

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Supporting Government schools in fund
utilization in Dahanu

August 2019



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Glossary

FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
GR	Government Resolution
HM	Head Masters
PO	Project Officer
SMC	School Management Committees
SVP	School Vision Plan
TDD	Tribal Development Department

Preface

On paper, SMCs potentially have capabilities to transform the schools through undertaking various interventions and initiatives. SMC Fund, which is about 5 lacs per annum for each school provide sufficient funds to undertake small activities and improvements in the schools.

However, in absence of relevant expertise and training, most of the SMCs were not able to utilize the funds in the schools we selected for pilot in Dahanu, Maharashtra. A small-scale, short-term project was subsequently undertaken to ensure that the SMCs were able to use the funds for the schools.

This report provides a brief overview of the training process. We hope we are able to provide an overview of the efforts by our team and the Government officials that went into the entire process.

Executive Summary

Saajha has partnered with the Tribal Development Department (TDD) to ensure better utilization of the School Management committee (SMC) funds in schools/Ashramshalas. This fund of INR 5 lakhs is allotted to the SMC for improving the school functioning. However, there was a significant difficulty for the Head Masters (HM) in utilization of these funds. A brief survey was conducted in 29 schools for understanding the schools and the SMC therein. It was observed that 9 out of the 29 schools have not utilized the SMC funds and only one school had utilized more than the 60% of the total funds allocated to it. Also, empirical evidence suggested that greater number of SMC meetings is likely to result in greater fund utilization.

Saajha had initiated the project to support 34 schools/ Ashramshalas in Dahanu- a tribal belt in Maharashtra PO, enabling them to utilize the funds better. This intervention was to focus on two specific elements.

- Increase awareness about the roles and responsibilities of SMCs
- Increasing effective utilization of SMC funds for betterment of schools.

A booklet was designed which included a simplified version of the Government resolution, expenditure items, planning tools and resource pools. In addition, FAQs, SVP and additional tools were also included.

The first training for the project was conducted in January 2019 which focused on creating short-term as well as long-term plans for fund utilization. In the phase of the training, the focus was on providing specific support to the schools and understanding specific needs. The final training which recorded attendance from all 34 schools was organized in April 2019. It focused on sharing the data which each school had collected. A more detailed assessment of the fund utilization was subsequently done. Prior to our training, the SMCs had spent about 18% of the funds allocated to them. By March, over 70% of the funds allocated were spent, which was a total of INR 1.19 Cr.

This project has been a valuable learning opportunity for us. A positive impact is observed at the Ashramshala level, wherein the HMs have not just been able to understand complex process of fund utilization but also implement it.

Context

In May 2018, the Tribal Development Department of the Maharashtra government released a Government Resolution (GR) mandating a fund of Rs. 5 lakh for School Management Committees in the state's Adivasi Ashramshalas. This fund aimed at empowering and strengthening SMCs in these schools/Ashramshalas, for the holistic learning experience for the students. To provide further clarity on the utilization of the fund, the department released another GR with a detailed breakdown of the fund and a comprehensive list of heads under which expenses can be made. On paper, this was an admirable effort to give more agency to parents and community members in improving schools as well as in addressing bureaucratic red-tapism. However, there was significant ambiguity on the ground regarding the proper use of the fund among HMs and other school staff. Owing to lack of awareness and information, the SMC fund remained unused or underused in many Ashramshalas.

In order to address this situation, the Dahanu Project Officer (PO), under the leadership of Project Officer Shri Saurabh Katiyar, planned an intervention in partnership with Saajha for generating awareness among SMCs regarding the fund in its 34 Ashramshalas. After conducting a preliminary survey in the schools, Saajha prepared tools to aid HMs to understand the nuances regarding the utilization of the fund. Additionally, we also planned a series of workshops in schools which required support in using the fund appropriately.

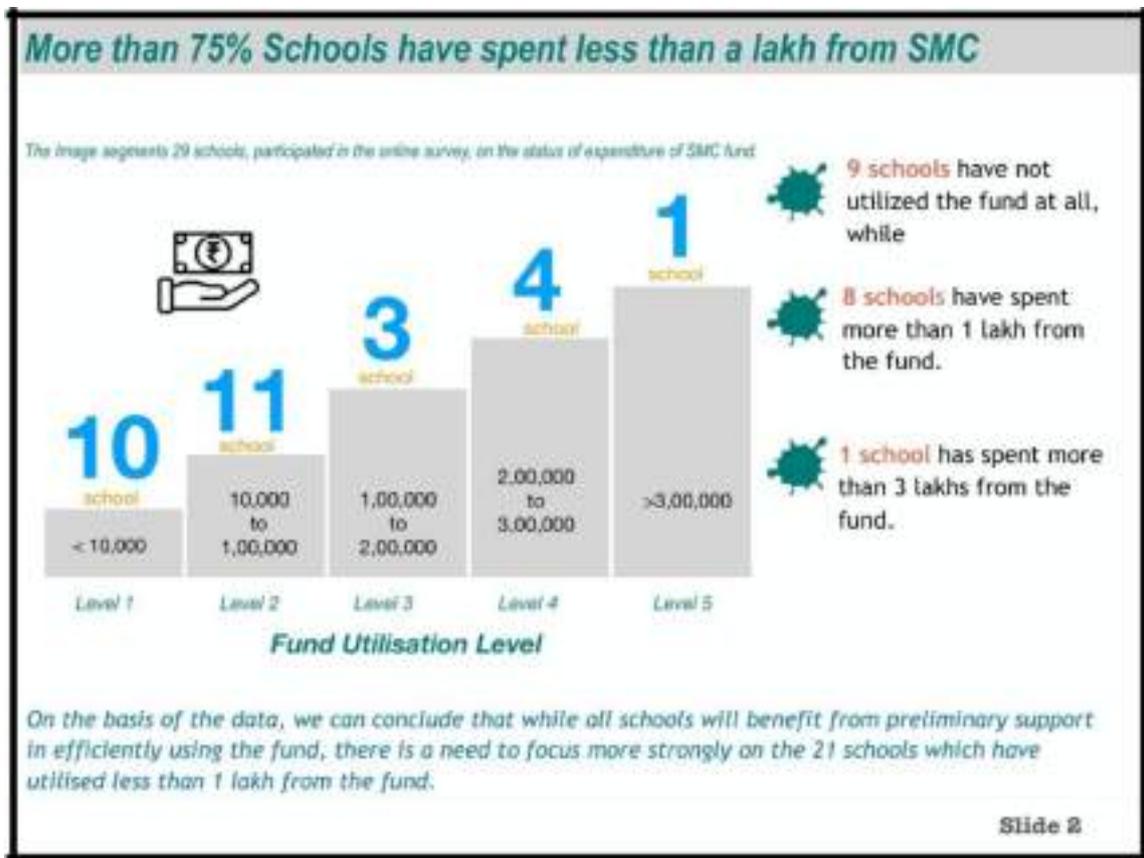
Saajha wanted to achieve two key objectives through the intervention:

