

Samagra Seva (Jamui) Field Visit

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Date: 31/03/2026

I arrived in Patna at midnight on 19th March 2026 and proceeded to Jamui by an overnight taxi. The plan was to conduct surprise visits to a few centres early the next morning. I was accompanied for the day with my friend, Angad Sharma, pursuing PhD at IIT Roorkee, who had some familiarity with the region. The stay and vehicle had been arranged by Makeshwar ji, one of the founders of SS, which ensured logistical support. However, executing surprise visits turned out to be more challenging than anticipated. Samagra Seva (SS) was unable to share location links for the centres, and navigating to them independently proved difficult. Given the constraints, I decided to select centres based on their proximity and purpose. Details of the SS centres supported by AfE can be accessed here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/171uV94Y2NfL-dDMjw2r2wEwkFO1CcMU/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=117073807847131803315&rtpof=true&sd=true>

The project currently reaches around 1,333 children in primary and middle grades through learning centres known as CCEC, along with 155 high school students through coaching centres. Notably, 55% of the children supported are girls, reflecting a strong emphasis on gender inclusion.

These centres serve the Mushara community in Bihar—one of the most marginalized and historically discriminated groups. The Mushara are largely landless and tend to settle near canals or barren hills, often on the fringes of villages due to entrenched practices of untouchability. Their living conditions are stark: small mud houses with poor ventilation, overcrowded settlements, and missing sanitation infrastructure. Open defecation and the absence of sewerage systems contribute to challenging hygiene conditions. Seasonal migration is also common, with many families moving to brick kilns across different parts of India for work. This further disrupts children's education and restricts access to government welfare systems.

Against this backdrop, it is particularly noteworthy that SS operates learning centres within these settlements (tollas). Experiencing this on the ground made it evident how difficult yet critical this work is. I did not encounter any other organization working so closely within these communities at a comparable scale. SS's efforts deserve strong recognition. Over time, SS has also built a credible presence and strong relationships with social, government, and civil society stakeholders. Its work spans multiple domains, including livelihoods, child rights, helplines, education, advocacy and skilling.

Field Visit: 19.03.2026

The day began with visits to four learning centres—Lalunagar, Shahpur, Amari, and Dharampur. These visits provided an initial sense of the operational diversity across centres, both in terms of infrastructure and student engagement. I interacted with the community,

children, and facilitators where ever possible. All the centres had only those children whose family have not migrated. The parents and children said that the village only had families who did not migrate and are involved in agricultural work on someone's farm. There was a need to train the facilitators for this sort of educational work. The community outreach appeared missing as not many were aware about the intervention. An open day or exhibition could be organized to enrobe the community.



Lalunagar



Amari



Lalunagar Learning Centre



Shahpur Learning Centre



Amari Learning Centre



Dharampur Learning Centre

In the afternoon, I had an opportunity to meet Dr. S. N. Jha at his clinic, along with Makeshwar ji. I had previously come across a video featuring him on the AfE platform, though there was no mention of him in SS's official website or reports. A child specialist by profession, he shared that the inception of SS stemmed from discussions between him and Makeshwar ji.

Even today, SS continues to receive meaningful support from the medical community. Reflecting on the condition of the Mushahar settlements, he identified overcrowding and poor hygiene as some of the most pressing challenges affecting the community.

In the evening, I visited the Khaira and Chandrashailly (coaching) centres. The Khaira centre stood out for its relatively spacious setup and strong student attendance. On the way back, I briefly interacted with a group of girls at the Chandrashailly coaching centre. The interaction, though short, offered a glimpse into their aspirations and engagement with the program.



Khaira learning centre



Chandrashailly coaching centre

Field Visit: 20.03.2026

In the morning I visited to the learning and coaching centre which are not funded by AfE. The learning centre there operates out of an abandoned mansion situated on a hilltop. Despite the unconventional setting, the children displayed a high level of enthusiasm and motivation to learn. A coaching centre was also functioning in a small room nearby, with attendance levels that were encouraging. After a brief introduction and a walk through the surrounding settlement, I proceeded to visit two tribal centres located in Bheem Bandh.



At Bheem Bandh, many children had not studied beyond Grade 5, and SS was making efforts to re-engage them in education through games, activities, and skill-based learning approaches. The initiative reflected adaptability to context, though the scale of educational gaps remained significant. During this visit, I also had the chance to see the region's well-known hot springs, which added a unique dimension to the field experience.



