

SWANIRVAR

OUR 4 PRIMARY SCHOOLS: HIGHLIGHTS 2009-10

~ 500 students

1. Consolidation of new activities started last year (in 2008-09) :

The various new activities which were started in 2008-09 are continuing . These include (i) doing regular art-craft in the morning assembly class (ii) occasional screening of films (iii) creating stories from pictures and drawing pictures from stories (iv) painting more of the walls of their classrooms (v) a nice morning assembly class with plenty of variations .

2. English :

This was the 5th year that volunteer Margaret Flanagan (Maggie) from England continued her efforts to teach English and specially the use of audio which she had created in Feb 2009. But there were other improvements noted by her : (i) Teachers are speaking mostly English “ Go to your place ; Get out your books ; Come here ; Louder ; Look at the blackboard; Listen carefully ; Silence --- (ii) Teachers are moving about the room, looking at student’s work , correcting , giving help , asking questions (iii) More use of TLM and Group work (iv) in most classes there is much child participation (v) some evidence of planning --- written and remembered so that lessons “flow” and the pace is better (v) In Chandalati where the audio have been used most frequently some students can re-tell the story almost correctly . Many others can say one/two sentences (vi) Some classes have good handwriting because it is taught methodically

3. Evaluation reforms :

What we had started in Class I and II last year , we have extended this to Classes III and IV this year. We have removed longish half yearly exams with 50 marks for each subject and annual exams of 100 marks and instead have four smaller tests of 20,20,30,30 marks. This does not sound much , but one has to remember that there is a lot of resistance as people are so used to one shot big exams with marks , ranks etc. But unfortunately we could not follow up on our attempt to list various kinds of talent-aptitudes of each child which we started in 2008-09 to stress the point that different persons have different kinds of “intelligence” and “ways of learning”



4 With Other NGOs

We started our 15 day primary training programme with Midnapur Namasole Palli Mangal Samity and the first 5 day installment was held this year. This was aborted twice due to Maoist disturbance in that area.

INPUTS IN GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Key Persons : Prosanto Mondol and Gopal Mondol
and assisted by rest of Primary team

The West Bengal govt has two kinds of primary schools (i) the regular primary schools run by education dept numbering about 60,000 (ii) Shishu Shiksha Kendras (SSK) run the Panchayat & Rural Development dept numbering around 20,000.

The following activities were done with govt schools (both regular primary schools and SSK)

1. Empowerment Training for Interested Teachers

Last year some of the govt teachers had requested our Shikshamitra resource person Sudeshna to conduct a training on “assessment” . Accordingly a two day workshop on “ Alternative assessment ; what to assess ; open ended questions” was held at Swanirvar on 14-15 April 2009. This was attended by 10 govt and 4 Swanirvar teachers. Normally this is something very new to most teachers and they have difficulty in translating the concept into creating different kind of questions. But the workshop involved lots of examples and actually making the teachers do many exercises. We do not expect immediate changes in govt schools . But this was really an eye opener to many of them and will hopefully lead to widening their horizons. On 7th March,2010 Sudeshna Sinha took another workshop on ‘creative writing – Part 1 ’. This was attended by 6 Govt. teachers and 13 Swanirvar teachers.

2. Individual & Joint Sahitya Sabha

This is a cultural event where children put up various performances involving reading, reciting, singing, dancing, acting and the whole thing is conducted by children. We used to organize this



with 10-15 govt schools participating where each school would send 4-5 children. But now we are shifting to holding this event in each individual school so that many children can participate

and local community can also enjoy and be part of this. Parents , ex students , ex teachers , panchayat members came to these programmes .

We had five events in this period. There was excellent participation from large number of children in the latter three schools.

Date	School	Performers	Audience
17.05.09	Jasaikati SSK	30	200
19.05.09	Kalinga Adarsha FP	20	500
15.9.09	Lakhhinathpur FP	80	300
23.9.09	Jasaikati FP	70	250
10.1.10	Bhojpara Purba FP	33	161

But we also continued with joint sahitya sabha where more than one school participates In January, 2010 we had organized three Joint Sahitya Sabha with 12 Govt. primary schools.

Date	No of Govt. Schools joined	Performers	Audience
21.01.10	5	90	800
27.01.10	2	120	700
22.01.10	5	128	500

3. TLM workshop with Teachers and Parents

This is one of our most effective interventions where teachers and parents get together to make , multiply , and understand how to use Teaching Learning Aids. Involvement of parents ensures that enough materials get made as a few teachers on their own cannot make the required quantities. Also the parents later will see to it that these TLM do get used. We did this in 18 govt schools. Special effort was made to organize and arrange the various TLMs according to lessons. Before they were all kept together .



