**Supporting Education for Rural Children**

**IN BADGAON BLOCK OF UDAIPUR DISTRICT**

**ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

**By**

**SEVA MANDIR**

**1st February 2009 – 31st March 2010**

**Supported by**

**ASHA for education**

**BACKGROUND**

The Education programme of Seva Mandir endeavors to ensure education for out-of-school children and empowers communities to demand and collaborate with the government to secure better education for their children. In five blocks of Udaipur district, the programme helps the village communities run the following activities:

Shiksha Kendras (SK) formerly called Non-formal education centres

Action research projects

Seasonal residential learning schools/ camps

Jan Shikshan Niliyams / village libraries (JSN)

Youth resource centres (YRC)

Activity Centres in Government Schools

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Of the 5 blocks, ASHA supported the SK programme in Badgaon block from 1st October, 2007 for one year. From 1st February 2009, ASHA is supporting the major educational interventions in this block. The proposal approved by ASHA had the following three components:

1. Supporting 20 Shiksha Kendra (rural schools), formerly known as Non Formal Education centres.

2. Supporting the initiation of 5 activity cum tuitions centers. These centers were to be set up in collaboration with government schools in Badgaon block.

3. Supporting at least 25 out of school children of Badgaon to attend three residential learning schools organized by Seva Mandir.

Though the period of support was for a year, a no-cost extension for two more months (till 31st March, 2010) was sought from Seva Mandir and subsequently granted by ASHA. Thus the support from ASHA covered the period from 1st February 2009 to 31st March, 2010

A brief progress on the three initiatives is given in subsequent three sections for this entire period.

5 blocks, ASHA supported the SK programme in Badgaon block from 1st October,

**Section 1 SHIKSHA KENDRA**

**1.0 BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

Seva Mandir helps village communities run Shiksha Kendras (SKs), (formerly called Non- formal education centres) to ensure quality education to out of school children of tribal and marginalised communities. These SKs also act as sites for of providing experience of quality education to communities. The SKs are often single instructor schools offering education to out-of-school children up to class 3. All instructors (called *Anudeshak*) are members of the local community and none of them have had any prior formal training in teaching children. The average academic qualification of a teacher is class 8th. Even though the instructors have not had much academic training, due to Seva Mandir’s investment in their capacity building, the students of the SKs generally outperform the children of the other government and private schools.

We had a target of running 20 centers and providing education to 600 students. At the beginning of the support period, we had **652 students (365 boys and 287 girls).** Out of these **104 children took admission in government schools** in July - August, after graduating from the SKs. **65 children dropped out** between April 09 and March 10. There was an **enrollment of 99 new children** during this period. Accordingly by the end of the reporting period we have **24 centres running in 21 villages with an enrollment of 582 students (251 girls and 331 boys).**

**Table 1: Details of SKs in Badgaon Block**

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The details of the SKs operational in Badgaon are given in Annexure I.

The students in the SKs are from tribal communities. Almost all children are from very impoverished backgrounds with their families were living on marginal incomes. But it is worth mentioning that in few villages like Challi, Malaria, Ushan and Loshingh Dhana, even students of the so called “upper caste “are attending the SK along with the children of the tribals. Though the upper castes are also from impoverished backgrounds, this fact not only speaks about the quality of the SK but also implies that Seva Mandir is managing to break down the social differences and promote cohesion amongst different social classes.

**2.0 CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHERS**

Since most of our teachers have studied only until 8th or 9th class, trainings are conducted regularly to enhance their capacity. Capacity building has been a critical area of engagement for Seva Mandir as on one hand it serves the purpose of improving teaching – learning for children and on the other hand serves as a motivational tool for the teacher. The details of the different trainings conducted in the reporting period are given below:

**2.1 Instructor Meetings**

As in each block, Badagaon block has 2 meetings planned in every quarter and in the reporting period Badgaon block has had 9 Instructor meetings. In these meetings, the instructors have the opportunity to interact with the block level programme coordinators,share their concerns, collectively find solutions to problems, discuss new directions for action, and review the various skills required to run the centers.

During the month of November, the duration of the instructor meeting was increased by a day, lasting for 3 days (instead of the regular 2 days) so that more topics could be covered with the teachers. One and half days were used to conduct the certification course, and the remaining time was used to discuss effective and multiple uses of the resource materials available in the SKs to better aid and improve the children’s learning. The resource materials that were dealt with included story / work books, number wheels, posters, number charts, poems, and flashcards. A variety of poems and songs were also taught to and sung by the instructors to add to their existing repertoire of songs. The instructors were also taught hand gestures and actions to accompany the poems to improve the children’s understanding, method of learning and overall enjoyment and to prevent rote memorization of the poems

Some members of the education team have recently had the opportunity to attend trainings and workshops on different aspects of education. The relevant learnings from these trainings were shared with the instructors during the instructor meetings. These included various games and activities to make education and learning more accessible to children like classroom ice-breakers, how to make the class environment more colourful, attractive and child centered, and creation of different teaching aids to transact teaching.

Along with this, regular discussions on fee collection, sharing on Parent –Teacher meetings in their respective SKs and other reports were also done in the instructor meetings. Sessions and follow-ups on English teaching also happened in the instructor meetings.

**2.2 English Language Teaching**

In lieu of the demand for including English as one of the subjects taught in the SK, English language teaching (ELT) was initiated on a pilot basis in October 2007. A follow up and second round of training were held in August, 2008. Nine instructors from Badgaon were selected and attended each of these two trainings. These workshops dealt with different aspects of ELT like grammar, sentence construction, reading and comprehension and writing, games, etc. The intent in both the workshops was to train the instructors through simple and basic activities like poems, games and commands while also demonstrating different teaching methodologies that can be carried with their stduents.

Encouraged with the response of the pilot and with the support that we have received from ASHA, we have been able to extend English training to all the 25 SK instructors of Badgaon block during the reporting period. This has been done in different stages to help the instructors understand and grasp the language better. Specifically, we held 2 small workshops and 1 more intensive training (described further below) to strengthen the capacity of the instructors in English Language teaching. These workshops dealt with different aspects of ELT like vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, reading, comprehension and writing.

These training sessions were very successful. The teachers were very interested and eager to improve their English. Additionally, significant progress could be noticed between the first and the last trainings. Teachers were more confident in their English speaking ability. As a result of the improvements made by the teachers, the children’s ability of spoken English has also improved. We are hopeful that the process which we have been able to start with support from ASHA, can be taken to all the SKs in the remaining 4 blocks.

The workshops conducted in ELT are described below:

**2.2.1 First ELT training**-. A 3 day orientation workshop on ELT was conducted from 22 to 24 September 09 for all the SK instructors of the Badgaon block. The major objective of this orientation was to build the vocabulary of teachers in English and improve their pronunciation skills. To help them fulfill this objective, the following aims were kept in mind:

• Building familiarity with English sounds primarily through spoken exercises in meaningful situations

• To help the child build up a working knowledge of English (greetings, requests, instructions, commands) by engaging them with the language through actions, rhymes, dramatization, mime and games.

The entire three-day orientation was activity based. Different themes like names of colours, my family, shapes, vegetables, body parts, animals, transport, flowers, fruits, days of week, month of year were covered. Different activities like “categories, if you please, give some names of fruits/vegetables etc” “Tipi Tipi Top which colour do you want?”, memory games, guess the object made from shapes, family reunion, picture reading were used to cover these themes. The instructors also learnt names of things around them in English with correct and intelligible pronunciation. Following small verbal commands and also giving out such instructions was conducted with much fun. Reading and understanding very small texts, singing English rhymes and songs with suitable actions and pronunciation were also done during the workshop.

Instructors were very excited to learn more English and found the orientation very interesting. Overall they felt the orientation to English language session was

comprehend-able and they could understand the concepts based.

**2.2.2 Second ELT training**- A short two day follow-up was done with the same instructors on 27 – 28 January 09. This workshop included revising the vocabulary on different themes covered in the previous training. Additionally, new dimensions and components to the same themes were added. For example after revising the theme of colours and body parts, instructors were asked to make small (oral) sentences on the colours and different body parts.

New topics were also included in the training like the themes of people and their professions, introduction to sentence construction in English, etc.

**2.2.3 Third ELT Training**: A 6 day workshop was held in Kaya from 22nd to 26th February. In this workshop the facilitators of the activity centre also participated as mentioned in Section 3 of the report.

The prime focus of this training was revisiting the ground covered in the previous ELT workshops and adding new dimensions and expanding the instructors knowledge and skills w.r.t. English language.New topics included simple sentence construction (verbal and written), having small conversations in English, using Titles (Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms), days of the week, months of the year, etc. For better practice, the instructors were divided into smaller groups and were allowed to converse, question & answer on certain themes. The small groups enabled even the weakest instructors to participate and express themselves. Games and icebreakers like mimicking animals to guess the action were

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6also used throughout the training and enjoyed immensely. With the help of audio-visual equipment, simple short stories in English were shown, with the aim to enable the instructors learn the language in a full context.

**2.2.4. Teacher’s Feedback and Review**

A real progress could be noticed between the pre- trainings and last day of the training. Teachers were more confident and willing to express themselves in English.

At the end of the third training, a feedback and review of the ELT training was done with the instructors. They were asked to fill in a questionnaire and answer some detailed questions concerning their experiences and responses to the ELT trainings.

On the whole, the teachers responded positively about the workshops. The instructors compiled a substantial list of what they had learned, what aspects of the training had helped them, while also offering constructive suggestions for future improvements. In summary, the teachers felt that the trainings had been useful in developing and expanding their capacity to teach English. The workshops had helped in increasing their vocabulary and improving their understanding of grammar. They expressed that the trainings had helped build their confidence and equip them new teaching approaches and ideas. 90% instructors wanted more such trainings in the future. Some even specified that in future they are keen to learn more grammar (about tenses, singular/plural, use of articles, etc).

