

MEETING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF SEASONAL MIGRANT CHILDREN:
AN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT BRICK KILNS IN INDIA

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Abstract

The research examines a government educational outreach initiative for the children of migrant brick kiln workers in Western India. During the 2010-11 school year, pilot educational outreach programs were set up at the brick kiln worksites in Gandhinagar, Gujarat and Bhilwara, Rajasthan for the children of the migrant workers living there. These programs were run by the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) government program with local NGO support using the new special training program model specified in the Right to Education Act of 2009. The research outlines the situation at the brick kiln and compares the two programs especially in the demographics of the para-teachers and the administrative structure. Finally, the research highlights some of the impediments faced with planning education for migrant children and provides recommendations for the future of the program in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements	3
List of Tables and Figures.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Methodology.....	8
Chapter One	
The Situation at the Brick Kilns.....	10
Division of Labor.....	10
The Phenomenon of Seasonal Distress Labor Migration	11
Vulnerability of seasonal labor migrants.	12
Seasonality of the industry.....	13
Extent of the phenomenon.	13
Nature of Employment.....	14
The labor contractor.....	14
Working conditions.....	15
Living conditions at the worksite.....	16
The Specific Situation in Gandhinager and Bhilwara.....	17
Migration Steams	18
Laborers experience level.	20
Laboreres education level.	20
Family size.....	21
Children at the Brick Kilns	22
Reasons for bringing children to the brick kilns.....	23
Child labor.	23
Attendance of village school by migrant children.....	27
Summary of Findings.....	28
Chapter Two	
Education Initiatives at the Brick Kilns	30
Initiating Intervention at the Brick Kilns	30
The Para-teachers.....	33
Types of para-teachers in India.....	33
Gender.....	35
Caste and Religion.....	35
Age.....	36
Education Level.....	37
Para-teachers and the Honorarium.....	38
Gender and the Honorarium.....	39

Para-teacher Motivations	40
Misperceptions about job advancement opportunities.....	41
Status as a motivation.	42
Administrative Structure.....	42
Financial Considerations.....	42
Differences in Oversight Structure	44
Teaching Learning Materials (TLM).....	45
Role of the NGO	46
Para-teacher Training.....	48
Monitoring	50
Level of Support	51
Summary of Findings.....	52

Chapter Three

Quality and Functioning of the Program	54
Realities of the Program.....	54
1. Ineffective pedagogy and under-developed curriculum	55
2. Multi-grade and multi-level teaching.....	56
3. Cultural bias in the classroom.....	60
4. Language and communication barriers	63
Gujarati Para-teachers.....	65
The Laborer Para-teacher Experiment	66
Para-teacher Absenteeism.....	71
Child Absenteeism.....	72
Summary of Findings.....	75

Conclusion

Reflections on the Future of Education for the Children of Migrant Brick Kiln Workers 77

References	82
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Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 1- <i>Source Areas for Bhilwara Brick Kiln Migrant Labor</i>	18
Table 2- <i>Source Areas for Gandhinagar Brick Kiln Migrant Labor</i>	19
Table 3- <i>Number and Years of Experience with Brick Kiln Labor of Parents in Bhilwara District</i>	20
Table 4- <i>Parent Response to the Question- Why did you bring your Children to the Brick Kiln?</i>	23
Table 5- <i>Child Labor by Age and Gender</i>	25
Table 6- <i>Children Performing Household Work/Sibling Care by Age and Gender</i>	26
Table 7- <i>Child Regular Attendance at the Village School by Age</i>	28
Table 8- <i>Level of Education Attained by Para-teachers in Gandhinagar</i>	36
Table 9- <i>Level of Education Attained by Para-teachers in Bhilwara</i>	37
Table 10- <i>Para-teacher Response to the Question- What was your Primary Motivation for taking this Job?</i>	40
Table 11- <i>Pros and Cons of Hiring Laborers as Para-teachers at Brick Kilns</i>	68

Figures

Figure 1- <i>Education Level of Brick Kiln Workers</i>	21
Figure 2- <i>Bhilwara Para-teacher Responses to- Do Cultural Differences Between you and your Students make it Difficult for you to teach them?</i>	60
Figure 3- <i>Gandhinagar Para-teacher Responses to- Do cultural Differences Between you and your Students make it Difficult for you to teach them?</i>	61
Figure 4- <i>Bhilwara para-teacher Responses to- Do Language/dialect Differences Between you and your Students make it difficult for you to teach them?</i>	64
Figure 5- <i>Gandhinagar para-teacher Responses to- Do Language/dialect Differences Between you and your Students make it Difficult for you to teach them?</i>	65
Figure 6- <i>Strategy for Ensuring the Education of Children in Migration-prone Areas</i>	78

Introduction

In 2009, India passed the Right to Education (RTE) Act. This legislation, which went into effect in April of 2010, was the latest and toughest effort yet by the Indian government to universalize elementary education. Free and compulsory elementary education is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India. The new Act takes this directive even farther by not only outlining the right of every Indian to a free elementary education from age 6-14 but mandating it the state government's legal responsibility to ensure that all young people are enrolled. In response to the criticism of previous educational initiatives in India which implemented Non-Formal Education centers and utilized para-teachers, educational volunteers with minimal teaching qualification; the RTE Act outlines minimum standards for every school in India. This effectively banned Non-Formal Education and Alternative Schooling models which did not meet the minimum requirements on everything from the physical infrastructure of the school to the number and qualification level of the teachers. Most of the Alternative Schooling programs in India were implemented through the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* ("Education for All") program (SSA) which was started in 2000 in order to help India reach universal elementary education. The RTE Act mandates age-appropriate entry for all out-of-school children identified by the SSA during their annual surveys (also mandated in the RTE Act). The only type of alternative schooling programs allowed under the new Act are "special training programs" which are designed to mainstream out-of-school students into the age-appropriate grade level. All Indian states are currently in the process of modifying their SSA programs to bring them up to par with the special training program model.

This research aims to highlight how the specific educational needs of migrant children, a group singled out by the SSA as a vulnerable population, can be met under the new guidelines. Beginning in 2009, the Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action and Prayas Chittor began to bring to the attention of the SSA departments of Gujarat and Rajasthan the high number of out-of-school seasonal migrant children living at the brick kiln worksites in the districts around Gandhinagar, Gujarat and Bhilwara, Rajasthan. In response, the local SSA department piloted educational outreach initiatives at the brick kilns in the districts of Gandhinagar, Patan, Ahmedabad, and Mehsana; Gujarat and Bhilwara, Rajasthan. This report will analyze and

evaluate the programs piloted in Gandhinagar and Bhilwara. The objective was to indicate specific difficulties encountered in implementing the newly provisioned special training programs at brick kiln worksites and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs when used to meet the educational needs of migrant children.

The researcher sought to compare the two brick kiln educational programs by exploring: the situation at the brick kiln and demographics of the student population, the motivations and demographics of the para-teachers, the administrative structure of the program, the pedagogy strategies used, and the extent to which language and cultural barriers hindered the educational process. Chapter One provides an analysis of the brick kiln seasonal labor migration cycle, the living and working conditions, and the specific situation found in Gandhinagar, Gujarat and Bhilwara, Rajasthan. Chapter Two describes the program that was set up in each district paying special attention to the para-teachers and the administrative organization of the program. Finally, Chapter Three provides some analysis and reflection on the barriers to the learning process that were observed in the brick kiln classes.

Methodology

The research was conducted with mixed methodology using a variety of different research tools. Interviews were conducted with government officials at various levels of government involved in the program in Bhilwara, Rajasthan and Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Observations were made of teacher/administration meetings, classroom functioning and various other events and activities related to the brick kiln schools. Countless informal interviews also occurred during the data collection process. The observation field notes and interview notes were analyzed against the quantitative data that was collected. Two surveys were drafted in Hindi to be used with the para- teachers at the brick kiln schools and with the parents of the students. In total, 52 para-teacher survey forms were completed using a random sampling method which accounted for a 52% sampling in Bhilwara and a 63% sampling in Gandhinagar district. The reason for the slightly higher sampling size in Gandhinagar is that there are half as many brick kiln schools in that district and the research team wanted to get more perspectives since the district has both laborer teachers and local teachers. Most of the surveys were conducted with the teacher filling in their own answers. A few of the surveys were orally

administered by the research team upon the para-teacher's request. The parent survey data was all collected orally by the research team during their visits to the brick kilns due to the fact that the majority of the parents are unlettered. The parents were asked questions in Hindi or Marwari about their children and the school at the brick kiln. A 25% sampling of the brick kilns was selected using stratified random sampling taking note to ensure proportional representation of the schools which were taught by a local para-teacher and those which were taught by a laborer. At most of the selected brick kilns, the research team surveyed one mother and one father from different families for each of the communities present at the brick kiln (Rajasthani, Chhattisgarhi, Bihari, ect.). At a few of the selected brick kilns a purely random sampling was done according to parent availability to conduct the survey. 48 survey forms were completed in Bhilwara and 23 were completed in Gandhinagar. This data was analyzed using SPSS software and compared to the other data that was collected through interviews and observations. The researcher was also able to analyze some government documents which documented the educational programs set up at the brick kilns. The research was conducted with the gracious assistance and guidance of the Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action and staff from Prayas Chittor.

Chapter 1

Overview of the Situation at the Brick Kilns

It is estimated that there are over 100,000 brick kilns in India, making it the second largest producer of bricks in the world (Prayas CLRA, 2010, p. 1). These brick kilns, which are primarily located in villages in the outskirts of towns and cities in India, are also one of the largest industries in India employing almost exclusively migrant labor. Brick-making is an Rs.600 billion industry producing around 300 billion bricks per year (Prayas CLRA 2010, p. 1). Brick-making in India is traditionally in the unorganized sector and thus comprises of small-scale, labor-intensive units. Despite an ever-growing increase in demand for bricks in India, especially with the housing boom, the level of technology used in the industry is extremely primitive and attempts at introducing new technologies into the brick-making process have been mostly unsuccessful. The ready supply of cheap manual labor is a main reason why the technology has not modernized (Prayas CLRA, 2010). Each brick kiln employs 100-250 laborers during the brick kiln season, which is six to eight months long.

Division of Labor

The brick-making process is divided into several steps each of which is performed by a different community of migrant laborers often from different parts of the country. The bricks are made by hand using mud and a small mold that is provided by the employer. The molding work is done by the *pathla* workers who work in a family unit molding, turning and stacking bricks for 12-16 hours a day. They are usually paid the least out of all of the workers at the kiln and make up about 60% of the brick kiln workforce (Prayas CLRA, 2009, p. 2). The transporting of these raw bricks to the kiln is done by the *bharai* workers. The main means of transportation include donkeys, wheelbarrows, and carrying by hand/head-loading. A group of laborers called *khadkhan* then arrange the raw bricks in the kiln; and this semi-skilled job and performed by 10% of the labor force (Prayas CLRA, 2009, p. 2). The *nikasi* workers are employed to remove the bricks and spare fly-ash from the kiln after they have been fired. The only community of laborers at the brick kiln that do not work with their entire family is the *jalaiya* workers, the skilled kiln workers who move hot coals intermittently to the kiln. Their work is the most

dangerous and they work round the clock in 12 hour shifts. Though only 3-4 *jalaiya* are employed at each brick kiln, most all *jalaiya* in all parts of India are recruited from a cluster of districts in central Uttar Pradesh.

The Phenomenon of Seasonal Distress Labor Migration

Brick production is a major employer of seasonal migrant labor, contributing to a new and growing trend in the way labor is supplied across India. The use of seasonal migrant labor is also high in the sugar cane, salt pan, marble, and fishing industries. Smita, the director for education at the American Indian Foundation explains that:

Distress seasonal migration is a growing phenomenon in almost all arid parts of India. Drought and lack of work in villages forces entire families to migrate for several months every year in search of work merely to survive. Children accompany their parents, and as a result drop-out rates go up. Migrants comprise the most vulnerable sections of society, and especially those that also belong to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups (Smita, 2008, p. 9).

The key to understanding the seriousness of distress seasonal migration is recognizing that it is a form of forced migration. The factor pushing them to migrate, their own destitution, may not be a physical force but it strips them of options in the same way that a physical force would. Even amongst the SC and ST communities, the brick kiln labor migrants are some of the poorest. A survey conducted by Prayas CLRA in 2009 of the brick kilns around Ahmedabad found that 55% of the workers were landless (Prayas CLRA, 2009, p. 2). 58% of the total workers surveyed, and 85% of the workers from Chhattisgarh, reported that they lived in *kachha* (raw or unfinished) houses (Prayas CLRA, p. 1). A survey conducted in 2010 of the brick kiln workers in the same area found that 66% of the workers were Below Poverty Line (BPL) and 11% were part of the Antyodaya extreme poverty eradication scheme (Mohanty, 2009, p. 8). Both the survey in 2009 and the one in 2010 found that 87-90% of the workers were SC. These individuals face food insecurity and frequently go into debt just to meet their family's basic needs. When asked about their reason for migration, 70% of respondents answered that there was a scarcity of enough labor work in their village (Mohanty, 2010, p. 9). 25% of respondents migrated to find a better wage than what was available in their village. A small percentage cited debt or forced migration by the broker as the reason for their migration to the brick kilns.

Vulnerability of seasonal labor migrants.

Labor migrants are drawn to the most industrially and agriculturally prosperous states of India, particularly the state of Gujarat. Gujarat, which has both industrial centers such as Surat and Ahmedabad and a thriving agricultural industry, receives a steady stream of laborer migrants from at least ten different states (Smita, 2008, p. 52). They are usually recruited by a labor contractor which adds an additional dimension of exploitation to the system since the laborers lose the ability to market their labor directly to employers. Many migrant workers are drawn to industrial cities to work in the manufacturing or construction industries. Brick kilns in Gujarat and most states, however, are usually on the outskirts of villages, making the migration pattern rural-to-rural rather than rural-to-urban. The use of migrant labor provides the following benefits to brick kiln owners:

1. The migrants will work for smaller wages. As was mentioned earlier, labor migrants are leaving some of the most destitute villages in the most impoverished states of India. They will often work for far less than the local population in the more developed state.
2. The migrant laborers are not a part of the local village community and thus have no support system or identity in that village. Often times they are not even fluent in the local language. Their status as an outsider makes it easier for the brick kiln owners to take advantage of them or exploit them for their labor. The brick kiln owners face little to no pressure from their local community to improve conditions or wages at the brick kiln.
3. The migrant laborers live on the brick kiln property. In addition to having no support system in the destination region, the labor migrants have no place to live once they arrive at the brick kiln except in the housing that is provided by the owner. This makes them easier to control or manipulate and increases the paternal nature of the brick kiln employment structure. As a result, brick kilns are often the site of confrontations between employers and their workers and there have been numerous cases of laborers being prevented from leaving the brick kiln or having their families or possessions held by the brick kiln owner (Halliday, 2011; and Halliday 2011).
4. Labor migrants are usually recruited through complex networks of contractors removing the direct responsibility of the brick kiln owner to find labor. In addition, in 85% of cases the contractor sets the wages (Prayas CLRA, 2009, p. 5). Because the laborers are recruited from a number of different contractors from a number of different regions, the

wages are not equal for all workers which increase division between the workers and acts as a deterrent to unionization efforts.

Seasonality of the industry.

The industry, like many others in the unorganized sector in India, is seasonal because of the “uneven rhythm of economic activity of the year” (Smita, 2009, p. 20). Brick kilns across India are closed during the rainy season when the monsoon comes because i) production takes place in open spaces and is not possible during rains, and ii) that is the peak agricultural season for people living in the village. For example, the Chhattisgarhi workers who migrate to Gujarati brick kilns are only able to procure one crop of rice during the monsoon season out of their land. With few job opportunities in their small villages aside from agriculture, they have little options but to migrate during the lean season. The brick production industry typically begins after Diwali in October or November and ends in April or May. However, brick kilns in UP and Bihar are open until June due to the lateness of their monsoon season. Another reason for the seasonality of brick-making is the fact that the production is done in the open air. Monsoon rain can seriously hamper the production process at the brick kilns.

Extent of the phenomenon.

Smita estimated in 2008 that around 25 million people depend upon brick kiln migration for their livelihood when the family members of the laborers are included (Smita, 2008, p. 21). Most of those family members travel with them to the worksite. In the 2009 brick kiln survey, Prayas CLRA found that only 14% of the workers had travelled to Gujarat alone (2009). Most had come with their immediate family members including infants and children. In the area near Ahmedabad, the child population at the brick kilns is as much as 49.9% with the eligible school population comprising 28.7% of those residing at the brick kiln worksite (Mohanty, 2010, p. 7). Typically only the male head of household is on the kiln accountant’s registry; but because they are paid piecemeal for each brick made, the whole family is encouraged to help in order to increase the profits. This includes the children, some of whom are documented to begin working as young as 5. While in most brick kilns, the use of child labor is not technically condoned or documented by the brick kiln accountant or labor contractor, in Andhra Pradesh, it is. In brick kilns in Andhra Pradesh, the unit of labor is known as a *pathuria* and consists of two adults and

one child. Women, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as infants face special difficulties in migrating to the brick kilns due to their increased vulnerability and health needs. The 2009 survey of brick kilns around Ahmedabad found that the ratio of women and children to total workers was 34.5 and 42.26 respectively (PCLRA, p. 2). There is an average of 45 children of pre-school age (3-6) at every brick kiln (p.2). There can be as many as 6 or 7 pregnant women working at one brick kiln. In very few places in India, has any type of intervention been done to bring social services such as health and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) facilities to the families living and working at the brick kilns. One example is the work of Prayas CLRA in Gujarat. Their advocacy during 2010 was influential in the ICDS and Health department setting up regular visits to brick kilns for health checks and ration distribution in four districts around Ahmedabad.