1. Increase awareness about the role and responsibilities of SMC among SMC members
2. Increasing effective utilization of SMC funds for betterment of schools

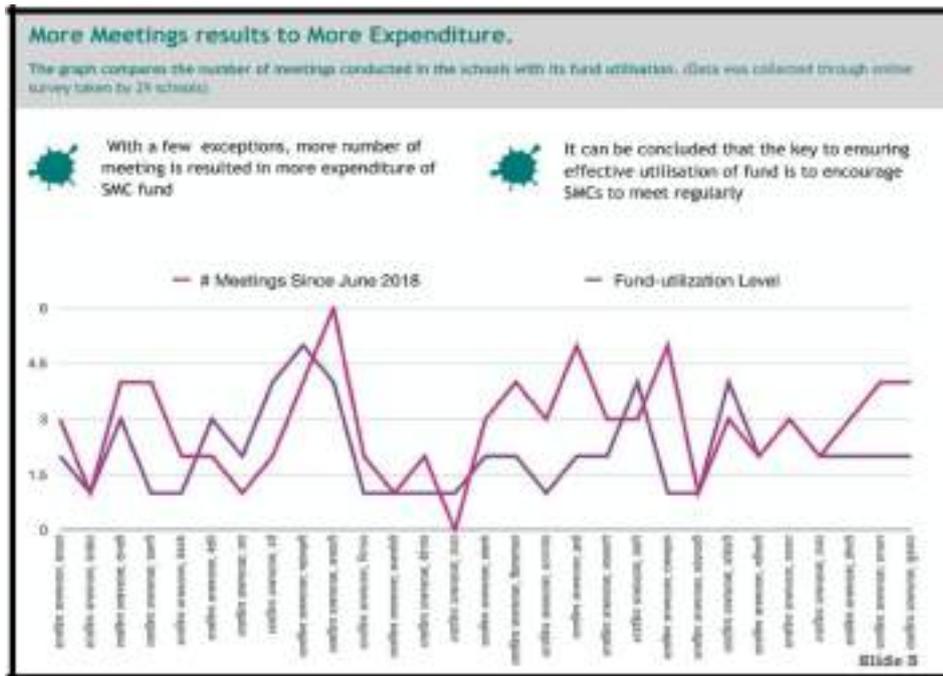
There were three aspects of the intervention – designing, training and implementations. The project had significant key learnings, challenges and recommendations which would ensure that SMCs are able to function smoothly and work more proactive towards facilitating a better future for thousands of students in Dahanu's Ashramshalas.

Research

Before embarking on the intervention, Saajha conducted a preliminary survey among Dahanu's Ashramshalas to get a brief understanding of the state of SMCs in the PO as well as the status of utilization of the SMC fund. An online survey form was circulated among HMs asking for details regarding the expenditure under the SMC fund. The data thus obtained from 29 schools revealed that at least 22 schools required extensive support in adequately using the SMC fund



The data also conveyed that schools which regularly conducted SMC meetings were using the SMC fund more efficiently. We were able to conclude that any intervention to increase expenditure under the fund will also have to focus on strengthening SMCs and specifically on increasing the number of SMC meetings conducted in schools.



Additionally, we also conducted visits in 5 Ashramshalas to delve deeper into parental involvement in the school, classroom, community and home level.

Field Observations

Visited 5 Ashram Shalas in Dahanu (Ambesari, Dharamgaon, Warwadi, Wairwandi, Szani). Interacted with teachers, children, parents and SMC. Our questions were focused to see

- How actively parents participate in School decisions?
- Teacher-Parent communication on learning and class practices?
- How do SMC members interact with other community members and SMCs of different schools?
- How thriving is home-environment (after-class) in the Ashram-shalas?



