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Schools4Freedom Project Report

Quarter 2 2016 (April-June)

Sept. 2016, Follows Q1 Report in June



Background

1. Location of Village/Hamlet: Outside of Varanasi in the state of Uttar

Pradesh, India

Map :



2. Demographics and Community Info as of January 2016:

Total population of the hamlet – 400 (85 households). 132 are enslaved; others are at risk for debt bondage because of dire poverty.

Education: Only 2-3 individuals in this community know how to write their name; most are illiterate and innumerate. Five children are enrolled in school but do not attend. They work with their parents instead. For 70-75 children, the S4F will be the first generation to attend school. Villagers are not aware of their rights.

Livelihood: Their economic condition is dire. People are landless, and enslaved in debt bondage at the slaveholder's farm, construction projects or brick kilns. Some family members, including children, have been trafficked to other states. Twenty families have no ID documents.

During Q1, the school was built, teachers were appointed, classes started and field workers began talking quietly to villagers about change.

Exciting New Developments Apr. – June 2016:

1. Community members regularly sit together to discuss their problems. More than 30 members are ready to form the Community Vigilance Committee (CVC) in their village. As a result, a CVC is formed.
2. Women also participated in this group.
3. A health and medical camp was organized with the help of government health department of Chandauli. With the support of this service camp the community members became aware of health issues - 29 people were given medical examinations for skin and worms problems.
4. 34 children were registered in Integrated Child Development System (ICDS) centre with the teachers working as S4F in the village.
5. Solar lamps were installed in the community and children are very happy about this.
6. 6 children were freed from brick kilns situated at nearby village of Chandauli district with the involvement of community and influential people within and beyond the community.



Health camp

Project Challenges:

1. Very often the slaveholder pick some community members and threaten them to influence them from their path to freedom. Slave owners use such tactics to misguide the workers by saying, "If you need food and money nobody will come to help you. I am your only support. Don't believe outsiders. They will leave you once you are in trouble". Due to such incidences the community members lose

their confidence.

2. Frontline team members were also threatened by slave holders. They were told not to work on labour and wages matters with the community.
3. Community members feel that they should not be standing against their master (slaveholder) because they are working there for generations.
4. Some community members continue to favor the slaveholders since these slaveholders have obliged them by giving them some money.

Next Steps:

1. Different children committees will be formed.
2. To continue discussion on benefits of Self Help Groups (SHG)* and to motivate the people in the community to sit together to discuss common issues.
3. Counselling sessions will be conducted for the victims and rescued individuals.
4. Investigation and fact findings will be done in the cases of individuals migrated/trafficked to other districts or states.

Teacher's Report



Overview

- Six more children were enrolled at the S4F during the 2nd quarter. These kids were freed from the brick kiln in Chandauli district.
- Now we have 56 children altogether who are at the S4F. Out of the 56 children, more than 45 children attending their classes regularly.
- Parents are keen on sending their kids to S4F instead of sending them to work and they are happy to see the school in their community.
- The classes in S4F are distributed into 6 periods lasting 4 - 5 hours per day except on Sundays. Teachers try to teach through games and playful activities because children feel comfortable with this method.

Progress

- Children are doing really well. Earlier they were not taking care of their study materials whereas now they take good care of their books, bags and other stationaries.
- They have started recognizing the numbers and letters in Hindi and some of them have started to write the letters and numbers too.
- Children are learning numbers and letters by shouting in the community and the parents sometimes come and sit in school.
- Earlier the teachers had to visit all the children's home or worksite to pick them up and convince them to come to school but now the situation is changed. Presently, teachers only have to go to half of the children's home or worksite (15 to 20 children households) to motivate them to attend school and study.

Problems

- Children weaker in studies often try to escape from the schools during lessons.
- Slaveholders and supervisors often come and make comments and jokes why Mushar children are getting educated in schools.
- The slaveholders try to keep watching what the community is planning against them.
- Slaveholders and their men often come to community to demand their debts to be returned. These demands for payment back are focused mainly on those who started to come in the CVC meetings and get educated about their rights. The slaveholders use abusive languages to discourage them.
- Community's people do not calculate their wages and interest against their debt because of illiteracy. Slaveholder takes full advantage of their illiteracy.

