

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT

Period: June'09- May'10

Place Kalabagn

Back Ground and Focus areas:

Jabala is running this centre in Kalabagan slum since year 2004. Slums in any city are densely populated area where half or more of all households lack improved water sources, improved sanitation, improved solid waste management, sufficient living area, durable housing, and secure tenure or combinations thereof reflecting the levels of inequality in the city.

High levels of inequality in cities can lead to negative social, economic and political consequences that have a destabilizing impact on society. This is true in places experiencing both high levels of inequality and endemic poverty, which increase the political tension and social divisions that can threaten national security and economic development. The children living in these slums quite are most vulnerable to the environmental hazards caused by the poor quality of sanitation hygiene etc. as well as the emotional stress rising out of living in a cloistered space and fighting for everyday's survival. Therefore, slums in any city require special intervention for the harmonious physical and mental growth of children living in slums.

In this context, Jabala Action Research Organization has tried to create a space for children in the form of community centre in the slums of Kalabagan. The need was felt because Kalabagan slum grew amidst the upcoming posh south Kolkata; its inhabitants catering to the service needs of extremely rich people inhabiting the southern part of fast expanding Kolkata. Like any other fast-expanding city, this part of Kolkata also has stark disparity between the classes in terms of access to education, health and other services. Jabala tried to address this disparity by offering educational, vocational as well as recreational services to the children to grow up in a safer environment.

The services that are being offered in the Kalabagan centre can be mainly categorized into Educational training, Job readiness trainings and Leadership Training through Dance, Drama and Football workshops.

Program Focus:

- Education support in form of enrolment to formal schools
- Coaching support
- Education Materials (Books, Excise copies, Pencils etc)
- Cultural therapies in form of theatre, story building etc to build confidence and shred inhibitions
- Games and Work readiness training
- Home and School Visits to Monitor Progress
- Mothers meeting

Major Achievements:-

1. Enrollment of all 50 children under the program into formal schools
2. Increased retention rate among girls. one passed secondary examination and other six are due to appear next year (Note: as per government report > 80% girls drop out after class VII in West Bengal)
3. Mainstreaming and enrollment of five drop out children
4. 10 Drop out girls are imparted training on beautician and five are earning their livelihood
5. Formation of a cultural tem who regularly performs in different street performances
6. Girls are taking part in football competitions
7. Increased participation by community especially mothers

EDUCATION

In this academic year *card x*; a girl of our centre passed Madhyamik examination and is now continuing further studies. Six of our female students will appear for Madhyamik examination in the

coming year and they are being given extra support to help them perform better in the board examination. Two of our students receiving non formal education have been enrolled in formal school this year. Six new students have joined our centre this year through home visit. Special mention is being made of Tagari Halder who after failing in Madhyamik examination had dropped out of school but our centre teachers through home visits managed to convince her parents to reappear in the Madhyamik examination next year with the support of Jabala's Kalabagan centre. She is also actively participating in cultural activities of the centre, especially drama workshop. *Child Y* has come first in class this year and *Child A & B* have scored more than 80% in their annual examination. The details of their result are as follows:-

SL NO.	NAME	CLASS	% OF MARKS IN PREVIOUS YEAR	% OF MARKS THIS YEAR
1		V	76.67%	80%
2		IV	80%	83%
3		X	68.62%	70%
4		VI	82%	87.23%

CULTURAL THERAPY

Cultural therapy is an integral part of our support system. Through various cultural workshops attempts are made to nourish their creativity and give them the freedom to express their feelings. Children are given a platform to showcase their talent in the cultural programs organised by the centre throughout the year. This year cultural programs have been organised during Independence Day where the students performed on patriotic songs and poems. This was highly appreciated and well attended. The local club secretary was very moved by the performance of our students and advised us to perform more cultural programs on various social issues. On the 100th anniversary of Women's' Day, the children of our centre along with the students of Barrackpore centre performed a street corner in Barrackpore. It attracted a lot of audience and was highly appreciated. Another cultural program was organised on 'Rabindra Jayanti' to celebrate the birth anniversary of Rabindra Nath Tagore. On this day the children performed songs, recitation and drama written by Tagore and danced to the songs of Tagore.

