

Shishukunj Medical Camp December 2011 @ Junagadh

~ a personal account by Harshadbhai

Please note as this report has many photos, the file size would be very large – so a compressed version has been created which may make the photos resolution low.

December 24, 2011 – Shishukunj Medical Camp arrival

The Christmas Eve day began on the train still in-transit to Junagadh, Gujarat. Enjoying the sound of the train hitting the track “Thadak, Thadak..” we journeyed from town to town, enjoying the vast landscape from Rajasthan state to Gujarat. It was breathtaking to see the greenery, the temples, the farms, the fields, the people and the vast climatic changes whiz by as we made our way through peaceful India. In my opinion, at the 1000 Foot level, India is on auto-pilot where each cast, creed, lifestyle, economics, social interactions are simply happening day-in and day-out and everyone is propelling in harmony. The train as it stopped at each station, I observed the commotion of people and the hustle and bustle to get on the train or get off in short time (less than 5 minutes). “Pakora, Pakora..chai, chai” was heard in the distance. We did enjoy the “station” Tea along with the homemade (by SIS) Theplas, Shak and spicy pickles for lunch. Once again job well done by the organizers to think of all the details and keep the entourage of 108 people happy! 😊. Life on the train is yet another subject and will save it for next time.





We arrived at Junagadh station at around 4:00PM and had to quickly shuffle all the bags and ourselves off the train in less than 5 minutes. It was scene to see where all of sudden we wore the hat of a porter. All the dis-embarking took place without a hitch and luckily the coaches outside the station were waiting to transport us to the BET compound. It took us around 40 minutes to reach Charparda, Visavadar Taluka. Everyone was energized and in good mood.

To my surprise and I am assuming the same for all, when we arrived in the compound we had a very warm welcome by the students residing at the BET compound, organization called Bhramanand Parivar. We were known to them as Shishukunj International Members.





It included band playing the tune of Bhangra / contemporary music with Dhol beats, the auspicious welcome chandlas and a rose was given to each member. It was a moment to cherish and what a grand kick off to our camp for the Sewa work. These welcome and the logistics were organized by Mr. Sanjaybhai and the children of BET. Harishbhai and other organizers coordinated our room details and got everyone settled in their living quarters within an hour or so.



As the sun was setting in, I managed to walk out on to a terrace. At that very moment I felt a chill in my body, simply because of what I had just experienced; true beauty of what India has to offer. I felt connected with people. The total strangers made us feel at home within minutes, which I would have expected at a wedding (Jaan) but not out in the middle of breathtaking vista of nature and human life blended in the cornerstone of India.



As we settled in and after dinner, most of the children retired for the day. However a group of us led by Pritiben, Rameshbhai and other Sakhi Sewa members had to set-up the Medical camp at the newly constructed hospital (minus the equipment). It was about ½ a mile from the compound. We decided to walk to the site. I remember, the evening was very pleasant, slight chill in the breeze and under starry night, these walk was very refreshing. I could have walked for miles!

This camp was organized to be an inauguration of the Hospital and to make the regional community aware of it. Prior to our arrival there were local media and community promotions blitz to inform the public about the camp.

Immediately after we arrived, everyone began the hard work of organizing the camp. It included arranging tables in the greeting area; setting of the pharmacy; hanging the banners and informational charts, preparing Doctor/patient rooms, setting up computers to display hygiene videos, cleaning the place from construction dust. Few of the Karayakars organized the logistics of how patients will flow from one station to the next.







During this time, I observed excellent team work and camaraderie; true hallmark of Shishukunj members in full action.

December 25, 2011 – Bharat Dharshan Medical Camp

The Christmas day began for me on the Terrace (Agasi) at 5:30AM. I saw a beautiful sunrise and observed how the day in the compound came alive. Once again I felt connected with India and all my hustle and bustle life in America and elsewhere was momentarily erased. I was excited to see how the day would unfold.





A group of members decided to start the Christmas day with a humble message. They used pebbles and recycled rose petals to showcase their message outside the main lobby area. All the BET children who passed from their lodging to dining were greeted with this message. Everyone smiled as they turned their head sideways to read the message. It was great way to start a beautiful day!



Manishbhai led a yoga session at around 7:00AM. The Surya Namaskar was recited several times as the sun began radiating its energy and awakening us from within. It was a peaceful transition.



This was followed by breakfast in the dining hall. The fresh fruits, home-made breads and cereal & biscuits were served by the boys with hot milk, and my favorite Garam Chai!





