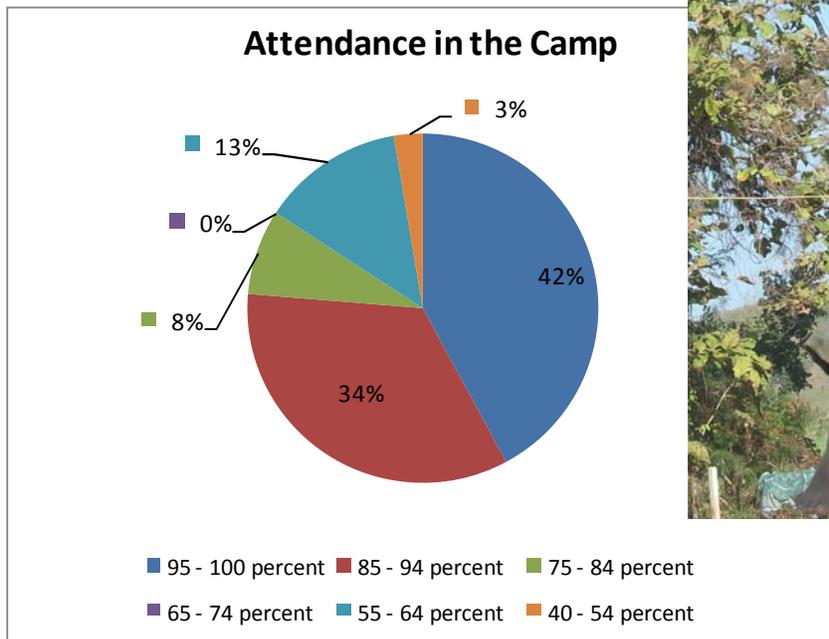
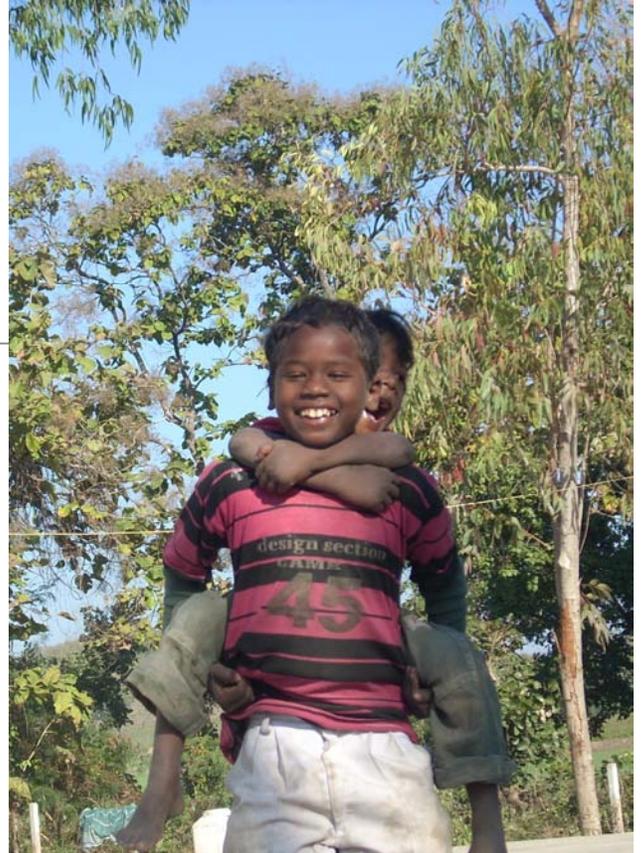


RESIDENTIAL CAMP REPORT (October 2010 – January 2011)

Profile of children

There were 39 children in this camp. Of these, 10 children were repeated from the last camp. Of the total children, there were 21 boys and 18 girls. There were some children who came in a few days. All but 5 children stayed throughout the camp. These 5 children came back at different intervals in the last month; due to illness and family requirements (brother's engagement, death of a member).



Learning to trust each other

As in the beginning of any camp, the children were very much distributed in their own community groups and there would be physical fights and abusive language thrown on each other for the slightest of reasons.

If any child would accidentally just graze another's elbow or simply use an eraser which was in front of another child, it would boomerang into a big fight. If there was a fight between two children, it would grow into a fight of all the children between both the communities.