School

1. Funds expenditure seems to be the major driver of formation of SMCs
2. The feeling of connection with school as well as the village was evident
3. SMCs had limited or no conversation on learning related agenda



Class

1. 60% of the Children responded that their parents meet them at least twice a month.
2. Parents spend more than 2 hours in school premises on their visit. They spend time with other children of their community
3. Parents and Teachers do not engage in learning related conversation on their visit



Community

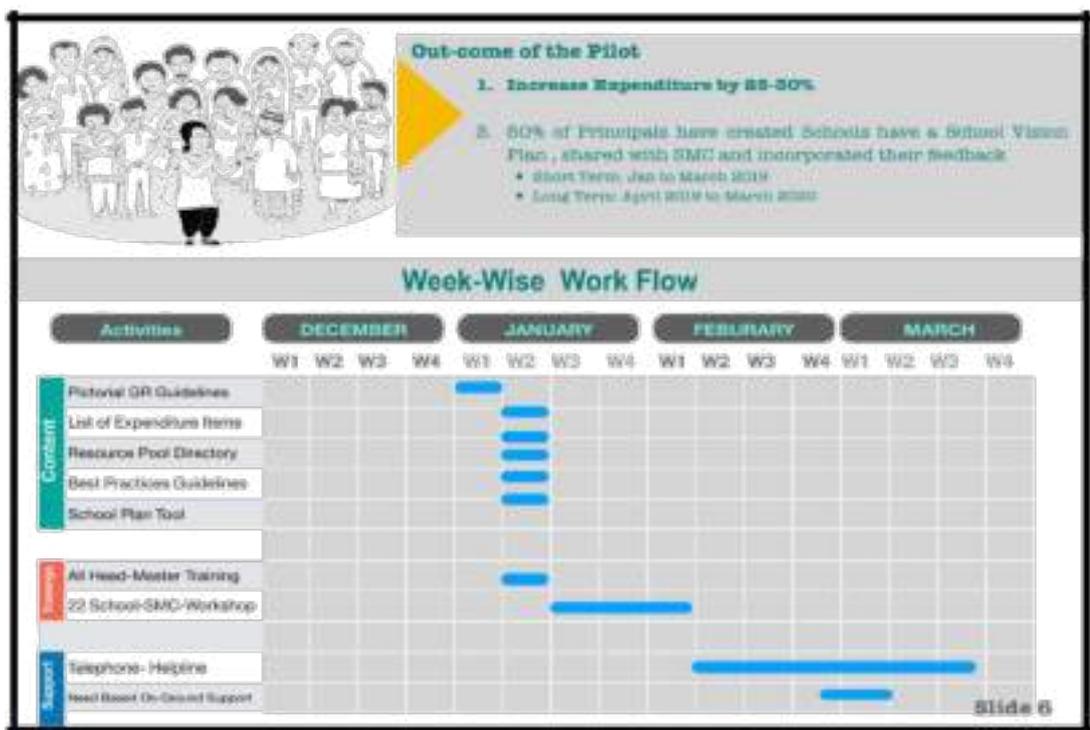
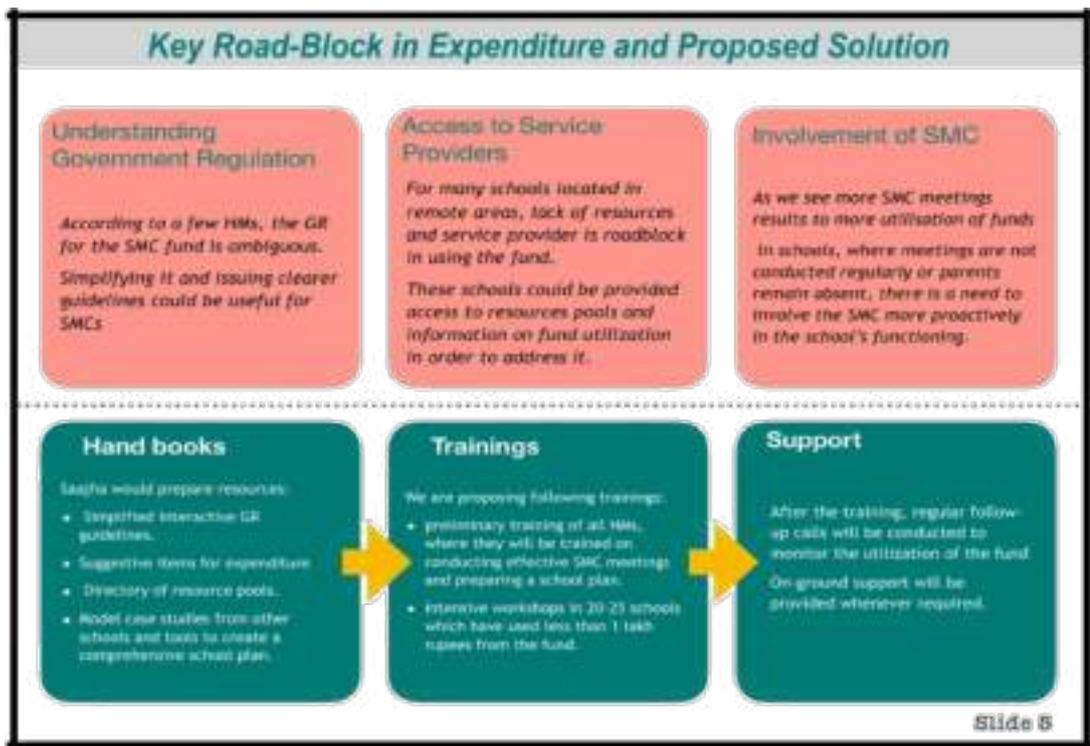
1. No platforms for SMC members to meet, share best practices and solve common problems
2. SMC Members not actively creating learning spaces in the communities



Home

1. Well planned days with fair focus on sports, free-play and academics
2. Fundamental need of safety, security and diet are taken care of
3. A significant adult to listen to children is missing. All superintendent complained that the children do not express

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Based on our preliminary surveys and visits, we identified a few key roadblocks that were hampering the utilization of the SMC fund. We planned our intervention, keeping in mind these roadblocks aimed at increasing the increasing the SMC fund expenditure and at engendering greater involvement of the SMC in the functioning of schools.