The BET houses over 2000 children (approx. 1900 boys and 160+ girls). Most of the children are either from broken families, economically challenged at home, or orphans. It also has senior citizen quarters, a blind school and a veterinary area to care for sick animals. There were acres of gardens with lines of home grown vegetables and fruit trees, all grown in organic, cultivated, naturally irrigated, very fertile soil. Everybody in the compound had a purpose and felt at home. I was touched by that the seniors fill their day helping in the compound. For example, they cut vegetables in early morning hours for the next meal.



For our Shishukunj children this Christmas day quickly became the one for giving and not receiving.



At around 8:30, we all made our way to the Medical Camp. The community people had already started gathering. The welcome party was awaiting arrival of Bapu and other chief guests to bless this day and inaugurate the hospital.





There were people of all ages that lined up to receive the care. Our teams were divided into several groups – Greeters, registration, entertainers, doctor office, pharmacy, etc. The goal was to flow patients through a process of registration, take vital signs, see a doctor, submit their Rx and fill & give the medication with instructions. Also while waiting for any of the services we had organized to entertain the crowd. We even had rooms allocated for them to watch Hygiene videos. Sounds simple right! Now multiply these services for 600-1000 people expected on this first day. We had set our cut off time of 3:30PM.

The opening ceremony began with Bapu's arrival and followed with lighting of the diyas, prathnas, speeches by dignitaries, and Aarti. Our badakoos had the privilege to sit with BET children and sang our Shishukunj prathnas with great pride and fulfillment. Outside the crowd was getting larger and everyone was anxious and ready to start the Sewa work.



Behind the ceremonies in the lobby, preparations were well on the way in the back. The entertainers got ready.





At around 10:00 we officially began seeing the patients. The lines for children, adults, and seniors were divided and moved them slowly through the registration desk and vital signs area. Each patient was given a wrist band for identification and match them to the paperwork completed as they moved to each vital sign station – Weight, blood pressure, height, temperature etc.





Also, the entertainment group kept the crowd enthused and smiles on everyone faces were in abundance not just the receivers but the givers! Sewa work was being demonstrated from the hearts and mind of our Shishukunj children.





Once inside the hospital, the patients were assisted from one area to another, some needing more than others. There was entertainment inside as well while the patients waited to see the doctor. This time the entertainment had some messages of Hygiene and safety. Samuben led the chorus and rest followed.





Bapu and honored guests witnessed our work first hand as they made their rounds.



The pharmacy began processing the Rx request and by noon had an overwhelming inflow of them. They did their best to turn them around. This was an area that was working frivoloously at the same time being very cautious of placing correct medication in the patient's tray. We had our own pharmacists, Hansaben and Anantiben to inspect the tray before dispensing them to the patient. The process of dispensing became complex as the correct dosages written by the Doctor had to be calculated and breaking the medication packages in supply to fulfill them. Outside the pharmacy crowd began gathering waiting to receive their medication.





Due to large number of patients flowing through the process this unfortunately became the bottleneck area. Everything from Entertainment, Hygiene Videos, and offering listening ear to the patients were the best options we had while Pharmacy fulfilled the medication. Some of us lost our voice in our attempt to control the demand by our patients. It got little bit chaotic.



We found no time for lunch and rounds of breaks came and went. Everyone worked so hard to offer the best service possible. When the challenge was presented in front of us, all Shishukunj members pitched in to do their level best to listen and fulfill each patient wishes.

The registration desk was closed at around 4:30pm after seeing everyone waiting for the services. Not a single person was refused or turned back. By 6:30pm we had the crowd tapering off and by 7:30 we closed down for the day. Unfortunately there were left over filled prescription that remained uncollected. We all hoped that the patients would come next day to collect them.

By this time most of the volunteers had returned to the BET compound. After freshening up, we had an opportunity to sit with Bapu who offered a Baudhik session. We had dinner at around 8:30PM and thereafter most of the children retired for the day by 9:30pm. The senior organizers met again to hear

feedback and discuss any areas of improvement for the next day. The bottleneck situation of the pharmacy dispensing was discussed and a well thought out plan was devised to tackle it.

December 26, 2011 – Bharat Dharshan Medical Camp day two

The day began the same way as the previous day. We were all at the camp by 8:30 where lines had already formed for waiting patients. Also today Children of BET were scheduled for a checkup. Since there were no ceremonies to conduct, we began seeing the patients by 9:00. Everyone’s spirit was very high and somehow I observed no lack of motivation and initiative. Everyone was somewhat seasoned from the previous day and looking forward to carrying out the mission of the day!

The entertainment was in full swing with Harshadbhai inviting the Children of BET to sing their favorite songs. Also he entertained curiosity questions of lifestyle in America and upon request showed US Dollar currency. The children were intrigued indeed. Meanwhile other Shishukunj members entertained elsewhere. The time past quickly and the lines moved efficiently.





Registration desk managed a steady flow of patients all day.



There was an ambulance service that transported community members from faraway places. We heard people came to the camp from as far as 100 Kilometers, for our services.



Inside the flow was also seamless and everyone was in a more jovial mood. All the adjustments made in the pharmacy dispensing area worked flawless. In fact at the end of the day we realized we processed more prescriptions this day and in less time and no left overs. Our Children interacted with interest and affection as they entertained and showed Hygiene videos.





In the mid-afternoon there was a group of handicapped children who came for the services. By looking at this one picture below tells many stories; two people sharing one wheel chair, person standing/walking on one leg without crutches. They all had many smiles to share and in turn it made us welcome them and serve with a smile in return.



By 4:00 we had managed to see everyone and finally began to wrap up. It was much better day where it must have seen over 800 patients and dispensed over 500 prescriptions. The final papers were sorted and left over medication was repackaged destined for various locations to be used by other camps or clinics. Most of the Shishukunj had returned back to the BET compound by 4:30.



By 5:00, remaining crew managed to completely pack-up and move out. A tractor was used for transporting the boxes and the team managed to take a photo as the sun was setting in the background.



Upon return to the compound, it was refreshing to see the Shishukunj and BET children having a friendly game of soccer as the darkness set in.



After quickly refreshing ourselves, senior Karyakars were called to meet with Bapu at his residence.



The meeting was cordial and interesting points were discussed. Bhaskarbhai gave feedback on his observation of the school and Bapu listened with interest. In particular the discussion led to how the BET schools could be improvised, hearing viewpoints of educational methods used by in other parts of the world. Other topics were discussed. A final point hit home when Bapu made an announcement of an honorable partnership between BET and Shishukunj International. He was very impressed in how our children performed the Sewa work and was extending a hand in partnership to share our spirit with theirs. Our Karayakars were humbly touched by this gesture and accepted this verbal agreement.



After dinner, at request of Bapu, everyone gathered in the assembly hall. Prior to his arrival, Dr. _____ started the session by saying how wonderful the two day camp was conducted to the children. He specially invited few selected children of BET to sit with us to learn from our experience as we exchanged our views. This was an extension of Bapu's interest in strengthening our partnership.



Upon arrival of Bapu, he opened the forum to anyone to ask him any question. The very first question from Rashaubhai was “Why there are all the hitchakas (Swings) everywhere?” leading to curiosity why Bapu likes to sit on them. Bapu gave a response that it helps him to think and answer questions while being in the mood of relaxation. Bharatbhai became the interpreter for the evening and translated to English for those who could not understand Gujarati or vice versa. After a healthy discussion the evening was concluded by presenting Bapu, senior Dr Shikharina and Sanjaybhai a token gift (Tortoise). These were presented by selected Shishukunj members. A final picture was taken with Bapu and our Shishukunj children. This was a memorable end to the evening.



In summary and reflection, this two-day Medical camp was very special for everyone involved. Honorable Bapu and BET saw their dream of the Hospital become a reality with the inauguration ceremony. The community at large received wonderful free clinic services and had increased awareness of the hospital. The BET children saw how Shishukunj children offered much more than a service and receiving care for themselves. For our Shishukunj children, they realized that ounce of SEWA work returned one thousand folds of joy and more. For the organizers these feat was an outstanding success of managing logistics of giving medical care to large number of people in short amount of time including medication distribution and coordination of tasks between teams, and finally celebration of their success. All in all, many hearts were touched, many smiles were shared, and many experiences to take home.

As for me, one personal moment had me in tears. One lady who must have been in late 80's had traveled a long distance to visit the camp and was there at around 8:00AM on day-one. She abided by the queuing we had setup and in silence waited for her turn. She must have seen the Doctor at around 12:00 or so and waited in the medication dispensing area till her prescription was called at around 3:00. Imagine spending your entire day waiting to know when your turn will come. She did not complain once. When I presented her the medication, she held my hands firmly and said "bhagwan tameri buo dai kare" (God will bless you all) "Tame ameri sewa karo cho, tamoro kubaj abahar" (All of you, taking care of us, a big thank you). She had tears in her eyes as she uttered these wonderful words. Then she began to bow down to touch my feet. I held her from doing so and instead I asked for her blessings and bowed down to hers. I was in tears and then I tapped Bharatbhai to save me from this emotional

moment and he too felt the same when he greeted her. This moment touched our core. I am sure many of you reading this report had their similar moment as well.

I want to end this report with the picture that tells the whole story. Look in the eyes of the child. It captivates the reason why we were there and why our Sewa work spoke volumes in the process. Be proud that our Shishukunj flagship of SEWA was flying high for these two days.



God Bless and Baal Devo Bhav!

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This report was written to best of my recollection. Please forgive me for any grammatical errors, omissions or incorrect statements.