Children would sit in their own community groups. They would not want to sit next to a child of another community, may it be at meal-times or studies, or hold hands when doing things in a circle.

It was difficult for teachers to sit for a minute in peace, and someone or the other needed to be on alert.

This community-bonding would also engulf everyone in the form that if any child would cry missing home, the others would also join him/her.

We would find this sense of community-ship appealing as well as harmful for the camp. It needed to grow beyond one community to a sense of protectiveness and concern for the entire group of children. We also felt the need for the children to decipher when the fights were insignificant and needed to be dissipated instead of building mistrust and take sides. We could see that these are the spontaneous responses within any community, an effort to protect oneself over endless unpleasant situations that keep coming up.

Children needed to be more with each other to get to know the other a bit and realize that they did not need to fight and defend. As the children were insistently distributed in different groups and opportunities to mix were plenty, these walls started breaking.

The children would be studying together, some time or the other, they would need to get the water together, do exercises together, be part of the same meetings.. these many experiences showed that they were all similar in many things. The rules imposed (of not eating any time and any where, or the timetable) were same for everyone. They had the same problems and experiences, and that started binding them.

The children who were second-timers in the camp helped out in this process. There were others who were natural 'leaders' and 'facilitators' and they also helped in the effort.



Breaking out of their addictions

It is not easy to break out of the tambaku addiction anywhere because it is so easily accessible and is within the financial reach of every child. A packet that could last for 2 weeks comes for Rs. 5 so even if one child bought it, it would be shared by many.

So it is only own determination, persuasion by the camp team members and different communications that can help in this matter; not physically removing the person from it.

Thus, Paptu could get off her addiction of the whitener (which is a harder substance) more easily than the others.

When the children didn't have money on them, they would either ask people on the road for alms or directly for the gutka also. If this didn't work, they would go around waste-picking and get a few rupees together and buy what they wanted. The surety of being able to earn is very strong within the children and they are able to exert their independence emergent from that.

Morning Exercises and Games

Soon after brushing and morning freshening up and cleaning, the children were brought into the routine of a physical exercise. This included a combination of stretching, some yoga postures, jumping and running. By the fifth week, the children would also assist in conducting this activity in the morning.

In the evening, the children played different games. This was part of their daily routine. Cricket, kabaddi, skipping, ball, etc. were some games that they regularly played.

Studying in groups

The children were distributed in different groups after their initial assessments of the written language.

Initially, the children were distributed in 3 groups.

Senior-most – 11 children (many were the ones repeated from the previous camp)

Second level – 8 children

Third group – 19 children

The third group would often mix with the other group also if their sibling was there, and also it was a comparatively bigger group to handle. They were also least familiar with sitting in classes and therefore they would not be able to sit for a stretch.

Handling children

There were a few children who continuously showed a resistance to a routine of studies. The camp team members tried to get them on the track through different methods.

Some children were managed only through individual relationships. These were built through individual conversations as well as conscious interactions during the course of the day.

Getting to know the child with a genuine interest in how s/he feels, what s/he does, what does s/he think about different things, who do s/he play with, where does s/he spend his/her time during the day, who do you trust more, what is the routine at home, what do different people do, who does s/he sleep with, when does s/he get scared, angry.

Engaging children in work – giving them responsibilities of checking all the lights are off, putting on the motor, filling in the water pots, getting the food, serving meals, cleaning, etc. was in itself a big help, but also aided in making the child feel responsible and important in the whole place.

Looking after things

A few specific children initially showed their temper by throwing glasses and buckets. This was something which most other children strongly objected to. They valued the things and within that group, some of them may want to take them home for using them with their families, but not destroy them.

During the camp, different children would pick up things if they were kept at the wrong places. Shakti (Banjara Basti) and Vishal (Gautum Nagar) would be roaming around the whole campus, and ensuring that everything was in its place. Paptu, Nandisna, Jiteshna and Akbar would be ensuring that the utensils had been cleanly washed by the child who had used it. Aman would be collecting all the pencils, pens and other stationery materials if they were strewn in the class or outside. Dayashankar would take care of the bedding and see it was kept properly.

Different children would come and clean up the class, keep the books properly, bring water for the class on a daily basis. Cleaning duties were distributed amongst many children on a weekly basis. In addition to those who had to fulfill their responsibility, there was a group of 6 – 8 children who would always check if things were done and help where needed.