To supplement English teaching in the SKs, audio players have been given to 5 SKs as a pilot. This audio material given includes simple English rhymes which teachers can do with their students with actions .We are also in the process of developing audio + written material (manuals for teachers, worksheets for children and other TLM) which will support the students in learning English.

**2.3 Annual Instructors Training**

In addition to the bi-monthly instructor meeting at the block level, annual trainings of instructors form an integral part of Seva Mandir's Education program. The trainings also prove to be a forum where theoretical knowledge meets practical experience enabling both the resource persons and the instructors to learn from each other.

In 2009, the annual training was held from 7th to 12th September 09, where 14 instructors from Badgaon participated (along with instructors from other blocks). This batch of training mostly had new instructors who had joined SKs after March 2007 and some instructors whose conceptual understanding of Hindi and Mathematics was weak despite their experience and thus required more hand holding in class room transactions. The training included concepts of learning language and math. A brief glimpse of the training held in 2009 is elucidated below.

**2.3.1. Training of Trainers**

Before the commencement of the instructors training, a 4 day training of trainers (TOT) was held for all those who were to facilitate the training. The purpose of the TOT was to review and strengthen concepts involved in Maths and language teaching, how children learn. The four days involved a lot of constructive thinking and brainstorming. Screening topics for the training, finding related articles, planning and making exercises for the training were done collectively in the TOT. External resource persons were also invited to take sessions on topics like story telling, understanding number systems, how to analyse test papers solved by children, why children make errors and how to frame questions for children.

**2.3.2 The Instructor Training:**

**Objectives:** The focus of the training was on how to make teaching more context oriented, child centered, interesting and enjoyable. The two major objectives of the training were:

1. To deepen the capacity of instructors by strengthening their conceptual understanding of the subjects (Hindi language and Maths).

2. Emphasize the practical aspects of how to conduct classroom transactions.

**Some sessions held in the Instructor Training Programme**

General Sessions:

•What does a child know before coming to the centre? How does she learn this?

•What are the games children play? What do they learn from them? Can we make

attempts such that when a child is studying, for her it is like a play / game?

•What is an activity?

•What is a good classroom?

Language sessions:

•What do we mean by language? How does a child learn language? How should

we teach language?

•Why are children not able to read?

•Importance of poems and stories in learning language

Maths

•When will we know child can count?

•How will we teach counting?

•Analysing problems of mathematics solved by children.

•Conceptual understanding of number systems

**2.3.3 Strategy**

The strategy followed to achieve these objectives included group exercises, discussions and presentations. Thought provoking sessions were held on how a child learns or does not learn, what does the child know before coming to the school/ centre, do children learn from the games they play, how one learns language, what is meant by language, how to teach language, ways to ensure maximum learning in classrooms.

Mathematical concepts that were discussed included getting a sense of numbers and number systems, what a child can do with numbers, how can she play with numbers, when we will say a child knows counting and how to teach a child counting, what does an activity mean, planning activities in language and mathematics. The objective was also to see how mathematics is different from other subjects and what difficulties children encounter while learning mathematical concepts. It is very important for instructors to understand that a lot of mathematical concepts are abstract. While initially children learn mathematics better with the help of concrete objects, they should gradually move towards understanding the abstract nature of mathematics. These were some of the concepts that were explored in the training. Apart from these, sessions were conducted on story telling, reciting poems with actions, making exercises on them and discussions were done on how story telling can be a good medium for teaching.

Instructors got the opportunity to take part in many brainstorming sessions, which forced them to think, rethink and share their ideas. They were asked to work both within the group and between groups and present their group work. Efforts were made to getting maximum participation from the instructors. In between the sessions, we also had games and energizers. These activities played the dual role of enjoyment and aiding the understanding of concepts.

**2.3.4 Feedback from Instructors**

Each day of the training was begun with a feedback session. Instructors were free to comment on sessions they enjoyed most or did not enjoy, issues they wanted more clarity on, etc. An overall feedback of the training was taken at the end of the training. The instructors responded that the training was very useful in terms of clarifying basic concepts that they had taken for granted. They also appreciated learning new methods and techniques to teach and transact in the classroom.

**2.4 Certification Course**

A long-term program, in the form of Certification course, was planned and offered to the instructors of SK from 2003. The SK Certification Course is being conducted in collaboration with Vidya Bhawan1 and continues to be an integral part of the capacity building efforts of the Education Programme for the instructors of SK centres. The certification course runs in a distance cum contact mode. As mentioned earlier, most of the instructors in the Seva Mandir education program have only studied up to Class 8, and have had no formal training to teach. The objective of the certification course is to enable the instructors to go through a systematic and well designed capacity building/teacher training course. The course also aimed to set up a mechanism that could enable a continuous dialogue and interaction with the instructors on academic issues, in a manner that the instructors found interesting, challenging, and meaningful for their own learning, and meaningful for the children in their classrooms.

The certification course is divided into three levels (Level I, II and III). The first level is focused around reading-writing and mathematical skills expected from a class 5 student. This level has a portion on learning processes (child) and its relationship with classroom teaching processes. The level II is an advanced version of level I with the expectation that the instructors after completing level II become capable of teaching upper-primary classes. Level II concepts are denser and more abstract in comparison to level I. For example, level II has more inputs on the classroom processes that will help instructors understand the classroom teaching and learning and the ability to relate with learning theories. Level III is pitched at integrating classroom teaching with the larger issues of development and education. Level III will focus on building an understanding on child- development, sociology of education, further understanding of subjects, etc.

The main components of the certification course are worksheets, tutorials and written exams. Assignments in language, mathematics and classroom learning processes are given through worksheets to the instructors. After which, tutorials are held in the block to help the instructors with their assignments. The tutorials are clubbed along with the bi-monthly instructors meeting at the block. All the instructors regularly submitted their assignments and attended the tutorial classes. Worksheets given for the assignments helped concretize discussion in the tutorials.

A Summary of the Achievements in the Certification Course so far in all the 5 blocks:

a. Conceptualizing the certification course and development of level-1 from 2003.

b. Piloting of level-1 (first group) April 2004 to Oct 2004

c. Implementation of Level 1 (second group) in all the blocks from March 05 to June 06.

d. Third group of Level 1 in all the blocks from March 07 to Dec 08. (This was done for new instructors and the instructors who did not pass the level 1 in previous attempts)

e. Piloting of Level 2 in Jhadol block from Mar 05 to Dec 07. (First Group)

f. Implementation of Level 2 in all the blocks from March 07 to Jul 09. (Second Group)

g. Fourth group of Level I began in Oct 09

h. Third group of Level II began in Oct 09

i. First group of Level III began in Nov 09

**Current Status In Badgaon the SK Certification has 14 instructors in level I, 7 in level II and 4 instructors in level III.**

The 4th group of Level I and 3rd group of Level II began in October, 2009. The first group of Level III started in Nov, 2009.

A focus of certification course in the initial months of the reporting period was on the consolidation of instructors’ learning for Levels I & II of the course, and its link with the classroom processes. Discussions on pedagogical issues in teaching of mathematics and language as a part of classroom processes were held with all the instructors enrolled in the level-I of the course.

Another major focus of the certification course during this period was on developing the material, worksheets, for level III instructors specially keeping in mind how children learn math and language,

For more details on Certification Course See Annexure II

**3.0 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Community participation and ownership, a central component of Seva Mandir’s vision, are also a critical part of the SK programme. This is not only because Seva Mandir strives to translate these principles into norms within its philosophy of constructive work but also because parents and communities at large play a very important role in the well-being of their children. It is for this reason that Seva Mandir works in a more systematic and comprehensive manner to involve communities in the functioning of SKs and to deepen their understanding on quality education. Thus to encourage partnership with the parents and community, and bring a sense of accountability from both the teacher and the community, various initiatives were taken, some of which are described below.

**3.1 Shiksha Shulk (Fees)**

In all the SKs, a token fee, known as Shiksha Shulk, is charged from the parents. If more than one child per family is attending the SK or if the family is economically constrained, the Shiksha Shulk is waived off completely.

Each year the collection of fees has been between 60 -70% against the expected amount. This is an encouraging sign of increased parental interest in their children's education. For communities which are economically weak, even a small contribution is a big step and reflects their interest and support for the NFEs**.**

To understand the reasons behind low collection of fees, a short study was conducted in the months of May-June(09) across 26 SKs in all the five blocks. It revealed that fee is being collected in different ways at different centres. In some places it is collected annually (i.e. Rs.60 at the beginning of the school session), while in other places, it is collected quarterly,half annually, bi–monthly or even monthly. The study shows that collection of fees was better where it was collected annually and not in installments. The reason for non-collection seemed to be that people often forgot to pay when they had to do it in installments. Collection of fees also improved with increased participation in parents’ meetings, a stronger village committee and where the instructor had a good rapport with the parents and reminded them for the payment. The findings show that only a small percentage of parents are unable to pay the fees due to financial constraints.

Based on the findings of this short study, this time it was suggested to the village committees to collect the fees annually at the beginning of the session and not in installments over the year. In this manner, if there are sufficient funds collected in the beginning of the session, its utilization can happen sooner and not after the year is over, as it usually happens now. Another idea proposed was that the fees per child be increased from Rs.60 to Rs.100 annually. The reason behind this was that in many places it is requested to purchase uniforms for the children, and due to inflation in recent times, a fee of Rs.60 is inadequate to meet this need. In most places these both the suggestions have been accepted by the village committees and the parents.

