

Asha Samajik Shikshan Kendra, Mirzapur

Site Visit Date: 27th July 2025

Summary

The Asha Samajik Shikshan Kendra program in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh, started with the efforts of Mahendra Rathaur addresses the severe lack of basic education and awareness among marginalized communities, particularly tribal groups such as the Musahar, Kol, and Bhil. Operating six evening education centers in the following villages - Bakiabad, Shekhwan, Patwai, Pachengda, Rastogia & Bawanji with trained local teachers, the initiative provides vital learning opportunities for approximately 270-300 children while engaging parents through community meetings. The program had begun about 3-4 years ago and was funded solely by Mala Sponsorship for Children, a Belgian NGO. The support from Mala ran out in 2024 and this program which had started to create real change, but with the loss of funding many of these centers are currently suspended and we're starting to see children backsliding on their learning goals

For More details about these 6 centers see this accompanying document

List of Centers



Background

The district of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh remains far behind on the path of development. Many villages continue to lack basic amenities such as drinking water, electricity, roads, education, and healthcare. Its geographical setting further complicates developmental efforts. The main livelihood sources are agriculture and labor in local mines. Due to the absence of reliable education and healthcare services, people face persistent challenges. Awareness of government schemes is low, preventing access to available benefits. Tribal communities such as the Musahar, Kol, and Bhil face even greater hardships, being socially and economically marginalized.

Initiative

Recognizing these challenges, Asha Trust through the efforts of a team put together by Mahendra Rathaur, began working in select villages of the Chunar region three years ago. Their approach is rooted in, "Education as



the foundation for change.” Six education centers were operating under the name Asha Samajik Shikshan Kendra. Centers ran for two hours each evening after regular school hours in community-selected public spaces. Each center served an average of 30-40 children, facilitated by a local community worker. Workers received teacher training three times a year to ensure engaging and effective learning methods. Community meetings accompanied educational efforts, raising awareness among parents and fostering collective participation.



Impact

Through these centers, Mahendra ‘Bhai’ has established a strong presence in marginalized communities and has gained the trust of the families who are willing and open to sending their children to learn. Most children are first generation learners. The cohort while being a mix of local and migrant children skews heavily towards local children because of the nature of economy in this region as well as Mahendra’s efforts to work towards the benefit of the local labor families with NREGA and other govt employment schemes.

The children were receiving consistent educational support, while their families are beginning to engage with Mahendra on broader issues of health, awareness, and government entitlements. The initiative has fostered hope

and built momentum for long-term social change.



Funding Challenge

Until 2024, this program was supported by the Belgian organization Mala Sponsorship for Indian Children. Unfortunately, they are unable to continue funding from this year onward. Without new support, most of these centers are currently suspended. The efforts risk being halted midway leading to disappointment among children and community members who have begun to see real progress.

