



Vardhmān

Delivering Excellence. Since 1965.

VARDHMAN SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (VSDP)

Vardhman is a progressively responsible organization, committed to sustainable development, encompassing all three bottom lines. We work towards empowering the communities that host us as we firmly believe in inclusive and holistic growth. For the same, our initiatives are centred on bridging the access gap and opening a window of opportunities.

We believe that the foundation for sustainable development is laid by providing indiscriminate access to education to all children. Education is one of the pillars of a strong, civilized society and a progressive nation. With the intent to provide the children of migrant labour access to quality education, we work towards upgrading the infrastructure of government schools in the vicinity of our manufacturing units.

Our CSR teams regularly visit the government schools falling in the vicinity of our manufacturing units, to identify the problems and devise sustainable solutions. One initiative in the direction, taken by us is Vardhman School Development Program (VSDP), wherein we upgrade the infrastructure of these schools and provide them with necessary facilities with the intent to create enabling environment to study.

With this idea of providing cleaner, safer and comfortable environment to the students belonging to the lower-income groups who sometimes drop out of the school owing to financial constraints, or are denied admission owing to the school's incapacity to accommodate such large number of students in the limited number of classrooms, we decided to invest in building classrooms and toilet complexes, besides providing furniture, water coolers with purifiers, computer systems etc. to the schools where there was a major gap between the available and required resources. Our motive is to support the Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan that our Government is successfully running and those teachers who could impart knowledge with greater efficacy if the weather conditions did not hamper their work or the attendance of students in the class.

In our assessment, we found there were schools where students did not attend the classes because there were no washrooms. At schools where there were toilets, there was no separate space for boys and girls. Girl students were particularly uncomfortable with this situation. The problem was resolved by building separate toilet complexes, which are an integral component of VSDP.

Another initiative that reinforces our VSDP goals is Project Nandini, under which we are working to generate awareness about menstrual hygiene management among adolescent girls coming from family backgrounds where they rarely receive any guidance on managing their periods. We have also installed sanitary napkin vending

machines and incinerators in the school washrooms to provide these girls with an affordable and hygienic alternative to keep them safe from diseases arising from poor intimate hygiene.

Under our initiatives to promote education, we found including MHM was an inevitable component to make our school development program holistic. The idea behind educating schoolgirls about MHM is to make them a change agent since they have a direct reach to other women in their community and are more open to accepting information on such sensitive topics.

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

Students from financially weaker section of the society, their parents and teachers at Government Schools are primary beneficiaries targeted. There is, however, a limitation for Menstrual Hygiene Management sessions and girls of the age group 10 - 18 only are targeted in schools. The awareness sessions are also meant for girls & women from rural background, irrespective of them studying in the school or not. Currently, Vardhman School Development Program is running in:

- Ludhiana and Sangrur, Punjab
- Solan District of Himachal Pradesh
- Raisen, Sehore & Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh

During our evaluation of the on-ground situation, before the launch of the project, we identified that there was a scarcity of facilities that strengthen the prospects of imparting education effectively. Several schools lacked basic infrastructural facilities such as classrooms, benches, water coolers, toilets etc. We also felt that there was no allocated space for girls having their periods, or formal education on menstrual health and hygiene. Besides, learning was hindered by multiple factors including harsh weather conditions, students dropping out, shorter retention and attention span owing to surrounding distractions, girls missing out their schools because of something as natural and permanent as periods. It was also gauged that in certain schools, a classroom could accommodate 40 students but due to lack of space, 60-70 students were being taught in the same classroom at the same time.

While children are, by nature, fun-loving and unsteadfast, expecting them to study well in such situations is like giving them strong reasons to avoid going to school. Hence, we decided to create an environment conducive for learning, to address the challenge by upgrading the infrastructure. With our program, there has been a marked improvement in the schools.

SOCIAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

- Denial for admission to students by the school

In our analysis, we came across the fact that several students were denied admission to school owing to lack of infrastructure. In a standard classroom, a maximum of 40-

60 students can be accommodated and if the classes are being run in the open air, the number has to be lowered further since the teacher's voice can be heard only until a certain distance. With a dearth of enough classrooms, classes could not be divided into sections to enrol more students. The school had to deny admission to students which was unfair for those students. With added classrooms, enrollment has gone up.