Study Patterns

Timings –The class timings were between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and then 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. With the winters in, the classes could begin a little late only but would stretch into the evening hours.

Learning outside class timings

- Children would be learning outside the defined classroom spaces also. After their class hours also, the children would be cross-checking what they've learnt with the others. When they went out for a walk, they would practice what they had learnt and try out new words. When they saw anything different, there would be discussions on that specific spider, plant, hen's eggs or other things. When watching a film, some children would try to read sub-titles and the reading practice continued.



Attendance and Concentration – As could be expected, there were some children who could not sit in one space for so long. They would run out to play gilli-danda. But this habit changed gradually.

Sense of Achievement – As the children learnt, they wanted to learn more. Bipendra didn't sit easily in class, but he would just be drifting in and out. As he started catching things in his in-between ways of seeing whether 'studies' was really something worth his time, he started making sense of some written words 'पेड़', 'पपीता', 'fly', 'run', he started coming more, but he never became completely regular for his class.



Kunti would use the wall charts more to study. She would write from the walls, and read all that was written there. Aman would be fond of a specific book and would break words from there.

English Classes – In Muskaan, written english is taught phonetically and is also taught as a spoken language. Thus children started speaking small sentences. They would also not be scared of picking up a book to read and would try to read it phonetically even if it took a long time. But some children preferred the small text cards prepared for reading.

Library Hours

The day started with a common library class. This helped in creating a time where a child was working quietly on his/her own and the books.

Different books became favourites for the children. Thus if a specific book was missing, everybody could guess who would have it. The choice of books was not so dependent on whether the child could read it fluently, but was more on the story that the child enjoyed.

As children heard and read stories, their writing skills also improved. They would try to write more in detail. Preeti and Vikas would earlier finish their story-writing assignments in 4 sentences,

जब किताब हाथ में आती और उसको पढ़ने बैठते तो कक्षा में पढाई गई चीजों को सामान्यीकरण कर रहे होते और आपस में ही बातचीत करते ये तो परिश्रम वाला श्र है ये मछली वाला ल है।



but as they progressed in the library period, it could be seen that their stories were becoming more descriptive. There was a logical sequence to the way the story evolved and did not jump sections completely.

Using different opportunities for individual perspective building and growth

Different stories affected the children. Sometimes they would wonder on the reality of the situations, and sometimes on the qualities of a person in a story. We used 'Pitara', bimonthly magazine for adult neo-literates earlier published by Nirantar, with the elder children. The stories and struggles around the women and information on different social and environmental struggles were of a lot of inspirational value for the children.

Some children were clearly very intently involved in these discussions and would sit for these sessions more earnestly than their studies also.

Children explored the identity of caste, and the commonality of being human. Cross-community similarities were discussed. These also brought up issues of treating women in a similar manner across society.

Individual, household, community and social and political issues were openly discussed. We are trying to put together a curriculum on this so that it is uniformly discussed across all teachers; otherwise it gets dependent on the capacity of the individual facilitating the class.

Using the environment

Khajuri offered many options of learning in/from the environment. We were able to use this to some extent, but it would be further explored in the next camp as we would also have our ideas and preparations done before hand.

What was possible in this camp?

- The children did some bit of farming in the land there. The children cleaned the space and sowed seeds of different vegetables – carrots, radishes, spinach, and coriander and looked after their plots sincerely. By the end of the camp, they could use the vegetables also.
- The children went around the village and did a social mapping of the area and the poultry counting.
- They learnt about pollen and different trees and insects in the jungle by exploring the plants directly. They would observe which insects and animals were around which plants. This



enhanced their basic curiosity about the environment, and they came up with more questions,

- Why are hens' feathers so colorful
- Why is the light more yellow in the afternoon
- Why do people fold hands when a star breaks
- Which old woman lives on the moon

Letters to and fro between family members and children

Whenever any of our team members were coming or going from the camp, the letters were the focus. Children would write letters to their parents, siblings, friends, muskaan didi – bhaiyas whoever they felt they wanted to say something to.

In the first month, many children needed to ask someone to write for them, but by the end, many were writing on their own. They would sometimes have someone write a longer letter, but write a few words themselves and pointedly ask that it be conveyed to their parents that these specific parts were written by the child himself.

