

Questions for Site Visit Volunteer
SOS Hermann Gmeiner Higher Secondary School – a project of SOS Children's Villages
of Sindh

Important notes

We want to get a general feel about the following:

(i) How the parents feel about the higher secondary school compared to other schools in the area.

The parents saw it as a cost effective school compared to other private schools in the area (City Smart School and The Educators). They were satisfied with the education standard and reported good results in school and board examinations.

(ii) We want to determine if there is a critical need/demand for this school and get a sense of the demography of the community

The community comprises primarily of lower middle class and lower class households. The students are mostly from adjoining areas with little commuting. The parents saw it as the best alternative to other private schools in the area and expressed a need for higher capacity to accommodate more students from their own families or their neighborhoods.

(iii) How long will it take for the construction to be complete? When will the school be up and running?

The school administration stated that they are ready to start construction in October 2014 and they are looking to complete it in 6 months in order to make the building ready for the next school year starting in August 2015.

It will be great if we could see **photos and videos** of the existing school, classrooms, area around the school, children and SOS team.

Photos have been provided.

Questions to ask parents

1. What value do you see in this higher secondary school? What are the reasons you would send your children to this school versus others in the area?

Parents reported a good standard of education and other facilities especially for sports activities. They also reported that the fees were on the higher side but much lower compared to other private schools in the area (SOS = PKR 1100 – 1200, City School = PKR 3500, Educators = PKR 2500). Parents primarily sent their children here due to the physical proximity of the SOS school to their residences and a decent standard of education compared to the more expensive schools in the area. They also cited the infrastructure and facilities for physical activities as a primary reason.

2. Is the monthly fees affordable? (if possible, try to gauge monthly fees as a percentage of their monthly income)

The parents with single children in the school reported it as affordable. The parents that had multiple children in the school reported problems in affording all the fees.

3. Is there a demand for higher secondary education for girls?

The ratio of male and female students was almost 50-50. They reported a general demand for higher secondary education which included girls and boys. It is an urban area so there is no problem with access for girls or social restrictions on their education or problems with coeducation.

4. Are parents comfortable sending their daughters to the SOS school and not other schools?

Yes, the parents seemed very comfortable sending their girls to the SOS school as evident from the even ratio of girls and boys. They also didn't have a problem with coeducation as they thought it was good for their confidence.

5. Is there any other critical need in that area e.g. electricity, water shortage, etc.

No.

Questions to ask SOS team

1. How was the need of this school determined? (was a survey was done etc.)

They did not conduct an official survey. They have determined the need by the admissions they had to reject due to lack of capacity.

2. What is the broader impact of this project on the community?

Comparatively low cost schooling with a decent standard of education and good facilities.

3. When will the school start enrolling students? (next school year? or as soon as the construction is completed?)

The admissions will be made for the next school year as mentioned in my response to the question about the completion of construction.

4. With 300 new expected students, operating costs (staff costs) will increase a lot. Is the school financially sustainable?

They said that the revenues that they will generate from the new admissions will be nearly sufficient and in case they need some additional support their patrons will fund them. However I was not shown any business plan/forecast about the expected revenues and costs or the projected P&L.

5. Will SOS be able to get enough teachers for the higher secondary school? Have teachers already been interviewed and/or positions for teachers advertised?

They said recruitment will be carried out next year a few months before the new academic year starts. The SOS team expressed confidence that there were enough qualified teachers/professionals in the vicinity for them to recruit.

6. From our market research, the construction cost for the SOS school (3000 per sq. ft.) is on the higher side. Is there any particular reason for this (what building components are more expensive than other schools in the area)?

They cited quality of construction as the reason for the higher per square foot cost of the project. They said that the cost could vary from PKR 1,500 to above PKR 3,000 per square foot and they were certainly at the higher end in that regard.

7. Do you have estimated/projected student enrolment numbers for Classes 6-8 (the secondary school classes) for the next 1-3 years?

As mentioned in my previous response they said that they had made the enrollment and revenue forecasts and shared it with the ADP team.

Questions to ask teachers

1. What is the survival rate of students (the 40-60 they currently have) going to the higher secondary school?

They said the survival rate could be 100 percent when the proposed construction is complete. However, currently they cited a lack of capacity which did not allow them to induct all their class 10 graduates to enroll with them for classes 11 and 12.

2. Is there any parent or community involvement in the functions of the school? How is their feedback assessed?

The parents are involved in sporting and other cultural activities (dramas, stage shows, art fair, science fair, etc). They also cited the capacity of the school to conduct these activities as a major reason why they prefer the SOS school.

3. Have the parents of the children in your class expressed any wishes and/or comments regarding construction of a secondary school?

The parents said it would make things easier for them to have their kids go to one school from the lower grades to the 12th class without switching schools. However, the parents with multiple children in the school said that either it would make it difficult for them to pay for multiple children going to SOS or they would just be unable to pay and therefore send the older kid to a govt college for 11 and 12 grades.

4. What kind of training do SOS teachers have to go through?

There was no specific continuous training regimen for the teachers. They only cited an upcoming teachers training seminar as an example of their desire to train their staff. They lamented that they could not pay the staff according to market rates which caused some retention issues. They said that even the upcoming teachers' seminar was being paid for in part by the school and in part by the teachers themselves.

5. [Assess general attitude towards the new higher secondary school]

General attitude was favorable.

Questions to ask students

1. What do you like about this school?

The children were happiest about the large playgrounds and the sports and art activities. They also expressed satisfaction with the teachers and school administration.

2. If they build a new higher secondary school will you continue your education?

They said yes.

3. Does it take you very long to get to school? Means of transportation? [especially for girls]
The children were primarily from adjoining areas therefore they did not have any major transportation issues. Some of them walked, others were picked by parents and some hire vans.

4. [Assess general attitude/ enthusiasm towards the new higher secondary school]
The general attitude was favorable.