Process

- Teachers teach the children through "letter cards" and try to make them understand through different activities and games.
- Teacher provide extra care and time to those children who are weak in their studies.
- Teachers inspire children to do better through telling stories.



Students eating lunch

How do you think the school is impacting students?

- Children now, are able to understand about the benefits of sanitation and they keep themselves neat and clean.
- Most of the children started coming to S4F on time and elder children in the community have also started to take part in school activities.

How do you think the schools is impacting the entire village?

- The children of this community started to study in school, this provides confidence to the community members about their rights.
- Community members have started to make efforts to free their children and themselves from bonded labor.
- Community members now understand the concept of bonded labor, trafficking and unsafe migration.

What are you doing well? What could you do better? What would it take to do it better?

- We get the children in school by visiting their homes and motivated them about education. We bring them to school every day.
- If the children come every day, I can teach them properly and follow my curriculum according to my plan.

Case Study – Student: Kiran

16 year old female
mother, father, 3 brothers, 4 sisters

Kiran is elder daughter of a family who is in debt bondage slavery in the village. They are so poor and she used to work on agricultural land with her parents who took debt from the slave owners. One of her elder brothers and one younger brother are mentally challenged. They fully depend on other family members. Kiran's family do not get full wages against their work due debt on them.



Tell us what you do in school? What are you learning?

I study in S4F and playing with friends. Presently I am learning English and Hindi alphabets and numbers.

What is your favorite thing about school?

I like to play games with friends and study in S4F. I like to sit under Solar Light during evenings and I love to chit-chat with my friends.

What don't you like about school?

When the slaveholders men come to the school and try to disturb the class, I feel bad. I don't like when the children are fighting with each other in school.

How did you spend your days doing before you started school?

Before coming S4F I was working in agricultural fields of slaveholders with my parents. I had to work 8-10 hours per day in harvesting, sowing, planting etc. with my parents.

What does your family thinking about you going to school?

My parents are not very happy now because I am not helping them at work. They have to do more work now because I am not at work with them.

What is the most important thing you are learning in school?

I am learning reading and writing Hindi alphabets and I also play badminton. It keeps us happy and healthy.

What do you want to be when you grow up and why? How do you think you will be able to make that happen?

I want to become a teacher and help my community's children because most children here do not study due to poverty.

What have you learned about your rights?

All children have the right to education. We should keep ourselves neat and clean.

What do you think you have learned about yourself, your personal strengths and weaknesses as you have been going to school or working to improve things?

I knew about benefits of sanitation. I learnt reading and writing Hindi alphabets at S4F. I am studying very carefully and doing hard work in my studies.

What do you hope for in the future, for yourself and your family?

I will be able to earn money and I will be able to help my younger brothers and sisters in their studies.



Case Study – Adult: Mithalu, 35 years old

Describe how he joined the program:

Mr. Mithalu is in debt bondage slavery in his own village. He works as a debt bonded labourer for a slaveholder. After opening S4F in the community, his children joined the school and he himself came in contact with frontline activists. Currently he is in CVC as a member and participates in the meetings too.

Can you tell us about the loan your family took that trapped you in debt-bondage slavery?

Three years ago, I took a debt of Rs. 10,000 [\$149.] from the slave holders near my village. I already repaid an amount of Rs.10,600 to him by the end of June 2015. But the slave holder was still creating pressure to repay Rs.10000 back or work on his agricultural farms and household work to repay the amount with interest. Then I had to work there for another ten months without any wages. In February 2016, some social workers [S4F/MSEMVS activists] taught me about bonded labor and they told the slave

holder that “If they employed him without wages then I can go to police for action”. In the beginning he put violence and beat me up. But now I am in CVC and preparing myself to face the slave holder.

Highlight how you benefit, as well as describing if there are ways that you contribute

We are illiterate, we are poor, and our parents could not send us school because we were of Mushar origin. Back then, people thought that people who were of Mushar caste don't need any schooling. My two children are now going to S4F to study. Before that they did not go for study in schools due to lack of money. I wanted to educate my children but I was helpless; now they study well at the S4F School.

What do you think you have learned about yourself, your personal strengths and weaknesses as you have been going to school or working to improve things?

I learnt that, “I should not take advance from any slave owner”. Otherwise they will treat us like animals.