In Badagon block, against an expected amount (Shiksha Shulk) of **Rs. 51300** (based on calculation of Rs.100 per child) for all the SKs, **Rs. 32,999** was collected in this period (Details in Table 2). The Shiksha Shulk collected was about 64 **%** of the expected amount in this year, which is a good improvement considering that the fees has been hiked from this year. Fees was waived off in 69 cases, where more than 1 child from the same family was enrolled in the SK, economic constraints prevented parents to pay the fees and the child not having parents. In centres of Barwaliya, Challi, Bhilwara, Lohsingh and Ushan, full fees have been received. In the past few years there was poor collection of fees in SKs of Raya and Naya Kheda villages. After consistent discussions in community meetings and PTMs, this year there was a marked improvement in the fees collected in these SKs. The fees collected in Raya was Rs.570 for 18 children and in Naya Kheda, Rs.1500 for 25 children.

The fees collected in all the SKs were deposited in the village fund and will be used for the students under the supervision of the Village Development Committee. The utilization of the fees of the previous year was done after consulting with the parents and children. Depending on the children’s and parents needs, the fee was spent for different purposes like buying uniforms and shoes for the children, sports material, maintenance of the SK, or whatever the students and parents decided. In Waghelo Ka Gura, Lohsingh, Challi, Gayrion La Guda, Bhilwara and Ushan, fees were utilized for buying clothes for children. In Sangawera, children received shoes and socks from the fees money.

**Table 2 : Badgaon Block: Shiksha Shulk Collection Details**

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As an effort to further deepen the relationship between the SKs and the parents of the children attending the SKs, Parent-Teacher meetings were organized in all SKs once in two or three months. The meetings enabled the parents to get acquainted with the progress their child had made and gave the teacher and parents an occasion to have a dialogue. A lot of issues got discussed and resolved through such forums. The topics discussed included *Shiksha Shulk*, enrolment and attendance of children, hygiene, teaching pattern, parent’s role, etc. At Chali Bhilwara and Wagela Ka Gura SKs, students narrated rhymes with actions and stories in the PTM. This was followed by a healthy discussion between the parents, community and the instructors.

**3.3 Role of GVCs (Village Committee)**

To ensure the accountability of the grass root level workers towards the village, village development committees (in Seva Mandir’s work area) have been entrusted with the responsibility of paying the stipend to all grass-root level workers including the SK instructors. Through training, the capacity of the village committee to plan, monitor, evaluate and support different programmes in the village is being enhanced. As a result, in most villages, there is active involvement of committees in monitoring and supporting the SKs. Conducting surprise visits of the SKs, checking the cleanliness and other facilities in the SK, keeping a tab on the attendance of the instructors and the children are some of the activities that the committees do. The committees are also encouraged to look at other aspects of the center vis-à-vis the behavior of the instructor towards the children, what and how the instructor is teaching in the class, etc. The village committees also take responsibility of utilising the fees after consulting everyone. In Selu village, the GVC took care of the rent expenses of the SK for a few months. In Ushaan, the GVC purchased a *durry* (carpet) for the children from the village fund.

**3.4 Infrastructure and Repair**

In SKs of Vadanga, Raya, Dholi Ghati, Patiya Khakrakhet and Dulawaton Ka Guda, repair work of the centres was carried out with the help of the village committees. In Vadanga community hall (where the SK classes are held), a new black board was made along with work of painting and varnishing the room. In Dholi Ghati, repair of floor was undertaken, while in Dulawaton Ka Guda, repair work of floor, installation of a door and a window was undertaken. Similarly white wash was done in 5 centres of Kadiya zone.

In Raya, a community hall has been constructed, where space will be given to the SK for running the classes. For this construction work, Seva Mandir helped with material and technical advice, the villagers contributed their labour and the Panchayat contributed 50 bags of cement. The village committee took up the entire responsibility for the construction from the beginning to the start.

Apart from this, to ensure proper light in 5 SKs which did not have adequate light, a new method has been tried out. Small fiber glass sheets were purchased and have been installed in these SKs, along with tiles in the roofs. These sheets are transparent and allow natural light to enter the rooms enabling the children to study with ease ( in absence of electricity connection).

All the above work has been done primarily with the support of ASHA, but for Raya where funds from another funding agency was used.

**4.0 EVENTS**

**4.1 Republic Day and Independence Day**

Republic Day (26th January) and Independence Day (15th August) are two of the major national festivals which were celebrated in most SK centers. The days were observed by hoisting the national flag and organising a cultural programme. The village committee and other residents of the village also participated in the celebration. Celebrating national festivals collectively serve varied purposes. They provide children a break from their routine and encourage interaction with others. The children get an opportunity to take part in many creative activities, thereby furthering their cognitive and other skills. It also gives them an opportunity to develop and showcase their cultural talent. For the village, it was an opportunity to get together and strengthen their solidarity. Most importantly, it encourages and inspires people to enroll their wards and regularly send them to SK.

• In Dhar and Barwaliya these occasions were celebrated jointly with the Youth Resource Centres or “Urja Ghar”. Other children of the village also participated in the programme.

**4.2 Pravesh Utsav2 (Admission day)**

Pravesh utsav was celebrated in many SK’s. The purpose is to encourage the out of school children to get enrolled in SK. Students of SKs organized a rally in each hamlet. The new students were welcomed in school. As a result of the Pravesh Utsav, 99 children were enrolled in the all the SKs of Badgaon block in the past year.

**5.0 OTHER EVENTS**

**5.1 Resource Material**

In an attempt to give the children a wide variety of text, the existing libraries in the SKs have been replenished with more books. Around 30 titles from Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti and 15 titles from Katha were selected and procured. Both these are NGOs which publish very good books for children. The books selected are in simple and interesting language (most are in Hindi while some are in simple English, and few are bi-lingual), with lots of illustrations which appeal to the readers.

2 Pravesh Utsav or Admission Day has been traditionally celebrated in Seva Mandir SKs at the onset of the new academic session in the month of July each year. The aim is to encourage out of school children to get enrolled in SK.

Case Study: Prabhulal Salvi Prabhulal Salvi is a student at the SK centre in Chali Bhilwara. He is 9 years old and has three brothers, of whom he is the eldest. Before coming to the centre, he used to help his father on their family’s farm. His father tried to send him to school but he was afraid of going, having heard about the unpleasant experiences of his friends who were going to school. One day when he was going to the field, the SK instructor called him and talked to him. Initially hesitant to talk, the instructor took him to the centre and asked him to participate in some of the activities like reciting poems with actions, songs and playing games. The child felt good and excited to be given an opportunity to study and from then on he began coming regularly to the centre. Currently his learning abilities are equivalent to that of class 4. He likes reading and writing stories as well as telling stories to other children. He even helps the younger children at the SK with their studies. His academic achievements have made his parents proud and they feel very happy when he reads a book in front

of them.

The children are enjoying reading the new and interesting books, and in some places the older children are also taking the books home to read. The instructors are also using the books for story telling sessions, role plays and other language related exercises.

Since April, daily newspapers are being supplied to 10 SKs. The use of newspaper had been discussed in the previous annual instructor training. Children and teacher are both reading the newspaper and discussing the events reported in paper. It is difficult to get newspaper delivery in all villages / SKs, thus only 10 centres are currently receiving the newspaper.

**5.2 Distribution of solar lights**

Seva Mandir was approached by a Delhi based solar light company (called Cosmos lights) for a promotion of solar lights in the villages. The company gave 100 solar lights worth Rs.1600 each free to SM. SM decided to further distribute it to 100 such children who are currently studying in SK/ school and who are willing to pay a contribution and also share the light with children from other families. In Badgaon, a total of 20 students from Challi, Bhilwara, Sangavera and Patiya (2) SKs were chosen to receive the lights. The selection of the children was done taking into consideration the economic background of the family, no of children per family, distance of centre from house, availability of light in the vicinity etc. The families were asked to contribute a token amount, a major part of which has been kept in the village development fund and a small part has been kept at the block level. The block fund will be used for the repair and upkeep of the solar lights in future. Preliminary results show that the children are using lights to study at night. This has also reduced the family’s dependence on oil for lighting thus also benefiting the environment

**Case Study : Losingh Dhana Village SK**

Losing Dhana village does not have a government school in its proximity. Children have to walk 1-2 kms in order to reach the only government school in the village. In the rainy season the condition gets worse, the roads get blocked and as a result of this, children are unable to attend school regularly. As a result of these reasons, the village community proposed the opening of a SK in the village, which was consequently opened in 2004. Presently there are 22 children enrolled in this center, including 11 boys and 11 girls. The SK is run by a local teacher, Premlata, who has studied till class 8th. She teaches children with a lot of care and attention, making sure that the environment is child friendly and comfortable.

Among these 22 children there is one child named Sanjay who is 10 years old and is at the level of class 3. He is very interested in reading, writing and drawing. He has very good drawing skills and creates beautiful pictures.

Another child, Meethalal Rawat who is 12 years old and enrolled in the SK 2010. He had passed out of the government school in Losing Dhana from class 5th, but hardly knew the Hindi alphabets nor could count till 20. After being at the centre for two-three months, he is now able to identify all the alphabets and read small words and count until 50. His parents can also see the difference and are happy about the fact that their child is now learning.

The English teaching program was started at the center in April 2009. The level of the children in English has increased a lot since then and the children are enjoying learning English.

**6.0 SOME IMPACTS**

**6.1 Results of Children’s Assessment/ Evaluations**

To measure the extent to which NFE students have been able to acquire new knowledge over the course of the year, standardized tests are conducted twice a year. We attempt to make the evaluation process interesting and a learning experience for the children as well as us. The question paper has a lot of illustrations and pictures to attract the children and to arouse their creativity and imagination. There are a variety of questions ranging from pictures to identify and name, text for reading and comprehending, mathematical sums, etc. Along with testing language and mathematics skills, children’s knowledge of their surroundings and environment is also evaluated. The exam paper is designed in such a way that there is something for each child. For example in mathematics, questions range from counting and simple addition to problem sums, which gives scope for each child to participate and not feel overwhelmed or alienated. We also had an intensive training of the evaluators before we embarked upon the evaluations. The training was on why the evaluation is important and how to conduct the evaluation uniformly across all centers.