Nature of Employment

The labor contractor.

The laborers are recruited by a labor contractor (*sardar* or *thekedar*) who provides them with an advance of Rs.2000-20,000 in their village. The labor contractor pays the advance to the laborers with money that he has borrowed from the brick kiln employer. Having received the advance, the workers commit to working where the contractor chooses to place them. The system of contractors is sometimes complex with the smaller contractor working for the bigger agents or at times independently. Some contractors can control as many as 1000 workers through a network of sub-contractors. Workers travelling with their families usually stay on at the same kiln till end of a working season, or as long as the contractor and owner wish, even if a family member becomes sick or there is a family crisis. If they choose to leave before the end of the season they will likely receive only 50% wages or less of what they were promised. All families live on a survival allowance (*Kharchi*) given weekly by the kiln owners and deducted from their total sum to be paid at the end of the season. 58% of families only receive Rs500-1000 as their weekly *kharchi* to purchase all of their family's needs for the week in the local market (Mohanty, 2010, p. 12). Their travel costs to and from the kilns are also deducted from their wages. The typical duration of stay at the brick kiln is 120 to 180 days for most labor migrants (PCLRA, 2009). The wage rates are usually set during the middle of the season although in

some cases, they are pre-set by the contractor before migrating. However, because there is no written formal contract, disputes often arise at the end of the season regarding wages. The final and total accounts are settled only at the end of the season as defined by the owner which strips the laborers of any bargaining power regarding their own labor. This has led many activists and NGOs to term the employment system a form of bonded labor.

Working conditions.

The laborers are paid based on how many bricks they are able to make during the brick kiln season. *Pathla* workers, the majority of the labor-force, are usually paid anywhere from Rs.180 to Rs.380 for every 1100 bricks they create. The actual wage is set for 1000 bricks but 100 bricks are deducted for every 1000 bricks they make when calculating the wages because of anticipated breakage of the bricks in the firing or transporting process. However, the actual amount of broken bricks is often much lower than that and the brick kiln owners are often able to sell damaged or broken bricks on the market anyway. The average worker leaves the brick kiln after 6 to 7 months of work having made Rs.10-15,000 (\$225-340) during their entire stay at the brick kiln. Many families leave at the end of the season having made less than they expected during the season. There are even reported cases of families leaving the brick kiln at the end of the season in debt to their employer because they took more in their advance and weekly allowance than they were able to produce during the season. In these situations, the family often becomes bonded laborers who are forced to return to the brick kiln during the next season in order to pay back their debt.

Most of the laborers work a minimum of ten hours a day (85%) according to Prayas CLRA (2009, p. 4). *Pathla* workers have the most intense hours, frequently putting in 14-15 hours of work in a day. They work through the night and often are not provided any lighting facilities by their employer. In Gujarat, where lighting facilities are not provided, the workers must purchase kerosene for lighting at the market with their own money. The brick making process is very primitive and there are little to no safety precautions taken by the employer to protect the health and safety of the workers during the long hours of working.

Living conditions at the worksite.

The workers live at the brick kiln during the 6-8 months that they are working there. Despite the fact that every year workers live at the brick kiln, the owners of the brick kilns in Gujarat have not built any permanent housing structures for them. Instead, they give the families metal or plastic sheeting to construct temporary housing. Most of the workers use bricks (raw or finished) to construct the sides of their house and they seal the bricks with mud. At the end of the season, they will deconstruct their house and sell the bricks back to their employer. Brick kilns in many other states such as Punjab and Rajasthan usually have permanent simple structures provided by the employer. The brick kiln owner typically provides water facilities to the workers in the form of a bore well or hand pump. Usually no latrines or any sanitation facility even of the most rudimentary kind are provided, and laborers defecate outside, affecting women's health and privacy adversely. This many times leads to fights with neighboring farmers whose empty lands are used as defecating grounds.

The lack of sanitization and poor living conditions leads to many health problems. The People's Health and Development Trust is an Ahmedabad-based NGO that has been working to provide medical outreach services to brick kilns in the area since 2008. They have collected information about the common ailments of workers at the brick kilns at the brick kilns and reported that 17.9% of the workers were suffering from some type of respiratory illness, many of them because of the pollution from the brick kiln (Mehta, 2009, p. 3). The other main categories of ailments were musculoskeletal and digestive, both of which are easily preventable through safe living and working conditions. Dr. Mehta from the PHDT also reported that as many as half of the patients were suffering from malnutrition (Mehta, 2009, p. 4). 22.5% of children living at the brick kiln fall ill at least once during the season (Mohanty, 2010, p.19). The workers are often unable to visit local PHCs or government hospitals when they are sick due to the distance. Most of the workers visit either an expensive private doctor or a local unqualified doctor that works in traditional medicine (often called *jhola*).

The workers purchase their food and other necessities at the local village at regular market rate despite the fact that almost all of them qualify for Public Distribution Services (PDS). Many of them have BPL or Antoyodya cards from their home state but these are never

recognized when they try to use them in a different state, despite the fact that PDS is a center government program. Because of this, only 35% of parents surveyed at the brick kiln reported that they were able to provide their children with three meals a day (Mohanty,2010, p. 21). The survey also found that only one of the localities had any electricity at the brick kilns and almost all of the families use firework for their cooking.

The Specific Situation in Gandhinagar and Bhilwara

Rajasthan and Gujarat are both major destination areas for brick kiln migration. Two districts were selected for the research because in both districts, the local Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Prayas NGO partnered to set up schools at the brick kilns. While the nature of the work and social issues at the brick kiln are basically the same in both regions, the migration streams and composition of the workforce are very different. This section will attempt to provide an outline of the population living at the brick kilns in both districts based on the parent surveys conducted there for this project. It is important to note that only parents who had at least one child attending the school were surveyed so some populations may have been excluded from the data such as the *jalaiya* workers who migrate alone without their family members. In addition, at each brick kiln surveyed, the research team either did random sampling of parents or surveyed two parents from each community; and therefore, the sampling is not necessarily proportional to the exact population at the brick kiln. The sampling size was 25% of the brick kilns with schools in each district.

Bhilwara is a large district in central Rajasthan (10,455 sq km) and the location of about 250 brick kilns of various sizes. The brick kilns that were surveyed were mainly located in Asind and Mandal block. Gandhinagar district is the location of the capital of Gujarat and is significantly smaller than Bhilwara. It is only 2163.4 sq kms and is the location of 96 brick kilns mainly clustered around the villages of Uvarsad and Adalaj. There is little dissimilarity between the brick kilns in Gandhinagar and those in Bhilwara. One noted difference in Bhilwara is the provision of housing in simple concrete accommodations at all brick kilns. This is lacking from all brick kilns in Gandhinagar. In addition, the brick kiln owners in Bhilwara are known to provide firewood and electrical lighting to their workers so that they can work at night. In Gandhinagar, the workers typically work by their own supplied kerosene lamps at night.

However, due to union activity in brick kilns in Gandhinagar, the wages are typically slightly higher than those in Rajasthan where there has been no union activity.

Table 1

Source Areas for Bhilwara Brick Kiln Migrant Labor

District	Number	Percent
Banka, BH	11	22.9%
Bhagalpur, BH	1	2.1%
Nawada, BH	2	4.2%
UNKNOWN, BH	2	4.2%
Agra, UP	1	2.1%
Allahabad, UP	1	2.1%
Balaya, UP	1	2.1%
Chitrakut, UP	7	14.6%
Karuda, UP	1	2.1%
Gorda, JK	4	8.3%
Ajmer, RJ	12	25%
Bhilwara, RJ	3	6.3%
Nagaur, RJ	2	4.2%

Migration Streams

The major migration streams to Bhilwara brick kilns are coming from Bihar, UP, Jharkand, and Ajmer district of Rajasthan. The table gives a snapshot of the breadth of the migration rather than the depth. It indicates the percentage of brick kiln schools in the region that had students from each region based on the sampling size and not the actual student demographics of the classrooms. The largest migration stream coming into the Bhilwara brick kilns is from the neighboring district of Ajmer. Many of the migrants from Ajmer do not bring their children to the brick kiln and thus on many brick kilns, no Ajmeri workers were surveyed despite their presence there. This migration stream consists of Marwari workers who are mostly from the OBC caste *Rawath* (14.3% of the total parents surveyed were *Rawath*) but a few were *Rajput*. Almost all are migrating from Masuda block in Ajmer. This migration stream is very well established and many of the workers come to work as *nikasi*, *khardakan*, or *bharai* workers, which are semi-skilled labor positions that have become dominated by Marwaris in both Gujarat and Rajasthan. Masuda is only about 60 km from the brick kilns in Bhilwara and many of the laborers are able to easily travel between the districts to visit family, sometimes on their own personal motorcycles. The proximity, history in the industry, and cultural similarity with the kiln

owners gives the Marwari workers some advantage over the other migrant communities. There are also Marwari workers in the Gandhinagar brick kilns (17.4% of those surveyed). It is believed that the migration stream of Marwari workers (from Ajmer, Nagaur, and Pali district) to Gujarati brick kilns began 35 years ago after the Marwaris began working in Gujarati textile mills. The Marwari workers in Gujarat have been heavily involved in Union activity since even before the *Int Bhatta Mazdoor Union* (Brick Kiln Workers Union) was created. Most of them now have arrangements with their employers such that their wages are set based on the market rate during the brick kiln season rather than before they take their advance. The Marwaris union leadership and experience in the industry has placed them “at a better position in the brick kiln status ladder if compared to migrants from other states” (Kaul, 2009, p. 3).

Table 2

Source Areas for Gandhinagar Brick Kiln Migrant Labor

District	Number	Percent
Bilaspur, CG	10	43.5%
Jahangir Chapa, CG	1	4.3%
Raigarh, CG	1	4.3%
Raipur, CG	2	8.7%
Kashiram, UP	4	17.4%
Ajmer, RJ	2	8.7%
Nagaur, RJ	1	4.3%
Pali, RJ	1	4.3%
Gandhinagar, GJ	1	4.3%

Gujarat is the destination for a very large stream of Chhattisgarhi migration to brick kilns (60.8% of those surveyed). This is a relatively new migration stream that is believed to have begun after the construction of the Narmada Canal (Kaul, 2009, p. 4). 72% of the Chhattisgarhis who migrate to Gandhinagar are from Bilaspur district and thus many people simply refer to the Chhattisgarhis as Bilaspuris. There are also workers from Dungarpur district, Rajasthan at some brick kilns but the research team was unable to survey any of them.

The distinguishing feature about all of the source areas for migration to Gujarati and Rajasthani brick kilns is that they are some of the most backward and impoverished districts in

India. Most of the migrants are Hindu and from SC (60.8%) or OBC communities. Only 8.2% of the families surveyed were Muslim. All of the Muslim migrants surveyed were from UP.

Laborers experience level.

Table 3

Number of Years of Experience with Brick Kiln Work of Parents in Bhilwara District

Parent Response	Frequency	Percent
First year	11	24.4%
2-5 years	21	46.6%
6-10 years	7	15.5%
11-19 years	4	8.9%
20 or more years	2	4.4%

It is common in the brick kiln industry, and many others that employ migrant labor, for the labor force to frequently change employers. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of workers explain that this is their first year working in a brick kiln. In Gandhinagar the percentage was slightly higher for first time brick kiln workers (35%).

Laborer education level.

The educational level of the parents at the brick kiln is very low. 72.2% of the adults surveyed at the kiln have no education. In Bhilwara the percentage is slightly higher at 75%. From this information, one can estimate that the literacy rate amongst the workers is about 20-30%, well below the national average of 63% and even the average for their source areas. These statistics highlights the extent to which these individuals come from some of the most deprived and backwards societies in India. Migration cannot be the only explanation for why the adult workers are uneducated since most of them have only recently entered the labor migration stream. Poor quality of local government schools, caste discrimination, remoteness of their villages, poverty, and corruption of local school districts are possible reasons why these people missed out on education during their childhood. The most educational disadvantaged were the migrants from Bihar. Fourteen out of 16 individuals surveyed (87.5%) had never attended school.

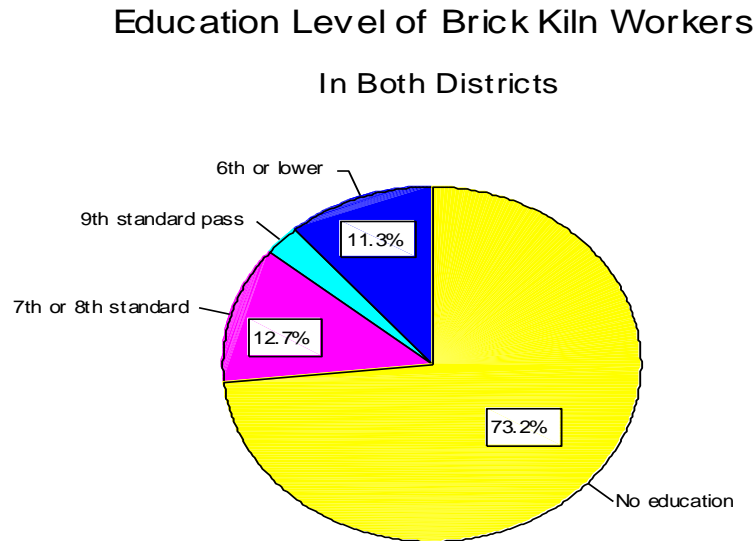


Figure 1. Education level of Brick Kiln Workers in Both Districts.

Family size.

Many of the migrant families have very large families, a factor which compounds their poverty. The average number of children per couple is 3.58. It is believed that the true average number of children that these families will have during their reproductive life is much higher. Because brick kiln work is grueling, the laborers are mostly poor young people (teens to 30s). Many of the migrants are young couples who have only recently been married so it is likely that their number of children will only increase with time. 12.6% of the people surveyed had six or more children. Conversations with older members of brick kiln labor community indicate that they do not use contraceptives or any family planning measures. The wide age range of the children of the older laborers (sometimes as much as 20 years) also points to a lack of family planning. One Chhattisgarhi worker nonchalantly told the research team that he had 11 children and that his wife had been pregnant every year since they were married. A different side of the story can be heard from the female workers. When a female researcher, medical worker, or doctor visits the brick kiln, the female workers would often ask them about contraceptives and family planning strategies. One woman explained that six women at her brick kiln were pregnant and she wanted to end her pregnancy because “we are too poor to feed more children.” In addition, most of these pregnant women already have small infants to look after and

breastfeed. These complaints were coming from Chhattisgarhi women in Gandhinagar but the problem is not limited to the Chhattisgarhi labor community. 64.3% of the workers from Ajmer have 4-5 children. Thirteen out of the 15 families from UP surveyed (86.7%) had at least four children. Large family size is a contributing factor to the laborers' poverty and need to migrate. It also points out the desperate need for educational outreach services at the brick kilns. The average laborer family has 2 children who are school-aged.

Children at the Brick Kilns

Information was collected from the parents about their school-aged children (6-14 years old) and data was compiled for 159 children. 13.2% of those children were not at the brick kiln, but were living in their village. Many of those children who had been left in the village were studying but some were left to work. 57.1% of the children who were left in the village were males, indicating a possible gender bias for sending the male child to the village school while bringing the female children to the brick kiln to help with work and sibling care. In fact, it was not uncommon for some of the children within the same family to have no education and some to be studying all the way to secondary level. The main factor differentiating who studied and who did not was gender but, it is important to note, that this was not always the case and in a few families, a female child was the most educated. Parents often cited migration, the need for their help with sibling care, and child's personal interest in studying as the reasons why some of their children did not study while others did. It is a common strategy for first generation learner families to invest in education of one child only as the family is too poor to invest in education of all. The only labor community that seems to be leaving their children behind in the village during migration in large numbers is the Rajasthani workers from Masuda, Ajmer. 42.9% of these families surveyed had left at least one child in the village. It is typical to find only the very young children from Masuda with their parents at the brick kiln. As mentioned earlier, the survey team only surveyed families that had at least one child in the brick kiln school since the questions pertained to the brick kiln school. At several brick kilns, no Rajasthani workers were surveyed because there were no Rajasthani children attending the brick kiln school. At some brick kilns the Rajasthanis would refer to the school as "that school for the Biharis."

Reasons for bringing children to the brick kiln.

The parents were asked to list reasons why they brought their children to the brick kiln instead of leaving them in the village. Almost half of all parents said that they did not have anyone to leave their children with in the village. This was also closely linked with the response with the second highest frequency- “I could not afford to leave them in the village.” Leaving children behind in the village, even with family, will require some financial investment on the part of the family. Also, many of the laborers are part of nuclear families instead of the traditional joint family system. As much as 85% of labor families at Gujarati brick kilns were part of nuclear families (“Conditions,” 2009). This explains why the families have no other option but to bring their children along to the brick kiln. One brick kiln owner in Gandhinagar, when asked why the laborers bring their whole families to live at the brick kiln, answered that the main reason for their poverty and inability to leave their children safely in the village was because they did not live in a joint family.

