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Sindhu Prabhu Dessai
Government High School Malkarnem
Quepem - Goa, Sanguem, South Goa
Email id: prabhudesaisindhu@gmail.com

Abstract

The major challenges facing this school were lack of awareness amongst students about personal hygiene and sanitation, shortage of staff in the school, financial constraints and geographical location.

Particularly striking was lack of knowledge and awareness among children, their parents and the villagers about personal hygiene, sanitation and menstrual hygiene. There was low attendance of students due to various types of illness, especially of girls during menstruation cycle and low haemoglobin count adversely affecting their concentration levels and physical and mental well-being. As initiatives by the school, a “Swacchta Oath” is taken every day by students during morning assembly. The corridor/passage is converted into a visual treat wherein there is rich display of posters, wallpapers, charts and handouts related to personal hygiene and sanitation. Safe ultra-violet filtered drinking water is provided to the students. The quality of drinking water is tested once in a year. Students and parents are made aware of the benefits of drinking boiled water and students are motivated to get boiled water from home to drink. Team of nodal teachers along with members of *Bal Sansad* (Child Cabinet) ensure and monitor the use of Swacchta Kits by the students. E-library (digital library) was set up in the school which is equipped with over 200 e-books (fiction, drama, educational content, stories, creative, etc), 22 CDs, special e-learning software by Pearson Education Limited, Bangalore, access to e-learning tools like e-pathshala and Pratham books. The school won the “Swachh Vidhyalaya Puraskar 2016-17” the National Award for the best practices in sanitation, hygiene and infrastructure.

“A school is a building that has four walls with tomorrow inside” – Lon Watters

Socio-cultural context of the School



Located in the lap of Mother Nature, Government High School Malkarnem is situated in Quepem Taluka of State Goa. The students come from the remote parts of the village. The simplicity of the villagers, the natural beauty, adjacent temples and tranquillity makes the school location unique and special. Most of the

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villagers are involved in farming and cattle rearing. A considerable number of people are unskilled labourers. Limited access to basic commodities of contemporary life like public transport, gadgets, modes of communication, lack of awareness about personal hygiene, professional growth and advancements around the world, is a very challenging state of the Malkarnem village. Most of the villagers are uneducated.

Established in the year 1983, the school has 120 students studying in classes from V to X (secondary school/high school). The medium of instruction used in the school is English. The torch-bearers of knowledge comprise of seven full time regular teachers and eight temporary teachers (lecture basis teachers). The administrative staff consists of one multi-tasking officer and a clerk. There is only one sweeper who is appointed by the Government, on daily wages. The members of the School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) are the other stakeholders of the school. Almost 90% of the students belong to Schedule Tribe community. The regional language used to communicate is Konkani.

The following are the major problems/challenges associated with the school:

1. Most of the students are first generation learners.
2. Low socio-economic status of the children
3. Lack of public transport facilities
4. Lack of awareness about personal hygiene and sanitation
5. Shortage of staff in the school
6. Monetary Constraints
7. Adverse terrain

Efforts Initiated or the Process of Transformation

Of the several challenges faced in the school, we focused on transforming the following dominant ones which would help us in improving the health and hygiene of children as well as in implementing effective teaching – learning methods.

