

Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti Visit in Kanpur (Padmanava Sen – 10-11th February 2017 – padmanava.sen@gmail.com – Asha Bangalore/Asha Central Team)

Snapshot of Visit:

- Visit Summary
 - Reached Murari Bhatta (Brick Kiln) on 10th February accompanied by Asha fellow Mahesh Kumar. Spent 1-2 hrs with the kids in this center (15-20 km from Kanpur city)
 - Visited Jagriti Apna school on 11th February and went from class to class till Mid-day meal is served.
- **Overall impression** – This project plays an important role in the lives of children of Brick Kiln workers. It is impossible to make sure the students will continue their education in future (out of Jagriti field of work) for the migrant nature of work of their parents. But the limited time has been best utilized to teach them basic academic concepts. Not only that, there are people who make sure the children stay at school once they go back to their villages. Jagriti has recently started residential facilities for girls at higher classes and it definitely helped them a lot. Overall it is the only hope for the children of Brick Kiln workers in that area and delays the vicious cycle of girls getting married and boys joining the workforce in early teen ages.

Details:

Kanpur areas have lots of brick Kilns. There are many bonded labours who work in these Kilns. They lost their land and may have lent money from money lenders and giving half of their income to them as bonded labours for years. Sometimes, they are unaware of the calculations and moneylenders cheat them years after years. There are contractors who take money from them for making connections to Kiln owners. They move from their homes, keep travelling from one brick kiln to another, building 4 ft high temporary homes, living in unhygienic conditions and demolishing them once they move out. Life of people who provide us bricks for our homes is a tragic story of exploitation, a story of homeless people never getting out of debt. Depression and alcoholism are very common.

Because they do not have permanent homes, most of them do not have bank accounts. When demonetization happened, they were given lots of old notes by the Kiln owners as advances. They even did not realize they were tricked until went to market to buy grocery after a week.

Spreading education is very important for the kids from these families as they drop out of schools as they are never in one place, keep missing many classes. Girls get married at 13-14-15 yrs age and boys join work sometimes when they are 10-11. The Kiln owners and contractors really do not want them to be educated as it will hinder the exploitation and that is why Jagriti has done a marvellous job.

On 10th February, I went to a center in Murari Bhatta 10 km from Tatiaganj, location of Apna school. Asha fellow Mahesh Kumar accompanied me there. I met the teachers and one project coordinator. They showed me the books they follow – Eklavya books for a fun way of learning. The kids showed me some craft skills they learned from teachers and volunteers. After that we asked simple language and mathematics questions and took photos. They gave lunch to the kids as well. We also played the game of grouping (to teach counting fast) outside.



Small projects on display



Group Picture



Group got bigger



I joined to the group



During the game

On 11th January, I spent 2-3 hours in the Apna School in Tatianganj. This is the main center of Jagriti adjacent to the Apna Ghar residential hostel (a project run by Asha fellow Mahesh Kumar). Apna School has a very good building and for this good infrastructure, they bring older kids from 10 Brick Kilns around Tatiganj. Other centers focus on classes 1 and 2 where as this school have a good number of Class 3-5, They have two school vans for picking up and dropping off the students. Due to multiple year gaps, some of the students are 3-4 yrs older than the usual age based on class. Some children were lucky that their parents got placed in brick Kilns in same area consecutive years and could continue their studies in Jagriti school. They are in a better shape academic wise. They have started a residential hostel facility for girls last year during the times when parents go to home and those girls are the smartest. Overall I liked their teaching techniques and teachers are very dedicated. Most of them are teaching for a long time. Children gave me their mid day meal (Curry-rice). It was a very good time spent with the kids. I saw some craft works they learned.



Crafts made by kids





Smiles all around