

Diksha Foundation

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Asha for Education

I have been a volunteer with Asha for over a decade and have undertaken site visits whenever possible. For the past two years, I have also been working with Asha, overseeing an educational project in Puducherry.

I reached Patna in the late afternoon on Monday, 12 October, for a field visit to Diksha Foundation. The Diksha team offered to meet for a few hours that evening. However, since Monday is the organization's weekly holiday, I decided to plan the field visits over the following two days. The plan was to visit the Patna and Bihta centres and understand the work being carried out by Diksha.

About Diksha Foundation

Diksha Foundation was founded by Gautam, who also serves as its Director. He is involved in fundraising, supervision, and providing strategic direction to the organization. With a background in Computer Science, he is enthusiastic about incorporating AI tools into the organization's operations. He is currently developing a chatbot modelled on open-source contextual educational content.

Gautam also heads another organization, Suchitra Cancer Care Foundation, which provides palliative care and caregiver support, as well as conducts awareness programmes.

Besides the Director, Diksha has four other members in its programme team who participate in decision-making for the organization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the team worked across multiple projects with diverse themes, partnering with several organizations, including the UN, the US Embassy, and NITI Aayog.

The Diksha team comprises the Director, three Programme Managers responsible for Fundraising, Finance, and KHEL, a Project Coordinator for Empowering Youth program, three Head Teachers, eight full-time teachers, and three part-time teachers.



Diksha Team at Bihta

Current Programs

Besides its primary after-school learning centre initiative, KHEL, Diksha is implementing several other programmes:

1. **Empowering Futures:** Funded by the Azim Premji Foundation, this three-year programme will engage approximately 300 adolescent girls across six urban slums. The programme focuses on health, education, livelihoods, and sports.
2. **English Communication Programme:** In collaboration with the US Embassy, Diksha facilitates English communication sessions for first-year students at NIT Patna through school English teachers. The classes are conducted on weekends.
3. **Poonji Programme:** This programme supports 100 new women entrepreneurs by providing material assistance, such as stalls and refrigerators. Beneficiaries are often drawn from communities where Diksha is already implementing other interventions. The programme is funded by Egain Communication Pvt. Ltd., with an annual budget of ₹10–15 lakh.

KHEL: After-School Learning Centres

KHEL is Diksha's primary intervention, delivered through after-school learning centres in Patna, Bihta (approximately 35 km from Patna), and Samastipur (approximately 85 km from Patna).

The students primarily come from low-fee private and government schools located within walking distance of the centres. The current enrolment across the three centres is as follows:

- **Samastipur:** 180 students
- **Bihta:** 156 students
- **Patna:** 120 students

The enrolment process begins with an assessment of the seats available at each centre. Prospective students then take a basic test, followed by an assessment to determine their learning levels. Based on these assessments, students are grouped according to their learning levels for further educational intervention.

The primary academic subjects covered are Hindi, English, and Mathematics. Students also have weekly online access to Khan Academy videos covering Science and Mathematics. However, the effectiveness of this component is constrained by the limited number of laptops available at the centres.

Each KHEL centre has an annual budget of approximately ₹35 lakh. The Bihta centre is funded by Ruban Hospital, while the Samastipur centre receives funding from New Way Homes. The Patna centre was previously funded by Asha for Education (AfE). For the past two years, however, it has been operating on individual donations.

Nutrition Support through Zomato

Since December 2024, Zomato's Feeding India initiative has provided evening snacks and meals to children across all three KHEL centres.

Diksha has appointed the mother of one of its students to prepare the meals. Zomato directly manages all other aspects of the initiative, including logistics, payments, and attendance.

Organizational Focus and Future Plans

Diksha's primary focus is the holistic education of marginalized communities, with scope for justified experimentation and innovation in its approach.

The organization is exploring plans to expand the KHEL model to new locations, including Bodh Gaya. In the long term, its vision is to establish Diksha as an educational institution dedicated to marginalized communities by 2050.

KHEL Centre field visits

13th October: Bihta KHEL Centre

I left for the Bihta KHEL centre, located in a semi-urban area, at 11:00 am and reached around noon. The centre operates from the spacious and beautiful Seetharam Ashram, which has an open field for outdoor activities, a hall, and several rooms. The rooms are long (like corridors) and pose difficulty in accommodating and teaching of children. The centre had a small room with library books and another room used as a computer lab. At the time of the visit, only seven laptops were functional. The children were divided into groups based on their learning levels, with each section taught by a teaching facilitator. The number of students at the starting grade (the lowest learning level) was the highest, sometimes reaching around 60.