A. Effective implementation of practices related to personal hygiene, sanitation and menstrual hygiene

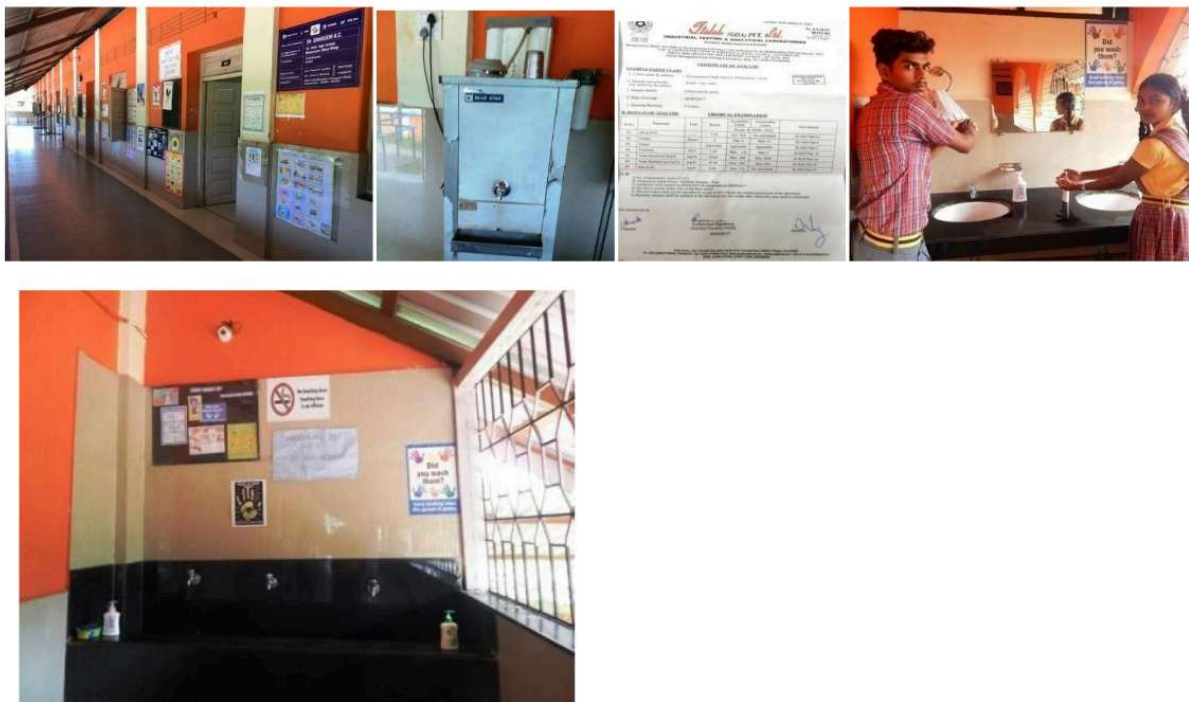
“We can no more gain God’s blessings with an unclean body than with an unclean mind, a clean body cannot reside in an unclean city” – Mahatma Gandhi

There was a remarkable dearth of knowledge and awareness among children, their parents and the villagers about personal hygiene, sanitation and menstrual hygiene. Low attendance of children due to various types of illness, especially of the female learners during menstruation period, low hemoglobin count in their blood which affected their concentration level, physical and mental well-being, was an alarming scenario.

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We decided to preach, teach and implement the ideas of cleanliness and personal hygiene among the students thereby percolates the same to the other parts of the community.

The “Swacchta Oath” is taken every day by the students during morning assembly. The oath enlightens the students to begin their day with conceptualization of personal health and hygiene. The importance of health and hygiene is explained to the students periodically by the headmistress and the teachers.



Swachhta Kits: Swachhta kits comprising of Dettol hand wash, medical quality of hand towel, nail-cutter and water proof band-aids (04 nos.), packed in a pouch, were gifted to all the students by the school. Team of nodal teachers along with the members of Bal Sansad (Child Cabinet) ensures and monitors the use of Swacchta Kits by the students. A considerable amount has been kept handy in procuring the refill packs, buying new band-aids, etc. The teachers contributed their money and gifted Swachhta Kits to the students of class X during their valedictory function.



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Sensitization of stake holders of the school in personal hygiene, sanitation and menstrual hygiene:

The teachers, parents, students and SMC members are sensitized periodically by trained doctors, nutritionist and the experts in personal hygiene, sanitation and menstrual hygiene.



Toilet facility: The school has sufficient, separate and clean toilets for girls, boys and staff. Toilet has secured doors with latch and cloth hanging hooks. There is proper ventilation through exhaust fans. There is ample of water in the toilet. There are sufficient number of dustbins and liquid hand wash in each toilet. The team of teachers supervises the cleaning and maintenance of toilets in the school.



