

## Site visit report of Apna Skool project

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This report comprises two parts: a meeting with Apna Skool staff at their Tatyaganj centre and a site visit to a school at Maharajpur. The meeting transpired on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2021 with Mukesh Kumar (co-ordinator), Laxmikant Shukla (co-ordinator), and two teachers Kanak and Nirmal. The objective of the meeting was to acquaint me with the various activities undertaken by the Apna Skool team for the children of brick-kiln migrant laborers this year. Before the second closure due to the pandemic (15<sup>th</sup> April 2021), different centers ran in 2-3 shifts to comply with the covid protocol. This year, there were few new admissions though the team distributed clothing (school dress, sweater, shoes, socks, and cap) to all children. The team even organized a science fair on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Amidst the second pandemic wave, the team carried out ration distribution for two months for families in addition to the mid-day meal that continued without fail. The team undertook different other initiatives like hand-made masks and distribution and awareness regarding covid and vaccination. Apna Skool runs 14 centers in Kanpur and wishes to open centers in Bihar (in villages from where the laborers' families migrate) to attend to children even when they return to their villages during the monsoon. Presently these plans are on hold due to pandemic, and only awareness and surveillance of issues are being undertaken. Also, the team informed of opening 3 libraries in Bihar while 1 library in Kanpur, where each library comprised of around 300 books. Since the lockdown, continuing educational activities has been a challenge. About 22 children (affiliated to classes 7-10) availed the online courses facilitated by the team. In their efforts to go online, tablets (for kids) and laptops (around 12), pen drives, and jio wifi for staff have also been acquired. Also, as informed, their teacher training workshops continued as usual.

Next, I undertook a site visit on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to one of the centers located at Maharajpur (around 35 km from Kanpur). All of the other centers were closed and are expected to reopen after October when migrant laborers returned from their villages to work at brick kilns. The center at Maharajpur was abandoned presently due to rains. Two teachers, B.N. Sharma and Mithlesh Vishwakarma, were present attending to around 22 children. There was one kid in class 5, four kids in class 3 and seventeen kids were in classes below class 3. The number of boys and girls was almost equal. The center did not have a kitchen because the handpump was at a considerable distance. Many kids had gone home with their families, and all kids below class 3 were at level zero (they could count, recite poems and identify Hindi /English letters). I had carried a bunch of story books (Pratham/Eklavya) in Hindi/English for the kids to read and also to read out to them a few stories. Only two kids from below class 3 could read words in English as most of them were fresh inductions. Suraj (class 5) was the only kid who could understand English sentences and write in Hindi effortlessly. Other kids from class 3 struggled in reading and understanding text. All kids were enrolled in a government school nearby which has been closed for long, due to the pandemic. In spite of the kids finding reading by self a challenge, it needs mentioning that all were quick in verbal modes of learning. They easily recited and articulated and also picked up even English words with ease. The elder kids were specific about their ambitions and reasoned well the need for their education. The kids were versed regarding the pandemic and the precautions that needs to be taken. No mid-day meal was being provided as most centers have closed, and hence food was not being prepared anywhere nearby. Instead,

some bananas and puffed rice (bhunja) were distributed presently. Please find some of the images taken from the visit below.



Fig 1. Kids at zero level being taught by teacher Mithlesh under a shed.



Fig 2. Neeraj (class 4) explaining multiplication with the help of sticks.



Fig 3. The elder kids in the class reading an English story book.



Fig 4. Cinderella story from a popup book being recited to kids by me.



Fig 5. Kids reciting poems with ease and zeal.



Fig 6. Kids being taught by me body parts in English in the form of a poem.