Table 4

Parent responses to the question- Why did you bring your Children to the Brick Kiln?

Parent Response	Bhilwara	Gandhinagar	Total
I did not have anyone to leave them with in the village	48.6%	45.5%	48.6%
I could not afford to leave them in the village	34.3%	22.7%	34.3%
They are too young to be away from their parents	27.1%	22.7%	27.1%
They were bought to help with the work at the kiln	25.7%	27.3%	25.7%

Child labor.

One of the main reasons why children are brought to the brick kiln is to help their families with the work including brick-making and other household tasks. Children help during the brick making process by transporting sand, stacking bricks, turning drying bricks, and picking out broken pieces among other tasks. When asked whether any of their school-aged children worked in the brick kiln, 66.7% of respondents in Bhilwara and 26.3% of respondents in Gandhinagar answered positively.

Variance in child labor by cultural group.

The reasoning for the variance is likely cultural as the largest variance can be seen when the data is broken down by source area. Only one of the Chhattisgarhi families said that their children work in the brick kiln. 90% of the people surveyed from Banka, Bihar and 67% of the

people from UP said that their children help with the brick-making. 64.3% of the families surveyed from Ajmer have at least one child working in the brick kiln. When asked about whether their children work, the research team received sharply different responses from families answering, “of course not, he is a child so he just plays all day” to “of course he helps and does his part.” The families from Bihar or UP were especially noticed to easily admit that their children work. The reasoning behind the variance could have more to do with socio-cultural beliefs regarding proper child upbringing and the social stigma in their community (or lack thereof) for child labor. It is possible that the percentage of working children is higher but that many families were reluctant to admit that their children work. In Mohanty’s study from 2010 in brick kilns around Ahmedabad, 22.2% of Chhattisgarhi, 30% of UP, and 36.4% of Rajasthani families admitted that their children work in the brick kiln (Mohanty, 2010, p. 17).

Age at which children begin work.

An examination of the data on children collected from the parents indicates that the children begin working at a very young age. By the age of 9, half of the children are working in the brick kiln and by 11, the majority of the children are working in the brick kiln. In fact, 77% of the Bihari children who are 7 or younger are reportedly working in the brick kiln. Here it is important to note that it is common for the parents to not know the exact age of their children, thus many of the ages given were estimates. The information also indicates that the female children are working in the brick kiln more than the male children (53.8% vs. 41.5%). One of the reasons for this is that many of the male children have been left in the village to pursue their studies. The research team noticed that for many of the older children and perhaps the younger children as well, helping with the brick kiln work seemed to provide the children with a sense of inclusion, adulthood or equality with their older siblings. With everyone at the brick kiln working for 12-14 hours a day, it is not surprising that the children also get drawn into the work.

Table 5
Child Labour by Age and Gender

Gender of child			Does the child work in the brick kiln?		Total
			No	Yes	
Female	Age in years	3-5	8 66.7%	4 33.3%	12
		6-7	13 48.1%	14 51.9%	27
		8-9	8 50.0%	8 50.0%	16
		10-11	5 50.0%	5 50.0%	10
		12-13		6 100.0%	6
		14		1 100.0%	1
		Total		34 47.2%	38 52.8%
Male	Age in years	3-5	15 100.0%		15
		6-7	11 61.1%	7 38.9%	18
		8-9	4 50.0%	4 50.0%	8
		10-11	5 33.3%	10 66.7%	15
		12-13	3 37.5%	5 62.5%	8
		14		1 100.0%	1
		Total		37 56.9%	27 41.5%

Sibling care and household work performed by children.

With the work hours in the brick kiln being so long, often the workers have no time to watch their infants or perform basic household chores such as food preparation. It is very common to find young girls who were brought just to do the household work and sibling care. One young girl at a brick kiln near Uvarsad in Gujarat explained that it was her responsibility to prepare all meals for her family and to watch her younger siblings. Infants make up around 42% of the child population at the brick kiln so it is not surprising that the older children are often left with the burden of supervising them while their parents work (Mohanty, 2010, p. 7).

Table 6

Children Performing Household Work/Sibling Care by Age and Gender

Gender of child					Total
			No	Yes	
Female	Age of child	3-5	9 75.0%	3 25.0%	12
		6-7	8 30.8%	18 69.2%	26
		8-9	6 37.5%	10 62.5%	16
		10-11	5 45.5%	6 54.5%	11
		12-13		6 100.0%	6
		14		1 100.0%	1
		Total		28 38.9%	44 61.1%
Male	Age of child	3-5	13 86.7%	1 6.7%	15
		6-7	8 44.4%	10 55.6%	18
		8-9	2 25.0%	6 75.0%	8
		10-11	6 40.0%	9 60.0%	15
		12-13	4 50.0%	4 50.0%	8
		14	1 100.0%		1
		Total		34 52.3%	30 46.2%

Gender dimension of household work.

The table shows how the percentage of female children performing household work is much higher than that for males. An interesting thing to note is that their involvement in household work decreases after age 9, particularly for the boys. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that by age 10, the majority of the children are performing brick kiln work with their parents and thus may not be shouldering as large a load of household work. This probably further explains why only half of males 12-13 and no 14 year old males do household work. By that age, most of the boys would either be in school or working full time in the brick kiln.

Household work for boys of that age is most likely to be excluded from their chores because of the traditional notions regarding gender-based work.

Attendance of village school by migrant children.

When asked about whether their children attend school in the village, 73.1% said that at least some of their school-aged children attended school. The percentage was slightly lower in Bhilwara where only 69.6% said that their children attend school in the village. However, it was disturbing to find that 22.4% of families in both districts said that only some of their children attend school and not all of their children between 6 and 14. This is likely because most of their older children are either non-starters or dropouts and work in the brick kiln full-time. Most families answered that migration was the reason why their children were not able to attend school or had to drop out permanently.

An examination of the data collected on school-aged children (129 children) from the parents, indicates that the percentage of children enrolled is only 61.2%. When asked if the child attended the village school regularly when in the village the percentage went down to 56.6%. It is clear that by 12-13 years of age, the majority of children do not attend school. It is important to note that though the parents answered that their children regularly attend the village school, because of this years' migration, their children have become dropouts. Likely, they only spent about a month at school before leaving to come to the brick kilns. They will return in time for the last month or two of school. Obviously after one season away at the brick kiln it becomes almost impossible for the children to go back to school because they have become so far behind.

The Bihari migrant workers had the worst showing when asked about education for their children. 54.5% of the families surveyed from Banka, Bihar do not send any of their children to school in their village. All of the families surveyed from Gorda, Jharkand said that all of their children were enrolled in school. All of the families from Ajmer sent at least some of their children to school although almost half of them said that only some of their school-aged children attend school (usually the male children). Only 2 out of 12 Chhattisgarhi families did not have their children in school.

Table 7

Child Regular Attendance at the Village School by Age

		Is the child a regular at the village school?		Total
		No	Yes	
Age of child	6-7	22 45.8%	26 54.2%	48
	8-9	11 36.7%	19 63.3%	30
	10-11	9 32.1%	19 67.9%	28
	12-13	10 55.6%	8 44.4%	18
	14	4 80.0%	1 20.0%	5
Total		56 43.4%	73 56.6%	129 100.0%

Summary of Findings

- Brick kilns are major destination areas for distress seasonal migrants. In Bhilwara and Gandhinagar, the brick kilns migrants are from Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar, UP, and Jharkhand.
- Brick kiln laborers are vulnerable to exploitation by labor contractors and/or brick kiln owners. They migrate for 6-8 months to the brick kilns where they will live at the worksite and work as much as 14-15 hours a day.
- The majority of the brick kiln laborers bring their entire families with them to the worksite. There were only a few instances where laborers reported that they had left some of their children in the village to attend school or work.
- 72.2% of the parents surveyed had no educational background.
- The main reasons cited by parents for why they brought their children to the brick kiln were that they had no one to leave the children with in the village and that they could not afford to leave the children in the village.
- When surveyed, 66.7% of parents in Bhilwara brick kilns and 26.3% of parents in Gandhinagar brick kilns reported that their school-aged children work in the brick kiln.

- The degree to which the children worked varied by gender of the children and by the cultural identity of the family.
- Many of the children also do most of the household work and childcare for their families at the brick kilns including 61.6% of all girls between the ages of 5 and 14.
- 56.6% all school-aged children at the brick kilns reportedly attended school regularly up until migrating for work.

Chapter 2

Education Initiatives at the Brick Kilns

This section will outline the history of the brick kiln school program in Bhilwara and Gandhinagar and also compare the structure of the programs in those districts paying special attention to best practices. The section will also detail the demographics of the para-teachers employed in the program for both districts and examine their motivations.

Initiating Intervention at the Brick Kilns

Intervention efforts at the brick kilns in Bhilwara and Gandhinagar were initiated by the Chittorgarh-based NGO called Prayas in order to improve the situation of the laborers and their families. The Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action (PCLRA), the labor branch of Prayas, began working with brick kiln workers near Ahmedabad in 2006. In response to the demands of the workers, the first few seasons of PCLRA's interventions were mainly focused on bringing about a hike in wages. The NGO also helped to facilitate the creation of the Int Bhatta Mazdoor Union (IBMU) which has been very active in wage cases and wage strikes at the brick kilns. The lack of access to government services, the poor health conditions at the worksite, and the large number of Out of School Children (OOSC) at the brick kilns was documented by Prayas since their first contacts with the brick kilns. However, due to the demands of the workers, who were initially more interested in wages than in social services, advocacy work for government services was never a focus during the first two years of the intervention effort. In December of 2009, Prayas CLRA began contact with the Government of Gujarat about the services needed by the labourers at the brick kilns near Ahmedabad namely Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) outreach, and health services under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). PCLRA was encouraged to submit a formal proposal to the SSA of Gujarat before the next brick kiln season so that the state could allocate funds and hold the districts individually accountable for implementing an outreach program. PCLRA initially proposed setting up regular Hindi-medium government schools near the brick kilns for the children but was eventually convinced by the Department for Alternative Schools in

Gujarat, that the new Special Training Programme (STP) would be the best solution to the problem.

The STP program was the first state SSA response to the RTE Act's new guidelines for alternative schooling. At the time of data collection, which was the second year of the STP, there were 4,500 STP schools in the state of Gujarat aimed at preparing students for entry into regular government schools at an age-appropriate level. As explained by one SSA official, they "used to run Alternative Schooling (AS) centres but found that even after 20 months some children had not learned anything" but "this [new] program is much more effective. It is activity based [and] helpful for the children." Under the program, a yearly survey for Out of School Children (OOSC) is conducted in each district in October/November in order to identify migrant, never-enrolled, and dropout children in the area. Each child is given a unique identification number, enrolled in the local government school (however, they will not attend until completion of STP), and a profile is created in order to track their academic progress. OOSC between the ages of 6-8 are enrolled in the 3 month STP program and those between the ages of 9 and 14 are enrolled in a 10-20 month program. Students progress independently with the supervision of the Education Volunteer (EV), a contractual para-teacher, through modules designed by the SSA department for each grade level. It is expected to take each child about one month to complete each module which is approximately equivalent to one year of schooling. After completing the modules, the child will be admitted into the local regular school at an age-appropriate level and their progress will be tracked for two years. The EVs are to be recruited based on "interest, convenience, minimum qualification of 12th pass education, and belonging to the community of the children". There are also provisions for a Lady Escort, a helper of the EV, who is only required to have 7th pass education and will receive Rs.700 per month. The EV will receive Rs.1500 per month. The program calls for 3-4 hours of class-time every day through "group learning." No school facilities are provided for the STP programme but teachers are given some Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) and training.

The SSA department requested the help of PCLRA in setting up the program at the brick kilns due to their experience working with the labor population living there. Prayas oversaw the surveying of the four districts that were originally identified by Prayas as the target pilot area-

Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Patan, and Mehsana. In total, they collected data on 1909 children living at 66 brick kilns in Gandhinagar district alone. Unfortunately, it was not possible to set up schools at every brick kiln due to a lack of para-teachers recruited at such a short notice. In Gandhinagar, only 31 schools were eventually set up, leaving 35 brick kilns in the district without any education facilities. During the survey process, potential EVs were identified from the laborer community living at the brick kiln based on the educational requirement. Prayas CLRA and Gujarat SSA were both in agreement that laborers with adequate qualification would make better para-teachers than local Gujaratis because they could better communicate with and identify with the children. In Gandhinagar, only Chhattisgarhis were identified as potential EVs amongst the laborers due to their level of education but in Patan and Mehsana, several of the EVs are Marwari Rajasthanis. The rest of the EVs, including all of the EVs in Ahmedabad district, were recruited from the local Gujarati community. By the end of December, the Village Education Committee (VEC) of Gandhinagar had approved the EV suggestions made by Prayas CLRA and the Block Resource Center (BRC). From December 20-25, Prayas coordinated a training for the EVs. The official first day of classes for the new brick kiln schools was January 1.

It was around this time (December 2010) that the Prayas-Chittorgarh office also began advocating for schools to be set up at the brick kilns in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. Prayas had little presence in the brick kilns in the area before initiating contact in the fall of 2010. Two staff members were posted in the village of Haripura and administrative staff began meeting with the Additional District Program Coordinator for SSA. A preliminary survey was conducted on the brick kilns in order to highlight the problem. Once the SSA department recognized the need for a program, it was decided to set up Shiksha Mitra Kendras (SMKs) at the brick kilns and a survey for OOSC was conducted. The SMK program has been running in Rajasthan since 2005-6 and is currently undergoing transformations following the RTE Act. The SMK program is intended to be used in rural, sparsely-populated areas with smaller numbers of OOSC. If the number of students is more than 40, then they will employ a Non-residential Bridge Course (NRBC) through which EV honorarium is higher, class time is longer, and school building facilities are also provided. The SMK classes are run in a public area for 4 hours every day. The EVs are paid Rs.100 for every child that they teach per month. The EVs were all recruited by

Prayas staff and approved by the School Management Committee (SMC). There was no training for the EVs in Bhilwara before they began teaching which was in January and early February, depending upon when they were hired.

The Para-teachers

The crux of all educational programs and this program in particular, due to the lack of other infrastructure is the teacher or EV (hereafter referred to only as para-teacher). The single most determining factor regarding the quality of education that a child receives, how much they learn, and even self confidence in their academic ability is the commitment and skill level of the teacher. The para-teachers who worked at the brick kilns in Gandhinagar and Bhilwara faced special challenges because the program was in its pilot phase and because their students were an especially difficult and vulnerable group. At the time of data collection there were 62 brick kilns in Bhilwara district with schools and about 67 para-teachers employed (some of the brick kilns had more than one teacher because the number of students was above 40). In Gandhinagar, there were 31 brick kiln schools running with 8 of the teachers being recruited from the amongst the Chhattisgarhi laborers themselves. It is also interesting to note that at least three of the locally-recruited para-teachers live at the brick kiln worksite despite not being laborers themselves. They are the wives or children of the brick kiln accountant (*Mehta*) who is an employee of the brick kiln and a local of the village.

Types of para-teachers in India.

The supply of teachers, like with any profession, depends on 1) working conditions, 2) salaries, and 3) entry requirements in the teacher labor market compared with other labor markets (Vega, 2007, p.220). Working conditions for para-teachers are certainly poor. The children speak a foreign dialect, and are often unkempt and undisciplined. Their lack of educational background can make teaching them especially difficult. The parents are uneducated and not usually supportive of the school. The brick kiln itself looks like a vestige from medieval society; it is dirty and there are no classroom facilities and often no bathroom facilities. It is no surprise to find that many of the residents of the village have never been to the brick kilns on the outskirts of their village. Clearly, the para-teacher job does not offer desirable working conditions. Moreover, para-teachers are not paid a salary but rather a measly monthly

honorarium for their “volunteer” work. The main, and seemingly only economic benefit of the job, is the low entry requirements compared to others of similar stature in the community, namely regular teachers. As the data will show, this is major motivation for many of the individuals who were recruited to work in the brick kiln classes. A review of current literature on para-teachers and an analysis of the profile of the para-teachers in the brick kiln programs show that there are 3 general types of para-teachers found in India:

1. Middle-aged or older individuals seeking the job solely to help the target population of students and/or because they have nothing else to do. They may have varying degrees of qualification. With this group, the primary motivation for seeking the job is not financial and the honorarium is only supplemental income for them. This group includes housewives and retirees who are taking this job for some employment outside of the home.
2. Young, highly educated individuals. This includes current students of higher education and recent graduates. Many of these individuals even have a Bachelors of Education (B.ed) but have not found permanent employment as a teacher yet. Since they have little work experience, their primary motivations in seeking the job include increasing their status in the community and gaining work experience. A secondary motivation is their desire to help the target population of students. This group demonstrates the highest dissatisfaction with the honorarium because they feel that their qualifications and education merit a much higher salary. Despite this, many of them are not the primary breadwinner for their family. Some are still financially dependent upon their parents.
3. Individuals seeking the position primarily for financial reasons in order to improve the economic situation of their family. These para-teachers are usually older, married with children, less educated themselves, and poorer than the other para-teachers. For most of these individuals, the honorarium is their primary source of income. They often take the position out of desperation because of the limited employment opportunities in their village.