Half yearly and annual evaluations were conducted as planned. In 2009- 10, annual evaluations were conducted in April 2009 (for the session of 08-09) and half yearly evaluations were conducted in December 09 (for the session of 09-10). Annual evaluations of 2009-10 session have recently been completed and results are being processed.

Hence, to see the year over year improvement, we present below (table 3) the test scores of last three evaluations.

**Table 3: Performance Of Students In Last Three Evaluations**

To further explain the progress in performance, below is the performance of common children across evaluations.

A total of 296 common children appeared in the exams of December 08 and April 09. Their progress is given in the table 4 below.

**Table 4: Progress of Common Children**

A total of 281 common children appeared in the exams of April 09 and Dec 09. Their progress is given in the table 5 below.

**Table 5 : Progress of Common Children**

Both the tables above reflects that the progress by children in the all the levels, especially in Level 3, is quite fast.

On the basis of the evaluation results (and some other parameters), we are now specifically doing targeted monitoring of the SKs, which have shown little progress in the terms of children’s academic performance

Level 0

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

T otal

Half Yearly exam Dec 08

40

210

113

59

422

Yearly exam April 09

35

202

106

71

414

Half yearly exam Dec 09

42

235

94

110

481

Level 0

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

T otal

Half Yearly exam Dec 08

23

150

87

36

296

Yearly evaluation April 09

16

136

89

55

296

Level 0

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

T otal

Yearly exam April 09

19

142

74

46

281

Half Yearly exam Dec 09

15

118

72

76

281

**6.2 Graduating To Government Schools**

Students from SKs are encouraged to enroll in the government school once their initial foundation of reading, writing and mathematical abilities are built. Most of the admissions were in class 5, but in few cases there were also admission in higher and lower classes. In this reporting

period, a total of 104 children took admissions in government schools. This is a substantial increase as compared to the previous year when 63 children were enrolled in government schools.

**7.0 RESEARCH PROJECTS**

**7.1 Ensuring Teachers Presence**

Seva Mandir had started an action research in August 2003 to address the issue of absenteeism across the SK centers. This was done using tamper proof cameras, through which the teachers had to get photographs taken, showing themselves and all the students at the beginning and at the end of each school day. Teachers either received a bonus or paid a fine depending on the number of ‘valid days’ above or below a specified number of ‘valid days’. A valid day was defined as a day where the opening and closing photographs were separated by at least five hours and where the number of children in both photographs was at least eight. The research done in a randomized treatment control design showed a significant reduction in absenteeism across the treatment centers and also an improvement in children’s learning levels. After the research, Seva Mandir continued with using cameras at 5 SK centers in Badgaon block.

Due to the encouraging results, a decision was taken to have cameras in all the SK‘s. Due to spiraling cost of living in the recent year, it was also decided to increase the base salary of the instructors to Rs.2000 per month ( from the previous salary of Rs.1400). In May 2009, digital cameras ( earlier manual cameras were used) were introduced in all the SKa of Badagon block. Continuous rounds of trainings on the use of Digital cameras were done with instructors. From 1st July 2009, the use of digital camera and the new salary structure came in effect at all 24 SKs of Badgaon.

As compared to instructors of other blocks, who earn a fixed Rs.2000 a month, the average salary of the instructors of Badgaon block for the months of July 09 - March 10 was Rs.2155. In some cases, the instructors have earned as high as Rs.2600 in a month, indicating that these SKs are open for 26 days a month.

**Table 6: Enrollment in Schools in July 2009**

**Girls**

**Boys**

**Total**

45

59

104

Stipend Payment Details of 24 Camera Monitored SK centers from July till March 2010

• Average payment of 25 instructors from July-March: **Rs.2155** (centre opening for atleast 23 days in month)

• No. of months where payment was greater than or equal to Rs. 2000: 6.3 months, ensuring centre opened for 22 days.

• No. of months where payment reached Rs.2600 implying SK open for atleast 26 days a month: 2.24 months

**Table 7: Stipend Payment Analysis for the period July 2009-March 2010**

Block

Total instructors who were given camera in July 2009

No of instructors whose average stipend payment was below Rs.2000 in this period

No of instructors whose average stipend payment was between Rs.2200 – Rs.2300 in this period

No of instructors whose average stipend payment was above Rs.2300

Badgaon

25

6

12

7

The table indicates that almost half the instructors (12) were between the range of earning Rs.2000 to Rs.2300 i.e. running centre from 22-24 days in a month3. There are 7 instructors who earned more than Rs.2300 which implies that they were running the centre for more then 24 days in a month.

Overall, the data indicates that the new incentive model along with camera monitoring have encouraged the instructors to run the SKs regularly and earn more than the fixed stipend of Rs.2000 a month. The regularity of the instructors has also translated into better attendance of students.

3 Under the new incentive model, the instructors are paid Rs.2000 for 22 valid days in a month. For each day worked less, a flat deduction of Rs.100 is made. For each extra day worked, a bonus of Rs.150 is paid. A valid day is when there are 3 photos per day. The interval required between the first and third photo is 6 hours. The second photo can be shot after an interval of minimum of 2 hours and maximum of 3 hours from the first photo. And there have to be at least 8 children in each photo.

**Annexure I**

Table 8 : List of SKs in Badgaon Block

…

**Annexure II**

**Certification Course**

A brief on the three levels of the Certification course are described below:

**Level I**

Level I (third round) of the certification course started in all the blocks of Seva Mandir in March, 2007 with 16 instructors from the Badgaon block and ended with 8 instructors in Dec, 08. A written test was taken in January 2009, for these instructors and the results of this were declared in March 2009 and are given in Table 9 below.

**Table 9: Level I (third round) : Results**

No. of instructors enrolled

No. of instructor who left during the course

No. of instructor who appeared in exam

No. of instructors who cleared the exam

16

8

8

6

All those instructors who get 65% or more in Mathematics and Hindi; and score 55% in children’s learning processes clear Level-I . The instructors who cleared level I were enrolled in Level II in October 09. For this group, the period between the exams and the formation of Level II groups, was utilized to discuss aspects of how children learn language and math.

The fourth group of Level I began in October 09 with 14 instructors. These included instructors who were new and/ or have not been able to clear Level 1 in previous attempts. A baseline of the new instructors was also conducted which assessed their competencies in language and maths.

**A Glimpse of Level I Tutorials**

A focus of a few tutorials in Level I was on how children learn language. First, the instructors were asked to reflect and brainstorm on this in smaller and then bigger groups. The importance of using context to teach language was also highlighted here. For this purpose, examples of advertisement, picture stories and poems were used.

This was followed by detailed discussions on what is an advertisement, where they’ve seen it, what did they like about it, their favorite advertisement, etc. There were also discussions on what a photograph caption means and what does it say about the product. The instructors were then asked to create an advertisement of their centre. The advertisements created had a lot of diversity and included highlights on teaching, children, infrastructure, hygiene, etc. To conclude, discussions were held on what children can learn from the advertisements and how.

Under picture stories1, instructors were given examples of different picture stories and were also asked to create their own picture stories using certain simple symbols. Though all the instructors had the same set of symbols, they all came up with different stories and used the symbols creatively. Under poems and rhymes, the focus was on how to use poems amongst the children, how to use expressions and actions while reciting with children, and what other activities / questions can be done with poems. The instructors were also given incomplete poems and asked to complete the last lines on their own. It emerged from the whole exercise, that poems were also an interesting way of learning language. It was felt that actions and expressions helped children understand and remember the meaning of new words. Oral discussions, written questions, completing a poem, rhyming words, etc were some of the activities that could be conducted with poems to aid in learning language and making it meaningful and joyful.

It was concluded that the instructors should use multiple ways and different contexts to help the children learn language.

1 Picture Stories are those where some words are replaced by their illustrations / symbols. For example, instead of writing “sun”, an illustration of sun (☼) is used throughout the story.

19Under Level I a total of 31 worksheets are given to the instructors. This includes 12 worksheets on language, 12 on maths and 7 on learning processes of children. Details on worksheets given in table 10 below –

**Table 10 : Worksheets used in Level I**

**Level II**

During this reporting period, tutorials continued for the second group of Level II until July 09. The instructors in level II appeared for their written exam during July 09. The results of the same were declared in October 09 and are in table 11 below.

**Table 11 : Level II (second group) : Results**

The instructors who have been able to clear Level II exams were enrolled in level III of the certification course which began in Nov 2009. While waiting for the declaration of results, the tutorials were spent on revisiting the concepts dealt with in Level II and in also conducting new games and activities.

On being asked what they have learnt in Level II, the instructor’s answers included that they now know a variety of poems, stories and activities and are able to express themselves better with the children. They have also started using new words in their daily vocabulary. In mathematics, they said that earlier they were not clear about concepts of fractions, proportion, etc, which they are now confident about and are able to answer questions of the children in a better way. Due to the paper on Children’s Learning Process, they mentioned that they are now better able to understand why children make errors or are unable to grasp a thing.

The instructors were also asked on what their expectations were from Level III of the course. While some of them expressed the desire to learn and teach English and environment studies in their centre, other expressed the desire to have more stories and themes / contexts to teach language in their class. In mathematics, the desire of learning more on fractions, area, volume etc came forward.

In month of November third group of level II with 9 instructors started which included all those who passed out from level 1 and those who could not clear second group of level II.

**Level III**

Four instructors who cleared the level II were enrolled in level III in November 2009.

