Some reflections & impressions from Kalwan base line visit:

1. This region appears to be quite different from other areas that I have seen. The schools around Kalwan are far more functional and vibrant. The kit has reached. Teachers are enthusiastic and those who have attended the training are very positive about this experience. However they are all at the demonstration stage. They open a box and take some materials for demonstration. Only one teacher has organized this as *toli* work but one is not sure if she uses this regularly. She is clear on the purpose. Pushing the system so that children begin to do experiments on their own and use the kit is the next step. Monthly meetings and follow up by AFSPs where they jointly work with teachers could help to overcome this hurdle.
2. The kit is usually kept in a separate room and one would have to carry this to the class room. This needs to be organized. Joint periods have not been implemented in the timetable but all are open to make this change either formally or informally. For class 5 to 7 there are varied school situations. Different class teachers could all be taking science or there may be one special teacher. Both arrangements were evident.
3. Children don’t appear to be subdued but are rather quiet in class. One is amazed by their collective living. Older children looking after younger ones and do lot of managing and cleaning tasks for teachers. Once AFSPs start moving around one should find different ways of engagement.
4. The comfort level with Marathi appears to be much better than other regions and teachers make an effort for this. However there’s little other material in Marathi to read with understanding and all appear to be tense about acquiring this ability. Unlike other regions there were many local teachers employed on contract who are genuinely multi lingual but they are stuck with a wrong notion- they consciously don’t use the home language in classroom because they feel that this way children would not be forced or motivated to learn Marathi. A dialogue is required here.
5. Many of these schools are nodal high schools. There are day scholars coming from villages around, since many ZP schools are only up to class 4. The demand for admission in the school has a positive influence & they effectively compete with other private schools around. However Tribal department rules don’t allow multiple sections, hence at times in the higher classes the strength is more than fifty. The nodal high school allows a natural integration for the region and also motivates the staff. Tribal depart should examine its policy of not having multiple sections at the high school level. On the other hand why should one encourage residential schooling for small children up to class 4, when ZP schools are around in every habitation? It would also reduce the anxiety and duty that all have in looking after such young children.
6. The senior staff would say that more than 50% of the students study further up to graduation or diploma. They are encouraged because there are Tribal department run hostels at the Taluka level. Even among those who go back to agriculture they do so with some pride and confidence, not as a failure to secure a job. Many also start their own business. This is a new trend but in an area that has competitive market for agricultural products such as onions, tomatoes, vegetables etc.
7. The emphasis on sports is also encouraged by teachers and this provides energy to all. Many teachers talk about their natural abilities and would like activities that would enhance them such as treks, nature observation etc.
8. In this PO there are 40 government residential schools and 33 aided residential schools run by trusts. We need to visit a few aided schools to be able to compare and contrast.

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