Date	Name of the school	Participants				Type
		parent	Govt teachers	Swan. teachers	Total	
29.4.09	Chatkaberia SSK		4	2	06	TLM sharing
19.6.09	Kolsur Biswas para SSK	20	3	3	26	TLM Making
19.6.09	Jasaikati F.P.		4	2	06	TLM sharing
30.6.09	Uttar kolsur SSK	25	3	2	30	TLM Making
28.7.09	Kalinga Adarsha F.P.	30	3	2	35	TLM sharing
10.8.09	Gurdaha F.P.	20	5	3	28	TLM Making
22.8.09	Pachim Jasaikati F.P.	20	2	2	24	TLM Making & Sharing
28.8.09	Rudrapur CSFP	25	2	2	29	TLM

						Making & Sharing
29.8.09	Chatkaberia SSK	35	1	1	37	TLM sharing
23.9.09	Kolsur Biswas para SSK	10	3	2	15	TLM Sharing
31.10.09	D. Chandalati SSK	10	4	2	16	TLM Sharing
03.11.09	Kolsur Sheker More	6	4	2	12	TLM Sharing
11.11.09	Fatullapur FP	4	3	2	9	TLM Sharing
12.11.09	Aturia FP	10	2	2	14	TLM Sharing
13.01.10	Kamarpara FP	12	2	3	17	TLM Sharing
14.01.10	Mathabhanga FP	33	2	2	36	TLM Sharing
15.01.10	Kalinga FP	45	3	3	51	TLM Sharing
19.01.10	Srikati FP	48	3	2	53	TLM Sharing



Through discussions the advantage of these TLM emerged

- Both teachers and students can easily take TLMs and give it to every group of students. So group work can be done smoothly
 - Some TLMs are not from the govt texts . But teachers understand that they are very useful and eager to use them
 - Teacher can control and manage the classroom easily
- Teacher has enough time to look after the weak children
 - Parents also know the method of using the TLMs and can help their children at home

4. Model Parents' Meetings with the Help of our Guidelines :

Govt teachers have been asking for our help to conduct parents meetings and make them lively
We held such meetings in 14 schools during this period

Date	Name of the school	Participants			
		parents	Govt teachers	Swan. Teachers	Total
29.6.09	Kolsur sheker more SSK	30	3	2	35
29.6.09	Jasaikati SSK	35	4	2	41
11.7.09	Gurdah F.P.	27	5	2	34
26.7.09	Ramkrishna Vidyavaban	70	16	2	88
27.8.09	Kalinga Adarsha F.P.	19	1	1	21
10.9.09	Maheshpur SSK	25	3	2	30
10.9.09	Bhojpara Fatullapur Purba para FP.	20	3	1	24
15.9.09	Fatullapur FP	35	3	1	39
23.9.09	Malangapara F.P.	50	6	2	58
14.10.09	Laxminathpur FP	37	4	2	43
16.11.09	Maheshpur FP	34	1	2	37
28.11.09	Kalinga FP	17	2	2	21
03.12.09	Khamarpara FP	24	3	2	29

To liven up things we asked the parents to comment upon two points

- i) Are you sending your children to school so that they can get a good job ?
- ii) To argue for and against private tuition

Some discussions are summarized here

Overall they do want their children to get a job . But they also want that their children .

- turn up to be good civilized persons
- help their families with tasks involving reading and writing
- actively participate in panchayat activities
- are able to write applications and other writing tasks related to bank, panchayat, BDO office etc and read governments rules and schemes for improving their quality of life
- those who will be farmers are able to learn better cultivation methods
- work for better health and hygiene of family

The parent's opinions about Tuition are:

Those in favor-

- Illiterate parents cannot help their children
- Even if literate , they do not have time to look after their children's studies
- Children are very naughty and will not read on their own
- To perform well , children need extra inputs

Those against-

- Poor families cannot afford tuition
- Parents put undue pressure on children through such tuition imposing their own high ambitions forcing their children to fit in.
- Sometimes new methods are introduced in schools, but private tutors are not familiar landing the children in trouble

5. Cross Review visit to Swanirvar schools with govt. teachers

In our own schools we have had a system of "peer review" for many years where teachers from 2 schools visit the third school and spend the whole day observing . At the end of the day they sit with the teachers and share what they saw . We have found this very effective.

For the first time we involved some govt teachers in this process

Date	Swanirvar school visited	Govt teachers	Swanirvar visiting teachers
13.6.09	Magurkhali	6	4
18.7.09	Chandalati	5	4
10.10.09	Fatullapur	6	8

The govt teachers took extensive notes and gave detailed feedback class-wise and subject wise (Bengali , Maths , EVS , English)

They saw board work , group work , hands on activities , use of TLM , performance during assembly class , class on family history and drawing village map (not part of govt text book) , question – answer sessions.

The govt teachers participated wholeheartedly in the process of being critical of certain things and suggesting changes and also appreciating what they liked.

They felt that this was an excellent way of all-round learning for teachers. We hope that some day this will start in the govt schools on a regular basis .