The tutorials for Level III so far have included giving exposure to different kinds of text like script, story, poem, dialogues between two people, etc. Various activities were done on using these text like summarizing it and writing in their own words, debates on the issues, writing meaning of poem, reading and comprehending stories and doing exercises on it. This was done so that they get to read the text again and again to ensure they are fully involved with the text. In maths the concept like fractions, what is decimal system, how are they related to daily life what are problems faced while learning these concepts were discussed and worksheet were given. A lot of brain storming was done to find out that, does child know what is maths before coming to school, how should one be teaching how to read. It was

**A Glimpse of Level II Tutorials**

In one tutorial for Level II the piece of text under-discussion was a famous play by Bhism Sahani, 'Kabira Khara Bazar Me'. It gave the instructors exposure to different type of narration in the first place. The playwright uses poetry in the drama to express different sentiments. Since the text was slightly abstract, instructors found difficult to respond to the questions on the play.

In another tutorial., instructors worked on “Gadbad poem activity”. This was done in groups where each group was given 4 stances from 12 different poems and they were asked to complete the poem. After this, how children can learn from this activity and what more can be taught to them was discussed.

In other tutorials understanding proverbs in Hindi, reading advertisement, arranging story in sequence, was done in groups. Also importance of keeping their viewpoints, waiting for others to complete their point, creating platform of discussing issues was also the focus so they can use more and more of language

In maths various concepts were more discussed and understanding maths related to daily routine and sharing experience on this was considered important. Emphasis on critical thinking was done. Other topics covered were decimal and its related algorithm. An article on children's learning was given to enable the instructors’ to understand how children learn and how mistakes in learning are also a part of learning. Some conclusions were drawn like children learn from their environment, stories attract them, and they learn even when they open a book, turn pages, so lot of different kind of exposure is required and must be given to ensure that their learning is enhanced.

basically done so that instructors realize how important are they for these children and how should they be dealing with them.

**A Review:**

Over last two years, due to the certification course, the instructors have gained confidence in their capacity to learn. There is increase in the average marks of the instructors compared to the baseline across all the subjects. The average score in language is 82% compared to 70% in the baseline. The average score in maths is up by almost 20% compared to baseline. Growing confidence of instructors towards their learning is also seen in the 50% decline of blank worksheets submitted by instructors as a part of their assignment. There is a change in the quality of questions asked by instructors in the tutorials. Compared to tutorials in the beginning of the certification course instructors now have more questions on the nature of mathematics. The question pattern has changed from more general to academic. Yet there are constraints on contents of number sense, abstract nature of mathematical proof etc. Hence the focus of discussion is now shifting from discussing mechanical process of solving mathematical questions and arriving at answers to a more conceptual understanding of maths. Now it is possible to talk to instructors on the number position system, cardinal and nominal values of number, the mathematical theory of fraction or negative number, the process of induction and deduction in mathematics etc. Accordingly worksheets have been made more difficult with more questions on abstraction.

In language, too there is an improvement in the instructors’ ability to deal with different narration and style in language. Their stories linguistically are more enriched in terms of use of sentence structure, use of phrases and use of mechanisms of language. There is improvement in the use of connectors. Now instructors understand texts with compound sentences more easily. There is improvement in their cloze text score in the worksheets. The focus of language question is shifting from grammar to making an effort to analyze the texts more fully.

The struggle now in the certification course is how the instructor's learning translates in the classroom. The course has been a little weak on collecting evidence on this and we need to understand this better to actually appreciate the impact of the course. Along with this, preparation is on to launch the next and final level of the course.

**Feedback from Instructors**

The instructors of Badagon block really find this course very effective. They feel that after being enrolled in this course, their reading and writing language has been improved. They are now able to understand the meaning of complex words used in a text and Mathematical concept like units, tens, fractions, Ratio-proportion. Discussions on topics like how does child learn, what do child know before coming to school, children are not empty slates enhanced their knowledge . While teaching children which activity and which way it should be done and what problem did they faced was were some other topics which they felt were important to be discussed.

**Section 2 Seasonal Residential Learning School**

**Background**

The purpose of the proposal submitted by Seva Mandir and approved by ASHA for Education, was to enable out of school children from rural Udaipur “to be able to read and write independently and with comprehension”. This was proposed to be done by organizing seasonal residential learning schools/ camps of two months duration each. Three such seasonal schools were proposed to be held between the period of April, 2009 to March, 2010. At least 25 such children were to be reached out through these seasonal schools with each child being encouraged to attend all three seasonal schools. This is because our experience has been that on an average, a child needs to attend three seasonal schools to attain stable literacy skills. After the completion of the seasonal schools, wherever possible, the children will be encouraged to enroll in a regular school and continue their studies.

The two main subjects taught in the seasonal schools would be language (Hindi) and Mathematics. For overall development of the child, sessions on health, hygiene, environment, art, games, outdoor sports, etc would also be an integral part of the seasonal schools.

**PROGRESS REPORT**

**1.0 Introduction**

As per the proposal, three seasonal school were held for the year 2009-2010 as give in table below:

**Table 1: Participation Of Children In The Seasonal School**

**2.0 Population Covered**

A total of 59 children attended the seasonal schools (16 children of school 2 participated again in school 3).

4 In most seasonal schools, a higher number of children had joined in initially , but little less of them completed as either they returned home mid way either due to health issues or other reasons.

Seasonal School

Total children who completed the school4

Girls

Boys

Comments

School I : 5 May to 30 June 2009

25

16

9

At the beginning of the seasonal school there were 38 children. But 13 children left in between due to various reasons.

School II: 5 November 09 to 5 January 2010

20

11

9

School III: 20 January to 25 February 2010

30

19

11

At the beginning there were 35 children, but 5 children left the seasonal school in between due to chicken pox.

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The villages where the children were drawn from are: School 2 & 3: Malariya, Mada and Patiya villages (Bagdunda zone) and School 1: Rooptalai (Ghorach zone), Vadanga and Banadiya (Dhar zone) villages. All these villages are located at remote place and characterized by poverty and largely inhabited by tribal.

All the participating children were from very impoverished backgrounds, and their families are living on marginal incomes. Many of these children have either never been to school or dropped out at a very early stage due to several reasons. Some of them migrate from the villages for work and hence were not able to attend regular school.

In the first seasonal school, out of the 38 children in the beginning, 12 had never been to school while 26 children had either gone to school for some period of time and then dropped out early, or are enrolled in school but not attending it regularly. Similarly in the 3rd School , we had 35 children (14 boys and 21 girls) at the beginning of the seasonal school. Amongst the boys, 8 boys were involved in grazing, 1 went to mines for labour, 3 children had dropped out of school at an early level ( 2 children had dropped after class 2 and 1 child had dropped after class 1) and 2 were at home. Out of girls, 12 were involved in grazing and other domestic work, 5 had dropped out of school at a early age, 2 girls were doing labour work at mines and 2 were at home helping in domestic work.

**3.0 Teachers Selection and Training**

Teacher selection and training is a crucial aspect of the seasonal school. The seasonal schools provide young people from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds an opportunity to get trained and teach in the seasonal schools. Out of the 22 teachers who were with us in the first seasonal school, only 9 teachers were available for the second school. The rest of the teachers, due to the experience and confidence gained from the seasonal school, were able to find employment in SM or other places. Thus we had to select some new teachers for the 2nd school and again for the 3rd school, where also a few teachers left us.

Before the beginning of each seasonal school, teachers were selected through a written test that evaluated their abilities in Hindi, Mathematics, reasoning and general attitude. After being selected, the teachers underwent a training on what and how to teach in the seasonal school. The training was divided in two major sessions, Hindi and Mathematics. In addition to this, sessions were also organised to sensitize them towards the other psycho- social needs of children.

Preference was given to women candidates and candidates from rural backgrounds during the selection of teachers. Many young people from rural and humble backgrounds came to teach in the school. Each seasonal school had around 20 teachers, where the minority of them were from the city and the rest were from the rural areas surrounding Udaipur. We also had around 7 female teachers in each seasonal school. For the children of Badgaon block, 3 teachers were dedicated.

**4.0 Childrens Learning Process**

In the beginning of the seasonal school, the children were assessed on their existing literacy level and formed into groups of 8 - 12 children, with each group being assigned to one teacher. The classrooms in the seasonal schools were structured to allow for children to work (individually and in groups) on their own. There were spaces and exercises, which allowed them to read, write, speak and reason on their own. The children were also encouraged a lot to speak and ask questions. While pre-lunch was devoted to Language ( Hindi), post lunch classes were utilized for math. Plenty of teaching materials and aids were used, which were meaningful and interesting to the child. A lot of care and energy went into preparing the learning materials for the children. We selected storybooks, which are in good and simple language, had attractive illustrations and suited children of different ages and learning levels. In mathematics, exercises were designed which allow children to understand the concepts of numbers and the functions possible with them instead of just learning the algorithms. A lot of other play materials like snakes and ladder, dices, flash cards aided the children to understand and learn while having fun.

During the course of the school, the children did plenty of work in terms of drawing, writing, craft, etc. The work done by the children was displayed on the walls of the classroom and was changed every week. Thus every week there was something new on the walls for the children to read. It also created a good learning ambience in the school and made the children happy and proud to see their work on display. It was ensured that everybody’s work is displayed and not only the best ones.

**4.1 Resource Centre**

A resource centre was set-up in the seasonal school for the benefit of both the children and teachers. This was equipped with indoor learning games, lots of play material and a computer. The walls were colourful and decorated with paintings and drawings of the children, making the resource center one of the most attractive rooms to the children. A weekly schedule was established, enabling each class to spend a few hours in the center each week. Children engrossed themselves in books, games and some also picked up basic skills in computer. Sessions on time, eclipses, simple science experiments, etc were also conducted in the center.