While the target population for para-teacher recruitment is type 1 and type 2, a large percentage of para-teachers fall into the type 3 category. The majority of para-teachers in Bhilwara fit into the type 2 category. Despite a strong push to hire type 1 para-teachers, almost none of the para-teachers in the surveyed districts fell into this category.

Gender.

Despite having relatively similar criteria in selection, the demographics of the teachers in both districts were vastly different. The main distinction between the two different groups of para-teachers was gender. Perhaps in part due to the persistent gender issues in Rajasthan, Gandhinagar was far more successful at recruiting female para-teachers. Also, discussions with school district administrators indicated that a large emphasis was placed on academic qualification in para-teacher recruitment in Bhilwara which could have prevented more female teachers from being identified. In Gandhinagar, less focus was put on the educational background of the applicant and more focus was put on the perceived ability of the person to relate to children. The recruitment guidelines in Gandhinagar were, “interest, convenience, minimum educational qualification, and belonging to the local community of the children” according to government officials. Also, Gujarat has an explicit policy of hiring women as para-teachers. The head of Alternative Schools for the state said, “we prefer to hire women and girls as teachers” for the STP because “they can better take care of children” and “are very caring with children.” In Gandhinagar 57.9% of the para-teachers at the brick kiln schools were female. According to information provided by Prayas staff in Bhilwara, only 16 of the brick kiln para-teachers were female out of 67. 18.7% of the para-teachers surveyed in Bhilwara district were female.

Caste and Religion.

Of all primary level teachers in India, 30.09% of male and 23.08% of female teachers (including para-teachers) are from SC and ST communities (Mehta, A., 2009). Since information about the caste of the teachers was not collected from all of the brick kiln para-teachers, it is difficult to make any conclusive statements. However, it was observed that a high number of Scheduled Caste (SC) or Other Backward Caste (OBC) individuals were selected for the job. All of the Chhattisgarhi teachers are from SC communities. In Bhilwara, about 30-40% of the teachers were from SC or OBC communities. Some of the teachers were from the Muslim *Rangrez* community. All of the para-teachers recruited in Gandhinagar were Hindu. Another important thing to note was the high number of *Brahmins* who took positions as para-teachers in Bhilwara (about 15%). This is likely due to the fact that teaching is still regarded by the people in the villages of Bhilwara as a *Brahmin* profession. None of the brick kiln para-teachers in

Gandhinagar were *Brahmin* though about 15% of them were from other General Castes (particularly *Patel*). The rest of the Gandhinagar teachers were from SC/OBC communities. Concerns over caste-based discrimination at schools often stem from the belief that “social attitudes and community prejudices play an important role in determining the ability and willingness of teachers to reach out to the children and team them with empathy and love” (Ramachandra et al., 2004, p. 11). However, in this case, it is unclear whether caste differences affected the approachability or attitude of the teachers because of the cross-cultural nature of demographics at brick kiln schools. In many cases, the local teachers expressed that they did not know the castes of their students because their family names and/or *gotras* (subcastes) were unfamiliar to them (though it is safely assumed that anyone working at the brick kiln is most likely from a SC/ST community). Chapter 3 will discuss cultural issues at the brick kiln schools in greater depth.

Age.

40.4% of all para-teachers surveyed in both districts were between 16 and 24 years of age. In Bhilwara, the teachers were, on average, even younger. Half of the teachers in Bhilwara were younger than 25. In Gandhinagar, 52.6% of the teachers were between 25 and 35 and 21.1% were older than 35 based on the survey data. The average para-teacher in Bhilwara was a young man who was either still in school or having just completed their higher education. In Gandhinagar, the para-teacher group included many older married individuals who already had children of their own, including women leaving the home for their first employment outside of the house.

Table 8

Level of Education Attained by Para-teacher in Gandhinagar, GJ

Education Level	Number	Percentage
8 th Standard Only	1	3%
9 th Standard Only	2	6%
10 th Standard Pass	8	26%
11 th Standard	1	3%
12 th Standard Pass	12	38%
Any Higher Education	6	19%

Table 9

Level of Education Attained by Para-teacher in Bhilwara, RJ

Education Level	Number	Percentage ¹
10 th Standard Pass Only	2	6.3%
12 th Standard Pass	3	9.4%
BA/BSc	16	50%
MA	9	28.1%
B.ed	14	43.8%
B.S.T.C	2	6.3%

Education Level.

Gandhinagar, though far more advanced educationally than Bhilwara recruited para-teachers with significantly lower educational qualification. Data from government documents show that in Mandal block of Bhilwara district, 75% of the para-teachers at the brick kilns have completed some higher education. Considering the low pay, it is shocking to find such highly educated individuals taking a job as a para-teacher in Rajasthan. About half of them have educational qualifications for teaching too with many of them having received the teaching certification (B.S.T.C) and 43.8% having received a Bachelors of Education (both are required to be a regular teacher). This data could point to a problem of underemployment of highly educated young individuals in villages, however there is not enough information from this particular study to come to any conclusions in this regard. It is important to note that for many of the young educated para-teachers in Bhilwara, this was their first job.

The low education level of the teachers recruited in Gandhinagar becomes less of a shock when the situation is critically examined. First of all, the SSA of Gujarat puts a strong emphasis on recruiting para-teachers for their STP programs that could more easily relate to the children, which is why they recruited laborers and many women. The Chhattisgarhi teachers, who are all laborers in the brick kilns, were pretty evenly split between 10th standard pass and 12th standard pass. But it was not just the laborers who had lower education levels, but also the local Gujaratis recruited as para-teachers. Since the overall education level in Gujarat (especially Gandhinagar district) is relatively high, it can be assumed that more highly educated candidates for the para-teacher position were not found due to either 1) lack of interest from qualified individuals or 2)

¹ Percentages do not equal 100% because some para-teachers have more than one higher degree. All of their higher degrees are listed.

inadequate effort in advertising for the position. It is likely that the former is the main explanation and one government official even expressed to the research team that “it is difficult for the VEC to find good teachers for such a low honorarium.” It might be precisely because of the rapid economic growth in Gujarat, that it was more difficult to find qualified people for para-teacher positions. However, there did seem to be recognition by the state and district-level officials that the individuals recruited for the position should have a 12th standard minimum education level in the future of the program. Another district official assured the research team that “next year, though, we want to set 12th pass as the minimum qualification. No 8th or 9th pass teachers. We will first go for all of the candidates that have degrees, then go for 12th pass as a minimum.” Observations of the para-teachers indicate that there is not necessarily a link between the education level of the para-teacher and the quality of teaching; however, there was a greater degree of professionalism observed in most of the para-teachers with higher education.

Para-teachers and the Honorarium

Para-teachers in Bhilwara were paid Rs. 100 per student per month and para-teachers in Gandhinagar were paid Rs.2100 per month. 64.7% of all of the para-teachers surveyed felt that the honorarium was not a fair amount for the job that they perform. In Bhilwara, where the para-teachers were noticeable more qualified and educated, only 18.7% thought that the honorarium was fair and 59.4% strongly felt that it was unfair. In Gandhinagar, where the teachers formed a different socio-economic demographic, 61.1% said that the payment was fair to some degree, the rest found it unfair. The low compensation of the para-teachers causes the following problems: 1) it limits the quality and quantity of applicants for the positions, 2) it strips the position of professionalism and causes para-teachers to not take their job seriously, and 3) it encourages para-teachers seek additional employment since the honorarium is not adequate to meet a family's expenses. In Bhilwara, 21.9% of the para-teachers had another job during the time they were teaching. Their other jobs ranged from farming, working in a local shop, working as a tailor, or studying in a local college. In Gandhinagar, 52.6% of the para-teachers surveyed said that they had another job; however, this includes the laborers who are also working as para-teachers. The other jobs distract the para-teachers from teaching which further lowers the quality of education administered.

Despite having other jobs, 76.9% of the para-teachers surveyed reported that the para-teaching job was the primary source of income for their family. There is obviously a disconnect between what the government thinks these “Educational Volunteers” are and what the ground reality shows. The government documents and rhetoric call these para-teachers temporary “volunteers” and indicates that the job is not meant to be a primary or sustained source of income for any family. Furthermore, by calling their salary an “honorarium” the government is able to further perpetuate the myth that the para-teachers are really just “volunteers” for the education system and not actual government employees deserving of appropriate benefits. However, in their interactions with the para-teachers, the researcher never observed anyone call the honorarium an “honorarium.” By para-teachers and local school administrators alike it was always referred to as a “salary.” The original DPEP report on para-teachers from 1998 even noted the same phenomenon of para-teachers calling their “honorarium” a “salary” (DPEP, 1999). Despite efforts by the government bureaucrats to classify the different types of teachers, Educational Volunteers, *Bal Mitras*, *Shiksha Karmis*, *Vidhya Sahayeks*, and para-teachers, no one on the ground-level sees any difference except for the uneven pay and benefits. As one official in Bhilwara explained, “their work, their status, everything, is basically the same. And everyone in the community still calls them teacher.”

Gender and the honorarium.

There does appear to be a gender dimension to the recruitment strategy of para-teachers, at least in Gujarat. In fact, the way that the STP Education Volunteer position is described by administrators in Gujarat seems to frame it as an opportunity for women to work in a safe and respectable “volunteer” position outside of their home. This was clear in how state and district officials described both the positions of “Lady Escort,” a 7th standard pass woman who works as an assistant to the EV under the STP model, and the ideal nurturing female “Educational Volunteer.” Studies of teacher motivations reveal that female teachers do have different motivations and reasons for selecting teaching as a profession when compared to their male counterparts including: respectability, security, and less work so that they “can also manage my home and house,’ or because they had nothing else to do” (Ramachandran, 2005, p. 24) While it is commendable that Gujarat is working to include women, the feminization of para-teacher work does nothing to break down gender barriers. In fact, by defining para-teaching as “female”

work, the administrators of Gujarat have conveniently found a way to maintain a low honorarium for the position since it is regarded ideally as supplemental family income for women that would otherwise be housewives. There was no indication from this study that the female para-teachers were better at teaching because of their supposed “nurturing” traits; however, the female para-teachers did express less dissatisfaction with the honorarium than the male para-teachers.

Para-teacher Motivations

Despite the disappointing honorarium, the para-teacher job was a welcome opportunity for employment for more than half of the para-teachers surveyed who were unemployed before taking the position. 77.4% of the surveyed para-teachers in Bhilwara said that they were neither studying nor working before taking the teaching job. When examining the work experience of the Gujarati para-teachers it was discovered that the majority were either employed in a different job before taking the para-teacher job (38.5%) or were a housewife (30.7%). Many of the female para-teachers expressed that this was their first job outside of their home. About half of the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers were fathers who had children at the brick kiln. The other half was young unmarried men and women who had just recently completed or dropped out of high school to come to the brick kiln. One Chhattisgarhi para-teacher was studying as an external student at a college in Chhattisgarh.

Table 10

Para-teacher responses to the question: What was your Primary Motivation for taking this Job?

Response	Number	Percent
I needed money to support my family	6	11.5%
I wanted work experience	2	3.8%
I felt that this job could lead to a job as a regular teacher	19	36.5%
I wanted to help the children at the brick kiln to receive an education	24	46.2%

Slightly less than half of all of the para-teachers surveyed said that their primary motive for taking the job was altruistic, because they wanted to help the children at the brick kilns receive an education. While it is possible that not every para-teacher was honest in disclosing their objective in seeking the job, still 53.8% did acknowledge that their objective was related to economic or professional advancement. The percentage of para-teachers motivated by altruism was significantly lower in Bhilwara (37.5%) and higher in Gandhinagar (63.2%) than the overall average. This is, once again, related to the demographics of the para-teachers. In Bhilwara, the

majority were Type 2 para-teachers who were young professionals looking for career advancement. It was explained by the Additional District Program Coordinator in Bhilwara in this way: “their first reason for them to take the job is probably financial and the second reason is because they are motivated to help the children learn.”

Misperceptions about job advancement opportunities.

Probably the single most revealing statistic regarding the para-teacher motivations in the area is how many believe that this job will lead to a job as a regular government teacher. This belief was widespread especially in Bhilwara, where 50% of the para-teachers surveyed said that it was their primary motive for taking the job. This could also explain why so many individuals with a B.ed. were working as para-teachers. Unfortunately, their belief is based on false premises. Not only does a teacher have to complete 2 years of teacher training, but they also have to pass 1-2 tests before being eligible for a teaching position, depending upon the state. When a local government official in Bhilwara was asked directly whether the para-teachers had any advantage in getting regular government teaching jobs, he smirked and answered “not a chance.” In fact, all of the officials interviewed said the same thing and stressed the “temporary” and “need-based” nature of the program. It does not appear that the government officials are doing anything to dispel the myth that being a para-teacher will help someone become a regular teacher. The belief that the para-teacher position could lead to formal employment is not unfounded and has been based on historical experiences in other regions where Shiksha Karmis or Anganwadis (other temporary government positions) were formalized due to unionization efforts. While it might be possible to regularize the STP/SMK program, it is impossible for the para-teachers to bypass normal government teacher requirements. If they knew that there was “no chance” for advancement with this position, half of the para-teachers in Bhilwara may not have taken the position. Overall there is very little understanding of the nature of the SMK program demonstrated by the para-teachers. When asked about it, many of the para-teachers did not even know the official name of the program. This point of confusion is related to the above mentioned difference between the government rhetoric about the nature of the EV positions and how they are perceived by the community.

Status as a motivation.

The surveyed para-teachers were asked to explain what motivates them to do their job well. In Gandhinagar, para-teachers answered that student attendance, the brick kiln owner, Prayas CLRA, and their own interest in educating the children were their main sources of encouragement among other things. Many of the Rajasthani para-teachers mentioned a “sense of honor” as their motivation to do their job well. Some of them also mentioned that being “inspired that even these poor children can get an education” was a motivating factor for them. A number of the Rajasthani para-teachers also mentioned how doing their para-teacher job well would increase their status in the community. One para-teacher wrote of the experience, “to become a teacher so then everyone will have respect for me and speak to me with respect” as their motivation. As was mentioned earlier, the fact that they could have the high-status position as a teacher without having to meet the educational and training requirements is the main draw factor to the position. Every single para-teacher surveyed agreed that their status in the community had improved since taking the job with 53.8% “strongly agreeing” that their status had increased. The honor and status associated with the profession of teaching is an important factor in understanding the motivations of individuals in seeking any type of teaching job, including as a para-teacher.

Administrative Structure

By analyzing and comparing the administrative support structure of both of the programs, it is possible to highlight best practices. Despite the fact that both programs run through SSA and a central government mandate, the states decided to structure their response to the brick kiln situation very differently. It is also important to recognize failings in the programs and identify whether these problems are structural, programmatic, or region/situation specific.

Financial Considerations

It is, first of all, important to understand that both states run on vastly different budget allocation. One state official lamented that the SSA of Rajasthan does not have the same amount of funding as the Gujarat SSA because their state is less developed. Bhilwara SSA allocates funding through the SMCs from the Block Education Office (BEO). The local Headmaster and the rest of the SMC are in charge of allocating the funds properly on the ground level. In their

case, there was a minimal amount of support staff so it was decided that the para-teachers would purchase the supplies they needed and then show receipts to get reimbursed for up to Rs.30/month/child in Teaching Learning Materials (TLM). The only supplies that were distributed by the Block Resource Center (BRC) were workbooks. One of the greatest successes of the Bhilwara brick kiln school program was their ability to start the Mid-day Meal scheme at the brick kilns from the very beginning of the program. Students were brought a full meal every day by their para-teacher. The lunches were prepared either in the local school or by an external party like a nearby hotel. The standard Rs.2.69/child per day lunch allocation is observed and it should be noted that many of the schools had to hire an additional cafeteria staff to meet the jump in school lunches that needed to be prepared.

Unlike in the Bhilwara program, the funds for the Gandhinagar program were released to the district office and then to the BRC. The funds were not given to the VEC or SMCs in the area because they are not in charge of overseeing the program. In Gandhinagar, supplemental TLMs and events are budgeted into the new STP program. Events were planned for Uttarayan, Republic Day, and a vocational training. These events often included food, activities, and special presenters. The Gandhinagar Republic Day event alone cost Rs.17,000. The supplemental events and activities were very well received by the students, parents, and teachers and helped to get everyone in the community excited about the educational program. One of the most disappointing things about the Gandhinagar program, however, was their inability to start the Mid-Day Meal scheme at the brick kilns. According to state officials, it was impossible to start the program because it needed to have been planned in advance and the regular schools were “too far away” from the brick kilns. Instead, the state allocated Rs.5/child/day for a “snack” of a packaged biscuit or some other purchased food which would be bought by the para-teacher before class. The para-teachers were given an advance or 2-3 weeks to purchase the snack based on attendance. It should be kept in mind that Rs.5 is more than even the daily Mid-Day Meal budget for local Gujarati children. Unfortunately, the snack was a poor substitute for a meal and many of the parents, students, and para-teachers complained about it. There were also implementation problems with the snack, including lack of clarity about the plan and disbursement of funds; and this frustrated many of the parents and para-teachers causing them to become disillusioned with the school program. This is especially disheartening when it is

discovered that 92.3% of the para-teachers surveyed felt that the Mid-Day Meal program provided a big incentive for the students to attend class.