Content and Design

In order to address key concerns pertaining to the utilization of the SMC fund, Saajha conceptualized and designed a booklet that could serve as a guide for HMs.

The booklet included the following details:

1. Simplified GR - The GR document was simplified using infographics and charts. A detailed breakdown of the SMC fund was stated. It also included the process to be followed for using the fund
2. Expenditure Items - Based on our interviews with HMs, we provided a list of suggestive expenditure items. The expenses were under the following heads: classrooms, toilets, drinking water, tree plantation and health
3. Planning Tools - We created a few planning tools to help HMs in systematically using the SMC fund. These tools were for both short-term and long-term planning. We also provided a planner for future SMC meetings.
4. Resource Pools - An informal list of contact details of vendors was provided as an addendum. The list was obtained from HMs who had hired these vendors for specific tasks of the school

In addition to the booklet, the other resources that were prepared and shared with SMCs as a part of this intervention are listed below:

1. Frequently Asked Document (FAQ) document – A comprehensive document with responses to all questions and concerns raised by school HMs and SMC members regarding the fund. The responses were compiled based on inputs from the Tribal Development Department and the Dahanu Project Office.
2. School Vision Plan – A visual tool was provided to HMs to help them to propose their idea of an ideal school, explain the current state of the school and to draw up a vision for the next two months since the intervention.
3. Meeting tool – A guide to help SMC Chairperson's conduct SMC meetings effectively. It included steps to be followed before, during and after an SMC meeting.

Training

A three-hour training session was organized for the HMs of the 34 Ashramshalas in Shaskiya Ashramshala, Khambhale on 21st January, 2019. The objectives and outline of the training are explained below:

Desired outcomes –			
1. Increase the utilization of funds till march 2019. 2. One SMC Meeting with SMC Meeting Process in all schools. 3. Orientation of all SMC Members on SMC fund.			
Desired Outcome	Process	Time in minutes	Required Material
Opening – To start meeting on an energetic note.	Facilitator will do an energizer and introduction round.	10-15 minutes	Music
About SMCs – To develop understanding on SMCs and to build rapport with participants.	Facilitator will give a brief orientation about SMCs. 1. What is SMCs? 2. Where and why was SMCs started? 3. Where are we working currently on?	5-7 minutes	Music Presentation of SMCs
Importance of SMC – To build understanding amongst participants that why SMC is important and why the total involvement is important.	1. Facilitator will show a video (if not a live) and ask participants to see the video. 2. After video, facilitator will ask some debrief questions to participants. (Facilitator can share their own story as well to build an environment of sharing) a) What they saw in the video? b) What was the girl's father doing in the video? c) Why was her father trying to do? d) How your parent's done anything like this? How did your parents help you? e) Share the best moments/ contribution of parent which you cannot forget. 3. After debrief share concept of SMC – a) PARENT PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUR LIVES AND WE TRY TO FAIL IN SMC. b) AND THAT'S WHY WE NEED TO FOCUS ON SMC. 4. SHARE SOME EFFECTIVE STORIES OF OUR SMCs through video etc.	25-30 minutes	Video, Speaker, Music, Projector
Ideal SMC Meeting	1. Facilitator will share the ideal process of SMC meeting through PPT. 2. Will cover all aspect of pre, during and post meeting strategies.	10-15 minutes	Music, PPT, Projector

Desired Outcome	Process	Time in minutes	Required Material
What is SMC (KVC) – To build understanding on structure of SMC and SMC fund.	1. Make group of 3-4 people. 2. Orient the SMC structure to participants through PPT. 3. Share SMC circular and parallelly with participants. And share the instructions of KVC – a) You will have 10-15 minutes to read this circular. After that we will play a game called 'Guess-Strong Scoopit'. b) In this game I will ask you some questions, related to the SMC circular. c) Every question will have 4 options, you need to select the right answer. d) If you give the correct answer then you will get 10 points and 0 points for the incorrect answer. e) After every answer respective group needs to define the reason of their answer. 4. AFTER THIS GAME FACILITATOR WILL EXPLAIN THE MAIN POINTERS OF CIRCULAR AGAIN THROUGH PPT. 5. REQUEST SOME PRINCIPALS TO SHARE THEIR EFFECTIVE FUND UTILIZATION STORIES IN LARGE GROUP.	20-30 minutes	Projector, PPT, Circular, Flipchart, Music, Board.
SMC FUND Status – To ensure proper understanding on SMC fund and reflect/define the future picture of fund utilization.	1. Facilitator will give FUND Status format to each participants and share instructions to fill the format – a) Assume you know many successful stories of fund utilization and you know the process of fund utilization. b) How much of you need to imagine your school and fill the given format – what is the ideal situation according to them for each head. What is the current status of each head, what they will till march 2019 under each head. c) There are 3-sections in the format – this will have 10-15 minutes to share this format. 2. After filling this format some of us will share their plan in large group.	10-15 minutes	Copy of format, projector and video
Plan of first SMC meeting – Enable participants to create an effective SMC meeting plan.	1. Distribute the SMC Meeting Planning sheet amongst participants. 2. Elaborate the heads of planning sheet and how they need to fill it (with example). 3. Display the effective SMC meeting picture on projector. 4. Give them 10-15 minutes to plan one meeting. 5. Share some plans in large group.	10-15 minutes	Copy of format, projector and video

The training session was also attended by Extension Officer Mohite Sir and Assistant Project Officer (Education) Jadhav Sir. The training was quite successful and was well-received by the HMs. Towards the end of the training, HMs created Short-term and long-term plans for using the SMC fund. As mentioned in the above plan, HMs were also informed about the school-wise workshops in the 22 Ashramshalas which had significantly under-utilized the SMC fund. The schedule was shared with them and they were asked to make necessary preparations for the workshop – including sending invitations to their SMC members for the workshop.