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B. To improve the numeracy and linguistic skills of learners

It was observed that the numeracy and linguistic skills, specially the reading skills in English of the students was very poor. As a result of which they had poor communication skills in English. The students were not able to learn and express even the basic concepts. This was the biggest barrier in teaching-learning process. Earlier the students never participated in inter-school competitions like essay writing, elocution, memorising the tables, etc. To improve the reading skills in English of the learners is in fact one of the mission statements of the school and we have made noteworthy progress in this area.

In order to improve the numeracy and linguistic skills of learners the following steps were taken:

- I) A reading activity was planned for the students wherein every student was given an opportunity to read a paragraph in English during the morning school assembly. During the first round, students were given the opportunity to read the autobiographies of famous personalities like – Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam – The Wings of Fire, Mahatma Gandhi – The story of my experiments with the truth, Sachin Tendulkar – Playing it my way, Kiran Bedi – I Dare, etc. In the second round all the students were taught to use dictionary. It was ensured that all the students possess English – English dictionary. Free dictionaries were provided by the school to the students with financially poor background. Students were taught to construct sentences using the new words that they have learnt.
- II) Myriad competitions like word building games, essay writing, elocution, reading educational articles in English, numerical table competitions were conducted for the first time in the school.
- III) Maths kit comprising of mathematical and geometrical tools and equipments was made available to the teachers and the students in order to make the abstract concepts clear. Innovative and fascinating assignments and projects in maths were given to the students.
- IV) **Introduction to graffiti to create "learning walls"**: Learning walls were created in the school by introducing graffiti. The numerical tables were painted on the school stairs. Basics and rules used for solving mathematical operations were painted on the school walls. 'Vowels' and 'articles' which is the heart of English language was also painted on the school walls in order to make teaching - learning interesting and lifelong. Famous quotes, motivational phrases, meaningful sentences on the walls added flavour to English learning.



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V) Free stationery was provided to the economically weaker students to aid in the drilling process.

VI) Students were encouraged and trained to participate in several competitions at District and State Level.

VII) Reading corner was created in the school where the students could get an access to books on different topics.

VIII) E-library (digital library) was set up in the school which is equipped with over 200 e-books (fiction, drama, educational content, stories, creative, etc) 22 CDs, special e-learning software by Pearson Education Limited, Bangalore, access to e-learning tools like e-pathshaala and Pratham books.



Efforts Initiated or the Process of Transformation

There was an incredible impact on the teachers, learners and the other stake holders, of the transformations in the school:

1. Improved infrastructure to aid teaching-learning process.
2. Staff members updated with the latest happenings in Education in and around the world.
3. Improved reading and listening skills of the students.

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4. Self confidence of the students and the teachers increased (especially of the female staff members).
5. The percentage of students remaining absent drastically decreased.
6. Improved health of children, specially the girl students.
7. Students excelled in academics and other co-curricular activities.
8. Students won district and state level prizes in sports and other inter-school competitions.
9. The teaching - learning process became fascinating due to introduction of graffiti.
10. The students and the staff members started spending extra time in the school.
11. The students and the teachers became more resourceful.
12. Digital learning was encouraged due to set up of e-library.

The school has won the “Swachh Vidhyalaya Puraskar 2016-17” the National Award for the best practices in sanitation, hygiene and infrastructure. The National level award not only enhanced the self-confidence of the staff members and the students but also the school gained popularity in the state. The award money of Rs. 50,000/- helped in transforming the school:

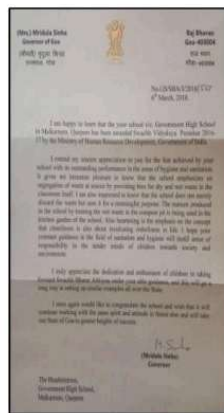
- (i) Nearly 50% of the award money was utilised in buying the “swachhta kits” for the students.
- (ii) The remaining amount was spent in:
 - (a) Buying incinerator to dispose sanitary waste
 - (b) Painting the school compound wall
 - (c) Setting up of compost unit to dispose wet waste
 - (d) Introducing graffiti in school



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Many dignitaries from various fields visited the school and different kinds of aids were provided by them to the students. An e-library was set up in the school with the help of the computers donated by the honorable MP of the district.