I interacted with the team (with Gautam joining online), three mothers, and the children to understand the team's work, vision, and challenges.

The parents spoke highly of Diksha and its work. Classes were conducted for around three to four hours, after which every child was provided with food and fruits.

बाल संसद SSS KHEL CENTER BIHTA		
पद	मंत्री के नाम	उपमंत्री के नाम
प्रधान मंत्री	नंदनी	सुरि
समासद	रेशनी	कोमल
शिक्षा मंत्री	अंश्वर	शिवम
रवेल मंत्री	जैरव	आनंदी
कला मंत्री	तान्या	प्रतिव
पर्यावरण मंत्री	निभा	रानाक्षी
पोल एवं स्कूटिंग मंत्री	सुलेखी	भोनाली
अनुशासन मंत्री	शुभम	सनीली
सूचना मंत्री	प्रिती	रानी
विज्ञान एवं तकनीक मंत्री		

Bal Sansad (Bihta)



Libray and STEAM room



Class Observation (intermediate learning level)



Children Interaction (Bal Sansad, Advanced learning level and peer group)



Interaction with parents



Computer Lab



Long Hallway like rooms



DikshaTeam at Bihta

14th October: Patna KHEL Centre

I reached the Patna KHEL centre at around 11:30 am. The centre operates from a reasonably spacious building complex. It was originally established after identifying specific marginalized communities in the area. However, over the years, urbanization has changed the character of the locality, and most students now come from nearby low-fee private schools.

Interaction with the Teaching Staff

I interacted with the three teaching staff members to understand their roles and the learning levels they cater to:

1. **Sangita (since 2010):** She teaches students at the starting learning level, with an average daily attendance of 45 students. She also visits a school during the first half of the day.
2. **Shubham (Diksha alumnus):** He teaches students at the intermediate learning level, with an average daily attendance of 28 students.
3. **Amrendra (since 2018):** He teaches students at the advanced learning level, with an average daily attendance of 20 students. He also visits a school during the first half of the day.
4. **Sonali :** She has started as Head Teacher at Patna centre and was earlier a teacher at Bihta centre. She oversees day to day activities (including administrative) at KHEL Patna centre.

Following the interaction, I observed the lesson-planning and review processes for the classes. I also interacted with the children and a few parents.



Interaction with teaching staff



Patna KHEL centre



Interaction with children

Empowering Youth Programme

I visited a nearby slum for around half an hour, where the *Empowering Youth* programme was being conducted. A doctor from the nearby Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) had been invited to conduct a session on menstruation for adolescent girls from the community.

Upon returning to the centre, I discussed the documentation processes followed by the team. Stationery is provided to students on a quarterly basis, subject to the availability of funds.



“Empowering Youth” session visit in community

Library, Computer Lab, and Student Initiatives

The centre has a small library and a computer lab equipped with only two laptops. The team is planning to increase the number of laptops to ten in the near future.

I also interacted with the *Bal Sansad* (children's parliament) and the peer group, comprising elder students who primarily visit the centre for self-study.



Library



Computer and STEAM Lab

Plans for Relocation

The team is planning to relocate the centre to a nearby area to better serve communities in need. The present locality has undergone significant urbanization, and the centre faces space constraints. The current rental agreement is valid until November 2026.



Bal Sansad (Patna KHEL)

Documentation and Administrative processes

1. Financial Transactions: Most transactions are conducted online. Vouchers and reimbursements are subject to an upper limit of ₹2,000. Salaries are credited on time.
2. Student Attendance: Student attendance is recorded through the Feeding India application. The team is considering developing its own application in the near future.
3. Data Access and Sharing: The Head Teacher has access to student data. Teachers should also be given access to the relevant data or kept regularly informed to support effective teaching and follow-up.
4. Staff Attendance: Staff attendance is recorded using a system with geo-tagging enabled.
5. Leave Policy: The organization has a formal leave policy in place.
6. Student Assessments and Curriculum: Assessments are conducted through LiFi and NSF. LiFi assessments include baseline, midline, and endline evaluations, while NSF assessments are conducted three times a year in English and Mathematics. LiFi also provides a 20-week curriculum.
7. Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs): PTMs are conducted monthly, and a register is maintained to document the meetings.
8. Donor Reporting: Updates are shared with donors fortnightly, while quarterly reports are circulated to all relevant stakeholders.