School-wise workshops

In the second phase of the intervention, we focused on schools which needed more support in the utilisation of the fund. The plan for these workshops has been explained below:

Step 1: Interaction with SMC members on their involvement and understanding the factors that aid/hamper their active participation

Step 2: Understanding the previous utilisation of the SMC fund as well as the challenges faced by the school in using the fund, giving solutions and suggestions wherever necessary

Step 3: Taking a round of the school along with the SMC, asking for their suggestions on where the SMC fund can be utilised as well as providing necessary inputs

Step 4: Helping the SMC in preparing short-term and long-term plans for utilising the SMC fund using the tools we provided. Also, helping the HM for creating a plan for future SMC meetings

The schedule for the school-wise workshops has been given below:

No	Day	Date	School			
			10.00 am to 12.00 pm		2.00 pm to 4.00 pm	
			Jenil	Chetan	Jenil	Chetan
1	Wednesday	23-Jan-19	Girgaon	Aswali	Dongari	Uplat
2	Thursday	24-Jan-19	Varkhanday	Dhamanagaon	Kalamdevi	Udhawa
3	Friday	25-Jan-19	Kandarwadi	Nanivali	Rankol	Tawa
4	Monday	28-Jan-19	Betegaon	Mendhawan	Nandore	Takwalah
5	Tuesday	29-Jan-19	Embur	Govade	Bhatane	Lalthane
6	Wednesday	30-Jan-19	Bilapada	Saiwan		

A brief snapshot of these intensive workshops has been provided below:

School's Name	HM's name	Level of SMC	Challenges in using fund	Plans for the fund
Girgaon	N.M. Rathod		1. Work has already been sanctioned in the school, but hasn't commenced from PO 2. Can't use SMC fund for those works as there can be overlap	Well cleaning Ground levelling Sports equipment Lab equipment Library Sick room

Dongari	G.D. Gavit			<p>Classroom painting</p> <p>Cleaning school campus</p> <p>Waste water management</p> <p>Constructing cabin for watchmen; maintaining register at entrance</p> <p>Space for washing clothes</p>
Varkhande	M.R. Gaikwad		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School is in rented space, hence infra work can't be done 2. Rent not paid, hence landlord unwilling to conduct repairs 3. SMC meetings are rarely held; members don't turn up 4. Ambiguity about using SMC fund in rented spaces 	<p>Purchase sports equipment</p> <p>Space for washing clothes</p> <p>Organize competitions</p>
Kalamdevi	K. N. Gole			<p>Newspapers for students</p> <p>Purchasing kitchen utensils</p> <p>Entrance gate repairs</p> <p>Painting</p> <p>'Kattas' around big trees</p> <p>Purchasing books for competitive exams</p>
Kandarwadi	C.K. Vedga		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No sanctioned HM in the school 2. Since teachers are taking up the post on rotation, they are unwilling and hesitant to take responsibility of fund 	<p>Shed for drying & washing clothes</p> <p>Girls hostel floor repair & painting</p> <p>Sports equipment</p> <p>Painting of classrooms</p>
Rankhol	K.R. Gowali			<p>Painting</p> <p>Newspapers</p> <p>Solar geyser repair</p> <p>Pipeline for water</p> <p>Soak pit</p> <p>Construction around tree</p>
Aswali	S.S. Khurule			<p>Water supply for 24 hours</p>
Uplat	B.P. Ahire		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building has been newly constructed, hence major expenses not needed 	<p>Repairing of windows</p> <p>Tree plantation</p> <p>hot water for bathing</p>
Dhamangaon	P.B. Bhivgade		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SMC newly constituted; meetings not held 2. HM is inactive; doesn't take initiative on using fund 3. SMC has no information about using fund 	<p>Furniture</p> <p>Teaching Aids</p> <p>Drinking water facility</p>
Udhawa	L. Y. Wagh			<p>Sports equipment</p> <p>Shed for drying clothes</p> <p>Plumbing work.</p>
Naniwali	M.B.Patil		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work has already been sanctioned in the school; hence can't conduct repairs 2. Lack of space in the school for undertaking more works 	<p>Drainage work</p> <p>Equipment for science laboratory</p>