**4.2 Other Activities**

To ensure overall development of the children, various activities were organized along with studies. Sessions on health, hygiene, environment and art were organised on a weekly basis. In the daily schedule of seasonal schools, evening sessions were assigned for outdoor sports and cultural activities. Children played “Kho-kho”, “Kabbadi” (popular local games), Cricket and many other games every evening. The teachers also participated equally in the games and the cultural activities at night. Some special activities were organised on most Sundays, like sports day, magic or puppet show, documentary screening, craft workshops, etc.

In 1st school a workshop on Block printing and Bandhni making (tie and dye) was organised for the children. Children enthusiastically made colourful designs with these techniques. In 2nd school, a magic show was held where the magician enthralled the children with his magic tricks. A painting competition was organized by “Saman Bachpan” and another by PLAN India. Some paintings were selected and displayed in an exhibition at the State level. In the 3rd school, there was a children’s movie screened by American Centre, Delhi, which exposed the children to a different culture. A sports competition was also held which had children enthusiastically taking parts in races, archery and other sports.

**4.3 Exposure Visits:**

The children also got the opportunity to go on picnics. In the 1st & 3rd school, the children visited *Gulab Bagh* in Udaipur. *Gulab Bagh* is a famous garden with a zoo, having many attractions for children. The children spent the day in *Gulab Bagh* playing and visiting the zoo. It was a good outing for the teachers also. Along with picnic and enjoyment, the trip was also useful to children to understand various aspects of nature and environment. Later that evening the children visited the Rajiv Gandhi Park, which is beside the beautiful lake Fatehsagar Lake and is an example of contemporary architecture with lots of play area and equipments for children. In the 2nd school, due to the cold weather and Swine Flu scare in the city, the children were not taken out for any outing or exposure visit.

**5.0 The Venue**

The seasonal school was fully residential for both the children and the teachers. The first and second seasonal school of this year were organised at Vidya Bhavan’s Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Campus, situated in Badgaon, Udaipur. The campus in many ways proves to be ideal for the children's school. The place has a lot of open space with greenery and allows for children to play and explore. The place was also equipped with all basic amenities, making it comfortable for the children for the two months of their stay.

The third seasonal school was organized at Seva Mandir training Centre at Kaya. The reason for the change in venue was due to differences with the management of KVK

**6.0 Health Issues**

As health issues are not properly coped by the parents of these children, many of them had skin infections and other pre - existing illness when they come to the seasonal school. Weekly health checkups and daily medical aid was an important component of the seasonal school. We were fortunate to get help from a reputed pediatrician for weekly visiting the school and doing health-check-ups for the children and also providing invaluable medical advice from time to time.

In 1st seasonal school, as it was also one of the hottest summers recorded in Udaipur in past 5 years many children initially got heat stroke. Lots of care, medication, proper nutrition and advise from pediatrician this was controlled. Nutritious and balanced meals and snacks, keeping in mind the local tastes and the weather were provided to reduce anemia and general weakness. A lot of time was also spent on hygiene of the children and cleanliness of the premises and good habits were all incorporated in the routine of the children. By the end of the seasonal school, there was a visible difference in the children's appearance and their certain habits of hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness.

In the 2nd school, due to cold weather, many children suffered from cold and cough in initial days. This was brought under control by giving ayurvedic medicines, nutritional supplements and good diet.

In 3rd seasonal school there were incidences of chicken pox, and thus a few children had to sent back home to prevent the infection from spreading.

**7.0 IMPACT**

**7.1 Evaluation of Children’s Learning Levels**

For evaluation, along with regular classroom observations, a mid term test was conducted in seasonal school, to get a gauge the progress of children. Based on the feedback of these tests, groups were re-arranged as per the results and changes made in the teaching techniques accordingly.

An end-test evaluation of children was also conducted to assess the children’s progress. The results of the same for all the 3 seasonal schools are given in table 2 below.

…

At the beginning of the school most of the children could barely read or write. By end those in Level 1 could read small words and do basic counting and simple mathematical operations. While those in level 2 started reading and writing independently in Hindi. Furthermore, in mathematics they could perform operations like addition, subtraction and multiplication and division. This is a big achievement, for the children, that in such short duration, they are able to do some reading, writing and counting. It is remarkable especially given the fact that most of them would have never seen a book or held a pencil before coming to the school.

The results even though encouraging are a little uneven across the schools for two main reasons. One is that in School 1, there were some children who were repeat, and therefore they progressed a little faster. Secondly- the first residential school was held in May June, which is the time of summer vacations, therefore some children who are currently attending school also come for the seasonal schools. This happens largely because their reading – writing abilities are not so strong so their parents want them to attend the residential schools and improve their scholastic abilities. And even though their reading writing abilities are not too much, they have been exposed to some studying so they progress a little faster.

Compared to first school, the children in the second school were all new and hence their progress should be seen accordingly.

The third school had a mix of old and new children.

16 children of 2nd School, participated again in 3rd School . The progress of these children is given below:

**Table 3 : Results of Children common in both Seasonal Schools II and III**

The above table shows that for the children who attended 2 schools, the progress is very fast.

**7.2 Mainstreaming to Regular Schools**

After the 1st Seasonal School, regular contacts and follow-ups were made with the children and their parents. They were encouraged to enroll in regular schools (since admissions for the new session happens around July- August). Armed with their academic learning in the

5 To identify the progress of a child we have different levels of their learning. When a child can barely read and write anything, she is at Level 0. When a child can read and write small words in language and in Mathematics can do basic counting and simple operations like addition and subtraction with small numbers, she is placed in Level 1. When a child progresses and can read and write small text in language and in Mathematics can further also do operations like multiplication, division, etc she is placed in Level 2.

Total children

Level 0

Level 1

Level 2

School 2

16

10

2

4

School 3

16

2

7

7

seasonal school and the new confidence, 14 children (out of total 25 children ) enrolled and are continuing in a regular school. Two children ( boys) have migrated for work while 9 children (all girls) aree involved with domestic work.

**7.3 Helping Strengthen The Retention Of Children in Regular Schools**

Poverty is one big reason why children are unable to study. The hostile environment of the schools is also a cause but often the economic condition of the families deter children from regularly attending school even when interventions such as the seasonal schools help build in the children the ability to cope with not such a good school also.

As can be seen in the data given earlier for these seasonal schools also, many children passing out from the seasonal schools are involved in productive chores, either at home or outside. The money they bring back is critical for their family’s survival and therefore it is important that the children earn.

Under a new initiative, SM is proposing to compensate the family for the children’s earning by providing them a scholarship if the children attend school regularly. A similar programme has been done in the past, where due to the scholarship award money, there was high motivation for the children to regularly attend school. The attempt was to attract children to enroll and regularly attend school rather than migrate for labour or stay back at home for domestic work. The only problem in the earlier experiment was of targeting. Since the scholarship was offered to all the children in two villages of a certain age, many children who were already attending school also qualified for the scholarship. Singling out the children who really needed scholarship was difficult at a village level intervention.

By linking scholarship to the seasonal schools, we hope to take care of this issue of targeting, since most of the children at the seasonal school are out-of-school due to various reasons.

Children participating in the seasonal school, who are above 9 years of age and have attended atleast 2 seasonal schools are eligible for the scholarship. Accordingly 16 children (11 girls and 5 boys) have been selected for the scholarship from Malaria and Patiya village in Badgaon block. The initiative is for 3 years and is supported by Monsoon Accessories Trust, U.K.

**8.0 Closing Ceremony**

At the end of each school, a brief closing ceremony was held, which offered the children an opportunity to show their talents to others. Many children enthusiastically performed different cultural programmes, which ranged from songs and dances to drama.

The occasion culminated with children receiving certificates of participation and colourful bags and stationary pouches, which had been donated generously by some visitors. Some of the parents and village leaders were also invited on the closing day. This gave them a chance to see what their children have done in the school and also builds their confidence in Seva Mandir’s endeavor for educating their child. Enthused and impressed, many of them said that on returning they would now enroll their children in school.

The scholarship programme was also shared with the children and parents, so that they are further encouraged to send the children to schools.

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**9.0 Volunteers and Visitors**

In each seasonal school, we have volunteers from both India and abroad spending time with us. The seasonal schools provide volunteers, mostly from an urban background, an opportunity to understand and be sensitized to their rural counterparts. The volunteers on their part help in conducting games and activities with the children.

In the both the 2nd & 3rd seasonal school we had a group of students from St. Christopher’s School, United Kingdom, volunteer in the seasonal schools. The students were briefed about the seasonal school well in advance and came prepared with loads of activities and games on maths and English, science experiments, outdoor games and art and craft activities. The children immensely enjoyed and benefited from all the activities and it was a rich cross- cultural experience for both the children of the seasonal school and of St. Christopher’s School.

Udaipur chapter of Wokhardt Pharmaceuticals Corporate Social Responsibility wing under their initiative SHIKSHA for supporting primary education in India visited the Children at 1st seasonal school on 21st June, 2009. Four reputed Doctors of the city of Udaipur were present on the occasion accompanied by the locally placed employees of Wokhardt .The guest were warmly welcomed by the children of the school. A small cultural function was organised by the school family in which children performed folk songs, dance, and a drama on the issue of child labour and also shared their experiences of the school. Wokhardt team distributed stationary to the children on that day.

Mr. Bajrang Singh, the Additional Commissioner of Udaipur also visited the school on 24th June 09. Being a Government official, he valued the efforts Seva Mandir has taken to run such good education initiatives. Mr. Kishor and Mr. Umashankar from Azim Premji Foundation, Banglore were also visited the school on the 20th of June. As a subject expert they appreciated Seva Mandir’s efforts and also impressed by the motivation and the dedication of the teachers in the School. Mr. Vijay Tata from the World Bank also visited the seasonal school.