Letters contained concern and messages of well-being. 'Don't drink; don't fight; don't hit ma, don't send my brother alone for waste-picking.. etc.' The letters were also dominated by reassuring parents that they were well and were learning to write. (This was written even when they could be fighting with the camp didi and bhaiya to send them home and that they did not like it here). Sometimes, children would simply write down a song or poem that they had learnt in the camp and send that for their parents to read.

Meditation and Dance

We would conduct
'imagination' and

मम्मा करब की याद आती है।
मम्मा चंदन की याद आती है।
और मम्मा फूलसिद्धे। सो केदुयो
के फौन मेबनेस गुलवानिया
मम्मा एकदिब हिना सो नत
कारे हौगा मम्मा करब की याद आती है।
ओल पढ़ई मच्छा मे पढ़ई
लूम मेरे याद मत कर है।



'visualization' methods to enhance calmness in children and to build concentration. This was usually after the physical exercise in the morning.

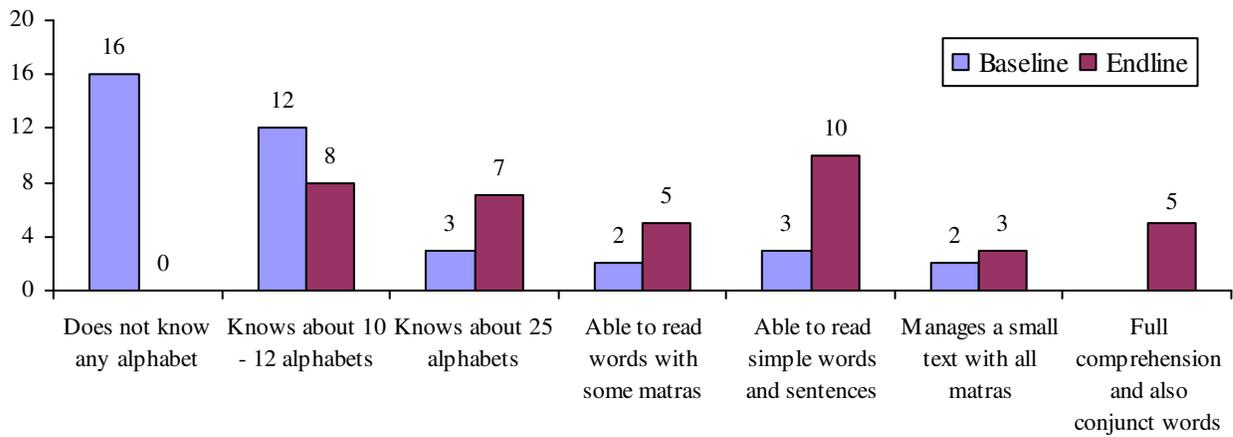
We also tried tapping and 'Emotional Freedom Therapy' (EFT) with the children for venting out of deep emotions. These were also found useful. These techniques would be more fully explored in the next camp, as our teachers had been freshly trained on that.

Dance, as a form of expression and freedom, was carried out as a biweekly activity.

