

# **A report on Schools for the children of mining community project**

## **Overview**

The Thar Desert of India is an under-developed and poverty impacted area of Rajasthan State in India. The region suffers severely at the hands of frequent droughts due to extremely scanty and unpredictable rainfall. Agriculture in the region is extremely precarious and every alternate year is considered a drought year with low rainfall insufficient to grow crops. In lack of sufficient livelihood in villages, people migrate in mines in search of some earning to support their families. Mines in Rajasthan are second largest occupational support to millions of less empowered and economically weak people. An estimate suggests approximate 400,000 mineworkers work in stone mines mainly located in the western and central parts of the state.

While health of miners is a serious issue in stone mines but education of their children is also often neglected in lack of adequate resources, awareness and visioning for any alternate earning. Children are also forced to live and adopt the hereditary profession of their parents. As a result, a very small percentage of children of the population group go to schools and hence are bound to become mineworkers in attending adulthood in lack of proper education and alternate source of income for families.

Situation of girls are more challenging as many are involved in household chores and assist their mothers in taking care of younger siblings. The education for these girls is a far dream as it is considered low prioritized commodity which a financially weak family does not want to buy. The continuous awareness for importance of education and gender based sensitization among community to provide equal opportunity to girls to learn and grow is necessary.

Keeping this objective in mind, GRAVIS and Xertifix (Karoline-Kasper-School) has started a collaborative project aims at providing primary education to the children living near to mining area of the Thar Desert, in a mentally stimulating and physically attractive environment. The project is supporting Sodhon ki Dhani, Bheel Basti school running in vicinity of mineworkers habitations.

## **Adarsh Khan Mazdoor Primary School, Sodhon ki Dhani, Soorsagar (Jodhpur)**

The school was constructed in 2006-07. The need for a school was felt after observing and visualizing the conditions of mineworkers' children. A land donated by community was handed over for construction of school. The nearest school is 3 km far from *Basti* and a highway road is in the middle making very difficult for young kids to go to school. Distinguished donors supported for construction, renovation and further expansion of school including toilets, drinking water tank and boundary wall for school. A dedicated female teacher belong to same community teaches kid in a very friendly and joyful environment. Along with elementary teaching, the teacher teaches them singing, dancing and playing indoor games. Two full time teachers are taking care of 60 kids of schools at present. Regular health checkup and awareness sessions are part of school working methodologies.

**Table # 1**

<b>Name of Schools</b>	<b>Boys enrolled</b>	<b>Girls enrolled</b>	<b>Total kids</b>
Primary School Sodon ki Dhani, Soorsagar	28	32	60

### **Facility given to school**

**1. Committed Teachers from community:** Girl child is mostly being debarred from getting educated due to social ill practices and using her as a helping hand to do many household supports including fetching water. In this project, female teachers play a vital role in mobilizing families for education of their daughters. These teachers are from same community and well familiar with problems of community. The teachers work in close collaboration with Village Education Committees (VECs) and GRAVIS field team take regular feedback on teaching methods and extra-curricular activities. Children feel very friendly with teachers and teachers also treat them like a friend.

**2. Teaching learning aid to schools and children:** Many times children of miners could not continue their education in lack of resources required for studying. The project supports school with all kind of administrative expenses like blackboards, chalk, charts, learning games and first aid kits. Kids have also received books, note books, pencils, school dresses and other study materials. There is no fee for kids for attending school.



**Pic 1: Sodo ki Dhani, Bheel Basti school renovated**



Pic 2 & 3: Playful and joyous environment for students





Pic 4: Health check-up camps for school kids



Pic 5: Health and sanitation awareness camp in school

## Story of Hema:

8 years old Hema belongs to unprivileged *Bheel* community. Her parents do mining activities and always think that this is the only world for them. Hema and her other siblings were not going to schools earlier but after project interventions they are coming to schools. Hema is oldest one. She is regular in attending classes and extracurricular activities like dancing, singing and painting. This is her second year in school and now she reads mathematic tables with confident and without seeing at board. Her parents are also surprised to see her talent and hope for a brighter future for her. The project is a small initiative to give an opportunity to kids like Hema to grow and fly in sky of hopes.



Pic 6: Hema, a young kid speaking mathematical tables