

PROJECT FOR ADIVASI EDUCATION IN ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA
Activities Report
January –March 2005

The education programme of Samata in this period continued with the running of the schools in the 20 villages with the CBO's and the community's active involvement. It was with great excitement that the new methods of teaching were being used in the schools. We could hear the elders also picking up the songs and tribal tunes that the children were vigorously singing in the schools.



Some of the main activities of the period:

School Visits:

We had village level meetings with the parents and the community in every school to discuss the children's activities in the schools and each school demonstrated what they were learning in these meetings. The parents then realized that it was just not singing and playing that was happening as some of them thought was going on, but that the children were actually learning their language, numbers and basic arithmetic through these rhythms. So the questions which initially came up about the children not 'learning' in the schools changed to a broad understanding that there was something meaningful happening and that their children were actually enjoying going to school.

The attendance in the schools has been more or less regular for most of the children but in one school the children have been going to another village because of the mid-day meal. Constant illnesses is another reason for some children's irregularity. Our schools also have infants and younger siblings attending the schools as the older children cannot come to school otherwise.



We have also been attending the monthly staff meetings of the three CBO's when the teachers are present in these meetings and the needs of the schools, the problems that teachers are facing, to review the teaching methods and the records being maintained by the teachers, and future planning of the school activities are discussed together with the involvement of the CBO. This had helped us sort out local problems along with the CBO's at the village level.

Teacher Training:

The twenty teachers received training from us in the second week of January. This time we also involved the village organisers from each CBO who were monitoring the school programme, so that they would understand the nature of training and education that we were

imparting. The main contents of the training were in two parts –the pedagogic part and the art work.

The pedagogic aspects covered were on introducing alphabets phonetically, first orally and then the written letters, form drawing, introducing words, formation of sentences, and teaching science to the first standard orally through seasons songs, animal songs and other nature songs. Arithmetic was taught through rhythmic movements of the four processes, teaching the four processes and tables through bean bags, seeds, group games, songs and cards.

As art work is important for the creative development of the children, we are developing drawing, painting, craft work, and other artistic work on paper, murals, cloth and using the natural material around them along with simple craft work tools. As the children are very small, we are introducing only simple activities that could be replicated in the villages. The teachers are trained to do most of these on their own in the village.

We have also spent some hours of the training in developing a time table with these multiple activities with children of mixed ages, lesson plans and how to gather material. One session was spent on sharing problems with the teachers which mainly consisted of lack of infrastructure because of which they are not able to keep the material and do the activities as planned. The other problems were of some children not attending during the agricultural season, the lack of providing mid-day meals which were provided in the government schools and parents also demanding for similar facilities in these schools, the lack of response from the administration to our proposal for mid-day meals.

These programmes have become the essence of carrying forward the alternate methods that we want the teachers to adopt in their schools. As the teachers are also tribal people themselves coming from different tribes and languages, we have been able to develop many lessons and activities based on their cultural knowledge. Some of the teachers have been very creative in using local material and have developed various activities with their children.



Health Camps and Health Training:

We managed to undertake health camps in most of the schools this term but could not cover all the schools. We want to improve the health situation of the tribal children using the schools as an entry. We find that some of the major concerns in health issues of the children are:

- Nutrition is not adequate all through the year and mid-day meal in the school would improve the situation to a great extent. The children had grown a lot of vegetables in the school gardens but the government did not sanction the mid day meal programme, so we could not provide this to the children. We are again pursuing with the government to extend the Sarvasiksha Abhiyan programme to our schools also.
- Malaria- this is a major health problem and 90% of the children we checked up have enlarged spleens and have been going through malaria fevers on and off. This is affecting their physical growth and motor skills and some of the children are stunted. Again nutrition would improve this situation and also other areas of health intervention like potable drinking water have to be pursued. We are trying to find medicinal herbs locally which can be used regularly to reduce the incidence of malaria.
- We found that most of the children are suffering from worm infections and this is also causing further malnourishment and delay in growth/vulnerability to malaria and other illnesses. We are again trying to find alternative local remedies and also de-worming medicines, which would improve their conditions.
- Vaccinations have not been done properly and it is not possible to find out what vaccinations were given to the children as the mothers were not given the cards. We are involving the government ANM's to motivate them and bring them to the villages. We have meetings with the mothers to talk about the importance of immunization.
- The CBO's are undertaking a survey of the children with disabilities and we are coming out with a detailed list of all the CBO areas. We want to first organize health camps with the government so as to get certificates for the children and to see if some of them could be sent to the government schools for the disabled.

In order to motivate the teachers to look into the basic health concerns of the children we had a two-day workshop with the teachers and the health workers of the CBO's. The subjects that were dealt with mainly are:

- Human growth and development in the first few years
- Children's primary health
- First aid and handling emergencies
- Immunization
- Hygiene in the school and teacher's role

As most of the teachers are young adolescent girls, we had a separate session with them on reproductive health, sexual health, women's health problems, social health problems and threats to women in the tribal area in the context of emerging pressures from the outside, especially for young girls in schools and hostels. The girls found this session very useful and felt that they could openly ask questions and clarify their doubts which they could not discuss or take advice from others.

School Annual Meets:

In the month of March we organized annual meets in every school where we organized a number of cultural and sports events for the children and the parents as a way of building community motivation and using the opportunity to discuss the education programme we are implementing. In each area the communities and the CBO's came up with different programmes and we organized sports for the mothers and children. In Sovva the annual meet also coincided with the Traditional Seeds festival where parents were asked to get as many varieties of local traditional seeds. Prizes were given to parents who had the most number of seeds and the rarest varieties. The children put up activities to show the parents how they learn in the schools and displayed the material they made in the class-room. We used the opportunity to present to the community the details of the education programme and to get the community more involved in the school activities.



Learning from alternate schools and curriculum development

Some of us have been attending the training from an alternate training institute and have also been following the curriculum and teaching methods from a school called Abhaya which is based on the Waldorf method and philosophy. We have been trying to adapt the methods used here and are working with the language and maths and cultural knowledge in

the tribal area. We are trying to adapt the first few grades from this method and we are developing our own curriculum and lesson plans based on these. We are coming out with a handbook for our teachers developed from our training programmes so that they could use this as a guide to teaching as we do not use any ready made text books for the children.

Selection of teachers for the 20 new schools:

The CBO's were busy selecting the villages where the 20 new schools are required. Selection of teachers for these schools was also done in March through conducting interviews with the local educated youth. They will undergo the first phase of training before the new academic year. Formation of village education committees and enrollment of children to the new schools is also taking place. The villages have donated the land for the school premises and are constructing the school infrastructure before the rainy season begins.

Other Issues:

Some villages have been taken over by the government tribal welfare under the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, so we are shifting the schools to other villages which have need for the schools. The teachers will also be shifted to these schools. One teacher had to be dropped because of bad performance, so the CBO is taking a new teacher. We have given the new list of schools to the government for the mid day meal programme. This year we have admitted fifteen children to the tribal welfare ashram residential schools as they are eligible to join in the third grade.

The schools are being visited by some of the government officials and local press as they have found a qualitative difference from the government run schools. An action plan is being prepared for the following academic year and we are also involved in administrative activities like taking stock of the education material, purchasing of slates, note books and other material for the next year, preparing the writing boards for the children to work inside the class room and collecting local material like seeds, preparing natural colours, craft material and lesson plans.