Mendhawan	D.L. Bhalekar		<p>1. SMC fund was allotted only recently hence school hasn't utilized it all</p> <p>2. HM is new and didn't know much about the procedure to utilize the fund</p> <p>3. Waiting for the new building to be constructed, they have been a bit unsure about conducting repairs in the old premises</p>	<p>1. Repair all doors and windows</p> <p>2. Painting of the school building</p> <p>3. Teaching aids in the classroom</p> <p>4. Refurbish the school ground</p> <p>5. Build a hand washing station</p> <p>6. Tiles in the toilet</p> <p>7. Construct a new soak pit</p> <p>8. Renovate two old classrooms</p> <p>9. Buy furniture for the Principal's room</p> <p>10. Nameplates for all rooms'</p>
Takwalah	S.S. More		<p>1. Lot of PWD work left in the school, hence they can't use the fund for undertaking repair work since it has already been sanctioned</p> <p>2. HM is very cautious about using the fund</p>	<p>1. Doors for toilets</p> <p>2. Nameplates for classrooms</p>
Betegaon	R.B. Mhatre			<p>Soak pit</p> <p>Levelling of ground</p> <p>Pipelines</p> <p>Sports equipments</p> <p>Lab equipments</p> <p>Water tank</p> <p>Newspaper stand</p> <p>Gate for girls hostel</p> <p>Toilets</p> <p>Fans</p>
Nandore	B.P. Choudhari			<p>Daily Newspaper</p> <p>Dustbins</p> <p>Sports equipment</p> <p>Teaching aids in classrooms</p>
Embur	K.V. Paste		<p>1. No active participation of SMC</p>	<p>Shed</p> <p>Construction around trees</p> <p>Develop garden behind the sheds</p>
Bhatane	R.R. Darves		<p>1. Rotating HMs - hence no one is taking much initiative</p>	<p>Sports equipment</p> <p>Lockers for students</p> <p>Shoe rack</p> <p>Girls bathroom repair</p> <p>Wall compound repair and painting</p> <p>Painting for 2 classrooms</p>

Bilalpada	J.L. D'souza		1. Rented space; hence ambiguity on using fund 2. HM used to take permission from PO office for repairs	Repairing School gate Hand wash station Sports equipment Electric fitting Shed to dry clothes Place to wash clothes Magazine for students Painting (teaching aids in walls)
Tawa	T.I. Patil			Painting drainage work
Govade	C.T.Bhoye			Painting, electrical fitting
Lalthane	V.V. Pawate			Water connection, Painting work
Saiwan	Kedare Sir		No challenges persay, need more funds	Material for science lab Shed for dining hall Furniture
			↑As per data submitted by HMs on 7th December, 2018	
Level of SMC:				
Very active				
Somewhat active				
Inactive				

In the second phase of the module which was conducted in March 2019, telephonic support was provided to all the schools in the Project Officer (PO). During this period, updates were collected from SMCs on their progress with respect to utilization of the SMC fund. At the same time, they were asked about their future plans regarding the fund and whether the SMC requires any additional support

A summary of these conversations has been given below:

School's Name	HM's name	Details of expenditure of fund	
		in Feb and Mar. Update on each plan	Plans for the future
Girgaon	N.M. Rathod	0	
Dongari	G.D. Gavit	Classroom painting Cleaning school campus Waste water management	Constructing cabin for watchmen; maintaining register at entrance Space for washing clothes

Varkhande	M.R. Gaikwad	-	Purchase sports equipment Space for washing clothes Organize competitions
Kalamdevi	K. N. Gole	Newspapers for students Purchasing kitchen utensils Painting	Kattas' around big trees Purchasing books for competitive exams Entrance gate repairs
Kandarwadi	C.K. Vedga	Shed for drying & washing clothes Girls hostel floor repair & painting	Sports equipment Painting of classrooms
Rankhol	K.R. Gowali	not completed	Painting
Aswali	S.S. Khurule	not completed	Pending work
Uplat	B.P. Ahire	Repairing of windows hot water for bathing	Tree plantation
Dhamangaon	P.B. Bhivgade	not completed	
Udhawa	L. Y. Wagh	1.Plumbing work completed in february. 2.shed for drying clothes is in progress. Try to complete this in next two week.	1. complete remaining work. 2.Repair of toilets in both hostel
Naniwali	M.B.Patil	-	drainage work
Mendhawan	D.L. Bhalekar	Repair all doors and windows Painting of the school building is going on	Teaching aids in the classroom Refurbish the school ground Build a hand washing station Tiles in the toilet Construct a new soak pit Renovate two old classrooms Buy furniture for the Principal's room Nameplates for all rooms"
Takwalah	S.S. More	Doors for toilets and Nameplates for classrooms	sport equipment
Betegaon	R.B. Mhatre	Water tank, Newspaper stand, Gate for girls hostel, Toilets	Remaining work
Nandore	B.P. Choudhari	Dustbins, Teaching aids in classrooms	Daily Newspaper, Teaching aids in classrooms
Embur	K.V. Paste	No	Shed work is going on
Bhatane	R.R. Darves	Lockers for students Shoe rack Girls bathroom repair	Wall compound repair and painting Painting for 2 classrooms

Bilalpada	J.L. D'souza	Repairing School gate, Hand wash station, Shed to dry clothes Place to wash clothes,	Sports equipment, Electric fitting, Shed to dry clothes, Magazine for students Painting (teaching aids in walls)
Tawa	T.I. Patil	drainage work	Painting is going on
Govade	C.T.Bhoye	Painting,	electrical fitting
Lalthane	V.V. Pawate	Water conection completed. cloth dry shed	Painting work Remaning, Science kit
Saiwan	Kedare Sir	no	Material for science lab Shed for dining hall Furniture
Ambesari	Bhosle Sir	Door Repair, Toilet Repair	Water tank, Gate ,
Khambale	Khairnar Sir	Toilet Repair Drenage Repair water tank	remaning painting work
Dabhadi	Deshmukh Sir	Solar Lamps, Stages, Building Maintenance,	Drainage
Dhekale	Vanmali Sir	Light fittings, emergency expenses, drainage	Water tank
Mahalakshmi	Patil Sir	Painting, Gate, Dhobi Ghat, Water Tank,	Light Fitting
Urse	Solanke Sir	Painting, toilet tank repair, steps, handwash	Sheds to dry clothes
Khutal	Chavan Sir	Painting, genrater shed	Drenage, gate,
Chalni	Shete Sir	Light fittings, sanitary accessories, water tank repairs,	hand wash stand Repair
Sawne	Patil Sir	Window repair, new water tank, painting,	Sheds to dry clothes
Varwada	Bhurkud Sir	Repairing of windows hot water for bathing	1. complete remaining work. 2.Repair of toilets in both hostel
Sutrakar	Madne Sir	Door repairs, clean-up materials, plumbing, water purifiers	
Betegaon	Mhatre Sir	Light fittings, painting, water filters,	Drainage repair, plumbing