Aside from the Mid-Day Meal program, issues with the timely and proper disbursement of funds for the program, including payment of honorarium, were present in both districts. The research team observed that this had a major effect on the effectiveness of the program because when the teachers were not paid on time or given adequate supplies or reimbursement for supplies, they became apathetic or frustrated with their job. In fact, in Gandhinagar two of the para-teachers stopped teacher because they were not being paid.

Differences in Oversight Structure

The RTE Act outlines the procedure and functioning of the School Management Committee (SMC) and the Village Education Committee (VEC) which are supposed to decentralized governance of the schools and improve the quality of the education. They even include guidelines for inclusion of 50% females in the SMC and representation from SC/ST community members. Bhilwara has been successful at reforming their SMCs to bring them up to par with RTE and other regulation. The brick kiln schools are overseen by the SMC of the closest school. In one block alone (Asind) 11-12 of the SMCs oversee brick kiln schools. Most of them oversee several brick kilns (10-15).

Gujarat decided to take a different approach to the administration of the brick kiln schools. They assigned the task of monitoring and running the program to the BRC and CRC of the area. The State Coordinator for Alternative Schools explained it in this way:

Funding for STP schools is going through the SMC. However, in the special case of migration, we give special authority to the CRC to set up the programme and handle funds. It is not practical for the VEC to manage the brick kiln schools because the brick kilns are so far away from the village and the local Head Teacher cannot regularly support and monitor the classes. This is only for the special case of migration.

It was widely believed by most people involved in the Gujarat program, that the VECs and SMCs would not carry out their duties to oversee the program because they do not feel a sense of obligation to serve the brick kiln community, mainly because they are migrants. However, the

Rajasthani program seems to be proving him wrong. The brick kilns in Bhilwara are no farther away from the village than the ones in Gandhinagar. While the program does seem to put an extra strain on the local Headmaster it does not appear that they are defaulting on their duties to run the program. In fact in many ways (including monitoring), the local school administrators ran the program much better than the Gandhinagar BRC and CRCs.

Teaching Learning Materials (TLM)

Aside from the para-teachers, the major input invested in the program was the Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) which provided an aid in the learning process. In Bhilwara, there were some issues with the distribution of TLM reimbursements to the schools. At the time of surveying the para-teachers, 65.6% of the para-teachers were waiting to be reimbursed for some supplies that they had purchased with their own money for the class. One Headmaster explained that he had to purchase the supplies using the money allocated to his own school as “a risk we had to take” because the funding was not coming from the SMC on time. The only supplies directly given by the school district in Bhilwara were the SSA workbooks, however the research team did not witness these workbooks being used much by any of the para-teachers in the classes. Aside from being unimaginative and poorly organized according to many education activists and NGO workers, the SSA workbooks (in both states) are often not distributed in the correct levels to the right students. In Gandhinagar, where new “module” workbooks have been developed for the STP program, only the leftover old SSA workbooks were distributed at the brick kilns (and even those books were only partially distributed by SSA) because the new workbooks were only available in Gujarati language. Because Prayas and the training staff realized that the old SSA workbooks were not helpful, they purchased and distributed one copy of the NCERT textbooks to each para-teacher to be used in class. The research team observed the para-teachers using these textbooks but not the SSA workbooks.

In Gandhinagar, there are provisions for participants of STP to receive additional supplies including: a First Aid kit for every class and a personal hygiene kit and backpack/school kit for every student. The students and parents were very excited about receiving the kits which clearly were needed by the families, many of whom do not have enough money to purchase even basic hygiene items. The distribution of school kits increased enthusiasm for the program and should

be done early in the program in order to deter dropout and increase attendance. In Gandhinagar, 84.2% of the para-teachers said that they had been given sufficient materials. Unfortunately, 36.8% said that they had purchased items for their class that they were not reimbursed for.

Para-teachers from both districts were asked to give suggestions for how to improve the program. The para-teachers listed needed materials and facilities including: school uniforms, a school building, flooring, scholarships for students, sports equipment, water facilities, bathrooms, and syllabi/course materials. The necessity of uniforms has been expressed by many individuals including staff members at Prayas, parents, and even students. Many of the students do not even have proper clothing of their own so uniforms would not only be helpful for “inspir[ing] a sense of belonging and ownership of the school for the children using its services” but would also be very functional for the children according to a Gandhinagar SSA funding proposal. Ironically, almost all of the requested items by the para-teachers are ensured to all students under the RTE Act. While there are certainly commendable efforts by both districts to bring TLM to the children, they are still far from having adequate materials and facilities at the brick kilns to meet the educational needs of the children living there.

Role of the NGO

In Bhilwara,, 87.5% of the para-teachers said they would go directly to the local Headmaster with any of their questions or problems. In Gandhinagar, where most of the work for the administration of the program falls on the CRC, 63.3% of para-teachers said they would go to the CRC with a question or problem. Here it is important to make a note of the large involvement of the NGO, Prayas, in administering the program. In that same survey, 21.1% in Gandhinagar and 65.6% in Bhilwara² said that they would contact a staff member at Prayas if they had a problem or question. However, it should also be noted that the survey was conducted in Gandhinagar at a later stage in the program when the BRC/CRC had started to take more ownership of the implementation of the program. In both locations, most of the survey work and at least some of the recruitment of para-teachers was done by Prayas. This was partly because

² Respondents were allowed to list more than one person that they would go to if they had a problem or question so the percentages do not equal 100%.

the organization had strong connections with the brick kiln community and a thorough understanding of the situation at the brick kilns.

The main reason why the NGO took such a large role in the administration of the program was because of the shortcomings of the government's ability to implement the program. In Gandhinagar, the government initially offered Prayas CLRA the opportunity to run the program on its own and offered to pay them Rs.700 per child. Prayas decided not to accept the offer because they did not have the capacity or educational expertise to run the whole program independently. However, Prayas ended up running much of the program including the training (in Gandhinagar only), monitoring, running weekly meetings with the para-teachers (in Gandhinagar only) and providing supplemental educational material (in Gandhinagar only). Prayas CLRA in Ahmedabad had one full-time staff member focused on the education project and 5 other staff members who worked on the project part-time. This begs one to question whether the government is capable of running this program on their own at some point when Prayas is no longer able or willing to assist them. Conversations with government officials in both states indicate that even they do not feel that they are capable of running the program independently. Some of the most scathing criticism of "government servants" can be heard by government servants themselves. In the same breath they will often extol how much better NGOs and the "private sector" are at running services for the poor. One official in Bhilwara said:

NGOs are doing good work. There are good programmes for condensed courses to prepare children for age-appropriate entry into school. NGOs do this work most effectively. Their NGO members are caring about human society. Which is something that the government program does not do.

This lack of confidence in itself, expressed by government at all levels, is worrying because it seems to be a contributing factor to implementation issues in special projects like the one at the brick kilns. After all, the government offices are the ones with the legal mandate to provide services to the community, including special cases like the brick kilns.

Para-teacher Trainings

Teacher trainings for the program were observed to increase teacher confidence and commitment level and decrease teacher absenteeism and apathy. Shockingly, Gandhinagar was the only district that organized any kind of training program before beginning classes at the brick kilns. In Patan, Ahmedabad, and Mehsana districts of Gujarat, Prayas CLRA observed rampant absenteeism in the para-teachers, which was not as widespread in Gandhinagar. Prayas CLRA observed a drop in absenteeism in these districts after they had their first training in February. In fact, some staff members at Prayas CLRA believe that basically no classes were taking place in Mehsana district before the “mid-program” training. Prayas CLRA organized all of the trainings for the brick kiln schools with partial financial support from Gujarat SSA. In Gandhinagar, one week-long training was held from December 20-25, 2010. The training helped SSA to weed-out some EVs who were not actually interested in the responsibility of teaching. About five of the hired para-teachers did not complete the training program. The trainer, who was a special consultant with experience at several educational NGOs, prepared the para-teachers for the classroom by teaching them innovative ways of teaching that were not based on rote memorization. He also facilitated activities, presentations, and classroom exercises for the para-teachers to practice leading a class. In February a refresher training was organized (3 days) for the Gandhinagar para-teachers. During this training, the trainer noticed that the main thing the teachers were lacking was teaching aids so he helped them to create flashcards, flip-books and other teaching aids. While it is impossible to prepare someone to be a teacher in five days of training, it was clearly still helpful for the para-teachers who had little to no background in teaching to learn some basic techniques. 73.7% of the para-teachers in Gandhinagar said that the training was very helpful to them. Additionally, the training increased para-teacher commitment to the job because it helped them get to know the administrators and the other para-teachers. Trainings and the follow-up weekly meetings that were organized in the month of January were an important contact-point for para-teachers to vent their concerns, frustrations from the field, and questions with each other and with the CRC and BRC. At the weekly meetings, which were organized on Fridays in January, materials and announcements could easily be disseminated and school administrators could answer questions and concerns that were brought up. Through their regular contact, the para-teachers in Gandhinagar, both local and laborer, became close friends and were able to use each other as support when they encountered problems on-the-job. As the

observations in Gandhinagar show, regular meetings with the para-teachers and adequate training before the job are important component of any SSA outreach program for especially vulnerable populations.

The State Alternative Schools Coordinator explained that Prayas ran the training this year because SSA did not have enough time to plan for the brick kiln program and they only have one Hindi-language trainer on their staff. He explained that “for general STP classes, there is a Master Trainer training from the state that lasts 6 days. These Master Trainers learn about classroom skills, child development, memory functioning, ect. Then the Master Trainer organizes block-level trainings for the EVs. These trainings last 30 days and occur before the centers open.” The Gujarat SSA plans to organized 2-3 day training before the brick kiln programs begin next year lead by a trainer who will focus on issues that specifically may be encountered at the brick kilns. These trainings may not be enough and Gujarat SSA should at least consider continuing the weekly meeting program to provide additional training. Unfortunately, training is where the Gujarat SSA must take a trade-off if they want to employ laborers as para-teachers. It is impossible to run a comprehensive 30-day training if they employ laborers because of the timing issues of their arrival and the laborers’ other work schedules. Arranging trainings around the brick kiln work schedule were an issue this year. However, because the para-teachers in Gandhinagar possessed a low level of academic qualification and experience with teaching, it is extremely important that adequate training be provided. In Bhilwara, where half of the para-teachers had teaching qualifications already, the lack of teacher trainings at the beginning of the program was not as disastrous. Also, since all of the para-teachers were locals of the small village and many already knew each other and the school administration staff, the lack of training and orientation to the job was also not as serious. Bhilwara SSA did not organize any teacher training before classes started but later ran a two-day training in February. 63.5% of the para-teachers said that the training was “somewhat helpful.” Though teacher absenteeism was not as major of an issue in Bhilwara as it was in Gujarat, there were many para-teachers in Bhilwara who complained about the lack of training and the difficulty in teaching the children at the brick kiln.

Monitoring

There appeared to be a correlation between effective monitoring and low teacher absenteeism. Monitoring support was provided by Prayas in both districts, but especially in Gandhinagar where a Prayas CLRA staff member was responsible for visiting the brick kiln schools every week. Bhilwara's Headmasters, who along with the rest of the SMC were assigned the task of monitoring the brick kiln classes in their area, demonstrated a remarkable ability to do the monitoring competently on their own. One Headmaster explained that he visited the brick kiln schools 1-4 days a week. Only 5 para-teachers out of 32 surveyed in Bhilwara said they had not been visited yet and all of those who had not been visited had started teaching later in the season and thus had only been teaching for a few weeks before the survey. While there is legitimacy in the concern that this may put a large off-campus load on the local Headmaster, it is heartening to hear that they are performing their job of monitoring the classes. The survey of the para-teachers in Gandhinagar was done much later in the season, at the end of March. However, there were still 5 para-teachers surveyed out of 19 whose class had not been visited by any administrative official. All but one of them had started teaching in January so almost three months had gone by without any monitoring visit. Other para-teachers claimed that their class had been visited 5 or even 7 times by the CRC so clearly some brick kilns were getting more supervision and attention than others. In Gandhinagar, the CRC is responsible for monitoring. They visit the classes at the brick kilns two times a week. The BRC and VEC are also supposed to make monitoring visits however none of the para-teachers reported that they had been visited by them. Prayas had a staff members assigned to monitoring and the SSA had even hired someone specifically to monitor the schools aside from the CRC. Gandhinagar also has about half as many brick kiln classes as Bhilwara yet was less successful at reaching all of them for monitoring. However, the researcher does believe that the monitoring problems in Gandhinagar likely stemmed from other issues at the BRC level because of the replacement of some staff members and early confusions about who was supposed to be overseeing the brick kiln program. Towards the end of the program, the local CRCs had organized a seemingly more effective monitoring schedule.

Level of Support

Despite the problems with monitoring and a reshuffling of BRC-level staff, 79.1% of all para-teachers surveyed in Gandhinagar said that they felt supported by the administration. It was clear that the SSA officials and the para-teachers had developed a close bond throughout the period of the program. The CRC maintained fairly regular contact via phone or visit with most of the para-teachers. One especially helpful strategy that Gandhinagar implemented was the weekly meeting. This was suggested as a way to provide supplemental training and serve as a contact point for the para-teachers with the administration so that they could discuss problems that were encountered at the brick kilns. The weekly meetings only occurred during the first month of the program and were scheduled on Fridays which are payment day at the brick kilns and the only day that most laborers are able to leave the brick kiln. During these meetings, which were led by Prayas, the local CRC, and the district Alternative Schools Coordinator, many of the para-teachers were able to pick up more supplies and find solutions for their classroom-related problems. It is highly recommended that other district adopt the weekly meetings as a strategy at least in the beginning of the program in order to avoid isolating the para-teachers. In Bhilwara, all ground support was given through the local Headmasters who were surprisingly responsive and engaged. Because they are all members of the same small village community, it was less of a challenge to develop a relationship between the Headmaster and the new para-teachers. All of the para-teachers in Bhilwara reported that they felt supported by the school administration.

Overall, the school administrations were responsive to the needs of the new program and the para-teachers working at the brick kilns despite the many implementation issues. 92% of the para-teachers said that their enthusiasm for the job had only increased since they started working. Most added that student interest level in learning inspired them and increased their enthusiasm level. The para-teachers in Gandhinagar mentioned things like the start of the distribution of the snacks, the eventual delivery of needed supplies, and the increase in child attendance as reasons why their enthusiasm had increased. All of the para-teachers in both districts said they would be interested in doing the job next year.

Summary of Findings

- In both Bhilwara and Gandhinagar, the education outreach programs at the brick kilns were government-run and supported by Prayas, which had done major advocacy work to get the program started. In both districts, Prayas was heavily involved in the implementation and monitoring of the program.
- In Gandhinagar, the Special Training Program (STP) was used to outreach to children at the brick kilns. This STP is the first state response to the new RTE guidelines. In Bhilwara, the Shiksha Mitra Kendra (SMK) program was used. This program is still in transition under RTE guidelines.
- The researcher classified the para-teachers into three main types: 1) middle-aged or older individuals motivated by a desire to help the children living at the brick kiln including housewives, 2) young, highly-educated individuals seeking the job for experience and money, and 3) other less-qualified individuals seeking the job mainly with the motivation of making money to support their family. Bhilwara was comprised of mostly para-teachers in group 2). The fewest number of para-teachers fell into group 1).
- In Gandhinagar, 57.9% of the para-teachers were female compared to 18.7% in Bhilwara. This was seen to be due to an active recruitment of female para-teachers by Gujarat SSA.
- 40.4% of the para-teachers were between the ages of 16 and 24.
- Almost half of the recruited para-teachers were from OBC or SC communities.
- In Gandhinagar, only 19% of the para-teachers had any higher education. In one area of Bhilwara, 75% of the para-teachers had a higher degree including many with B eds. This is likely the result of underemployment of young educated individuals in Bhilwara and an active policy of recruiting laborers and women as para-teachers in Gandhinagar.
- In Bhilwara, 77.4% of the para-teachers reported that they were neither working nor studying before taking the para-teaching job, which highlights high underemployment.
- 53.8% of para-teachers reported that their motivation for taking the job was an interest in professional advancement or economic opportunities. Slightly less than half of para-teachers reported that simple altruism, wanting to help the children, was their primary motivation.
- Status seemed to also be a motivating factor for para-teachers. All of the para-teachers reported that their status in the community had increased since taking the job.

- There was a large misperception amongst the para-teachers about the possibility of job advancement to a regular teaching position. This belief seemed to be a primary motivation for many para-teachers in Bhilwara. The government officials seem to be doing little to dispel this myth.
- In Bhilwara, the funds were disbursed through the SMC and local Headmasters which were responsible for implementing the program. They reimbursed teachers for expenses on TLMs and were successful in bringing the Mid-Day Meal to all students.
- In Gujarat, the program was administered by the BRCs and CRCs. There was basically no involvement of the VEC. The BRCs were unable to get the Mid-Day Meal started and instead provided a daily 5Rs snack. The TLM distribution was also delayed.
- In Gandhinagar a weeklong training was organized before classes began and a 3-day refresher course was organized in the middle of the session. In other districts in Gujarat there were no trainings until the refresher course and this was seen to be linked to teacher absenteeism. In Bhilwara there was a 2-day training only.
- Weekly meetings held in Gandhinagar were an effective strategy as they created a sense of commitment to their job in the para-teachers and helped them build their support system with administrators and fellow para-teachers.
- In Bhilwara, the monitoring was done by the Headmasters and it appeared to be effective. In Gandhinagar, there were a number of people monitoring, the BRC, CRC, Prayas, and an individual hired by the CRC, yet monitoring was less effective. Five out of 19 para-teachers surveyed said that their class had not been visited in 3 months.