The seasonal school is also getting acknowledged at the local level by the residents of Udaipur. Vikram Arora an owner of a Marble Company in Udaipur visited the 2nd school on 8th December 2009 to celebrate his first marriage anniversary with the children of the learning school. He and his wife spent a day with children and also distributed Shawls and Chocolates to children.

In the 3rd school Mr. Robert Westlake, U.K. from Personal Development Trust, U.K. visited the children at the learning school with his wife, on 2nd Feb 2010. Mr.Tim Allen and Ms.Darina Allen (Ireland) spent some time at the school on 10th Feb 2010 and distributed fruits to all the children.

**10.0 Challenges and Learning**

The journey during the seasonal school had its many ups and downs. The seasonal school brought its new challenges and with it its own new learnings. Managing so many children for two months in itself is a big challenge which kept the team on-toes day and night. As mentioned above, most of the children who came to school were from very poor family hence several of them were very weak, malnourished and vulnerable to illness.

One of the biggest drawbacks of this school was the uneven profile of the children. Also a few of the children who came were too small, i.e. below 6 years and thus managing and teaching them it proves to be difficult.

**11.0 Conclusion**

In the three seasonal school that were held this year, the first had some problems of children’s identification and stability. But by the second seasonal school, we had managed to identify the children and also increase their stability. The academic processes have also been strengthened. These seasonal school have re-affirmed our faith that if the right learning environment is provided, then all children are capable of learning.

**Annexure I Success Stories** While collective uplifting of the group is important, the individuals benefiting must not be forgotten. While in the overall numbers you can see some progress, it is the change in the individuals where you feel the success. **Case Study 1: Hansi Mohanlalji**

**Age: 14 years Village: Malariya , Zone: Bagdunda** Hansi, is an exception among the children in the seasonal school. Almost six years ago she used to go to school and was studying in class one. One day when she was unable to reply correctly to the teachers question, she was beaten by the teacher with a stick. One of her leg was badly injured and she still bears scars from that wound. From that day she left the school and took to grazing her cattle and helping in other household work. She also sometimes did labour work, like working in the Nursery, where she earned Rs.50 a day.

Hansi’s attended both the first and second seasonal school and the experience has kindled in her the desire to study once again. At the end of the two seasonal schools she had reached A level and could read and write simple texts and do basic mathematics operations. She is currently at level of class 3. She has also been selected for receiving scholarship, provided she continues her studies in the regular school.

**Case Study 2: Durga Logar Age: 12 years Village: Mada, Zone: Bagdunda**

Durga is a jovial girl of 12 years. She has 2 brothers and 1 sister. Both the brothers work in Surat city in mills. They have some land but as agriculture is dependant on rains, her father does labour work in nearby mines. Durga had attended a school 3 years ago for a year, but then stopped going and helped her mother at home. Lately she also started working with her father on the mines, where she earned Rs.50 a day. One day she got injured in the mines and thus stopped going.

She attended the seasonal school for the first time in the 3rd School, where soon due to her eagerness to learn she moved from Level 0 to Level 1. Apart from studies, she enjoys dancing and singing with the children in the seasonal schools. She hopes to come back for the next seasonal school and advance in her studies.

**Case Study 3: Manaram Age: 14 years Village: Mada , Zone: Bagdunda** Manaram is a reserved but bright boy of 14 years. He is the eldest of 4 brothers at home. His father does wage labour as they have small land holding. His mother also works in the NREGA scheme. 4 years ago Manaram went to school, but was not regular as being the eldest he also had to take the cattle for grazing and soon dropped out. Since the past 1 year he has also been going to the nearby soap stone mines earning Rs.50 a day for doing labour work. His earnings have been an economic support for his family. He first attended the learning school in the 3rd school. His sharp mind soon helped him move from Level 0 to Level 1. Apart from taking keen interest in studies, Manaram also helped in the management of the younger children at the school. He often volunteered to help in serving food during meal times, in helping other children, etc. He also excelled in the sports activities in the seasonal school. He hopes to become a teacher when he grows up.

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

**Section 3 Activity Centre**

The condition of schooling in Seva Mandir’s tribal work areas is often one of severe neglect, characterised by high rates of teacher absenteeism, inadequate and overburdened teachers, substandard pedagogical methods, lack of materials, and poor infrastructure. In Badgaon, for instance, most of the children in government schools are from literacy impoverished backgrounds and face a lot of difficulty at school. This, together with a poorly performing state schooling system, means that even children who attend school for 4-5 years fail to learn very much. For this reason, the drop-out rate after class 5 is very high. The few that stay in school drop out in years 8 and 10 when they are required to take external examinations. Children either struggle through classes without gaining much or drop out of with a sense of failure and frustration.

Although the children in our Shiksha Kendras have access to quality education, once they attain the required standard and join the mainstream, they are confronted with poor quality of education in government schools. Addressing the issue of the quality of education provided in government schools is thus of great importance, and is also a priority of ours.

The Sahyog Kendras, or Activity Centers, were started in order to address some of these problems. The Activity Centers have been set-up in collaboration with government schools and the village communities, and from February 2009, with the invaluable support of ASHA for Education.

The goals of the Activity Centers are to:

•Enable the students to gain more from their education and take pleasure in learning;

•Encourage attendance and decrease drop-out rates;

•Improve academic performance.

We hope to achieve these goals through the following:

•Reinforcing the content of syllabus by providing books, materials, science kits etc.

•Organizing extra support classes after-school.

• Providing students with material for craft work to develop creativity and build

confidence.

•Providing a platform for students, teachers, parents and the community to engage in

dialogue and learn together.

The Activity Centres will also provide additional tuitions after school to cater to those students who need particular help in certain subjects..Initially, this extra tuition will only be available to students in classes 5 to 7, but will eventually be extended to the higher classes.

The Activity Centres are a new intervention for Seva Mandir. As the project grows and we learn with communities what they need from the Activity Centres, so our goals and methods will evolve.

**2.0 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME**

Any new Seva Mandir initiative is preceded by several rounds of discussion and deliberation, both within the organization and with the communities that we work alongside. Therefore, based on a common understanding, the Seva Mandir team shortlisted the schools in which the problems of teacher absenteeism, quality of teaching and simply lack of staff were particularly acute. This was followed by talks and discussions with village level committees, explaining to them the concept of Activity Centers and enlisting their support in approaching schools and gaining permission to set up the Centres. Most of the teachers and head-teachers welcomed the intervention, but categorically stated that they would allow the intervention only if they had consent from the Block or District level education officers. Obtaining this permission was a difficult and lengthy process. The 5 Activity Centers lie in different jurisdictions, meaning we had to approach a number of different officers. Furthermore, convincing the officers to give their consent proved to be a particular challenge. Perhaps one reason for their apprehension is that allowing external agencies into the government system exposes the failings of government provided education and shows them in a negative light. Even an year after the Programme started, we are still awaiting written approval from one officer, despite several reminders and visits to his office.

The consent we received was conditional. The officers stipulated that the activity centers were not to affect the teaching happening in the classroom that tuition centers were not to run during school hours, that no fees of any kind will should be taken from the children and that political activities of any nature are forbidden.

After the selection and training of facilitators the activity centers started in March 2009 (as described later).

**Table 1: The villages where the Activity centers have started**

**Background Information about the Schools:**

• In each school, the student to teacher ratio is poor, with the school in Undithal village being the worst.

• Even where there are sufficient teachers, the methodology is routine, and does not engage with the students or inspire to them to learn. There is a penury of teaching and learning material. Teaching is often restricted to blackboards and learning by rote methods. Libraries exist in most of the schools but they are generally locked up and out of regular reach of the school students.

• From our initial interactions with the school staff and students, it was evident that in the foundational classes (i.e. class 1 – 5) , the students had weak understanding of Mathematics and Language. As a result, most children were unable to read and write, or solve addition and subtraction problems, with any confidence or real understanding by the time they graduated to classes 6 - 8.. Furthermore, since the schools are often short staffed and lacking in materials, teaching and other resources available tend to go to the higher classes who are preparing for 8th class Board exams. Sadly, these exams are often the final benchmark for school staff and students. Thus, younger children in junior classes are often neglected and the foundations for reading, writing and mathematics never built. This creates a vicious cycle in which students in higher classes are not adequately prepared for their

Village / zone

Classes in school

Teachers in the school (No.) July 2009 March 2010

No. of Children enrolled in July 09

Negria / Delwara

1st – 5th Class

3 teachers (including head teacher)

3 teachers (including head teacher)

90

Ushan / Ghodach

1st – 8th class

6 teachers (including head teacher)

6 teachers (including head teacher)

125

Selu / Kadiya

1st – 8th class

3 teachers (including head teacher)

3 teachers (including head teacher)

100

Undithal / Bagdunda

1st – 10th class

1 teacher (is the head teacher)

1 head teacher, 1 teacher , 1 para teacher

200

Peepad / Kadiya

1st – 8th Class

5 teachers (including head teacher)

6 teachers (including head teacher)

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exams, and drive resources away from the junior classes. Our challenge is to provide enough support and resources to students in higher classes to cope with their studies and impending exams, whilst at the same time building strong educational foundations in the young and inspiring them to learn.

• The attitude of the teachers towards the children was also a concern. The students come from tribal and impoverished backgrounds and, for the most part, have illiterate parents. Their background is used as an excuse and justification for their low performance in the school. Children were given little or no respect and punished (even corporal punishments) often. Little attempt is made to understand the underlying reasons for the children’s poor scholastic performance.

• In Negria, the centre was been started in a primary school because this school for a long time had shortage of staff. Of the 3 teachers one was on maternity leave till May leaving only 1 teacher and 1 head mistress. The village community has been requesting SM to make an intervention in this regard for a long time. This school is situated inside the village, while the middle school (5 – 8th class) is located outside the village on the main road. The village committee requested that the centre be situated in this school as it will not only benefit the junior students, but also when the elder students return home, they can benefit from the tuitions. Another middle school is located in the opposite direction. Students of this middle school also come to the centre after school hours and on Sundays.