Final Training Session

A three-hour training session was organized for the HMs of the 34 Ashramshalas in Shaskiya Ashramshala, Mahalakshmi on 16th April, 2019. The objectives and outline of the training are explained below:

Desired outcomes:			
1. Felicitate HMs for progress in SMC fund			
2. HMs prepare plan for SMC fund use for April to June 2019			
3. Orientation of HMs on modifications to GR			
Session & Objectives	Process	Time	Materials
Opening - To start workshop with enthusiasm	Facilitator will conduct an energiser and an introduction	10 min	Mic
Data sharing - To appreciate HMs for using fund effectively	Facilitator will start with a few guessing questions - do you think we were able to use SMC fund, how much was the increase/decrease etc. Then APO sir will share a few slides while Facilitator will explain 1. the increase in fund use 2. areas in which the fund was used 3. What factors were catalysts in increasing the use	15 min	Mic, PPT
Discussion: HMs will identify factors that helped in SMC fund, their aha moments and challenges/suggestions	1. All HMs will be divided into groups of 5 2. HMs to discuss three issues - what factors led to improvement in fund use, what were their personal highlights in their experience, what is the way forward/challenges/suggestions 3. Facilitator will then hold discussion in the larger group	20 min	Diares, pens,

Saral/Asar - HMs to identify areas of effective utilization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitator will say so far our focus was on utilization, now will move to effective utilization 2. Facilitator will share a scenario of an earthquake in the village and suggest four remedies 3. All four remedies will be pasted on chart paper on the wall. HMs have to put a green sticker on 1 remedy they will do first and 1 remedy they will never do. 4. Once they have chosen, Facilitator will explain the saral/asar chart - picking up remedies that are both saral and asar 5. Facilitator will now give the saral/asar chart to all HMs (in groups) with chits about suggestive works in the school. They have to put them in the four boxes of the chart 6. Each group will then explain their charts to the larger group 7. Facilitator will then advise HMs to focus on saral and asardar plans for the next three months 	40 min	Saral/Asar chart, sketchpens, chits, postits, chart paper, Mic, PPT, case study
Planning - HMs to prepare plan for next 2 months	HMs will be given a planning sheet where they will prepare a plan for the expenses they have planned for April to June	15 min	Plannning sheet and pens
Amemdments to GR - To explain changes to SMC GR	<p>TDD rep will explain to HMs about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. changes in the SMC GR 2. Accounting rules 3. transfer of 10 lakhs to their fund 	10 min	Mic, PPT
Sawal Jawab - HMs to address their queries wrt fund	APO Jadhav Sir will address all HMs regarding their queries and concerns on SMC fund.	10 min	Mic
Felicitatation of HMs	APO to give certificates to all HMs for completing the training	10 min	Certificates,mic, and flowers

Impact

Before the intervention, Dahanu's Ashramshalas had spent only 18 % of the fund allocated to them, with 72 % of the schools having spent less than 1/5th of the fund. 33 of the schools had spent a total of about 28 lakhs from the fund. However, in March 2019, we found that over 70 % of the total fund allocated had been spent by SMCs. The 34 Ashramshalas had spent over 1.19 crore rupees of the fund by the first week of March itself. A detailed breakdown is provided in the annexures.

Drivers for SMC Fund

Based on our intervention, we have identified six factors that expedite the utilisation of the SMC fund. They have been explained with the help of the diagram below:



Best Practices

Some of the best practices that emerged from this intervention are listed below:

- GRs are usually complex documents to comprehend for SMC members. Before the intervention, SMC members were uninformed and even suspicious about details of the SMC fund. In Dhekale Ashramshala, the HM used the visual guides prepared by Saajha to educate his SMC members about various provisions of the GR. With information on how exactly the fund can be used, SMC members in the school became more proactive in making suggestions for expenses and became cooperative with the HMs towards utilizing the SMC fund.
- One of the points we focused on during the intervention was the need to share knowledge/information among HMs. We suggested that HMs could reach out to reach other if they need help with conducting repairs/other any other work in their school. It is often difficult to find suitable resource persons in majority of schools. However, HMs have now started using the Whatsapp group as a means to reach out to each other for information on vendors, clarification regarding GR or documentation. This is building a network of learning of HMs in the PO
- Involving the Superintendents has been another highlight of the intervention. The Adhikshak and Adhikshika spend a significant amount of time with students, hence are most aware of their needs and issues. In our school visits, we ensured that they were a part of the planning exercise on the SMC fund and we also insisted that they must be closely involved in the utilization of the SMC fund. Due to this, it can be observed that majority of the work conducted using the fund are directly related to living conditions of students in the Ashramshala. The most common expense is the construction of sheds for students to dry clothes. Inadequate drying space for clothes posed a health hazard for students, who would end up wearing wet clothes which would lead to the spread of various ailments among them – an issue Adhikshaks/Adhikshikas are keenly aware of. Involvement of the superintendents ensured that the overall well-being of students was at the centre of the utilization of the SMC fund.

