



SHUKHAR FOUNDATION

OUR JOURNEY

Before I jump into our next day activities, it is important for me to stress that every successful trip of this magnitude requires a dedicated team on location. Our greatest blessing has been having a team that is par excellence in both Bhavnagar and Porbandar. Our every need has been anticipated and met with dedication and enthusiasm. We can simply not function without them. From receiving us at the airport at 4 am to planning every detail of the trip setting us all up for success. A big standing ovation to Nasreen Nathani, Dr. Parvez Nathani, Rukhsana Lakhani, Arif Lakhani, and Salim, our driver.



Our Gujarat team receiving us at the airport at 4 am.

We traveled north from Ahmedabad to Sidhpur to visit Aga Khan School and Hostel. Here, we have 41 girls in various grades studying and living. Razia felt like she was here only yesterday!

The vice principal gave us a warm welcome and we discussed the challenges the school is facing. The school is anticipating a new principal will be in place within a month or two.



Our team with the vice principal of The Aga Khan School Sidhpur.

One of the biggest challenges discussed is the recruiting and retention of teachers as some of these schools are tucked in remote areas where the student population is mostly children of farmers. In particular, recruiting science teachers is a challenge that have more lucrative offers in larger cities and would have to uproot their families to relocate. The remuneration package would have to be attractive enough to find long term committed teachers.

In the past, we have always maintained 20 – 25 students in Sidhpur. The last 2 years brought an additional 25 girls to our doorstep. This was because COVID affected not only people here but everywhere. Many lost their source of income regardless of whether they had jobs or ran small businesses. Some students lost a parent. Sadly, during COVID many sponsors also faced hardships and walked away from their sponsorship responsibility. On the other hand due to inflation school fees have gone up as well, This left the dependent girls in a very vulnerable situation and us, the foundation, having to scramble to find alternate sponsors.



Our team with the girls at Sidhpur Hostel.

We had a lovely meal at the hostel that was hosted by a donor whose family also joined us before we started meeting with the girls. We interacted with each and every sponsored girl, all 41 of them, and each had a unique story to tell. Soon we will be sharing these stories with the sponsors, but here are some of the stories we documented from these girls that are truly gut wrenching and require a solution.



Shifa Barakatali Mulani

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Shifa was placed in a school in Maliya and was expelled for some odd reasons. Hence, she missed one whole year of schooling before she was picked up again by our foundation. She was placed in the Sidhpur school and has developed skills as an aspiring artist. However, she was very weepy and asked if we would be kind enough to bring her older sister who is unwell in Mumbai to Sidhpur school so that they can support each other.



Priya Nayani:

We have previously posted Priya's story on our website <https://shukhar.org/>. Priya has lost both her parents and was in the care of her Motabapa and Motima. Sadly, her Motabapa passed away during COVID. The Motima runs a small convenience store that barely provides for basic expenses. We

also have her brother called Lucky Nayani in our Junagadh hostel program. Priya's glasses are broken and require replacement that the Motima is unable to provide. She also needs additional funds for travel and clothing. We will be meeting Lucky in Junagadh and see what we can do to help them.



Sanya Navinbhai Dewani:

Sanya's mother has remarried and it has only been a month, leaving Sanya worried if her stepfather will be accepting of her. Her mother was supported by our welfare aid program. We will stop supporting her mother and instead consider providing support to her grandmother provided she will take responsibility of caring for Sanya.



It was reassuring to see so many girls working hard and thriving under our program. The goodbye was long with the girls waving at us till we turned the corner and lost sight of each other.

Next, we depart to go to areas surrounding Bhavnagar where we will meet more volunteers who are actively involved in our Foundation. All the way from Kutch to Ahmedabad, we are fortunate enough to have a total of 50 volunteers who work hand in hand with us and provide vital support. Our net is thrown over a large area covering not only Bhavnagar but Sihore, Palitana, Barwada, Valbhipur, Mahuva, Timbi, Talaja, Jaffrabad and more.