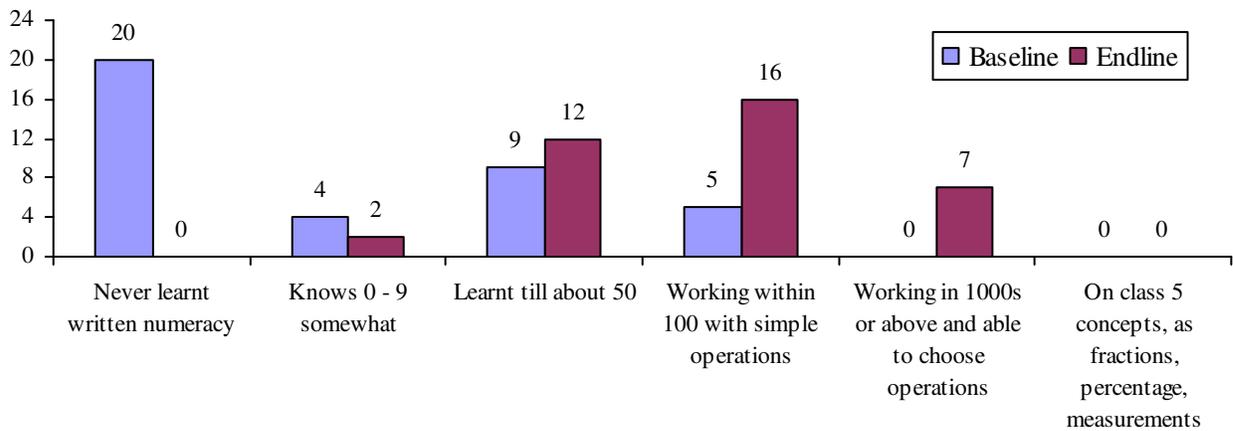


Improvements in Learning Levels

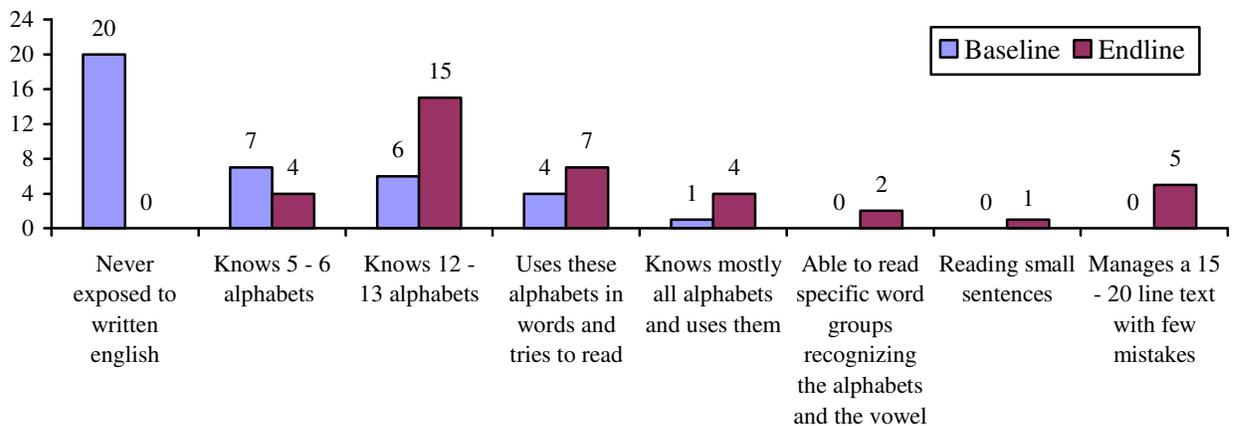
In Hindi



In Math



In Written English



LEARNINGS

Camp Venue - We had initially taken a place on rent in Sehere as the camp venue. However with emergent difficulties, we shifted to Khajuri, the venue of the earlier camp. This has been provided through the Forest Department. We have also understood on the kind of space that would be preferable for a camp.

- Lots of physical space to move around – play, walk – This is important for the energies of the child to be constructively used. Otherwise within a building set-up, there is no space for one to be by oneself or with her/his own group.
- Space or campus for the children distinct from the main town / village – With children of different natures, varying tolerance levels and sense of independence, it takes a while for them to trust everyone and the people in the vicinity to accept them. So while they engage with the town, the campus boundaries help in establishing the necessity and boundaries of the camp.
- Familiarity – It helped that the second camp was held in the same venue. The villagers know what to expect and they were forthcoming from the first day. They recognized the sincerity of the camp staff and there was no reason to defend oneself or the children repeatedly. Everyone was working in the flow.

Take back for the children – Some immediate take-back points are being written here.

- Sense of knowing they can also be part of this – Children go back with a strong faith in their own capacities to 'learn' and be part of formal academics. There is a confidence before a camp also for many children, but this is usually limited in their own spaces.



The time in the camp shows them that they are as capable of becoming completely literate as any other person, and can excel in this. They learn in 3 – 4 months what other children learn in 4 – 6 years of formal schooling (beginning from kindergarten).

- Friendships across communities are happy experiences in themselves. But they also build a sense of conviction for oneself because you otherwise tend to look for role-models within the basti only. Now, there is more space for a ripple effect across communities.

It also helps in overall sensitivity towards people from different social groups and breaks down divisions across social groups, a trait which is pervasive in all classes.