The Uttor Chandipur Community Society
Supporting a rural community: creative solutions to education and health

GOOD NEWS!
As a continuation of our Supporting Adivasi Identity programme, we have been working with children to encourage creative writing in their first languages. For many, this was a first experience of writing in their own languages, so the process was very exciting. In November 2011, we released two books of their writing and illustrations: “Kopai Gada Hanasai” (On the Far Side of the Kopai River) in Kora; and “Miru Chere” (The Parrot) in Santali. The children are very happy as some of them are now “authors”!

And in February 2012, we released more products intended to support first language learning: ‘Miru Arang’ (‘Cherished voices’) - a CD collection of 16 Santali songs, sung by Suchana children. We had a lot of fun making the CD (and doing the photos).

Miri Arang
Santali songs by children available @ Rs 100
Email us at:
suchana.india@gmail.com

And finally, we printed a Santali ‘Alphabet Chart’ using the Bangla script. We distributed the chart to a number of local schools, which were very happy to receive it.

EVENTS UPDATE:
Our calendar of events started with the third run of our Children’s Mela (fair) in November – an entirely child-managed event, very well attended and enjoyed by both participants and organisers. The two years of experience clearly reflected the children’s planning and event managerial skills!

This was closely followed by Drama in Education – techniques and activities around using drama for learning and personal development were introduced to a group of 60 mixed-aged children by a team of National School of Drama alumni in association with the National Centre for Protection of Child Rights.

A Low-cost No-cost Science Training: was held in November, conducted by retired Birla Museum director Samar Bagchi, for Suchana teachers, teachers from four further local schools, and secondary school students. This training was so popular that we are now thinking of holding a ‘science fair’, every year as an annual event!

And next came our annual Sports Day in December: true to Suchana’s tradition – 76 of about 110 children won at least one prize and children who got more than two shared one of the prizes with her/his friend.

NEWSFLASH: Take a look at a short film on Suchana made by film students Sushovan Sircar, Esha Paul and Nishtha Arora http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FH066JYqjPs
Programme news from the Education Resource Centre

Suchana’s ERC is doing very well and a sense of community ownership of the centre continues visibly to grow amongst members. Villagers use Suchana as their mobile charging point, take shelter from the summer sun and storms; relatives of villagers on their visits will often be shown around Suchana by the children with a clearly discernable sense of pride; children drop by to see what’s happening and for the 8 programmes it runs. It’s always buzzing with activities and the energy that it generates is quite infectious.

The Pre-School has 29 children, mostly Santals and a gender ratio of 50:50, and now borrows the mobile library’s van rickshaw to offer a ‘bus’ service to 3 year olds. The Early Learning Group has 132 children, mostly Santals and Koras, and still runs on 2 days a week with sports on Fridays. The Tuitions Classes get bigger each year as more children enter secondary school: currently there are 74 children and 5 teachers. This year four (2 girls & 2 boys) of Suchana’s students appeared for their Secondary level public exams. Amongst the four, three are first generation literates and we feel very proud of their achievement. The Computer Courses are in demand: children in the current batch are age 9-10, which means that all of Suchana’s children from class 4 upwards now have basic computer skills. The adult course has a long waiting list and is known for being a hands-on course, with a chance of free practice sessions after completion.

The Activity Groups have been attracting new craft specialists into Suchana’s fold; regular craft teachers have also been inspired to develop new ‘products’ through this process. Current activities include fabric painting; vegetable-gardening; Tagore dances; hands-on maths; crochet; Santal drumming and clay sculpture. The Health Project’s work on basic health care and hygiene with children seems to have recently resulted in a dramatic reduction of bacterial and other skin infections. And the Supporting Adivasi Identity programme is running 7 new projects to develop teaching and literacy materials.

Thanks to all who have helped us recently:

To the Mere Group, who donated funds for a generator, and as a result we have been able to run the tuitions and the computer programme unhindered even during serious power cuts; Sir Dorabjee Tata Trust for a 2nd year programme grant; Paranjay Guha Thakurta; P.K Sen, Abeer Chakravorty; Jacques Ellis and Vincent; Devit Yerker; Kira Wallace; Kim Moretti; Daniel Heitor; Brittany Fignar; Chandra Banerjee; Emma; Soumen and Manjushri Basu; Humkara; Peter Kirby; Ben Rogaly and Kirat Randhawa; two donors who paid our Just Giving subscription; Shreen Harmony choir; Sheldwich Primary School; St Stephens Infant School; Kirsty Reid and Highstead School; Rose Creed and Christchurch Girls’ High School, New Zealand; Petra and Michael Slaytor; Sophie Milward for sales in Worcestershire; Heather Chappell; P J Jacobs; Daphne Vivian-Neal; Mary Gray; Trustees of Mrs R Walker; Jo Lees; Joe Winter; Mrs J Woodroffe; Dr A Chatterjee; Urmila Rajkhowa; and all our generous regular donors.

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