9. Home Visits: Home visits are conducted on weekends based on the needs of individual students.

Suggestions and Observations

A. *From Children*

1. Science Education: The peer group requested the introduction of science-related learning activities and interventions.
2. STEM Expertise: A STEM expert is needed to support and strengthen the corresponding interventions contextually.
3. Science Curriculum Books: Students in the peer group requested Science curriculum books.
4. Dedicated Subject Teachers: The peer group requested dedicated subject-expert teachers for different subjects.
5. Laptops and Infrastructure: Children requested more laptops, as only two are currently functional at the Patna centre. Space constraints also need to be addressed.

B. *From Diksha Staff*

1. Exposure Visits and Picnics: Staff suggested organizing exposure visits and picnics for everyone at the centre.
2. Salary Increment: Salaries have not been revised in the past two years. While the female teachers were content with their current salaries, the male teacher expressed a desire for an increment in view of inflation.
3. Travel Allowance: Staff requested a daily travel allowance. Currently, travel allowances are provided for community visits, excluding travel to the reporting office.
4. Health Insurance: Health insurance is currently available only to full-time employees.
5. Additional Teaching Facilitator: Students at the starting learning level constitute a large group, creating a need for an additional teaching facilitator.

C. *My Observations and Suggestions*

1. Lesson planning and peer learning: Lesson planning is already taking place. It would be beneficial to ensure that teachers have confidence in their lesson plans through practice sessions. Dry runs and sharing circles could also help teachers exchange ideas and improve their teaching practices.
2. Centre cleaning and student participation: The centre has two cleaning staff members and one cooking staff member. Children should also be encouraged to participate in regular cleaning activities at the centre.
3. ESI/EPF coverage: ESI and EPF benefits are currently unavailable to staff and need to be addressed.

4. POSH awareness: A POSH committee is in place, but awareness of the committee and its role among the team appears to be limited.
5. Homework: Homework could be avoided, as checking it consumes considerable time that could otherwise be devoted to classroom teaching and other learning activities.
6. Academic rigor: Academic rigor is needed to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the educational interventions. Online classes might be explored as a cost effective strategy for selected subjects.
7. Regular teacher training: Dedicated contextual teacher training should be conducted regularly to strengthen teaching methods (activity based) and classroom practices.
8. Dedicated library sessions: The library and its books are not being adequately utilized. A dedicated library intervention, supported by a facilitator, is needed to encourage regular reading and effective use of the available resources. The library books also need to be looked into from children's perspective.
9. Documentation and policy awareness: Almost all documentation, including organizational policies, is maintained digitally. Hard copies should also be made available for easy reference and access by all staff.
10. Parent awareness and household surveys: Parents need to be made more aware of the interventions being conducted at the centre. Household surveys should be undertaken to understand their needs, awareness, and engagement with the programme.
11. Effectiveness of community visits: Although the team mentioned that need-based community visits take place every week, some parents whose children have been attending the centre for several years were unaware of these visits. This raises questions about the consistency, reach, and effectiveness of the community outreach process.
12. Class size and age diversity: It is unclear whether effective, structured teaching can take place in large classes (students at starting learning levels) comprising children of different age groups. The teaching approach and classroom organization may need to be reviewed to ensure that individual learning needs are adequately addressed.
13. Sensitization on corporal punishment: Facilitators need to be sensitized to the prohibition of corporal punishment and the appropriate mechanisms for reporting and addressing such incidents.
14. Regular policy awareness sessions: Regular awareness sessions should be organized for staff on the organization's various policies, including their purpose, implementation, and grievance-redressal mechanisms.
15. Parent sensitization on organizational vision and mission: Parents need to be sensitized to the organization's vision, mission, and principles of inclusion. During the visit to Bihta, some parents expressed discriminatory views about students belonging to a particular section of society. This

highlights the need to strengthen awareness of equality, inclusion, and respect for all children within the community.



Diksha Team at Patna KHEL Centre

Highlight of the KHEL program

- The children loved the KHEL space because of the different facilitation and exposure (in the form of sports, friendship, performances, art, study, food, etc.) that it provides.
- The children took pride in the Bal Sansad and the Bal Sabha that has given them agency over the democratic functioning of the center.
- The assessment process in place in collaboration with LiFi and NSF is quite systematic and praiseworthy.

Major concern of the KHEL program

- A few students at the Bihta centre approached me with complaints against a male teaching staff, citing verbal threats and corporal punishment. The children were hesitant to raise the issue directly with the Diksha team. I brought the matter to the team's attention and ensured that a concerned core team member spoke directly with the children.
- The lack of subject-matter experts is limiting academic rigor and the quality of learning.