What additional skills or abilities do they want to work on, for themselves?

I want some useful skills that can help me to do better job rather than just labour work. By this way I can earn my living easily.

What impact do they believe the school is having in the village?

After opening S4F in our community, children have started to study in their own community. Community members are now sitting together and are willing to help each other in case of an exploitation that might happen anytime.

How do they you to help you children with schooling? What do you do to learn with your children?

I bring my children to S4F to study if they show slackness. I remind my children by telling them to please go to school regularly, and play only in the evenings otherwise you will be remain a labour like me”.

How has your life changed (practically and in how you are feeling)?

I am very happy because frontline activists helped me to get rid of exploitation of slave owner. My children are now studying in school. I did not study in school but my children are studying. I hope our life will be better in the future.

What do they hope for in the future, for yourself and your family?

I hope in the future our family will have a better life.

If they feel your village has stopped slavery, how do you think it happened?

It needs so many things. education, land, employment and awareness. But I think first of all children become educated and adults must have employment.

Statistics

Statistics:

1. School attendance (at transitional school)

Numbers of Boys	Numbers of Girls	Total	Cumulative no. of boys	Cumulative no. of girls	Total Cumulative no.
34	22	56	34	22	56

Explanation: During this quarter another 6 children enrolled to the S4F, these were children who were released from brick kiln.

2. Detail of skill training

Name of the Trade	Numbers of SHGs	Total participants	Cumulative no. of SHGs	Cumulative no. Participants
Process	1	0	0	0

Explanation:

3. Detail of CVC:

Male Members	Female Members	Total Members	Cumulative Number of Male	Cumulative Number of Female	Total Cumulative no.
14	17	31	14	17	31

Explanation: During the second quarter 31 community members started with one CVC in the community.

4. Numbers of children who gained access of education.

Children currently in MSVS school			Total number of children who have now mainstreamed to Village school from MSVS school			Children enrolled/ made continued in Village school through pressure/ campaigning (Cumulative no.)		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
34	22	56	0	0	0	0	0	0

5. Any other work that improved the quality of education.

Each child in the S4F is given special attention. Teachers personally help these children in their learning. The teaching learning materials are being used appropriately wherever needed.

6. Any work that improved access to health.

Health care and personal hygiene is being promoted through meetings and discussions of women and men in school. The Govt. health departments are sensitized to conduct health camps within the community. Community members are now giving importance to vaccination, Govt. health facilities (rather than quacks) and sanitation.



CVC meeting

Read me and smile.

Voices4Freedom works with partner, MSEMVS to address the issue of slavery in a holistic manner. People are trapped in slavery in northern India villages because they are extremely poor, illiterate, innumerate and vulnerable to exploitation. And there are people ready to take advantage of their desperate hope to take care of their families. There are great government programs for the very poor in India but most of the poorest people don't know how to navigate the system and like many places in the world, the villagers don't even exist for their government because their birth was never registered. There is no record of them. All that changes with the S4F program.

A large part of the Schools4Freedom work is to educate the parents about their rights and help them register with the government and it also helps them to get identity cards that are needed to access all programs. This gives them socio-economic benefits which reduces their vulnerability and helps to sustain their freedom.

The numbers at the end of each report indicates the access people are gaining to specific programs. The numbers can look so bland but they represent another gigantic step to freedom.

***Acronyms**

The alphabet soup can be confusing. Understanding and accessing these programs can be the difference between freedom and slavery.

CVC - Community Vigilance Committee - Group of survivors/vulnerable people in a village who come together to resist slavery and protect their communities. As these committees learn about their own rights they are empowered to stand together and grab freedom. They also empower other communities and help them come to freedom. One of the first things frontline activists do is help villagers form CVCs and Self Help Groups (SHGs). The villagers are enslaved together and learn to unite to come to freedom together.

ICDS - Integrated Child Development System - This scheme is basically for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children below 5 years of age. The women get immunizations and food supplements. The children get supplementary food and pre-primary education. This service is free of cost.

SHG – Self Help Group - Women in groups of 12 or more organize themselves to multiply their income collectively. SHG members do savings in groups which is often used for emergency so they do not fall prey to loan sharks and slip back in debt bondage slavery.

They also learn about hygiene and other issues that help the community get healthier.