Suchana is a community group working in rural West Bengal, focusing on education and health. The education project (the Early Learning Group) is a group of children and teachers which meets twice a week to participate in an activity-based learning curriculum aiming to support and encourage those children who attend regular school, and provide an introduction to literacy to those who don’t. Currently, 106 children participate.

Our health project now works in all six of the Suchana villages, delivering primary health information in a participatory format and linking villagers in with locally existing health services.

If you would like more information, please contact us at milwardbose@rediffmail.com

In April we admitted 40 new children to the ELG, bringing our numbers to 106. More than half of these new children are of pre-school age: there is a great deal of interest in pre-school education amongst parents here. We have now managed to accommodate nearly all of the 4-11 age group children in our villages.

Events update

Suchana continues to learn and develop. We have recently drawn up plans and a proposal for a major project expansion. We are trying to build a resource centre, where we will be able to increase our pre-school work, offer more after-school opportunities to primary children more frequently, and make our health work more consistent (see over).

The Early Learning Group

Arranging admission for 40 new children in April was a major achievement which increased our capacity by 60%. Most of these children are Konra adivasis. To accommodate them, we reorganised the structure of the classes and our timetable. At the same time we welcomed Santo Konra to our teaching staff. Santo, from the same village as many of these children, is the villages’ first BA student. His work at Suchana has been invaluable in communicating to the younger ones in their first language and settling them in. He also works specifically with those children who have learning difficulties, giving them individual attention and identifying their particular needs.

The ELG library has been running extremely well recently. The books are popular and the children are proving very responsible at bringing them back. Through this system, story books are entering the children’s home lives every week, and the literacy effects are tangible in the classroom. We plan to keep our book supply growing.

In July, we undertook a spontaneous school trip to the cinema. A local film

Our 2006 Christmas Cards are ready!

Suchana’s only income continues to be from the sale of our greetings cards. This year for Christmas we have six designs, printed from the ELG children’s own drawings, all with some glitterwork done by hand. Each design has a different photo of ELG activities on the back. Here are some (admittedly rather small) previews. If you’d like to see better previews, please contact Angela Stoddart at angela@cforstal.surfaid.org

The cards are priced at Rs 100 for a pack of 6 containing one of each design. Size: 5.5” x 5.5”

Would you like to help us sell cards this year, at your workplace, school, or amongst your friends? If so, please contact Angela anytime soon. Thanks!
Project Expansion Proposal

After more than two years of work, we feel we are now in an excellent position with the capacity and vision to take Suchana forward. We plan to:

- **Build and manage a multi-function community building to house the Early Learning Group, a community clinic, a Suchana office, an expanded children’s library and play area, an after-school reading room, a computer training and resource centre, an expanded pre-school, and meetings for livelihoods analysis and development.**
- **Develop the pre-school section of the ELG to cater to 60 3-5 year olds in four weekly sessions.**
- **Undergo an extended process of community-based social and livelihoods analysis to identify development priorities and meaningful, appropriate solutions.**

To build and equip the centre, to arrange training for its management, and to run these extended activities until April 2008, we are seeking Rs 15,000.00. We have developed a proposal document which explains our role in the community and these plans in more detail. **If you can help us, or know anyone interested in helping us, please contact us at milwardbose@rediffmail.com.** We can send you this proposal document as a preliminary step.

Working with Inequality

Suchana is an unusual community group in this area because it works with several villages incorporating a range of cultural difference. As in most parts of the world, difference is not innocent: it implies inequality. Caste and gender are both sources of particularly rigid ideologies which place people in unequal relationships with each other.

Within Suchana, there is a great deal of enthusiasm for addressing and redressing inequality, as well as a genuine interest in understanding how inequality happens and figuring out what can be done.

Structural inequalities such as caste and gender are very deep-rooted in any society. Suchana has had a number of small but important successes in challenging them. Girls play football with boys at our sports sessions (and the boys welcome this). Our policy of tiffin being served by all children on a rota system breaks important caste norms. Importantly, rather than showcasing Santal children singing Santal songs, we showcase all our children singing songs from all our communities. This small step constitutes a significant breakthrough, and was wonderfully reinforced when a Hindu girl from Suchana chose to sing a Santal song at her middle-school singing competition.