Please find the impact stories of children facilitated by Diksha Foundation attached here after:

Diksha Foundation – KHEL Alumni Pathways (Patna Centre)

Alumni pathways

Name	With Diksha since	Where they are now	Their journey
Priyanka Kumari	2011	Constable, Bihar Police	A long-term KHEL learner who also trained in computers with us. She prepared for the police exams while in college and went on to join the force.
Dharmveer Kumar	2011	MA Development, Azim Premji University, Ranchi (full scholarship, 2026)	KHEL learner and civic volunteer. He worked on the Smart City project in 2022 and was a Fellow Teacher at our Sarairanjan centre until August 2026.
Mithun Kumar	2012	Community Organiser, Development Support Centre, Gujarat	Bal Sansad Education Minister as a child, then Diksha computer educator and Fellow from 2020 to 2024. He went on to an MA in Rural Management at Shiv Nadar University in 2024.
Sanoj Kumar	2011	Art Fellow Teacher, KHEL Sarairanjan	KHEL learner and peer teacher who received IGNITE recognition for an innovation in 2017. He is pursuing a BA from IGNOU.
Kaushal	2011	Carpenter	A KHEL Patna learner who now works as a carpenter.

Name	With Diksha since	Where they are now	Their journey
Shubham Kumar	2014	Part-time teacher, KHEL Patna centre	Twice elected Bal Sansad Prime Minister and a peer group mentor.
Krish Raj	2020	Finance Coordinator and filmmaker	Joined Diksha in 2020 and was named one of the 75 Creative Minds of Tomorrow at IFFI Goa, receiving the award from Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, then Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting.
Maya Kumari	2011	Elementary teacher at Diksha until 2025	KHEL learner and civic participant who joined Diksha as Community Mobilizer cum Teacher in January 2022.
Shweta Kumari	2015	Update in progress	Bal Sansad plantation representative and peer teacher; received the Shiksha Samman in 2018.
Raja Kumar	2015	Front desk staff, Tamara Kodai Resort, Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu	A long-term KHEL learner, Bal Sansad member and English Access alumnus.
Khusbu Rani	2012	Qualified Bihar Polytechnic, 2021	A long-term KHEL learner who also trained in computers with us. She prepared for the entrance exam and qualified.
Khushi Rani	2012	Qualified Bihar Polytechnic, 2021; B.Tech	A long-term KHEL learner who also trained in computers with us. She prepared for the entrance exam, qualified and went on to a B.Tech.

Name	With Diksha since	Where they are now	Their journey
Vishal Kumar	2020	Community College Initiative Program, USA (2023)	Joined NavGurukul's computer science programme in 2021, then studied and interned in the US.
Yamini Chandra	2020	Community College Initiative Program, USA (2023)	Nominated by Diksha in 2022, she grew in confidence and design work in the US. She now runs her own business page on Instagram.
Aryan Kumar	2020	Global UGRAD exchange, Central Methodist University, USA (Spring 2025)	Studied film, made short films and volunteers with us.
Shrikant Kumar	2020	BJMC, Amity University Patna (Bharat Education Scholarship)	One of the first Bharat Education Scholarship recipients in 2023, with films, an internship and international exposure alongside his degree.
Rinku Kumari	2019	Housekeeping GSA, Marriott Jaipur	A long-term KHEL learner and former Bal Sansad leader.
Sunny Kumar	2014	Housekeeping Supervisor, Sheraton Hyderabad (since December 2025)	After Class 12 science, he received a fully funded hotel-management scholarship. A keen footballer, he was promoted within a year of starting work.
Saurav Kumar	2022	Front office staff, Marriott Whitefield, Bengaluru	A KHEL learner and Bal Sansad leader who also trained in computers with us.

Name	With Diksha since	Where they are now	Their journey
Sonu Kumar	2015	Housekeeping GSA, Grand Mercure Koramangala, Bengaluru	A long-term KHEL learner, Bal Sansad leader and English Access alumnus who also trained in computers.
Soni Kumari	2014	Housekeeping GSA, Marriott Jaipur	A long-term KHEL learner, Bal Sansad leader and English Access alumna.
Subodh Kumar	2014	Studied at Amity University on a Diksha scholarship	A peer leader, footballer and Bal Sansad member at KHEL, who went on to university with Diksha's support.