In the afternoon, a meeting was convened with all members associated with the AfE project. I began with a few ice-breaking activities, followed by a circle-sharing session. Facilitators spoke candidly about the challenges they face—both within the community and in their roles. At the same time, their commitment, resilience, and aspirations were clearly evident. Building on this, I introduced a few activity-based learning approaches and encouraged them to explore such methods further. The discussion also highlighted the urgent need for structured capacity building and academic training. Key points that emerged from the discussion included:

- There was unanimous agreement on the need for academic training and capacity building of the facilitators.
- Centre facilitators (55 in number) receive an honorarium of ₹3,000 per month, while those working with high school students receive ₹9,000 per month. Both groups expressed the need for a revision. Supervisors (4) receive ₹12,000 per month, and the coordinator receives ₹15,000 per month.
- Facilitators requested travel allowances, especially for centres located far from their residences.
- There was a demand for basic games and learning materials to support activity-based engagement at the centres.
- A notable gap was the lack of awareness among facilitators regarding institutional policies such as POSH and POCSO. This was particularly concerning given SS's engagement in rights-based work. There was a clear need for internal orientation and training on these policies.



Interaction, and Activity based session with all facilitators and SS team.

In the evening, I visited the central office and library of SS in the city. The level of documentation and record-keeping was exceptional. Detailed records of child progress, assessments, evaluations, and curriculum planning were meticulously maintained in physical files. Makeswar ji said that this comes from his learning while working with international

organizations like UNICEF. However, in my observation, much of this structured documentation did not seem to fully translate into observable practices at the field level.



SS office



Excellent documentation

The central library housed a number of donated books, but their placement—at a height within the office—made them largely inaccessible. It was unclear whether these resources were being actively used. A more effective approach might be to decentralize access by creating small, child-friendly libraries within each centre, such as wall-mounted shelves or cupboards, allowing children to engage with books more directly.

Project funding

SS runs around 118 learning centres in Jamui. The total budget is about Rs. 5cr. The organization is funded by PHF, SBI, Educate Girls, APF, AfE and crowdfunding. AfE funds 55 centres amounting to Rs. 36 lakhs p.a.

Achievements

1. Effectively engaged the children staying in 118 Musahar settlements through learning centres at an impressive scale.
2. Ensures that there is no drop out from school and assists children out of school to complete studies through open schooling. The only organization visibly working in these areas.
3. SS works in multiple areas (livelihood, skilling, awareness programs, etc.) that provide additional scaffolding for the educational initiative.
4. Excellent documentation and processes in place. Children progress report documentation, follow up as per the designed curriculum by centre facilitator and supervisor.
5. Opportunity to youth from the community to contribute as educator at the learning centre and become confident in themselves.
6. A number of success stories where the child has completed graduation against all odds like Urmila and Kajal.
7. Well connected with social, governmental, civil and private organizations through liasoning work.

Challenges

The sheer scale of the project is astounding. The trade-off between quality and scale is palpable in field. The organization needs to consciously shift its focus towards quality.

1. Structural quality: The centres where being run in either rented or community spaces. The centres lacked proper lighting, and fan.
2. Functional quality: Children complained about mosquitoes. There was no drinking water arrangement. Toilets were absent which is the norm in this region.
3. Academic quality: The walls of the centres were barren without children's poems, drawing, posters. A wall library would make much difference.
4. Resource accessibility: There was no accessible educational resource (books, games, stationery) at the centres for children.
5. Facilitators' capacity building: There is a need to train the facilitators to alternate teaching methodologies. There was a stark disconnect between what was shown in documentation (by supervisors) and what was expressed by centre facilitators in terms of child progress, assessment, evaluation, curriculum design etc.
6. Outreach program to onboard the community (through exhibitions etc.) is needed.
7. SS has observed that the drop outs is more from higher classes (because either the girls are married or boys take up jobs). To prevent this, they are looking forward to optimizing the number of children (in primary and middle grade) at a centre and focus on the children in higher grades. I felt sceptical of the approach since it is the relationship with the children since primary that gives one the opportunity to guide them towards graduation. Specific focus on children from higher grades looks good as outcomes in reports.



SS asharam learning centre



Community outreach by supervisor