Other than these cultural programs, regular dance, drama and drawing workshops are held in the centre. Twenty-five of our students regularly participate in the dance workshops. Child 1 & 2 are extremely good dancers and have benefited from learning dance in our centre. They have also performed the dance they have learnt from our centre in their school and it has been highly appreciated. Another student Child 3's dance performance has also been appreciated in her formal school and her headmistress has acknowledged Jabala's effort and initiative in conducting dance workshops during her school visit. Child 4 is also a good dancer who performs professionally in various programs and our dance teacher gives him extra coaching in western dance.

Drawing workshops are also held regularly where children are encouraged to express their feelings through colours. Child 5, 6 and 7 have won prizes in the drawing competition held in October, 09 in their locality. Child 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are good in drawing. Especially the small children enjoy the drawing classes and to play with colors a lot. Their drawings have also been published in 'Phuljhuri', a magazine written and edited by our children.

Reputed group theatre actors Goutam Mridha and Bindia Ghosh regularly conduct drama workshops. The children make their own scripts and participate enthusiastically. The workshop is made interesting through various games and activities.

WORK READINESS

This year 10 dropped out girls and 15 others of the locality were given beautician course to make them work ready. They were given training in pedicure, manicure, oil massage, hena, hair colour, facial, hair cutting, hair styling, puming, blow drying, and night and day make-up, and bridal make-up, eyebrow plucking and waxing. Now five of them - 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are doing it professionally.

SPORTS

Children of our centre are also encouraged in sports. For this JABALA provides coaching in football to fifteen of our students. Coaching is provided by the coach of Indian Womens' Football team Ms. Kuntala Ghosh Dastidar in Rabindra Sarabor stadium. Among the girls 1, 2 and 3 are very good players and the coach has found them quite promising. The girls have participated in

various football tournaments. In June, 09 they had participated in inter-school tournament, in November the team participated in Women's' football competition and in December four girls participated in 'Khela Mela'. Originally the football coaching was given only to the girl students but as the boys were very eager to learn football, recently even they are being given coaching. Among the boys *Child 1* and *Child 2* are very good players. *Child 1, 2* ... and *3* are very good in sports and has secured prizes in her school's annual sports. *X* had participated in an inter NGO sports tournament and secured first prize. Recently we are trying to arrange a weekly physical exercise class to increase the fitness of the children.

HOME VISIT

Jabala regularly conduct home visits of all the children of our centre. Through these regular home visits our teachers have developed a good rapport with the guardians and hence the guardians are also taking more interest in the overall progress of their children. Here mention may be made to *Child A* and *Child B*'s case as initially their family was quite reluctant about their studies but through repeated home visits their families could be motivated and now they are attending the centre regularly and taking interest in studies. Also during these home visits an insight is obtained in their family problems that are having an adverse effect on the overall development of the children. During one of the home visits to *Child C*'s place, our teachers witnessed that *C's* mother was brutally being beaten up by *C's* father. On Rohima's mother's request, one of the teachers of our centre had written a letter to the Women's' Commission reporting Rohima's mother case. Since then *C's* father does not beat her.

EXPOSURE VISIT

The children are quite often taken out for exposure visits. On 19th July, 09 forty five of our children were taken for exposure visit to Birla Museum. There first the children were shown the Coal Mine Show where they were explained how mining is done. Then they were taken to other galleries. They were also shown Science Magic Miracle Show where the relation of gravity with water was explained. Another exposure visit was organised on 1st September, 09 where thirty five children of the centre were taken to Nicco Park, an amusement park located in Salt Lake. The children enjoyed several rides and boating in the lake of the amusement park and played a lot. Arrangements were also made for refreshments. It was a really memorable day for the

children. Again on 23rd February, 2010 thirty children were taken to Alipore zoo. There they saw different kinds of animals and birds and enjoyed a lot.

MOTHERS' MEETING

Mothers' meetings are held every month to discuss the development of their children and this has also increased the mothers' involvement regarding the development of their children. This year the mother's attendance level in the meeting has also increased as through home visits the mothers could be motivated to get more involved with the education and overall development of their children. In the month of August, the month of Roja, the mothers' were given an Iftar party in the centre which they enjoyed throughly. Also on 17th January, 2010 the teacher of our centre took the mothers out for a movie which they enjoyed a lot.

