating play a crucial role in a child's motivation towards classroom learning. Given that a child spends most of his time in school, the school environment forms a major factor in how he perceives the world as a grown up.

The Right to Education Act under the Government of India that came into force in April 2010 provides for free and compulsory education for children aged between 6-14 years. Yet a decade later, parents from the rural backgrounds are still reluctant to send their children to school. Though one of the reasons behind it is grappling poverty, another massive reason is the lack of adequate infrastructure

necessary for a child's overall development. In saying this, much worse is the situation of the girl child who often drops out from school for the lack of a toilet in school.

JBGVS as a social development organization considers children to be the future of the society. Thus, to aid them towards a brighter future the organization has projects operationalized to renovate existing 70 Zilla Parishad Schools from the Khed taluka of Pune district in Maharashtra.

The Khed taluka is located at an altitude of 600 meters from the sea level along the Sahaydri zones of the Western Ghats. Primarily a hilly terrain, the location has poor connectivity to the urban world pushing the communities to various forms of struggles and hardships. Already at a disadvantage in terms of livelihood, the government zilla parishad schools have failed to provide basic school infrastructural support to the children, thus pushing them towards more backwardness. Starting from leaking roofs, corroded roof supports to damaged roof sheets, the current establishments are dangerous to carry out classes. The demotivation resulting from this is no longer attributed to the children and the parents but have also manifested into the minds of the teachers in the location.

The way forward

Given the dire condition of the schools in the region, JBGVS adopted a two-prong approach to solve the problem. While the first focus was to renovate the corroded structures or construct new buildings (wherever necessary) the second crucial focus was to bring the children back to mainstream school by bridging the learning gaps that they have developed over the years. To do the first JBGVS selected 70 zilla parishad schools where the renovation/development work would be undertaken. Additionally, 29 schools were selected

where Shiksha Pratsahan Kendras (SSKs) would be established by engaging the local community members to teach the children with scientifically approved teaching learning methods. While doing this, one of the major pre-requisites of the project was to establish clean and functional



sanitation facilities to address the needs of the staff and the children.

At present a total 35 schools have successfully been renovated with work for 25 remaining schools still under progress. Children supported by the SSKs have already started showing improved learning outcomes in comparison to before.

JBGVS believes that with continued support and stringent monitoring, the gaps that had started to get reflected would gradually be bridged resulting in improved motivation level both for the parents and the children concerned.