• In Selu, one of the facilitators selected at the activity centre is the instructor (Durga Lala) of the Shiksha Kendra (SK), which is also located around half a kilometer from the school. SM has been running an informal activity centre here for the past months, which ran for a few hours after school. With ASHA’s support, this has firmed up and the SK instructor is now fully employed in the activity centre, while a new person has been kept in the SK. Durga lal was a competent instructor in the SK in the past and many children attended his SK despite the presence of the school nearby. It will be interesting to see whether in the coming time if Durga Lal and his co facilitator are able to bring about improvements in the government school such that all children from the SK are also attracted to the school. Similarly, we hope to see improvements in the Ushan government school, such that children from the Ushan SK are attracted to the government school.

**2.0 SELECTION AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHERS**

Selection of facilitators for the activity centres was crucial task. In month of February, 2009, this post was advertised in respective and nearby villages/zones. Candidates who were at least graduates were invited. Unfortunately, as some of the villages are in interior, we were not able to get find any people who are even graduates. Thus people who had passed at least 12th class were asked to appear. The selection was done on basis of a written exam (which tested their knowledge of Hindi, the English language and basic science) and personal interviews. It was found that irrespective of whether the person is 12th class or graduate or even post graduate, there was not great difference in their understanding of concepts.

10 people were selected, and asked to attend a one week training in mid February. Only 8 people turned up for the training. The one week training covered basic concepts of the Hindi language and Maths. Facilitation is a big challenge as they themselves have been used to one way of teaching – learning and class room interactions.

5 facilitators also attended another day training from 6 – 15 April conducted by Vidya Bhawan. This training which covered concepts of the Hindi and English languages, mathematics, activities, games, story telling sessions, art and craft activities etc.

The facilitators also joined the 5 day training of teachers at the end of April conducted for the teachers of the seasonal residential learning school (conducted in May – June). Since duringthese months the schools were closed for summer holidays and the attendance of the children was not very high in the activity centres, the facilitators also spent 15 days in rotation teaching at the seasonal school. This gave them hands on teaching experience under supervision and guidance of experienced SM team. Facilitators also participated in 5 days training on teaching conversational English. They got a very good idea about how to introduce English to the beginners through various activities like story telling, sentence framing exercises and Role play.

Thus the facilitators were underwent various training programmes in the crucial initial stages of the intervention which gave give direction and support to them.

A variety of other efforts are made to enhance the effectiveness of the centers, apart from this initial round of trainings meetings being held at regular intervals. Monthly meetings are held, which not only have the routine of exchanging reports, but also help to plan schedule and activities for the coming month. The meetings re-endorse the discussions held at the trainings. Other trainings have been organized as when need felt. Class room observations are regularly conducted and one to one feedback also been given to increase effectiveness by the facilitators.

**4.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE CENTRES**

After initial understanding of the school and its working, each facilitator pair was asked to draw up a timetable in consultation with their respective school staff. The time table for the centres has helped in systematize students’ visits to the activity centre. The centres are running in two capacities. During school hours, the centre is an activity centre, where students of the school come and participate in different activities. After the school closes, the centre is turned into a tuition centre for another 2 – 3 hours. Here in each centre about 20 – 25 students of class 5 – 8, who are weak in certain subjects come for tuitions. In some places, children who are from other schools are also attending the tuitions. The centres will also run tuition classes on Sundays in lieu of which they observe a holiday on Monday.

To aid the running of the centres and conducting of different activities, various types of resource material have been selected and given to the centres. Books, colourful posters, teaching learning material related to language and maths, play equipment, puzzles, art and craft material have helped each centre become colourful and attractive both for the students and also for the other teachers. Maths teaching learning aids have been procured from well know organizations like Eklavya, Jodo Gyan which is helping children understand concepts of maths while having fun. Each centre has been set up with a library with attractive and colourful books in hindi and some even in simple English. More than 100 titles with multiple copies (to enable group activities) have been procured from good publishers like Children’s Books Trust, Katha, National Book Trust, Eklavya and Pratham. The library is kept open for students throughout. The children not only enjoy reading but it has also helped them improve their language skills.

**5.0 EVENTS**

**5.1 Solar Eclipse Viewing**

In the July meeting, the facilitators were made aware of the solar eclipse that was to occur on 22 July, 2009. The facilitators displayed apprehension and superstition regarding the same. They were made aware about the science of the eclipse and were asked to explain the same to the children. Special solar filter glasses were also obtained and distributed so that at least some children could break the superstitions attached to the eclipse and view it.

Unfortunately heavy rains and cloud cover prevented people in this region from viewing the eclipse. Another solar eclipse occurred on 15th January, 2010 and the children of Negadia , Ushan and Selu were able to observe it.

**5.2. Greeting Cards making workshop**

In the month of September a greeting cards making workshop was organized at Negaria activity center. Children from the whole school participated in the workshop. They were given different art and craft material and were free to make their own greeting cards. Children enjoyed a lot during the whole workshop and after it they decorated their own center with cards and charts.

**5.3 Children’s Day Celebrations**

On 14th November, 09 children of 3 centers celebrated Children’s day through an innovative idea. All the children came school early cleaned the school’s playground and their classes. Children worked very enthusiastically and government school teachers also joined the whole team happily. The whole idea was appreciated and shared by the principals to the Seva Mandir staff.

**6.0 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

There has been active community participation in the activity centres since the very beginning. The community has been active in getting consent from the government school in allowing the centres to be set up. The village community is also responsible for monitoring of the centres and payment of the stipend to the facilitators.

The facilitators, in turn, are attending the village meetings and reporting on the activities of the centre, progress of children, etc.

**7.0 IMPACTS**

Though a year is little early to look for impacts of the programme, some indicative trends are given below:

**7.1 Comparison of Exam Results**

To gauge the deeper impact of the programme, a baseline and endline of children’s proficiency in the Hindi language and Mathematics was carried out in all centers6. The comparative analysis of the exam results helped us to get an idea of the impacts of the intervention. A total of 113 children participated in both the tests (details in Table 2)

Table 2

6 Endline could not be conducted at Undithal by the time of preparing this report because we could not retain and replace the facilitators of the activity centres given the interior location of the school.

…

Analysis of the results of these children has showed encouraging increase in the academic performance. In baseline test only 12 children were able to score 30 or more, while in endline the number reached to 42. Breaking the results into subjects, in Hindi the children scoring 15 and more doubled in the endline test- from 23 to 47. Similarly, in Math the number of children increased to 26 in endline from10 in baseline.

Along with our own tests, the results of the state board exam of Class 8 also show significant improvement in the academic performance. This year, in 4 schools in total 28 children appeared in the exam, from which 26 children cleared the board exams with more than half securing the first division. This is indeed a motivating outcome for the facilitators as well as for Seva Mandir.

In Selu, for example, a girl student was unable to clear her 8th class board exams last year. However, after attending the tuition classes she cleared her board successfully

this time.

**7.2 Increased attendance and decreased dropouts**

There is general increased in attendance in the schools. Many students also visit the centers on Sundays and after school hours. Government school teachers are also admitting that the retention of the children has increased this year because of the activity centers. However exact number of attendance is very difficult to measure due to not getting perfect data form government schools.

Although some good examples and case studies showed the results like some students of class 6 and 7 of the Selu School have started coming regularly. In different centers, students are finding story telling sessions, games, poetry, etc and also the different way the facilitators are approaching the subjects. In some places, teachers are realizing the importance of giving more importance to the primary classes. In all schools, the school staff is supporting the activity centre.

**8.0 CHALLENGES**

Being a relatively new work for the organization, setting up and running activity centres has brought about some anticipated and some unanticipated challenges. The foremost challenge has been of finding space and permission in the schools. The reluctance of the seniors and their delay in giving written permissions has been a big challenge. As mentioned above, we still have not received written approval from one officer in Undithal centre, despite several reminders and visits to his office. The poor teacher student in the school has been a blessing, as due to this the head teacher has allowed our facilitators in the school.

But poor student teacher ratio also has a flip side. Due to shortage of staff in school, the head teachers are pressurizing our facilitators to play the role of substitute teachers and teach the curriculum as is usually taught in the school and not take up activities as planned by us. For this we are negotiating with each individual school to provide the facilitators slots in the school time table time for better co-ordination.

Finding qualified and competent people and retaining them is also a big challenge for this nascent programme. Most importantly we want to closely study the impact of these activity centres before increasing their numbers.

**Annexure I**

**Case Study: Selu Activity Centre : Ganeshlal**

Ganeshlal is 12 years old. He has three brothers and one sister, and comes from the village of Selu. Ganeshlal is in the 6th grade at the government school of Selu, but he did not have interest in education, he was not regular in attending school and frequently

skipped classes.

Ganeshlal started to come to Seva Mandir's Activity Centre (Shayog Kendra) at Selu, but his attitude towards the center was much the same as towards the school, and he did not attend regularly. The teachers at the Activity Center nevertheless decided to be patient with the boy, and let him come to the center to play carom which he liked a lot.

As a result, Ganeshlal slowly began taking interest in the other activities at the center that was more related to his studies. That is how he started doing counting, to read and to write. At that point, Ganeshlal could neither read nor write independently. After a year at the center, however, he is able to read a book and do simple maths. He also likes drawing, painting, and playing with number cards for learning ones and tens. Ganeshlal progressed a lot during the past year, which is proven by the results of his endline test, where he got 16 marks in sharp contrast to his 4 marks out of 50, obtained at last year's baseline test. He says, ‘Now onwards I will go to the center and school regularly and will work hard to clear the board exams.’