Involvement of SMC

Across the Dahanu PO, the overall involvement of SMCs differs from school to school. During our visit, the attendance of SMC members ranged from 16 in one school to 0 in a couple of them. It can be concluded, that SMCs are still in a formative stage in Ashramshalas and capacity building measures are needed to ensure that SMC members are aware of their role and responsibilities and are taking active charge in working for the development of the school



Some of the highlights we observed regarding SMC involvement are provided here:

- Many SMC members are daily wage earners. Attending meetings often amounts to losing wages
- SMC meetings are driven by the HMs only, now they have to take measure to include parent members as well.
- Meetings are not conducted regularly in many schools
- Sarpanch can be included in the SMC to motivate/encourage the SMC members of his village.
- Low awareness among SMC about role and responsibilities

Our Learnings

- I. **Financial freedom:** HMs consider the SMC fund as a potent means to counter administrative delays as it gives them more financial authority in improving their respective schools. At the same time, it will also empower SMCs as it gives them access to a fund that they could use to bring their school vision to reality. Long-pending repairs are now being undertaken at the school-level at priority basis – it is a huge step towards decentralization and democratization of the school structure.
- II. **Good intent:** We observed a display of good intent on behalf of most HMs regarding the use of the SMC fund. Many of them were keen to use the fund for various purposes, but were bogged down by certain constraints. If those constraints are addressed, all SMCs will have greater freedom in using the fund proactively
- III. **Responsibility of HM:** Most HMs are quite overburdened with a mix of administrative and academic responsibilities. One of the reasons why SMCs are hesitant to use the SMC fund is that they see the work as an additional burden over their existing duties. For instance, undertaking a repair of the boundary wall will require constant supervision and follow-up – and some HMs might want to avoid it. It is important to build a culture of collective responsibility among the SMC to ensure that repairs and other works in the school do not become the sole responsibility of the HM.
- IV. **Reimagine SMCs:** As mentioned earlier, SMCs are still in a formative stage in Ashramshalas here. In order to propel them into the next stage, regular training sessions are required. Crucially, HMs will have to recognize the value that SMC members bring to the table and SMC too will have to see some value in their contribution. There is also a need to reimagine the institution of SMCs in the context of tribal schools, and more thought could be given into this space.
- V. **Lack of clarity:** There is a lack of clarity over several provisions of the GR on the ground. While our intervention has addressed that significantly, there is a need for a platform where schools can easily reach out to the PO office for their queries and concerns. The Monthly Sabhas (Maasik Sabhas) can be developed into a space where such a dialogue can be conducted.

VI. Cross-learning platform: One of our learnings from Delhi has been to build a network of SMCs so that they can share knowledge, information and insights with each other. In Dahanu, while it is too early to expect a network of SMCs, HMs could be a part of a platform where they constantly share their work so that it can emerge as a cross-learning space. For example, HMs could use the WhatsApp group to inform each other about work they have done using the SMC fund from time to time.

Recommendations

- I. SMCs in majority of the schools we visited were dormant or inactive. There were several schools where no more than three SMC members attended meetings regularly. SMC members who have not attended more than three meetings must be replaced with the active parents. Schools must also be asked to compulsorily conduct at least one SMC meeting every month (and to send minutes to the respective PO office), so that regular activity is maintained.
- II. Training sessions must be conducted for two SMC members from each school – on various aspects of school management. There is a serious lack of information regarding their role among them and it can be addressed through regular workshops.
- III. The utilization of SMC fund often requires an inordinate amount of paperwork, which could hinder HMs for making expenditure. While the new GR does address this issue at the school's end by mandating a simpler minutes format and minimal documentation, financial officers do not seem to have enough information. There is a need to brief them adequately on the SMC fund and encourage them to support HMs in using the fund confidently.
- IV. HMs are often unable to prioritize between their academic and administrative responsibilities. If every school/a cluster of 3-4 schools has a person in-charge of infrastructure work, then it will ease of the burden of the HM as well as lend more primacy to overhaul of school infrastructure. In Delhi, retired servicemen were appointed as Estate Managers in government schools to look after infrastructural issues. A similar experiment could be replicated here.
- V. As mentioned earlier, there is a need to build a culture of sharing and learning among HMs. The PO office should actively work towards building platforms that promote and foster the same. At the same time, best practices must be duly rewarded so as to encourage excellence among them. Awards may be instituted for best utilization of SMC fund and case studies of such experiments must be prepared and shared.



Saajha began as a small project covering 60 municipal schools in North and East Delhi. Today, Saajha's creche has grown to include 1,300 schools across Delhi, Jharkand and Karnataka. In the process, we have also partnered with State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT, Delhi) and the Tribal Development Department (TDD), Maharashtra for building systemic capabilities for state-wide projects. .

Partnerships form the core of our vision to enhance parental involvement by creating 10 million parent partners by 2025. Invigorating parental participation has only been made possible through various partners in Delhi, Jharkand (Tata Trusts, CInI) and Karnataka (Deshpande foundation, Mantra4Change) - whose support has been essential to our success.

As we take a moment to celebrate the change which the parents could facilitate, we would like to thank each and every partner, mentor and well-wisher who has helped us along our journey.

Our Partners

