

SUCHANA'S NEWSLETTER ISSUE 26



Greetings from the Suchana team. Since our last newsletter in 2023, our team has grown to include 49 part-time and full-time staff, to accommodate for its various programmes with varying needs. Currently, Suchana operates at least one programme in 51 centres, reaching over 1830 children across 46 villages in different capacities, and has translated 160 stories into indigenous languages.

SUCHANA'S NEW "VISION" AND "MISSION"

In February 2024, Suchana's team participated in a retreat for team-building purposes and to reflect on and re-orient our values after 20 years of work. We came up with an organising vision and mission to direct our work:

Vision: Suchana will strive to build a society where social and economic disparities are eliminated and livelihoods for all are sustainable and long-term, especially for the adivasi communities. Achieving this goal requires equal rights for all, and the right to an education that respects indigenous cultural identity and language.

Mission:

1. Suchana will create opportunities for quality education which reflects social and human values and generates knowledge which can be applied in real life.
2. Suchana will work towards developing informed social leadership that reduces discrimination, including discrimination based on gender and disability, and will help build an inclusive society.
3. Suchana will continue to create greater awareness and realization of constitutional and human rights.
4. Suchana will create opportunities for young people to create sustainable livelihoods using marketable skills including agricultural and business entrepreneurship.
5. Suchana will try to identify, understand, analyze and respond to the lived realities and new social problems experienced by the young people we work with. Suchana will raise social awareness about harmful social practices like child marriage, child labour, discrimination etc.
6. Suchana will help to preserve and respect the indigenous languages, culture, cultural identity and heritage.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SUCHANA

On 16th and 17th February, Suchana hosted its 20th annual Function, featuring performances by children in dance, song, karate, gymnastics, poetry and plays in Bengali, English, Kora and Santali. This year's function was special as it also involved 'children's mela' style stalls with games and selling snacks. Alongside the usual art displays, some of Suchana's alumni who have been involved in craft making livelihood schemes had the opportunity to display and sell their wares. The Annual Function was livestreamed, and a recording of it can be found [here](#).



On the 2nd day of the function, various people involved with Suchana over the years were invited to participate in panel discussions on some core themes, including the opportunities and challenges for young people from our communities, and the future of the Kora language. Friendly faces were also invited to sell books and traditional Santali 'panchi' saris at the function, whilst early in the day, 18 of Suchana's staff participated in a blood donation camp. In India, donating blood is a particularly important civic responsibility as accessing blood during life saving operations is difficult. By donating blood, Suchana's staff receive a card akin to medical insurance which all members of Suchana's community can use in times of need.

PROGRAMME UPDATE: CREATING ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES

Supported by the Blue Moon Trust, this programme seeks to advocate for Santal and Kora inclusion in the employment market. As our first students passed through school, it became clear that accessing safe and non-exploitative employment was difficult. The ‘creating alumni opportunities’ project aims to provide a pathway to fairly paid and dignified work through trainings, vocational internships and the facilitation of entrepreneurial skills. Data gathered as part of this project shows that 36 of Suchana’s former students have secured commendable positions, including roles as interpreters, librarians, hotel management professionals, mechanics and nurses. Various alumni are also now involved in livelihood generating craft projects at Suchana, including jewellery making, tailoring and bamboo basket making

DECEMBER 2024: STORY WRITING COMPETITION

A story writing competition was held with 84 students from 32 villages participating. These students, from Suchana’s library and ITE programs, created original stories inspired by the books they had read throughout the year. 25 stories were selected to be published in a student magazine, and winners were awarded prizes at the Annual Function in February 2025.



Children participating in a story-writing competition

SUCHANA WINS AN AWARD!

