



*The Uttor Chandipur Community Society*

**Supporting a rural community: creative solutions to education and health**



Suchana is a community group working in rural West Bengal, focusing on education and health. The new Education Resource Centre grew out of the Early Learning Group which started in 2004. The resource centre is open 7 days a week, and aims to support literacy and make education relevant, enjoyable and accessible to very marginalised children. Currently, about 150 children participate, facilitated by paid and volunteer teachers from within the community.

Our health project in the six Suchana villages explores primary health in participatory ways and links villagers in with locally existing health services.

If you would like more information, please contact us at [suchana.india@gmail.com](mailto:suchana.india@gmail.com)

*Newsletter Issue 10, October 2009*

**2009 Christmas Cards are beautiful and ready!**



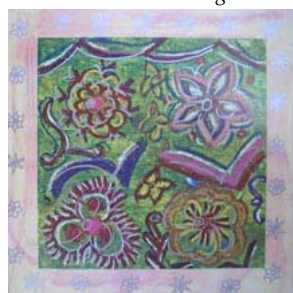
*Rainbow Dance*



*Mother and Daughter*



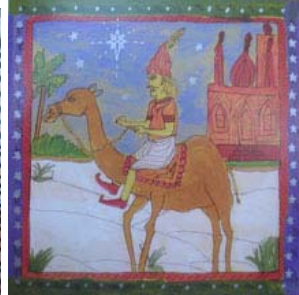
*Cosmic Sun*



*Festive Garden*



*Thatched Home*



*Travelling King*

£3.50 for a pack containing one of each design.

Chose your inside greeting:

'With Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year'  
'Season's Greetings', or blank.

Please contact Angela Stoddart:

[angela@claresforstalplus.com](mailto:angela@claresforstalplus.com)

We really appreciate hearing about other places or individuals who want to buy or sell cards.

Thank you, as always, for your support.

**THE HEALTH PROJECT**

We are trying to develop our health work – by holding a weekly clinic with a qualified doctor; providing some free and subsidized medicine. £80 a month covers the whole project, new elements and old – can anyone help us with this money?

**EVENTS UPDATE**



**The new building is in action**, and it feels tremendous to have this space, and all the potential it implies, finally up and running. It also feels really good to have finished up this monsoon in mud-free classrooms!

It's becoming gradually clear that this building changes many things – it is very visible: this already means that a lot of interest has been shown in Suchana's regular work; people drop by, ask questions, offer support. There is curiosity and excitement. It's open: people stop to watch the singing during assembly and come to observe classes. It's accessible: the children come and go; many of them pass it on their way to regular schools and stop to say hello.

Visibility ups the ante for all of us to work hard and get results. This has great potential; it seems like everything is in place to bring the resource centre to long-term and meaningful fruition.

The Early Learning Group moved its regular programme to the new site in July, after a fantastic effort by teachers Sushanto Ghosh and Shanto Kora to save money on the budget for finishing the building, but nevertheless get good quality work and materials.

Since then, we have been adding elements of the new programme as quickly as we can, bearing in mind the major festive season through September-October. In September, we started two mornings of 'pre school' with 10 children from the nearest village. We also held several meetings fine-tuning details for the expanded programme. On 18<sup>th</sup>, we held our inauguration event: a **Children's Mela** (fair), in which all the games and events were planned and run by the children. The event was a great success, a modest money raiser, and we have had many requests to make it an annual event. Special thanks to parents who cooked food for children to sell.

Right in time for the Mela, on 17<sup>th</sup> September our electricity connection was finally installed. This makes a huge difference to our potential for evening study routines, and of course for running the computers.

## EVENTS cont ...

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, we began a twice weekly 'tuitions' programme in Maths, Science, and English for middle school children – these are the subjects many routinely fail. Often, this means they have to repeat the year, and most ultimately drop out. We hope our tuitions can help break this pattern.



*Kora dance at the Mela*

On 19<sup>th</sup> October we took the big step of going full time by beginning our 7-days a week 'library and free-study space'. This is a major change, making Suchana's library, art and teacher resources available at all times, and the building 'operational' full time for ad-hoc inputs such as art workshops or study groups. For us, it is also an important co-ordination and management tool: each day is managed by a different teacher who is responsible for running the library, overseeing other elements of the programme, facilitating 'learning moments' for the children who attend, and for communicating progress and problems to the rest of the team. This is an experimental format with, we feel, a lot of space for innovation and inspiration, and for sharing all the advantages and disadvantages of responsibility across the Suchana team.

Another important input is about to go ahead in mid-November: the computer course. Thanks to generous donations of used laptops, we now have 6 to start the programme with – and a workshop to organise a syllabus tailored to Suchana's strengths and limitations is scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November. Watch this space for progress!

Finally, we held our AGM on October 15<sup>th</sup>, with about 70 parents in attendance. The meeting discussed last year's finances as well as the new programme, and 3 new members were voted onto the Executive Committee.

**Suchana now has a 15 minute DVD summarising our work – with special thanks to Joy and Marie Banerjee who made it for us. We have distributed nearly 100 copies and shown it at some events. If you'd like to see it – we'd love to hear from you.**

## And thanks to ....

The list of thanks gets longer – this is a wonderful thing!

To Bonumali Mondol for building a great building and 'donating' some of his work; and to Bijoy Mukherjee for much-needed guidance on design, especially for the foundations.

For donations which are right now running the new programme, many thanks to Kavita Punjabi, Lian Blades, Isabel Milward, Iain Frith, Mark Lillie, Anna Binnie-Dawson, Alison O'Connor, Marianne Tokita, Jan Fujikawa, Colin and Jean Kantharia, Jean Woodruff, Richard Price, Petrina Slaytor, Beth Wright, Mrs Rosemary Price, Manjusri and Somen Basu, Olive Pantry, and Bernard Price, who spotted one of the new leaflets and spontaneously sent a cheque.

Thanks to all those who have given their time and other things and helped in so many ways with all our 'events': Norman Crabtree, Poppy Thompson, Avril Waters, Frank Stoddart, and to Sheldwich Fete Committee and Faversham United Reformed Church for giving Suchana free stall space. Thanks also to all those who welcomed Kirsty and Rahul into their homes and organisations to talk about Suchana: The Faversham Fairtrade Group; Sheldwich Coffee Morning organisers; Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School; to Judith and Ross Thompson and Mark Lillie for sharing their 'house-warming' with us, and to all who came to Suchana's Throwley Tea Party.

Thanks to Dawn Kingsford for writing a thoughtful piece about Suchana in the Faversham Times on 19<sup>th</sup> August, and to Manjira Majumdar for highlighting the creative work in art and writing that Suchana's teachers facilitate: see this at <http://infochangeindia.org/200910217993/Children/Stories-of-change/The-koel's-song.html>

Thank you to all those who responded to our request for old laptops. Amazingly, we now have 6 to run computer courses with! Thanks, Sarah Horwood, Richard Milward, Kunal Sen, Brian and Heather Gillard, C and J Kantharia. Thanks also to Frances Beaumont for the digital camera, and to Anna Binnie-Dawson for the phone.

Laura Miller organised for the American School Kolkata to donate a lovely selection of books to the new library – thanks to all the children there for helping get good stories to Suchana! We received a whole Encyclopaedia set from Ashimendu Dasgupta and a collection of beautiful children's books from Anne Stacey, which are gradually making their way here.

IF ANYONE IS COMING THIS WAY FROM UK, WE ARE ALWAYS GRATEFUL FOR SUITCASE SPACE FOR BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY!