



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 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 learning relevant, enjoyable and accessible to very marginalised children. Currently, about 215 children participate, facilitated by paid and volunteer teachers from within the community.

Our 'mobile' project in 8 villages takes library books and basic health and hygiene care to a further 200 children.

If you would like more information, please contact us at suchana.india@gmail.com

Newsletter Issue 16, November 2012

NEW AT SUCHANA

Construction work

Our long-planned upstairs is at finally in its completion stages! This will give us much-anticipated extra space for a number of activities, including art classes and an afternoon pre-school. It also has a small room with a terrace to serve as the "seniors' library", and doubling as a guestroom for volunteers and other visitors.



Sincere thanks to the late Irene Bruegel for making this construction work possible.

Secondary student's 'study tour'

As a development of the tuition student's annual one-day excursion, this year 52 children and 6 teachers went on two day trip to Murshidabad, the erstwhile capital of undivided Bengal under the Moghuls. This was a fascinating look at local history, which brought some of the content of school text books alive. For the majority of children it was also a first experience of sleeping alone in a bed, and with a bathroom next door.



EVENTS UPDATE

Even though this was Suchana's lean season because of the high summer and monsoon, we had several events. In June, 3 teachers attended a 7-day **Loreto Barefoot Teachers' Training** in Kolkata. We've found this training very helpful because of its child-centred and interactive teaching methods. Also in June, two Suchana teachers set up computer courses for teachers and students at nearby **Jadavpur Government Secondary School**. The Principal of that school had approached us to set up their 15 computers - which had been stored unpacked for the last 2 years! We feel very pleased that Suchana managed to set up the computers and the courses. As a result our teachers have become very popular there!

In August **Dr Nigel Hughes**, from the **Dept. of Earth Sciences**, University of California Riverside visited Suchana with his story book **Monisha Pathorer Bon** ('Monisha's Stone Forest'). This is a fascinating story, set in Suchana's neighbourhood, of a girl who finds plant fossils and sets out to discover how they got there. Copies of the book were given to each of the tuition children.

In September two resource persons, Swati and Biswajit from **Shikshamitra Kolkata** came to Suchana, for a 2½ day workshop on 'hands-on maths' teaching for middle school. **Shikshamitra** specialises in creating manipulables and giving training in how to use them in the classroom, helping to make learning more engaged.

A technical problem faced by the **Supporting Adivasi Identity Programme** when producing publications is that unless we can provide the printer with text in the printing software, it has to be re-typed... (cont p.2)

SUCHANA CHILDREN'S MELA Sunday 11th November, 2.30pm

For those of you nearby, please come and join us for the annual children's mela.

Play Win-a-Chicken; Apple Bobbing; Disk-Pot; Sweet Count; Lucky Dip; Light-the-Candle; Thread-the-Needles; Ball Point; Ring Ball; Magnetic Fishing; Raffle; Steel Glass Skittles - and much more!

Tickets 10/- for any 3 games, at the gate.

BUILDING A CHILDREN'S LITERATURE – SANTALI AND KORA

The Supporting Adivasi Identity Programme has been busy working on a series of books and teaching material to make learning in their first language possible for Suchana children and many others in the area. The series is called 'Amar Bhashai Amar Boi' (My Books in My Language), and so far includes 'Panmoni' and 'Baha and Lukhi' in Santali, and 'Koda Sobdomala' (Kora Word Book) – the first ever lexicon in the Kora language. This collects together contemporary Kora vocabulary and gives meanings in Bangla and English under thematic headings.



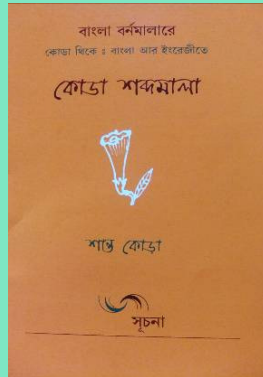
'Panmoni'



'Baha and Lukhi – two friends'



Kora alphabet chart



The Kora Word Book

EVENTS UPDATE: CONTINUED

Because the text is Kora / Santali which the printer does not understand, the result is several rounds of proof corrections! To solve this, we invited Arpan Mukhopadhyay, a print maker from **Kala Bhaban Art School** to give a ½ day training in Adobe Page-Maker at Suchana – hopefully, the result will be a much smoother process for our upcoming six books. These are adaptations for small children of Santal Folk Tales recorded in the late 19th Century by Norwegian Missionary, P.O Bodding.

In October, at the request of local secondary science teachers, a physicist friend, **Soumya Chakravarty**, gave two impressively accessible presentations on the mysterious "God's Particle" – one for teachers and one for students. Atomic physics in a nutshell – and all without the maths!

Two teachers went for a 3 day phase-2 training on **Integrating Computers in the Classroom** by Amina Charania of the **Sir Dorabjee Tata Trust**. This approach promotes a pedagogy beyond the text and technology, seeking ways for computers to enhance learning and helping teachers become learning facilitators rather than providers of knowledge.

And finally, our festive Puja season was preceded by a distribution of second-hand **Puja clothes** collected by Maura and helpers at Mustard Seeds from donors at Calcutta International School and Sumita Dutt. This event made everyone very happy! Teachers Jhuma, Kavita, Kumkum Aruna and Subhadra spent two days sorting the clothes according to sizes and need so the right clothes got the right bodies.

THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED US

In West Bengal, thanks to Debasish Gangapadhyay, Deepnath Roy Choudhuri, Arpita Das Gupta, Sarbani & Jisan, Calcutta International School, Maura Hurlley and the Mustard Seeds team, and Sumita Dutt. At Friends of Suchana in UK, who say they are beginning to feel like a community themselves reflecting the Suchana Community in West Bengal, thank you Robert from Paris; people who bought from the summer stalls during downpours; children at Sheldwich Primary School who raised a considerable sum by their own efforts; Sophie R in the US for giving through children's birthday parties; special thanks to Wendy Denton and all the Mere Group for working so hard to maintain Mere's regular contributions to Suchana in a difficult year; to Alexander Betts, a young Queen Elizabeth's School, Faversham student, who not only found sponsors for a long walk but also gave a long day's much valued assistance for a Beetle Drive; Jinee Patel and Andy Bonnette for their huge and practical help and also for gift of a laptop; Jane Hiles, David Wilkinson; Stephanie Wolfe for projecting the Jamia Millia Islamia University students' film; and Frank Stoddart who, since he retired from work has made abig input into our necessary administration; Nigel Hughes from the US and UK, who after visiting Suchana sent a wonderfully welcome Standing Order; Alison O'Connor for advice for Kent fundraising, and all our friends old and new without whom we would surely collapse!

Note 1: FOR UK GIFT AID TAX PAYERS: Your original GA declaration stands but from Dec 2012 the law states that you must be able to confirm that the amount of GA you give is at least equal to the amount of tax that ALL your GA donations amount to.

Note 2: JUST GIVING: Regretfully, because of lack of use, we are cancelling our subscription to JG but we hope that some folk reading this might like to undertake a 'personal challenge' sponsored event; we can reinstate our membership within a year, so please let us know.

Suchana: The Uttor Chandipur Community Society

Regd. Office: 'Uttor Phalguni, P.O. and Village Khanjanpur, Via Sriniketan, Birbhum, West Bengal 731 236, India
Tel: +91 (0) 3463 329278; Email: suchana.india@gmail.com; Web: www.suchana-community.org