In 2023, Suchana received the prestigious Robert Stillman Dignity Award from the Global Fund for Children (GFC). This award recognises Suchana’s efforts to ensure that education sustains the cultural identities of the diverse communities we represent, and it’s promotion of equality, including gender equality, in its communities. Read more about the award here: <https://globalfundforchildren.org/robert-d-stillman-dignity-awards/>

Earlier, GFC also published an article about Suchana’s first-language learning approach titled ‘The Power of Language’. You can read the full piece here: <https://globalfundforchildren.org/story/the-power-of-language/>



Suchana’s students receive clothes during the festive period, thanks to a clothing drive organised by Maura Hurley at Calcutta International School



Students at the main centre displaying bags that they made to carry their books to school and to Suchana.

NOVEMBER 2024: OLCHIKI TRAINING

For decades, the Santali language has had no script of its own. Recently, a push from state governments has led to a new script, 'Olchiki', being taught in state schools and a number of opportunities opening up in this field. The use of Olchiki in the public realm is crucial in Santali recognition, heritage preservation, and for widening opportunities.

Suchana has trained several of its teachers in the Olchiki script, and since, has advocated for its use elsewhere. In November 2024, Suchana organized an Olchiki training session for 10 teachers from communities across various districts. The training focused on basic Olchiki literacy, including letter recognition, word formation, and foundational skills. Five Suchana staff members also attended to expand their knowledge and support Olchiki education in their communities.

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Olchiki, Santali's script of its own

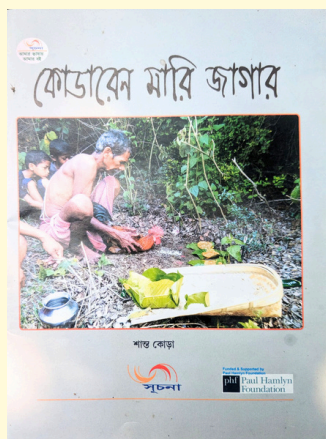


A mobile library student reading a book in Santali, her mother tongue

FIRST LANGUAGE LEARNING

Suchana leads a number of programmes to strengthen first language literacy among Santal and Kora communities. Last year, our longstanding staff member, Shanto Kora, has taken the initiative to document the Kora community's history and present it in an accessible format. For the research, Shanto traveled to over 5 districts in West Bengal, as well as Dumka District in Jharkhand and other states, seeking input from experts on the development of the Kora language and its history.

In other news, Suchana continues to create new and unique teaching materials for its students, and distributes these materials to others across West-Bengal and beyond. In 2024, Suchana distributed 148 sets of learning materials, including alphabet charts, number charts, flashcards, and storybooks in both Kora and Santali languages to NGOs, primary schools, ICDS workers, government officials and community education workers.



*'Kora Stories of Old' by
Shanto Kora*



*Suchana's teachers making
flashcards and alphabet
charts to distribute to schools*



Community cultural events

We would like to thank you all

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who continue to support us in one way or another, be it through sharing Suchana's work in your networks, supporting active members, fundraising, generating ideas, or donating.

For their donations, we would like to thank Gunn E & AJO, Frank Stoddart, Anna Binnie-Dawson, Ben Rogaly, Mary Byrne, Angela Stoddart, Vivene Moore, Megan Reynolds, Jane Unwin, William Bolton, Jean Kantharia, D Travis, Mrs Stoddart, Sheldwich Primary School, Benevity and Ann Hutt.

Mr & Dr Tandon made donations in memory of Urmila Tandon. We are deeply sorry to hear of her passing, and extend our condolences. We would also like to thank all those who sponsored Kirsty Milward in 2023, including Liane Blades, Gary Knowles, Jeanne Openshaw, Isabel Milward, Jim Infield, Philippa Moreton, Lucy Murphy, Urmila Rajkhowa, Judith & Ross Thompson and Rebecca Hack.

We would also like to thank the Friends of Suchana team for their time and patience, including Anna for her presence at the Annual Function this February.



Suchana's students winning awards in karate, football and dance competitions!

<https://suchana-community.org/>



Participants of Suchana's annual sports day 2024