Chapter 3

Quality and Functioning of the Program

Realities of the Program

The previous section discussed the structure of the program including the facilities, para-teachers, TLM, and administrative support; however, it did not go into the core questions in evaluating an educational program- What is happening in the class and are the children learning? Unfortunately, the researcher did not observe para-teachers in either district using any form of uniform curriculum or study guides. As a result of the lack of structure and oversight, learning levels and educational quality varied greatly between different classes making it difficult to make concrete conclusions on the curriculum and quality of education.

It is important to note the difficulty in gauging precisely the learning levels of the children who participated in the program because no before-and-after testing was conducted by the school administration, the NGO, or the research team. Instead, conclusions were based on classroom observations, informal interactions and interviews with the para-teachers and students, the parent survey, and an examination of the curriculum. The limits in evaluating the educational value of the program and para-teacher attendance rates through the parent survey became clear during the middle of data collection. Parents surveyed mostly demonstrated a lack of interest in or awareness of the brick kiln school. Many of them could not even answer basic questions about class timing and whether their children were attending regularly. Their own lack of educational background meant that they were unable to truly evaluate whether their children were learning. Because of this, the research team had to rely more on qualitative data and observations to make conclusions regarding the educational quality of the program. It should also be noted that the researcher was able to visit far fewer classes in Bhilwara so most of these observations are based on teaching techniques observed in the Gandhinagar classes. More research is clearly needed in the future in order to make firmer conclusions about the effectiveness of the STP/SMK program for brick kilns. Before and after testing of student knowledge could go a long way to track progress of students in order to ensure the program is meeting its most fundamental objective.

Many of the academic problems that will be discussed in this section are not specific to educational programs at brick kilns. Most of these are overarching issues that are being observed in educational institutions all over India. Nationwide statistics show that only 64% of children in Standard 3 can read Standard 1 text (the percentage was below the national average in both Gujarat and Rajasthan). Furthermore, less than 30% of Standard 3 children in public schools in Rajasthan and Gujarat can do subtraction (Pratham, 2011).

The following are the 4 main problems observed in the brick kiln classes:

1. Ineffective pedagogy and under-developed curriculum
2. Multi-grade and multi-level teaching
3. Cultural bias in the classroom
4. Language and communication barriers

The researcher believes that the problems listed above cause para-teacher and student absenteeism, two issues that will be discussed in this section also.

1. Ineffective pedagogy and under-developed curriculum

The researcher was able to play the role of classroom observer in fewer classes than anticipated because either 1) the para-teacher and/or students were absent upon the visit, or 2) the para-teacher and/or students became too distracted by the presence of the research team for a true classroom observation to be made. Often, the para-teacher would ask certain students to highlight their abilities for the monitor or researcher by reciting songs or numbers or demonstrating that they could write their name. However, when asked, the students who demonstrated these skills admitted that they had learned them in their previous school and not at the brick kiln school. The main teaching strategy observed by the researchers was rote memorization such as oral recitation of numbers and letters and “repeat after me” activities. Other common activities observed in the class were singing of children’s songs, coloring, drawing, and informal practice in script by writing letters, numbers, and basic words. The researchers also observed the teaching of basic math problems (up to a multiplication-level in one classroom) using blackboard and chalk demonstrations and exercises. A few of the para-teachers also taught the English alphabet and/or the Gujarati alphabet. While there were a few shining examples of para-teachers who planned thoughtful activities for the students that

encouraged thinking and learning, these were pretty rare to come by. Often, rather than plan an activity, the para-teacher would simply have the students color from most of the class time. The most effective para-teachers had a background in teaching or tutoring.

The widespread use of rote memorization pedagogy is not surprising because, as one teacher trainer noted, it is easier than planning engaging activities for the class, and it is familiar because most of the para-teachers were taught in this way. Recent research by Deepa Sankar has shown that para-teachers, as a whole, usually spend less time on activities that involve higher-order thinking and more time on rote memorization activities in class (as cited in Kingdon & Sipahimalani-Rao, 2010, p. 64). Since the main difference between the para-teachers and regular teachers is in the level of training, it can be deducted that proper training can help to equip para-teachers with the skills to teach more effectively and create activities that involve higher-level thinking. Several studies have shown that unhelpful para-teacher training led to poor teaching strategies centered on rote memorization (Kingdon & Sipahimalani-Rao, 2010, p. 63). The lack of syllabi or lesson plans was observed in both Bhilwara and Gandhinagar. Gujarat SSA has created a new module system complete with workbooks, check off sheets to track student progress, and para-teacher lesson plans; but, this curriculum was not used during the pilot brick kiln education program year because the materials have not yet been translated into Hindi. Hopefully, next year they can be used in Hindi and Gujarat SSA can organize testing that would evaluate the effectiveness of the new curriculum. Many of the para-teachers in Bhilwara were not seen to be utilizing the Rajasthan SSA workbooks that were supposed to be the basis for the SMK program. The SSA of Rajasthan should consider evaluating the effectiveness of the workbooks or planning more trainings and lesson plans that will help para-teachers incorporate the text into their class routine. The lack of uniformity in the quality of education being delivered in the brick kilns was one of the most upsetting observations of the researcher. This meant that at some of the brick kilns, children were learning a lot; but that at most, they were learning very little.

2. Multi-grade and multi-level teaching

Another challenge for the para-teacher was in teaching in a multi-grade and multi-level environment. The classes included children in the age range of 3 to 14, and with varying levels

of experience in the classroom. Para-teachers often struggled in planning lessons that would reach all of the students and maintaining control of the classroom with such a diverse maturity range. This is another place where government rhetoric seems to deviate from the ground realities. In Gujarat, the SSA department has outlined a multi-grade teaching strategy called “peer group learning” where students’ seating arrangements are divided into three groups (Star group- 1st and 2nd standard, Moon group-3rd and 4th standard, and Sun group-5th and 6th standard) and the children are taught using modules, peer group work, and individualized attention by the para-teacher who acts as a tutor helping the students through the modules. Each module represents a different class standard and takes about 3 months to complete. Rajasthan uses a similar strategy as one official explains:

During the first month of the program, we must teach all students at an equal level because they are all dropouts and we cannot yet gauge what their level is. After a month, we then categorize them and arrange seating for the class based on level of knowledge. The class is multi-grade. The different level students are given different textbooks/workbooks.

In truth, many of the para-teachers at the brick kilns are teaching the whole class at a basic level with the same material. This may alienate older out-of-school children and children who have already learned the basics in their previous school. Feeling like the school is only for the “babies,” older out-of-school children at the brick kilns often did not attend the class and instead worked with their older siblings and parents in the brick kiln. In Gujarat, especially, there were a number of the Chhattisgarhi and Marwari students who were only slightly behind (or not even behind at all for their age group). To these children, the emphasis on basic-skill acquisition (even if only for the first month of the program) can seem demeaning or like a waste of time.

The researcher has vivid memories of meeting a pair of 11 year old Marwari boys in a brick kiln class in Uvarsad. The rest of their class was younger Chhattisgarhi children, who were almost exclusively from the same village in Bilaspur. While the boys politely explained that they enjoyed attending the school, it was clear that they were not learning anything. Both of them had been regularly attending school in their village and demonstrated their ability to write a complete sentence in Hindi. The Gujarati para-teacher seemed to have little interest in designing

separate activities for the boys and instead used most of the class time on art and coloring activities which were very popular with the younger students. Just a few weeks later, when the research team returned to the brick kiln, they found the boys, not in the classroom, but near the kiln covered in a layer of red dirt, doing *bharai* work with their older brothers. Working with their family and contributing to their family's income seemed to give the boys a sense of purpose and made them feel grown-up like their brothers.

Some of the para-teachers do divide the students into groups and attempt a "peer learning" class strategy. However, there is no uniformity in the way the classes are being run because of the minimal supervision and training given to the para-teachers. The para-teachers listed a number of different ways in which they divide the students into groups including age-wise, "based on interest," "based on ability", "by personality", "maturity", or "gender."

Most of the para-teachers, however, wrote that they divided the class into "primary" and "pre-primary." This is due to the large number of infants brought to the brick kiln classes. 92.3% of the para-teachers reported that their students brought their younger siblings to the class. As is common throughout all of India, young girls, often as young as 7, babysit their younger siblings. These young girls bring their sibling to the class, where they are a distraction to the learning process for all of the students, most especially to the girl responsible for the infant. This problem has been recognized, not just in the brick kilns, but in the villages all over the country, where Anganwadis (day care centers) have been set up by the government Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program. The brick kiln workers are desperately in need of ICDS services. Brick kilns are home to a high population of infants and pregnant and lactating women; all of whom need immunization, ration, and day-care services which are traditionally provided free through the Anganwadi. Unfortunately, despite aggressive advocacy work on behalf of Prayas, no district in either state has set up full Anganwadi Centers at the brick kiln communities. A few of the districts in Gujarat were able to set up some ration and food distribution through ICDS but day-care services were flatly rejected by state-level officials as infeasible. It is almost exclusively agreed upon by all people involved in the brick kiln SSA project, that the construction of Anganwadis near the brick kilns is an important component of the success of the education program. Prayasam, a Bengali NGO that has set up some brick kiln

schools, called Multiple Activity Centers (MACs), learned pretty early on that including a special component of their program for children in the 3-6 age range was absolutely necessary. Staff from Prayasam reported that before they set up a day care at the school, the children would bring their siblings to class, which impeded the learning process. The research team encourages ICDS officials to work with Prayas and other NGOs in order to plan for how ICDS pre-primary care can be set up at brick kiln worksites.

It should be noted that there were several students attending the brick kiln classes that were developmentally or cognitively disabled and requiring in special educational services as well as family support services. Sadly, the families of these children often do not understand their child's disability and special needs. The school districts of both Gujarat and Bhilwara should do a better job of training para-teachers to identify children who could benefit from the Integrated Education for the Disabled (IED) program and to respond to individual-specific circumstances of disabled children.

Setting up Anganwadis is only one part of the solution to the multi-level and multi-grade classroom problems. Another strategy that should be explored is to require two para-teachers per class. The need for a two-teacher class setup was brought up by a number of the stakeholders interviewed including a brick kiln owner in Gandhinagar. One Gandhinagar SSA official said:

It is true that there are different levels of understanding between the students. One teacher should teach one level of students . . . The children should be taught in groups. There should be two teachers at every school. This is a problem.

A number of the brick kilns in both districts this year had two para-teachers and were better able to divide the class into different levels and provide individualized attention to each student. Most of them divided the class in half and ran two different classes for 2 different levels at the same time. This strategy seemed to engage the students more and resulted in higher student attendance in most cases. The general rule being observed by SSA in both districts (based on the RTE schedule) is that only if there are more than 40 students in the class would a second para-teacher be employed. However, this clearly creates a class size that is too large for a program that emphasizes individualized attention and tutoring. Children like the two Marwari boys discussed above will fall through the cracks in such a large class. It is the belief of the

researcher that almost every brick kiln class should have two para-teachers with the aim being for a 10-20:1 pupil teacher ratio. However, this will require a slightly different training and monitoring structure in order to ensure that the para-teachers do not interpret the 2-teacher strategy as the hiring of two part-time teachers. As long as teacher absenteeism can still be deterred, a two-para-teacher approach may prove to be the most effective strategy to deal with such a diverse class.

3. Cultural bias in the classroom

During the survey, para-teachers were asked about cultural issues they encountered in the classroom and whether they interfered with their ability to teach. A high percentage of the respondents did say that culture was an issue. In Gandhinagar, 53.9% of the local Gujarati para-teachers said that culture was a barrier.

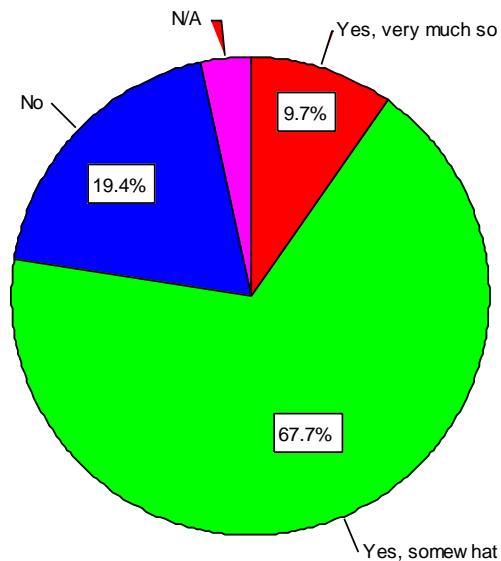


Figure 2. Bhilwara Para-teacher Responses to - Do Cultural Differences Between you and your Students make it Difficult for you to teach them?

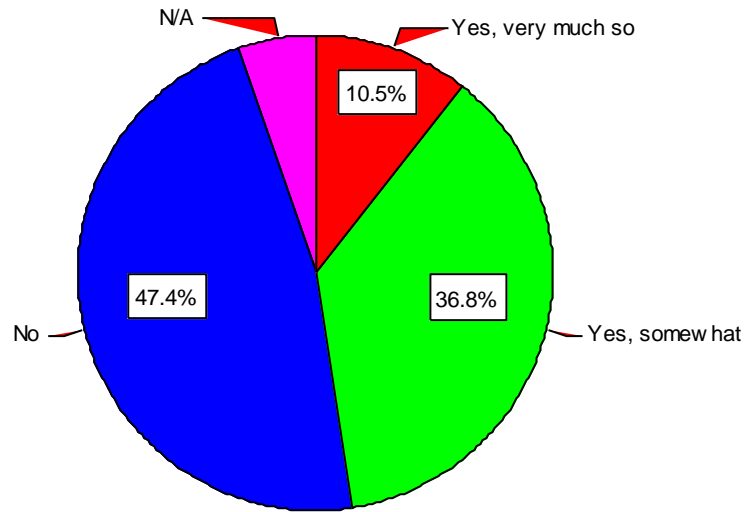


Figure 3. Gandhinagar Para-teacher Responses to- Do Cultural Differences Between you and your Students make it Difficult for you to teach them?

In the second part of the question, para-teachers were asked to list what kinds of cultural challenges existed. Their answers demonstrated that they had a broad interpretation of the word “culture” (*sanskriti*). The main cultural issues listed by para-teachers were 1) dialect and/or language, 2) food and lifestyle, and 3) cleanliness and clothing. The next section will discuss the language issues in greater depth. “Food and lifestyle” is more than just different types of food dishes; in most cases, it translates to alcohol and meat consumption. In fact, alcohol and meat consumption at the brick kilns was a major reason for prejudice against the laborer communities. Brick kiln owners often complained about how the workers “drank their money away” and school officials accused some laborer para-teachers of being intoxicated around the children. In some of the villages of Bhilwara there are not even any local butchers and the practice of meat eating is considered barbaric and unhygienic. At least one para-teacher said that she found it difficult to teach the children in her class once she learned that they ate meat. Her absenteeism also increased after she learned about their meat consumption. It should be noted that meat and alcohol consumption is linked to Dalit communities and that the bias reported by the para-teachers can be considered a form of caste bias against their students whose lifestyle may be

reflective of their upbringing and caste customs. “Lifestyle” also seemed to pertain to cultural differences like those between different linguistic communities. The Rajasthani para-teachers singled out the children from Bihar and Jharkhand as especially difficult to teach because of cultural differences. Most of the para-teachers from Bhilwara (Mewaris) did not acknowledge any cultural difference between themselves and the Marwari families from the neighboring districts (Ajmer and Nagaur).

For the most part, cleanliness and clothing differences translated to differences in class, hygiene standards, and poverty level. The para-teachers further explained their answer saying: “the children don’t wear pants,” they don’t have proper residence, the “children are often sick,” “children are working,” and their “clothes are torn.” These answers highlight a lack of sensitivity to the poverty of the laborer families. It should be clear the children do not wear torn clothes, suffer frequent untreated illnesses, and work in the brick kiln because of their culture. They do so because their families are poor and lacking in the resources required to ensure proper hygiene and safety for their family. These insensitive comments were especially prevalent in Bhilwara, where, as noted earlier, there is the greatest economic, caste, and educational gap between the para-teachers and their students. Caste and class bias in the brick kiln schools and the danger that could pose to the learning process were noticeably unrecognized by any SSA official that the researchers interviewed. The extent to which these social divisions affects the classroom has not been systematically examined. Most of the parents said that they felt the para-teacher cared about their children and that they would feel comfortable approaching the para-teacher if they had any questions or concerns. However, there was little interaction reported or observed between the parents and the para-teachers, which may have been at least partially due to social divisions. If para-teachers feel uncomfortable or uneasy about their students’ culture or class, it is logical to presume that this will negatively affect their ability to connect with the students appropriately. Cultural training and sensitizing should be incorporated as a part of the training of new para-teachers. Also, when recruiting para-teachers, their ability to empathize with and understand the students at the brick kiln school in relation to their poverty and vulnerability should be accessed and considered in the hiring process. A candidate with lower academic credentials may be selected over one with higher academic credentials if they demonstrate a greater commitment to and experience working with underprivileged children.

