

Mosamat Budhiya Shiksha Nirman Sangathan (MBSNS)

Annual Report 2023-24

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INTRODUCTION

The MBSNS, was registered as a Trust in 2017. Since then it has focused its work around developmental issues like education and health. This year our focus was primarily on the Mosamat Budhiya Jeevanshala (JS), an education initiative of the Trust. Like the Trust it is named after our local (s)hero Mosamat Budhiya, a widowed peasant woman who fought the British Indigo planters in pre independence India. She did not take to arms but challenged their injustice by winning the trust of her community of farmers, and it is said that the planters left after she was instrumental in destroying indigo produce in the area. The JS named after her is turning out to be a beautiful learning space for children from marginalized communities. The other focus program of the Trust is the Ambedkar Nagar Non-Formal Education (NFE) centre.



Library session in progress... the book racks that make the library



Mosamat Budhiya Jeevanshala

Picking up from where we had left last year, our strength has now reached it's full capacity, we have 40 children with us now. The Board of Trustees had also agreed that we would apply for registration of the JS, as a school under the RTE Act. In this effort we were told by the Education Department, that we would need to overhaul our infrastructure. This overhaul attempts to make 8 separate classrooms, the construction is underway.



This year also saw upgrading of our library. The library now has over a thousand books, though mostly English books for little children, there are also hindi books, all of these have come through friends of the JS. One new thing that we started this year after the visit from Jogendar ji, a Yoga instructor is simple yoga practices. The four day camp introduced many aasans, however we have not been able to continue the practice as our TLs are not trained in Yoga. Sports and dhyan have continued this year. Cricket has been introduced with football and dodge ball and children continue to play local sports like kho-kho and kabbadi.



Focus on the 3Rs- Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic

The classroom continued to be a space for day to day learning, like the last few years, where children enagedd with each other and the Teacher- Learners (TLs) to learn not just the 3Rs - Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic but also group work, cooperation, love and care. For the 3Rs the TL team has brought in exciting and engaging ways of learning, that suit our children, who are first generation learners. These include games, activities, story-telling, reading books, board games, visits and other such fun ways of learning.



← The floor as each child's blackboard

Learning weights, through doing ...



Workshops at the Jeevanshala

Every Saturday, the Jeevanshala has a workshop, facilitated by TLs and if we have some special guests, who are taking the workshop. Though theatre is a regular part of Saturday workshops, this time we had a group visiting us, who did some theatre with children using TOTO techniques. Other than this we had three workshops around health, hygiene and nutrition. For each of these along with the TL team we had special guests. These guests included Kanika, a researcher in Public health; Aashish Gupta, who is a demographic researcher and friends from a health NGO called SATHI (Maharashtra). They all specialize in health-hygiene and nutrition issues and beautifully helped children understand the concerns around the same. The arts and crafts workshops also happened. Also as a follow up to the shadow puppetry workshop we had last year, our children travelled with their shows to the neighbouring district of Purnea to perform at the Vidya Vihar School.



While we continued theatre with the children, especially using Theatre of the Oppressed (TOTO) techniques, we have also brought in music this year. We started with Ahavaan Project visit, where Pakhi and Vedi Sinha,

along with Sumant sang Kabir songs with the children. Later Ishwar, from Rajasthan who is also a Kabir singer, did some activities and songs with the children, exposing them to the depth and form of song and music, that had been started by the Avahaan group. What was interesting is that these singers not only helped children learn a song or two, they introduced them to the idea of meaningful lyrics.



Visitors at the JS

We believe that our children learn as much from the TLs, as they learn from the real world around them, each other and the visitors who visit us through the year. This year we had Prof Shishir Kumar Jha, talk to children about the various options open to them, if they were to focus on education. He talked to the children about his experiences at IIT Powai and the world outside of our JS. We also had a special visitor Sri Shailesh Diwakar, who was the Sub Divisional Officer, at Araria and dropped in to meet the children. He inspired the children to think of ways to make the world a better place for everyone. The children had many questions for him including why their village was without roads and why there was corruption in the police stations, but most importantly they could ask him questions without hesitation and its this confidence that we pride ourselves in. We were also visited by octogenarian Dr. Sharan, who is originally from Araria district, and is the founder of Desi Power Foundation, an organization which works in developing alterantive energy models, which are eco friendly.



Celebrations at the Jeevanshala

We at the jeevanshala believe in celebrating festivities together. Like each year we celebrated 15th August (Indian Independence Day) with unfurling of the tri colour, by Shankar ji, our cook and also the oldest member of our team. 2nd October, Gandhi Jayanti was celebrated by discussions around Gandhi ji's life, especially his childhood and connecting it to our children's lives. This year we also celebrated Holi, rakhi, christmas and had iftaar together, as all these festivals fell during the semester and we got a taste of the diversity of our festivals.



Ambedkar Nagar NFE Centre

The Non-Formal Education (NFE) centre has been progressing well. Sangeeta, the lead TL, has been able to win the trust of the community and children are more regular in coming to the centre. For two hours children go through some games and activities, and also learning exercises. Suman has been ably assisting at the centre helping children learn some pre math concepts and also move on to counting and some basic addition and subtraction. The idea is to help children be prepared for a more formal learning space like a school. This centre has a special significance as it runs primarily for the children of the cleaning community. Most people in this community have lived experiences of untouchability and discrimination because of their caste. Most members still have little formal education, face stigma because of their cleaning work and are involved in demeaning and underpaid cleaning works. In this situation children are many times neglected. Sometimes lack of basic nutritious food, clothing and housing affects their performance in learning affecting their schooling. The NFE centre ensures that young children either pre schoolers or those in school going age are prepared to face the school and don't drop out.



Leading a sustainable life

At the jeevanshala, we have been trying to lead a sustainable life. Our rooms are mostly made of locally sourced eco friendly materials, like mud and bamboo. We have a cold compost to convert our bio degradable waste from the kitchen and dining area into manure. And the recent addition to this effort is the mini-solar plant, set up by Desi Power Foundation. You can read more about this plant, set up at the Mosamat Budhiya jeevanshala, in the article on the Renewable Watch website at <https://renewablewatch.in/2023/08/25/decentralised-growth-case-studies-of-small-scale-rooftop-solar-epc-projects/>



Teacher-Learner (TL) Capacity building

The TL at the jeevanshala, is the most critical in children's learning. It is with this in mind that we are constantly striving to better the TL group. It is in this context that all TLs, are involved in daily planning meetings, and also if an opportunity arises travel outside of the Jeevanshala for courses that help build their understanding about 'How children Learn'. Suman went for a five day workshop to Hoshangabad (MP) with Eklavya, titled "Gender in the classroom". She also got an opportunity to travel to Siwan (Bihar) to attend a workshop by the Bookworm Trust on how to make reading attractive to children through the library set up. Munchun and Sangeeta travelled to Bhopal for a five day workshop on child development with Eklavya in Bhopal. Another of our young TLs Priyanka, has been going for training-workshops with Nirantar, where she is part of the Jeevat Fellowship programme.



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