6. Art – Craft workshop:

This was new item which we introduced in a few govt schools and also in our own schools and taught the children to make various items by cutting paper – a sort of simplified origami

Date	Name of the schools	Students	Govt Teachers	Swanirvar teachers
24.06.09	Keukepara SSK	10	4	2
27.06.09	Kundu Para SSK	12	4	2
16.07.09	Swanirvar's chandalati School	15	4	2
8.8.09	Gandharbapur Madinatata	12	3	2
29.8.09	Chatkaberia SSK	12	3	2
12.9.09	Dakshin Kolsur SSK	30	4	2
23.9.09	Sohai Dakkhinpara SSK	20	4	2
10.10.09	Gandharbapur Madinatata	20	3	2
24.10.10	Purba Chandana	20	2	2
10.11.09	Ghadarbapur Madinatata	20	2	2
19.12.09	Khaukepara SSK	21	5	2
15.01.10	Kalinga FP	10	3	2



7. Systematic work starts with Jagannathpur and Ragonathpur Gram Panchayat : Start with wall painting

In May - June -July 2009 we were negotiating with these two Panchayats to start a systematic quality improvement programme of their primary schools with our assistance. The presence of Shiksha Bondhus (new staff appointed by govt to help the SI and to be in-charge of CRC - Cluster Resource Centre in each Panchayat) . In both these panchayats we said that we shall do the work in several phases and not start with all schools of their area. In Jagannathpur we have an enthusiastic Pradhan , panchayat secretary , another key panchayat member , and shiksha bondhu. So they agreed and selected 5 school out of 15 where we will start giving inputs. It was decided that we shall start with wall painting, then go for parents meeting ; then TLM workshop involving the parents etc. There were two crucial planning meetings on 10th and 11th August for the first input – wall painting. So now visitors in the following schools can see lovely painted verandahs

	Date	Schools in Jagannathpur GP	No. of participating children
1	19.8.09	Uttar Diyara FP	24
2	20.8.09	Khanarpara FP	22
3	24.8.09	Srikati FP	23
4	8.9.09	Maheshpur FP	28
5	9.9.09	Mathabhanga FP	12
6	19.9.09	Gurdaho FP (Raghunathpur GP)	20

8. Special Rakhi Celebration at Jagannathpur GP

On 27th July the Panchayat had its own meeting on how to celebrate rakhi. On 28th they called our supervisor Prosanto and also teachers from all their 15 schools and detailed plans were made , responsibilities divided up. . And this is what happened on 4th August 2009

- Each of the 15 schools first celebrated rakhi in their own respective schools
- All the children were then brought to the Panchayat office
- The Panchayat had put up a lovely shamiana
- The ex MLA , other well known social workers , BDO were present
- 70 disabled children from the whole panchayat were brought in rikshaw vans. Tying rakhi on them was a special affair .
- All children were given a tiffin worth Rs.12
- There was a 3 hour cultural programme where Swanirvar Chandalati children performed kulottam , Fatullapur children put up a small skit; various children from the participating schools did all kinds of performance. But the highlight was that many disabled children either performed or spoke about their attempts to study or other experiences.
- The Panchayat spent Rs.7000 for this programme and Swanirvar contributed with Rs.2000

This event was reported in state newspapers Anandabazar Patrika on 5th Aug and Pratidin on 6th Aug and it was also reported on All India Radio local news on 6th August

9. Friendship Programme:



A school friendship programme where children of one school exchange letters with those of another school has been quite popular in our 3 primary schools . This was established with schools in England. But we decided that such “friendship” can happen within our area also. So this year we have started such friendship where 9 govt primary schools exchange letters with 2 of our schools at Magurkhali and Fatullapur.

Name and address of the School	Started from	With our school	Frequency of correspondence
Uttar Diyara FP	2009	Magurkhali	2 Times- Durgapuja & Kali Puja

Uttar Khorgachi FP	2010	Fatullapur	1 time- New Year
Aturia FP	2010	Fatullapur	2 times – Family, Rhymes
Kalinga FP	2009	Magurkhali	2 Times- Durgapuja & Kali Puja
Laxminathpur FP	2008	Magurkhali Fatullapur	2 times – Family, Rhymes
Bhojpara FP	2010	Fatullapur	2 times – Puja, Id
Jasaikati Paschimpara FP	2009	Magurkhali	2 times – Family, Rhymes
Fatullapur FP	2010	Fatullapur	1 time- New Year
Jasaikati SSK	2009	Magurkhali	1 time- New Year

10. Children's Committee:

In our primary schools we have had children's committees for several years. We have gradually started introducing in govt schools also.. So far , 14 govt. schools (12 primary and 2 SSK) have students committees with responsibility for cleanliness, sports, water, library, the sahitya sabha, mid day meal. We are also trying to introduce a system which is functioning in our schools where these committees have to present a report of their work each month to the whole school and answer any questions from the students . We believe such practices will instill functional democratic habits and that it is extremely important to start this habit formation from an early age before it is too late.