- Learning hampered by Weather conditions

Sitting under the shade of a tree or the sky is not a comfortable experience for students. Their sitting positions keep changing with the sun and rain. On hot sunny days, they are looking for shade while in chilly winters, preference is to stay inside the quilt at home, instead of sitting in an open space at school. When it rains, they have to look for a place/shelter where they can save themselves from getting drenched in the rain. These distractions or reasons could only be addressed by increasing the number of classrooms and providing a cozy learning environment.

- High dropout rate

Lack of proper classrooms, toilets, safe drinking water etc. was a concern for parents, who were not comfortable with sending their ward to a school without these facilities. Also, such living conditions at school would not have improved the lifestyle or hygiene at home. Children themselves felt shy about going to a school where they had to worry about using the washroom or sit on the ground and bring sacks (for sitting) from home. Girls particularly during their periods either stopped coming to the school or dropped out since this was a regular affair. With buildings and toilet complexes, there's one reason less for the students to discontinue coming to the school.

- Sense of inferiority among children

To facilitate every child of the nation with formal education, the government has taken numerous initiatives. While these initiatives aim at drawing more and more students to school and ensuring their holistic growth, one limitation that could have been felt at such a tender age would be the comparison. Seeing children going to private schools, where they get to study in classrooms furnished with comfortable seating arrangements would raise a feeling of inferiority in children going to schools where they have to sit on the ground. With an infrastructure that gives them a feeling of pride, students would love to be at their school.

- Absence of a sustainable solution to support the cause for years to come

While financial aid reaches a selected number of students, these buildings will serve their purpose for many years. Besides, with an industry pioneer investing in government schools, other organizations will get encouraged to contribute to such institutions following a similar long-term approach.

Under VSDP, maintenance support for 5 years is also offered to these schools, to ensure the resources provided are utilized to optimum and students as also the staff gets accustomed to an ambience that promotes hygiene and health along with education.

OBJECTIVE

The Objectives of Vardhman School Development Program (VSDP) are as follows:

- a) To make Quality Education accessible to the underprivileged section of society, especially for the children of migrant workers.
- b) To upgrade the infrastructure and educational facilities.
- c) To provide a clean, safe, hygienic, comfortable and effective learning environment to students.
- d) To encourage teachers and students through behaviour change activities and capacity building initiatives.

We firmly believe that education is the key to achieve several other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through quality education, we can break the cycle of poverty. What we wish to deliver to the community through this initiative is a sustainable model to promote education among all the sections of the society, irrespective of their financial differences. Our primary focus is on bridging the access gap.

Vardhman School Development Program is divided into two Phases:

Phase I: In the first phase, we provide necessary infrastructure such as classrooms, science & computer labs, drinking water facilities, and toilets for students and staff, furniture, books for the library, and other requisites to facilitate teaching and learning process. Keeping in mind our MHM initiatives for schools, we also install sanitary napkin vending machines, incinerators and regularly provide sanitary pads to the schools as well.

Phase II: In the second phase, we focus on capacity building, soft skill development, training sessions for behavioural change, and communication activities etc. We have initiated Project Nandini under VSDP in which we are conducting awareness sessions on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management among schoolgirls, staff and the local community. Participants are also being trained to impart the knowledge gained at these sessions.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

Vardhman Group firmly believes in sustainable development and holistic excellence. The organization is committed to contributing to the development of the communities that host their facilities. With an emphasis on continuous development and inclusive growth, the Group's core strategy is rooted in values and ethics that make Vardhman a preferred partner for numerous national and international brands. Not just business, the fair practices are equally appreciated at social front.

Mrs Suchita Oswal Jain, Vice Chairman & Joint Managing Director, states about Vardhman's approach on community development - "We are here not only to make money but build lasting relations and give back to the society as much as we can. All our stakeholders including the communities are of primary importance to us." A fierce advocate of women empowerment, she emphasizes education as much as her father

Mr S P Oswal whose ideology is the inspiration behind Vardhman School Development Program.

Vardhman School Development Program is crafted to serve as a base to offer quality education to the children of migrant labour as also the lower-income groups. Through education, we can provide all children with a fair chance to re-write their destiny. It is through education alone that life as also the lifestyle can be enhanced. We wish to eliminate the gaps and bring the opportunity to learn and grow to all the children alike.