CASE STUDY

(1) Name: Child A
Age: 16 years
Father's name: ...
Father's education: Illiterate
Father's occupation: Salesman in a bag shop
Mother's name:
Mother's education: Literate
Mother's occupation: Urdu teacher
Address:

School's name:
Rajendra Siksha Sadan Girls' High School
Class: X

No. of siblings: 1 brother

Family income: Rs.1,000/- per month

Family history:

The financial condition of the family is very poor. They have no electricity at their place so she finds it difficult to study there. So she spends most of the time at the Jabala centre for studying as there is electricity there.

comments:

Child B is a very bright girl who comes first in class. She is very sincere and serious about studies. She wants to pursue higher studies.

2. Name: _____ 1

Age: 11 years

Father's name:

Father's education: Illiterate

Father's occupation: Driver

Mother's name:

Mother's occupation: Housewife

Address:

School's name:
Tollygunge Bangur High School

Class: VI

No. of siblings: 2 brothers

Family income: Rs.1,000/-

Family history:

Extremely poor. Parents did not want to send him to school as they had no money for books, school fees or uniform and they had three sons. Younger brother suffering from brain tumor.

COMMENTS:

Very good in studies. Throughout primary classes he came first in class and in high school ranks within the first ten in class. Bright child and has keen interest to continue his studies.

Other Facet:

Child is a student of Kalabagan centre who studies in class 4. His guardian is Azma Bibi and he comes from a BPL family. He used to suffer from severe headaches. When the problem continued for quite some time, Jabala took him to the doctor who prescribed that he goes for a scan. In the scan report it was found that Rahul is suffering from brain tumor. He was immediately taken to a private clinic by Jabala for check-up and the doctor recommended immediate operation. But unfortunately his family is not willing to go for the operation and has instead switched to homeopathic treatment. Jabala representatives are closely following the case and monitoring his developments. They are trying to convince his parents to go for the operation as early as possible.

CHALLENGES

Despite best of our efforts, there are some challenges that our centre faced this year:-

- (1) The older children do not like to draw so to solve this problem they are made to practice their science drawing in the drawing class.
- (2) Initially the parents of the girls who went for football practice were not very enthusiastic about sending them alone to learn football in Rabindra Sarobar Stadium and were also adverse to Muslim girls wearing shorts while playing football, but this challenge was dealt by the teachers of our centre. Now

every Sunday the teachers accompany the girls in rotation and one of the guardian drives them to practice in his auto rickshaw.

(3) Child M, a student of our centre is suffering from brain tumor. Initially his parents did not take it seriously and were doing homeopathic treatment. Now with JABALA's intervention Rahul has been taken to a renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Garai and now Rahul is under his treatment. JABALA is supporting his treatment. Further, M's neighbors unable to realize the magnitude of his illness played their television and music system on loud volume. M could not take it and suffered from severe headaches. Despite repeatedly requesting the neighbours they paid no heed to M's father but with JABALA's intervention, the magnitude of the illness could be explained to them and they are now cooperating by keeping the television volume as low as possible.

(4) School visits of all the children were held every month but schools have raised an objection to this saying that it is not possible for the teachers of the schools to give time every month so now-a-days school visits are being held with a gap of one month. Also schools have complained against some of the children of our centre that they are extremely naughty. These children have been counseled by our counsellor and now their behaviour has improved. Further, one of our children P was consistently performing poorly in school so our counselor tested him and it was identified that he is a slow learner. Hence now he is given special attention and care to help him cope with his class.

CONCLUSION

Overall Kalabagan centre is working very hard to support the children of the community to achieve an all-round development. The children are equally encouraged in academics, sports and cultural activities. Renowned personalities like Goutam Mridha and Bindia Ghosh regularly conduct workshops interacting with the children and enriching them with their experiences. The children also perform at various cultural programs and are taken for excursions which give them an exposure to the mainstream society. Through regular home visits, school visits and mothers' meetings the community and the other stakeholders could be further

motivates and involved in the overall development of the children. Also JABALA not only caters to the needs of the children of the community but also attempts to empower the dropped out girls of the community to earn a livelihood through work readiness workshops.