Acting on the principle of Shri A.P.J. Abdul Kalam – “Don’t take rest after your first victory because if you fail in the second, more lips are waiting to say that your first victory was just luck”; the school won “Swachh Vidhyalaya Puraskaar 2017-18” – the National Award for the second consecutive year.



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Further Strategies to Improve School

The following are the areas with respect to our school that we want to take up next for transformation:

A. Fostering skill based learning: We believe that skill based education is the need of the hour. In our country demand for skilled professional is very high and desire to get skilled is low. The learners, parents and the society prefer socially acceptable qualifications in pure academic subjects. There is misconception in our society that skill based education leads to low paid jobs and it is perceived to be meant for only academically weak students, school dropouts and people in the lower strata of the society.

We intend taking following steps with respect to this area:

1. Making portfolios of the students which will have minute details about the learners from the time they take admission in the school till the time they pass out from the school. The socio-economic status, academic transformation, the areas of interest, aptitudes, the strong and the weak areas, the achievements, trainings, skills imbibed by the learners will be recorded in the portfolio. This will enable the learners to have better understanding about them, to stress on their strong points and to caress their interests.
2. Organising interactive sessions with the help of experts from different fields for the students so that they can channelize their interests and aptitudes in the right directions.
3. Arranging field visits so that the students get direct exposure to the skill based world.
4. Organising events like 'Bazaar day', 'consumer fairs', competitions like cooking competition, braid making, flower arrangement, costume designing, jewellery making, setting up of kitchen garden, floriculture garden, etc.

B. Harnessing solar energy: Solar energy is a renewable free source of energy that is sustainable and totally inexhaustible. It is a non-polluting source of energy. Trapping solar energy and converting it into usable form can effectively help us overcome energy crisis in future. We intend installing appropriate system (solar panels) to harness and convert solar energy into electricity.

Harnessing solar energy will serve the following purposes:

1. Uninterrupted power supply.
2. Avoid frequent power failures and voltage fluctuations.
3. Cost effective power consumption.
4. Aid in decreasing environmental pollution.
5. Lifelong learning experience for the students.
6. Storage of energy for future use.

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School Leader and Transformation

Most of the times, the school was deprived of a full time Headmaster. Adverse terrain, lack of public transport, shortage of staff in the school, remote background of the school and the unpleasant incidences that had happened in the school in the past (there was a major sexual harassment case in the school in 2003), might have been the reasons for this.

I was promoted as the Headmistress of Govt. High School Malkarnem on 25/02/2016. I was the youngest Headmistress of a Government School in Goa, that time. When I joined the school I had a vision to transform the school into a school of my dreams. There were many obstacles that came in my way.

The major hurdles were:

1. Financial constraints
2. Rigid mindset of the staff members and the other stakeholders of the school
3. Dearth of resources
4. Students lacking basic knowledge and skills
5. Uneducated parents

Following the words of Jhon C. Maxwell - "A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way", I started devising strategies with the help of my staff members. In the beginning there was reluctance to the change, every small task was a battle. The following practices were adopted to accomplish my mission:

- I) To overcome financial constraint, I started spending for the school from my own pocket.
- II) To motivate the staff members, as a leader, I always started acting upon first, as a result of which the fear of failure vanished.
- III) Working beyond the regular hours to achieve the goals became the routine scenario. Other stakeholders of the school gradually started following me.
- IV) With a vision to create leaders than followers, I started training the teachers, introduced them to the modern advances in education and encouraged technology based learning.

As a leader my confidence level has been enhanced. I have become more sensitive and observant towards the problems faced by the people in rural area. I have improved upon the skills of time management. Most important I have become emotionally very strong.

“Together we can and we will make a difference”