Most of the students in these schools are the children of migrant labours who have relocated to cities with the hope of a better life. These workers form a strong force that contributes to the growth of an organization and Vardhman follows a progressive approach of holistic and inclusive growth. The management recognizes the fact that it is the workers who make the industry thrive and it is a responsibility of the industry to ensure these workers lead a respectful life. Education and access to healthcare facilities is a basic necessity and we are committed to ensuring that the community that hosts us doesn't struggle to access such essentials.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Expected outcomes of Vardhman School Development Program -

- To create an enabling environment by providing infrastructure and basic amenities including classrooms, benches, labs, water cooler and purifiers, separate toilet complexes for girls and boys etc.
- To analyze the gap in available and required resources and fulfil the requirement.
- To retain and increase the number of students studying in the school i.e. prevent them from dropping out of the school due to lack of infrastructure.
- To provide the schools with maximum support to withhold the maximum number of students without cluttering the school premises.
- To augment student's attention span by removing distractions like outside noise, weather conditions etc.
- To increase the school's overall academic performance.
- To bring about behavioural change and inculcate a feeling of belongingness among students and staff.
- To provide hygienic and clean toilets for all students besides affordable sanitary pads with proper disposable facilities for girl students.
- To spread awareness about MHM - Menstrual health and hygiene management in schools as well as in the local community and develop change agents who can influence society as a whole for better.

The impact of VSDP can be broadly divided into two categories.

1. Quantitative Outcome:

- A total of 65 Governments schools and 41 Awangwaris, in the above stated three regions, are covered under the initiative till date.
- 30000+ students are getting benefitted and continuing their studies in well-maintained classrooms and an environment conducive for learning.
- 20000+ families with low income feeling proud to send their children to these schools.
- 500+teachers admire the new environment in school and believe it has improved the quality of imparting education.

2. Qualitative Outcome:

- The overall attendance of students has increased.
- The dropout rate of students has decreased with the facility of separate toilets for girls and boys, and the provision of sanitary napkin vending machines and incinerators.
- Overall cleanness and hygiene levels of the schools have improved.
- Attendance of parents in PTM (Parents teachers meeting) has increased.
- Ownership and sense of belongingness for the school among teachers and community members has increased.
- A rise of about 40% observed in student enrolments in these schools owing to the construction of school buildings, classrooms, toilets and computer/science labs.
- Attention span and efficiency of learning improved.
- Mindset an approach of parents, as well as students towards the government schools, has changed for better.

SCOPE

Vardhman School Development Program, at present, is an infrastructure development project launched with the intent of providing better facilities and environment to the students. The schools where we have initiated the project are in the vicinity of our manufacturing units, making it convenient to monitor the progress and identify the issues. These schools are identified and selected strictly on the basis of need and assessment is carried out at multiple levels for the same.

The program was first started as a pilot, with one school located near the Corporate Office that direly needed infrastructure. With the humongous success rate and appreciation from the local community, the program has been replicated at other factory locations i.e. Budhni, Madhya Pradesh and Baddi, Himachal Pradesh. Further, we have taken up the program to rural areas of Himachal Pradesh as the local community has approached us, discussing the challenges being faced by the students in the absence of appropriate educational facilities.

To ensure long-term sustainability, we provide complete ownership of the school building to the school management i.e. the building is for them and they are responsible for it. An MoU is signed with the School Management and teachers as also students are requested to pledge to utilize the provided resources to the best – improving the academic performance and maintaining the infrastructure well.

Developing a sense of belongingness is requisite to make them care for the complexes as they would do for their home. Students connect with their classrooms automatically. We also introduce the school's management to the contractors we work with for maintenance purposes.

Alongside, the school is asked to submit a half-yearly report of the students' academic results, admission rates etc. to map the progress/impact. Frequent interactions are carried out with the community members to analyze overall progress. The community has remained proactive through the project in almost all the locations and they have formed local, community-level school committees for reporting the grievances. They report the issues directly to the company, school administration and even at the district level to the education officers. Apart from this, the Sarpanch and members of panchayat keep a vigilance on the schools and if required can raise their concerns to concerned authorities. The regional administration/ government has also created Governance Guidance bodies at the local level to report project's before / during / after / ongoing progress and submit a report to the government agencies for assessment.

VSDP interventions includes upgrading school infrastructure, providing well equipped classrooms and labs, constructing toilets, providing water coolers plus teacher training

Government Sr. Secondary Smart School, Sekehewal



Government Sr. Secondary School, Kasasbad



Government Primary School, Billanwali - Baddi



Government Sr. Secondary School, Ladhowal

Government High School, Giaspura



Classrooms



Washrooms



Water Handpump



Government High School, Lohara