4. Language and communication barriers

Closely linked to the issue of culture, was the issue of language and communication. The topic of appropriate language of instruction has, however, received more recognition and discussion. It has been noted by K. K. Sridhar and others that “teachers who rejects the linguistic codes of the *Dalit* child rejects not only the child but also all those who speak the same code including the child's peer group, friends, and parents. The child is forced to make choices between her own world and that of the school and in the process gets totally alienated from the school, leading to dropouts” (as cited in Kabeer et. al., 2003, p. 128). These language barriers are exponentially more serious when the classroom is made up of migrants from all over the country. Sometimes within one brick kiln class, there could be as many as five or six different languages or dialects present. The main languages at the brick kilns in Bhilwara and Gandhinagar were Hindi, Gujarati, Marwari, and Chhattisgarhi but there are a number of other dialects present as well, including regional dialects from UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand. The communication problems at the brick kilns have more dimensions than the average outreach program for *adivasi* or *dalit* children. The different levels of the communication barrier include: between students, between (some or all) students and the para-teacher, between para-teachers and parents, and even between the para-teachers and the administration or other para-teachers (particularly for the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers in Gandhinagar where many of the meetings were held in Gujarati). Fortunately, language is not a new issue in India as the country is home to over 1000 languages and dialects. It is also fortunate that all of the languages present at the brick kilns in both districts with the exception of Gujarati are basically dialects of Hindi. In other industries, such as the power looms near Surat, many of the migrants are from Odisha. In these situations, language is a far more complicated issue because Oriya language tutors and materials are difficult to find in Gujarat. But language is still a major challenge at the brick kilns as well. Para-teachers complained that “sometimes the children are not understanding what we are saying and sometimes we don’t understand what the children are saying.” Another para-teacher explains that “to understand their language, I have to pay attention.” It is unclear whether all of the para-teachers are paying attention. There has been some debate about whether language really is a problem because some para-teachers in classes with students of mixed-dialect origins claim that class is easily taught in Hindi with no problem. Others exclaim that they just cannot communicate with any of the children. As one teacher trainer explains, much of

the communication barrier may come down to the willingness of the individual to attempt to understand the students.

Ironically, despite the large percentage of para-teachers who felt that language was a problem, the parents surveyed were adamant that their children understood Hindi and understood the para-teacher. Only 10% of parents said that the para-teacher had trouble communicating with some of the students. The frustrated para-teachers and often confused-looking students demonstrate that this is not the case and language is still an issue in the brick kiln classes. It is possible that the parents did not understand the question in the way the researcher intended or that this data only further demonstrates how unaware the parents were to what was happening in the brick kiln school.

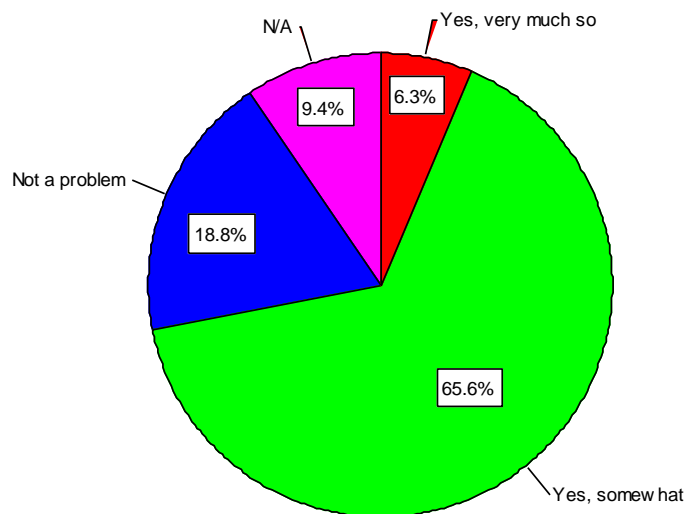


Figure 4. Bhilwara Para-teachers Responses to- Do Language/dialect Differences Between you and your Students make it Difficult for you to teach them?

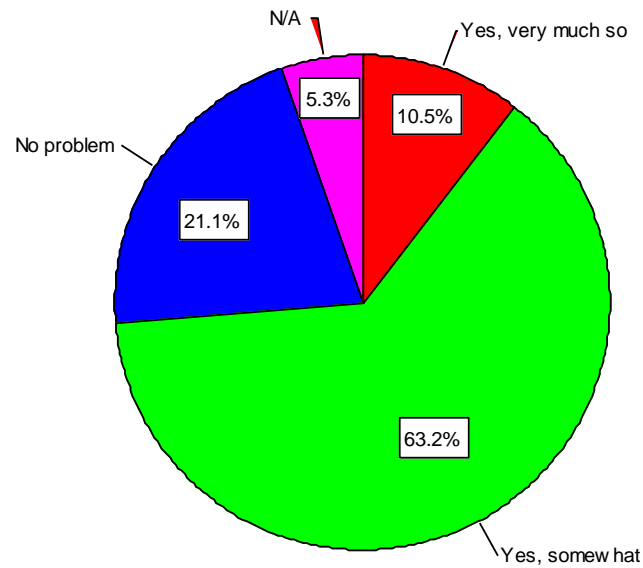


Figure 5. Gandhinagar Para-teachers responses to- Do Language/dialect Differences Between you and your Students make it Difficult for you to teach them?

Gujarati Para-teachers

Language was especially a concern in Gandhinagar because of the large language gap between the Gujarati-speaking locals and the Hindi-speaking migrant workers. Almost all educated Gujaratis know Hindi or at least were taught it in school. However, even within the para-teachers there were varying levels of comfort with the language. Overall, the Gujarati para-teachers ranked their proficiency in Hindi fairly well. On Hindi speaking ability, 28.6% said they were “excellent”, 42.9% said “good” and 21.4% said “ok.” In written ability, only 14.3% gave themselves an “excellent,” 64.3% said they were “good,” and 14.3% felt their skill was only mediocre or “ok.” Observations indicated that their comfort level with Hindi may not be as high as was self-reported. Some of the Gujarati para-teachers frequently slipped into Gujarati or used a Gujarati word instead of its Hindi-equivalent during conversations or class time. Even during a simple activity at one of the training sessions, where the para-teachers were asked to write a paragraph in Hindi about their feelings, a number of the Gujarati para-teachers were unable (or unwilling) to complete the task. Many of those that did complete the task did so by digressing slowly into Gujarati script as they were writing. Some of the Gujarati para-teachers were not even able to complete the survey form used by the researcher (which was only available

in Hindi) because they were not able to understand the questions. For those para-teachers, the survey was orally administered in Gujarati. A few of them who did complete the form themselves, wrote their answers in a Hindi-Gujarati script hybrid. In another activity during the training session, the para-teachers were asked to make number flashcards to be used in teaching math in class. Most of the Gujarati para-teachers struggled greatly in writing the numbers in Hindi (English) script on the cards. These anecdotes are alarming when it is noted that these para-teachers are not only teaching in Hindi, but they are teaching Hindi grammar and numbers to the children. At least a few of the Gujarati para-teachers are teaching their class partially or entirely in Gujarati. One Gujarati para-teacher explained that it was acceptable for her to teach in Gujarati because most of her students were from Dungarpur and so they understand her (despite the fact that there are some students from UP in her class). 30.4% of parents surveyed whose children are taught by a Gujarati para-teacher said that the para-teacher has trouble communicating with some or all students. Prayas staff and the researcher encountered a number of parents during their visits to the brick kilns who complained that the para-teacher was teaching in Gujarati and did not understand the children's language.

The laborer Para-teacher Experiment

The language barrier was the main reason why both Prayas and Gujarat SSA supported the idea of recruiting qualified brick kiln laborers as para-teachers. In 8 of the brick kilns in Gandhinagar, the para-teacher was a Chhattisgarhi laborer but several other brick kilns in the other three pilot districts for the program also had laborer para-teachers (Chhattisgarhi and Marwari). The decision to recruit laborers as para-teachers is based on two beliefs according to Gujarat SSA staff:

1. The laborers will demonstrate a greater sense of commitment to the students and their para-teacher job because they are part of the laborer community and live at the kiln, and
2. The laborers will be better able to communicate with the children because they understand the children's dialect and their situation and background.

The research team attempted to test the validity of all of these beliefs by comparing data and observations of the laborer para-teachers with the Gujarati para-teachers to see which was more effective. The results were mixed and not definitive. The sampling size was also very small and

more research with a larger sampling size is necessary before coming to any solid conclusions regarding the merits of recruiting laborers to teach in this type of situation. Overall, however, the researcher observed that just being a Chhattisgarhi brick kiln laborer did not necessarily mean that the person would be a more effective or dedicated para-teacher. It is summed up best by a field-level official who was in charge of monitoring:

The Chhattisgarhi teachers are only more effective in the case of language because they can communicate with the students in the local dialect. Aside from that, the teachers have the same effectiveness. Some of the Chhattisgarhi teachers . . . have been known to drink wine before school or at the brick kiln around the children. Other Chhattisgarhi teachers . . . are very effective.

There was also evidence that seemed to indicate that the first belief was accurate. The Chhattisgarhi para-teachers ranked slightly higher in approachability, “caring about the children,” and enthusiasm level than the Gujarati para-teachers. The Chhattisgarhi para-teachers were respected members of their community. Without exception the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers were observed to have closer bonds with the students than the average Gujarati para-teacher. However, this did not necessarily translate into greater accountability. According to the Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, based on their extensive research on teacher absenteeism, accountability and beneficiary control require two things to work properly- a demand for the service (education) and a functioning mechanism for affecting providers (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006, p.124). Para-teacher absenteeism was still a problem at a few of the classes run by Chhattisgarhis. At one of the brick kilns where about half of the students in the class were the sons and daughters of the two para-teachers, class was frequently canceled. If para-teachers who are also parents will make the decision to not teach their own children despite being paid for it, it shows that the demand for education amongst the laborer community may not be as high as initially thought. There were also no reported cases of any parents at the brick kiln ever holding a para-teacher “accountable” for poor performance or absenteeism regardless of whether or not they were Chhattisgarhi or Gujarati. The idea that a community member will be more committed or involved in the education program as a para-teacher is based on the premise that education is something that is highly valued by the community. This cannot be assumed. It has been noted in other research by Banerjee and Duflo that “parents do want their children to go to school . . . [but] for many parents, this commitment is perhaps driven more by their sense of what society

expects rather than a strong demand for education itself” (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006, p. 130). Staff at Prayasam in Kolkata also noted this at the brick kilns there and observed that “due to the mundane and hardship filled life of the workers in the kilns they do not have any hope or optimism left in their lives. . . [and] the fact that their children can have a better standard of living does not even come into their dreams” (Prayasam, 2010, p. 41). While there was some variation in perspectives on education between the different groups at the brick kiln, there is overall always going to be a low demand for education at the brick kilns, just given the mere fact that the children were brought to the brick kiln and not left in their village to continue their education. As a general rule, the laborer para-teachers seem to be more committed to their job as para-teacher and are more approachable to the students. But one should not forget the potentially low value that those in the labor community have for education and how that may translate into lower para-teaching quality and no accountability enforcement from the parents.

It was far easier to prove that the second belief was true. Part of what made the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers so successful at engaging the students was their ability to interact with them in the Chhattisgarhi dialect. As mentioned earlier, there were communication issues between the Gujarati para-teachers and most of the students, a problem which was avoided in most of the classes taught by a Chhattisgarhi. Caste and class issues were also a non-issue at the classes taught by the laborers. These points alone make it worthwhile to consider using laborers themselves to teach migrant children at worksite schools.

Table 11

Pros and Cons of Hiring Laborers as Para-teachers at Brick Kilns

Pros of Hiring Laborer Para-teachers	Cons of Hiring Laborer Para-teachers
Ability to understand regional dialect	Language barrier with Gujarati children
Approachability and availability to students and parents, especially for community monitoring	Brick kiln work distracts from teaching duties
Chance of class, caste, and/or culture-based barriers diminished	Possible perceived sense of favoritism or isolation of minority laborer groups
	Not possible to provide extensive training

Hiring laborers is not without its drawbacks. One of the major concerns is whether it is really feasible to ask a person to commit to organizing a class and teaching a group of students

every day when they are already working 12-14 hours a day in the brick kiln. While most of the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers cut back on their working hours in order to teach, 7 out of 10 parents of children who attended a class with a Chhattisgarhi para-teacher said that the para-teachers brick kiln work did interfere with their ability to dedicate their time to teaching. Considering all of the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers were *pathla* workers (which is the most time and labor intensive job at the brick kiln), this is not surprising.

One danger in hiring a laborer as the para-teacher that was not discussed much before the decision to recruit laborers is the problem of favoritism when a member of one cultural community is selected at the brick kiln to teach. In other words, having a Chhattisgarhi para-teacher is great for Chhattisgarhi children but not so great for the children from UP, Gujarat, or Rajasthan. In most of the classes where there was a Chhattisgarhi para-teacher the majority of the students were Chhattisgarhi, which also meant that much of the classroom exchange was in Chhattisgarhi. These classes tended to become more proportionally Chhattisgarhi as the season progressed and non-Chhattisgarhi students stopped attending class regularly. Parents and students from UP or Rajasthan often complained that the class was being taught in a dialect they did not understand. Furthermore, Gujarati children living at the brick kiln (of which there were quite a few especially after members of migrant Gujarati communities arrived in the middle of the season to do *bharai* work) were excluded from educational services because the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers were not able to teach them. There is something to be said about having a neutral para-teacher who is not a member of any of the labor communities who is more likely to engage all of the children on the same level and in the same language.

The hiring of laborers clearly has merits and drawbacks. In spite of this, the researcher is still recommending the recruitment of laborers. However, local SSA officials and the VEC should take into account the demographics and the context of each area and each brick kiln when they recruit laborers to teach. A brick kiln laborer candidate should not automatically trump any local Gujarati just because they speak a local dialect. Most of the stakeholders agree with the recruitment of laborers. 73.9% of the parents surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed with the practice of hiring laborers to teach. Most telling, however, was the fact that 76.9% of the Gujarati para-teachers (who would potentially stand the possibility of losing their job to the

laborers) agreed with the idea of recruiting laborers to teach. This shows that the Gujarati para-teachers were able to recognize the superior ability of the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers to engage and communicate with the majority of the children. The recruitment of laborers for worksite schools is not always possible or feasible such as in Bhilwara, where almost none of the laborers have an education. The possibility must be looked into in a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the education-level of the workers and the context of the situation.

Further research should also be done on whether laborer (or community-based) para-teachers really are more effective and better at engaging students at worksite schools. The SSA of Gujarat should also consider a policy of two para-teachers per class. One effective way of doing this would be to hire one Gujarati local para-teacher and one laborer to work at the school. The laborer would be responsible for ensuring attendance and working with the younger students and the Gujarati para-teacher would work on lesson plans and work with older students. The dynamic of one local and one laborer as a team may go a long way in meeting all of the different language and social needs of the diverse class. In fact, even though they did not work together at the same brick kilns, the Gujarati and Chhattisgarhi para-teachers in Gandhinagar became quite close during the course of the season and were supportive of each other both in trainings and meetings. There is no reason to believe that this cooperation could not extend to the sharing of a classroom between a Gujarati and laborer para-teacher. The district may even decide to shoulder the Gujarati para-teacher with more of the administrative tasks since they will have easier access to the BRC office and staff. Travelling away from the brick kiln for events and trainings was a real challenge for the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers. Another option in areas where there are not qualified laborers for the para-teacher position, the school district should consider hiring a laborer as a “helper” to the para-teacher. This position is already provisioned for under Gujarat’s SSA plan and is called the “Lady Escort.” This helper would be responsible for preparing the class area and ensuring student attendance. They may also be entrusted with working with some of the younger children while the para-teacher works with the other peer-groups. Variations of this model should be tested on some brick kilns in the upcoming year in order to ascertain their effectiveness.

Para- teacher absenteeism

“Neither one of our teachers ever come to the school,” explains one angry 13 year old Chhattisgarhi boy as the research team questioned him and the other crowd of children waiting on the patio for their para-teachers to arrive. The boy explained that he had been studying in Chhattisgarh all the way up until coming to Gujarat. He was excited to hear that there would be a school at the brick kiln so that he could continue his education because he really wanted to learn. He was disappointed, though, when both of the Gujarati para-teachers assigned to his brick kiln were frequently absent and did not challenge him in class. Unfortunately, this is an all-too-common story. The research team did not find the para-teacher present during the school timing in about one third of the school visits they attempted in Gandhinagar. While the research team did not collect quantitative data about para-teacher attendance, they did ask parents about teacher absence. As was mentioned above, this turned out to not be the most effective way of gauging attendance. Many of the parents show a lack of awareness of the para-teachers attendance but some of the parents in Bhilwara were overly eager to defend the “master” (para-teacher) and assured the research team that they were coming every day. It is unclear whether they were telling the truth as it often seemed like they were trying to defend the para-teacher from getting into trouble. In Gujarat, many more parents complained about para-teacher absenteeism and about classes being let out early than in Rajasthan. 26.1% of parents in Gandhinagar said that the para-teacher often did not stay for the full school timing. It was also reported by Prayas staff members, that basically no classes were occurring in Patan and Mehsana district for the first two months of the program despite the fact that para-teachers were being paid.

The most common reason given for the para-teacher’s absence was a para-teacher appointed “*chooti*” (holiday) or half day. Also, the Prayas or CRC monitors in Gandhinagar would often find the Chhattisgarhi para-teacher relaxing or working at the brick kiln when class should have been taking place. When asked, para-teachers cited a diverse set of reasons for their absence including being too busy with other work, having too many errands to run in town, frustration about not being paid monthly honorarium on time, frustrations with the children not wanting to learn, or wanting to attend a cricket match instead. The para-teachers in Gandhinagar developed an elaborate chain of communication via mobile phone where they would frequently

tip each other off when the CRC or Prayas monitor was visiting the brick kilns. It is a little puzzling why absenteeism was such a large problem in Gujarat despite the greater amount of infrastructure and monitoring. However, not only were the para-teachers less qualified and prepared for the position, but they had to deal with more serious cultural and language barriers, issues with the disbursement of payment, supplies, and money for food in class, and were more likely to have a second job. In other words, the para-teaching position may have placed many challenges on the para-teachers in Gujarat which would explain why some of them chose to make themselves absent frequently.

The researcher believes that working to improve the monitoring and training procedure will go a long way to deterring absenteeism. Addressing some of the problems listed above could also help increase teacher attendance. The school district should consider looking into informal monitoring mechanisms as research shows that “institutional monitoring mechanisms (such as visits by the CRC) lose their power” with time (Bannerjee & Duflo, 2006, p. 122). Experiments in beneficiary control or local monitoring have also not been promising as, just as the research team found at the brick kilns, it is difficult to get the families to actually engage enough to monitor the school. Informal mechanisms like the camera program implemented by Seva Mandir in Udaipur with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) are both cost effective and proven to decrease absence rates. In this project, teachers were required to prove their attendance at school daily by taking a time-stamped picture with the students every morning.

Child Absenteeism

Sitting in one of the classes, the researcher has the opportunity to flip through the attendance book of two para-teachers who teach in the same area. Each para-teacher has over 20 students on their roster (about 50 in total), but there are only 14 students in the class that day (and most of them arrived late). When looking at the past month, it is clear that most of the children whose names are on the roster have only come to school 1-5 times. Only a handful of children have attended class in the 22-28 days range which would be expected in one month and most of those children were the sons and daughters of the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers. This was not an isolated incident. As the season progressed, the number of children attending class dwindled. At most of the brick kilns only about half of the children whose names are on the roster were actually attending when the research team visited the class. Usually the children

could be found just in another area of the brick kiln playing or watching their siblings during the class time. Sometimes, as in the case with the Marwari boys mentioned earlier in this chapter, the children are working in the brick kiln instead of attending class. Based on classroom observations, there are a few main reasons why the researcher believes many of the children are not attending class regularly:

- 1) **Low quality of education.** If the class is disorganized and unstructured, the students often demonstrate a lower level of interest in attending. Also, many of the children who have some educational background get bored with the classes and do not feel challenged.
- 2) **The children are working.** As was cited earlier, 41.5% of the children are working in the brick kiln and 46.2% do some household work or childcare. They may not be able to attend school simply because they are too busy.
- 3) **No family support for their education.** The parents demonstrated both apathy for the education program and a lack of awareness of how it was functioning. Many of the parents were unable to answer even basic questions like what time the school runs and whether their children enjoyed attending. This indicates that they are not having discussions in the home with their children about their education. Most of the parents indicated that they would be willing to contribute nothing financially to their child's education. According to the para-teachers surveyed, about 10-20% of the parents were not supportive of the school. While many of the parents showed good intentions and claimed they wanted to give their child an education, their lack of understanding of the system and the necessity of their children's' labor for the sustenance of the family led them to be far less supportive of the school in actuality than they claimed to be.
- 4) **Absence of active recruitment to the school.** In at least one case, students did not attend because the location of the nearest brick kiln school was too far away. Sometimes there was a lack of awareness of the school's existence or the para-teacher simply did not make the children attend.

Attendance issues at the brick kiln schools should, in theory, not be a problem since the children are not actually far away from the school. Sometimes they are simply playing in the dirt 50 feet away from where the para-teacher is teaching; but the para-teacher does not make them attend. More children attending the class means more work for the para-teacher who is already

overwhelmed by the number and diversity of students actually attending. Rajasthan SSA has devised an effective mechanism of ensuring that the para-teachers demand the attendance of their students. Para-teachers are paid per student they teach which creates a direct incentive for them to ensure attendance of as many children at the brick kiln as possible. The para-teachers in Bhilwara would often arrive early and enlist a few overly eager students with the task of finding all of the other students and getting them to come to the class meeting area. In Gandhinagar, where there was no incentive to increase the attendance, para-teachers were noticeably less eager to hunt down missing students at the brick kiln.

There are a number of innovative ways of ensuring student attendance. All of the para-teachers agreed that the Mid-day Meal (or snack which was provided in Gandhinagar) helped to encourage attendance of students. In addition, school uniforms “inspire a sense of belonging and ownership of the school for the children using its services” and have been proven to reduce school absenteeism by 6.4 percentage points (Evans et. al., 2009, p. 2). School uniforms were also one of the things that para-teachers listed as needed items for the improvement of the brick kiln school. They are also necessary for practical reasons considering most of the children wear clothing that is ripped, dirty, and ill-fitting. Another strategy that could be tested would be a variation of a Conditional Cash Transfer (in the style of Mexico’s *Progresa* plan) or a scholarship. In effect, parents could be asked to sign an agreement at the beginning of the brick kiln season that they would comply with certain demands such as 1) ensuring daily attendance of their children in the brick kiln school, 2) ensuring that their child would complete the STP/SMK program by the end of the brick kiln season (or some other benchmark), 3) promising that they would attend parent-teacher meetings at the brick kiln, and 4) that they would not make their child work in the kiln. If the parents are found to have met their part of the deal, they would be given a cash sum at the end of the brick kiln season. This money would also help to compensate for any lost wages they would suffer from not using their child’s labor in the brick making process. While there is more logistical planning that needs to be made before implementing a program like this, it would certainly be worth testing in a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) in order to assess its cost effectiveness.

Summary of Findings

- There was a lack of structure and consistent use of lesson plans and/or workbooks by the para-teachers which led to variation in quality from class to class.
- Rote memorization was the most commonly witnessed teaching strategy.
- The brick kiln classes were multi-grade and multi-lingual which made it an especially difficult learning environment despite the use of “peer-learning” strategies by the para-teachers.
- Many of the older students, especially the ones who had some previous education, did not feel challenged in the class and often would stop attending.
- The presence of infants in the class was a major distraction to the learning process and highlights the serious need for Anganwadi services at the brick kilns.
- The researcher encountered several children with developmental or cognitive disabilities. Unfortunately, the special needs of these children are not being met at the brick kiln by anyone with expertise in the subject.
- 53.9% of the local Gujarati para-teachers said that cultural barriers made it difficult to teach the children. The percentage was slightly lower in Bhilwara due to the fact that the Rajasthani para-teachers saw no cultural difference between themselves and the Marwari children at the brick kilns.
- Para-teachers cited 1) language and dialect, 2) food and lifestyle (especially meat and alcohol consumption), and 3) cleanliness and clothing as the major “cultural” barriers between them and the brick kiln labor community. This highlights class insensitivity.
- Over 60% of the para-teachers thought that language and/or dialect was a serious barrier to their ability to teach the students.
- Many of the Gujarati para-teachers struggled to teach in proper Hindi and demonstrated that their actual ability in the language may be less than they self-reported.
- The Chhattisgarhi laborers who were recruited as para-teachers were not necessarily more or less effective. While they did seem to be more connected with the students, they were not necessarily more susceptible to beneficiary control by the brick kiln laborers.
- There was evidence that their brick kiln work distracted some Chhattisgarhi para-teachers from performing their job effectively. Also, the Chhattisgarhi para-teachers often had

difficulty communicating with non-Chhattisgarhi students. A few of the laborer families complained of favoritism and that the classes were being taught in Chhattisgarhi.

- Para-teacher absenteeism was rampant mostly due to inadequate monitoring. Trainings and weekly meetings seemed to be helpful in preventing absenteeism.
- Student absenteeism was also rampant likely due to 1) the low quality of the classes, 2) the children working in the kiln, 3) low family support, 4) and the absence of active recruitment to the school.
- In Bhilwara, para-teachers were paid per student attendance per month. This seemed to be an effective strategy to get para-teachers to ensure student attendance.

Conclusion

Reflections on the Future of Education for the Children of Migrant Brick Kiln Workers

This paper has provided an in-depth comparative analysis of pilot educational outreach programs for the children of migrant brick kiln workers in Gandhinagar, Gujarat and Bhilwara, Rajasthan. Unfortunately, little learning was observed at the brick kilns during this pilot phase of the program. The researcher believes that this was mostly due to underdeveloped curriculum and inadequate para-teacher support. As was seen by everyone involved in the programs, brick kilns are an especially difficult location to pilot an education program for the following reasons:

- Inadequate living conditions and health standards at the brick kiln
- The prevalence of child labor
- The seasonal nature of brick kiln work
 - The brick kiln season is in the middle of the normal school session meaning students miss almost the entire school year due to migration
 - There is a need for a full new survey of the children at every brick kiln every season which is both cost and time intensive
 - The start and end time of the brick kiln season can fluctuate and families come and go at different times throughout the season
 - The seasonality of the industry limits the quality of the recruitment drive and training of laborers as para-teachers
- Diverse student body
 - From different regions and cultural communities
 - Language and dialect differences between students
 - A wide age range in each class
 - Students are from different educational backgrounds and are at different levels academically
- The transferability of the education provided in the brick kiln to the native village of the student

For these reasons, worksite schools should be seen as a temporary fix to a problem which requires a larger and more sustainable solution. Seasonal migration has a negative effect on the education, safety, and health of children. Since most families report that they are unable to leave their children in the village when they migrate due to lack of finances or a place to leave them, residential hostels can be an effective strategy when implemented in source areas. The American India Foundation's (AIF) innovative Learning and Migration Program (LAMP) provides hostels

for the children of seasonal migrants to live in within their own village so that the children do not have to migrate with their families. Smita, director of educational initiatives at AIF, explains:

Bridge courses and work site schools/ centres are transient measures by nature, whereas seasonal hostels are a longer term solution for migration-prone geographies. While initially all three options need to run simultaneously to ensure every child has access, over time the need for bridge courses and site schools should reduce, and more children should have the option of staying in hostels and going to the school in their home village. (Smita, 2008, p. 27)

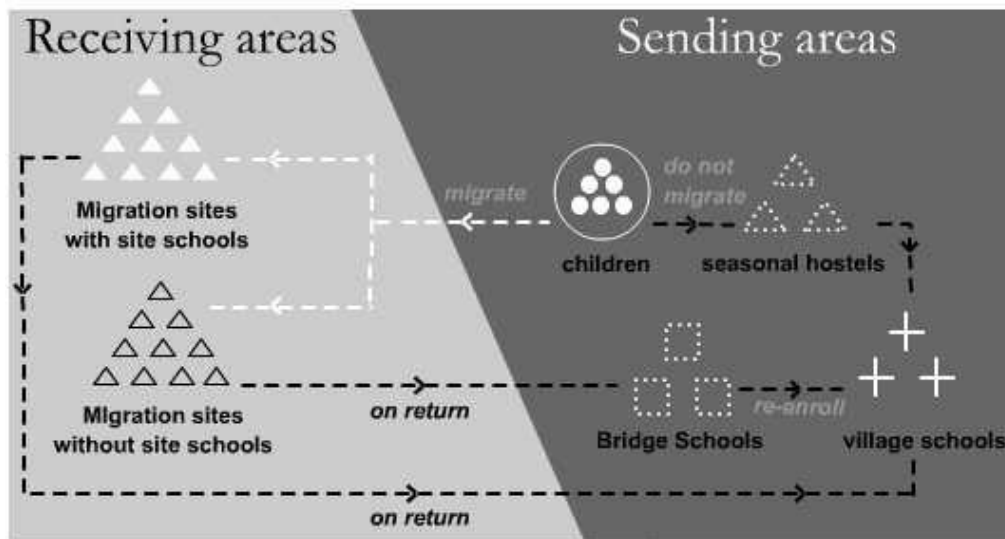


Figure 6. Strategy for Ensuring the Education of Children in Migration-Prone Areas

Notes: Source: Smita 2007 (as cited in Smita, 2008, p. 27)

Worksite schools, though not a perfect solution, are still an important part of meeting the educational needs of migrant children. As long as children continue to migrate to the brick kilns with their families, source states have an obligation to provide worksite schools to meet their educational needs. However, neither the STP nor the SMK model can offer a sustainable solution to the educational needs of these children by their very definition. These types of programs are temporary and need-based school readiness programs; they are not schools. The Right to Education Act of 2009 (RTE) effectively abolished alternative schooling centers. Prior to the RTE Act, a number of NGOs and schools districts were using the alternative schooling model outlined by the SSA to meet the educational needs of hard-to-reach populations like migrant children. In fact, due to RTE guidelines, Prayasam, the NGO which ran Multiple Activity

Centers (MACs) and classes at brick kilns near Kolkata is no longer able to receive funding from the West Bengal government for their schools. The MACs, which included community activities, classes for school-aged children, and day care service, were categorized as alternative schooling. Under the RTE Act, all identified out-of-school children must be mainstreamed into regular government schools through a short stint in a special training program.

Clearly the brick kiln STP and SMK classes were functioning as de facto alternative schooling. No attempt was made to mainstream them into the local educational system because they are only seasonal residents of the area and will soon return to their village. The local SSA offices, constrained by the RTE guidelines, attempted to adapt their STP and SMK model to a situation it was not designed to address. The situation is compounded by the diversity of students that could be found at a brick kiln. Within a brick kiln classroom there could be:

1. Never-enrolled students
2. Students who attended school sporadically in their village but who are not at a grade-appropriate level
3. Students who attended a village school regularly until migrating who are at or near their equivalent grade level academically
4. Students who completed the STP or SMK program last year (theoretically)

Children who fall into group 1 or 2 can benefit from a STP or SMK program because it can prepare them for re-entry into school at a grade-appropriate level upon returning to their village. Students who are in group 3 or 4 should not be in a STP or SMK class. Once a student has been brought up to their age-appropriate grade level, they are supposed to be re-entered into the regular school system. Students who fall into group 3 or 4 should be enrolled in a local government school (of the appropriate language medium). If Hindi-medium schools are not accessible to the student then the SSA should look into other options such as other local Hindi-medium private schools or tutoring. Whenever possible, local school officials should attempt to place migrant children into local schools. In some cases where there are large clusters of brick kilns in one area, it may be advantageous to set up an actual school to cater to the student's needs rather than continuing to utilize a temporary program model. Proper infrastructure from books, to a classroom to trained teachers are an important part of making a functional and effective educational program.

Ensuring the education of migrant children is a complex and often under-addressed issue in India. More coordination and tracking of the migration of children is necessary in order to ensure that these children are not slipping through the cracks. It has been noted by other researchers that:

The dynamics of migration renders small scale programs ineffective, therefore for interventions to be effective they must have expansive coverage. Lost distance and or inter-state migrations may also necessitate collaborative work among multiple agencies.

(Smita, 2008, p. 31)

The special needs of migrant children need to be discussed at the local, state, and national level and states need to consider migration patterns when making their educational plans. States must coordinate and communicate in order to track the migration of children between states. Gujarat has piloted an innovative new tracking system called the Migration Monitoring System (MMS) which is an online database of every migrant child in the district. Unfortunately, sending regions have shown little interest in the database and in tracking the seasonal migration of children in their districts. This database has great potential and the national SSA office should take the initiative and press states to expand the use of this database. Inter-state districts need to have a platform for regular communication, sharing of curriculum, and tracking of the migration between them. Sending regions could help with para-teacher recruitment and send local teachers to Gujarat or Rajasthan to work with the children. Sending regions also need to take responsibility for ensuring that children re-enroll in school at the appropriate level after returning from their migration. Overall, any strategy that seeks to address the educational needs of migrant children in India needs to be nation-wide and establish platforms and frameworks for tracking of students and cross-state communication and collaboration.

Finally, school officials need to collaborate with other agencies like ICDS, health services, and industry regulatory offices. The educational potential of the students in worksite schools is hindered by their unsafe living situation at a worksite where basic safety, labor, and child protection laws are regularly flouted. The root causes of migrant families problems need to be addressed at the same time as bridging the educational gaps of their children. It is impossible to expect a child to be able to receive a proper education if their family is facing exploitative working conditions and frequent seasonal distress migration. Education is a universal right to all

Indian children. It is also the only way out of poverty for most of the children of migrant labors. It will take a concerted effort and careful planning and cooperation between all actors to ensure that these vulnerable children do not slip through the cracks of the Indian education system. The programs piloted in Gandhinagar, Gujarat and Bhilwara, Rajasthan are a step in that direction.

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