

SAKSHAM NEWSLETTER, AUGUST, 2009

Dear friends,

It's been a while since you have been updated about what's been happening with our project in Nithari and we should be doing this more regularly indeed. Otherwise there is all the chance that you folks lose touch with Saksham and lose interest, and that cannot be.☺

Well, the school is alive and kicking, thanks to many, many people who have joined the efforts along the way.



As you know, we have been able to take this work this far purely on the basis of help received from individuals, or groups of individuals; no corporate big time funding or assistance received from the Government. In some ways, this is something remarkable in itself as this whole endeavor can be said to have been sustained by individuals in the community who feel motivated enough to help in a cause on a more personal level.



It may be seen as an example, however small it may be, of the fact that we don't always have to depend on the Government to make small changes for the better, in the community that we are a part of.

The present strength of the school is around 350, sometimes a little more and sometimes a little less.



We cannot, in any case, take on more than 350 kids as the premises are not large enough to accommodate more than this number.

The fluctuation is because of a number of reasons. Families relocate to other places or back to their villages. Some of the children, who have acquired a basic education from Saksham and have started going to other schools in the locality, discontinue because of clash in the school hours. Most of them however continue to come for the classes held in the evening. There are many small schools in Nithari, where the standard of education is nothing much to speak of and are more of a commercial venture. But because they charge fees (ranging from Rs. 100 to 150 per month) and insist on a uniform etc., some of the parents tend to think that they are the better schools. As most of the parents are illiterate, they are not in a position to assess the difference. Be that as it may, we at Saksham do not discourage the kids from taking admission elsewhere, but only emphasize that they should continue to come to Saksham so that there is no backward slide in their learning. We have been trying to give them as sound a foundation as possible within our constraints of funds, space etc. For the syllabus, we have been combining the CBSE module with the textbooks of the U.P Board.

The morning shift, which is from 8.30 to 11.30, has children of the lower age groups.



Many of these kids have to tend to younger siblings while their parents are at work and we have facilitated their attendance by allowing the little ones to come along to the school. A teacher looks after these tiny tots.

Although our intention has been to hold classes only up to the Vth standard, there is a senior group of children who have been coming to Saksham from the beginning and are now in classes 6th to the 10th. They too attend our school in the evening for supplementary coaching.



For the past several months, tailoring classes are also being held for the girl students and they are steadily advancing with their skills.



This has been possible due to a generous donation from a well wisher in Mumbai. Thank you, *Amit Goel Saab*. A few interest-free loans are also being rotated out of this contribution.

We are also very grateful to *Shri Ahlawat of Vijay Enterprises, Noida* for his generous support throughout.

Thanks to *Ms. Manju Gupta* of Noida and her group of friends who have helped us with the donation of two full length steel almirahs, fans and plastic chairs.

We also wish to express our gratitude to *Renuka Nair* and her group of friends in Railway Board, who have been consistently helping us with regular monthly contributions.

Our thanks to *Ms. Elsie Mathews, a teacher in St. Michael's school, Pusa Road*, who has been responsible for motivating the children in her school to share their books and stationery with the children in Nithari. They have also collected and given us clothes for the children several times.

Thanks to *Smt. Unni*, through whom we could avail of help in the form of a large number of textbooks for the primary classes, from the *Amrita School in Pushp Vihar*.

"For the people" a group of young men and women working in *"Conexant"* - have also rendered assistance from time to time giving us notebooks, storybooks, a CD player and also pitching in with the arrangements for a picnic that was organized early this year and so on. We hope you continue to be as involved.

A computer has also been acquired for the school and the older children are being given the basic knowledge of working with MS office.

In spite of all the limitations, the children are happy to come to the school and it is indeed a source of joy to see the positive changes that slowly but surely take place. There is a lot of boisterous exuberance as is normal for children, but there is also a desire of wanting to be more involved and to share. At the time of the *Bihar floods* last year, the children had gone around Nithari collecting small sums for sending to the flood victims. This sum of Rs. 5000 was handed over to *"Goonj"*, who were active in the flood relief work at the time.



A few months ago, a small "jhuggi" cluster within Nithari Village was razed by fire.



The older children went about distributing clothes, utensils, plastic buckets etc. that were collected for the purpose.



As you perhaps know, we have also been coaching children for the entrance test for admission to the *Navodaya Vidyalaya*. *Four of our children are now attending school in the Navodaya Vidyalaya at Dhoom Manikpur, near Ghaziabad.*



The Navodaya schools are residential schools run by the Government to cater to children primarily coming from rural backgrounds. The children who secure admission are provided completely free education up to the Senior Secondary level. Food, uniforms, books etc are also provided free of cost. This is indeed a good break for the children and we are happy that we have helped these children in this regard. We will be continuing with such coaching this year and hopefully in the coming years.

Saksham lost a very close patron with the **demise of Dr. J.K. Jain**, who had been coming to the school every Thursday.



Together with one of our trustees Shri P.C.Jain and Shri B.K Jain who has also been closely associated for quite a while now, this team had been responsible for ongoing medical check-ups, not only of the children coming to the school, but also of the many adults in the neighborhood, who used to line up every week. Many cases of T.B. had been detected and treatment was being provided. The local populace had come to depend on these weekly check-ups.



Dr. Jain in his self-effacing manner had won the faith, respect and love of all of them and his death, due to a heart problem, has been quite a shock. Shri P.C.Jain and Shri B.K.Jain have however ensured that the medical check-ups resumed after a small unavoidable gap. Dr.Gaur now comes to the school on every Saturday.

Shri Ashit Saxena has also been helping towards the nutritional aspect of the children attending the school. "Sattu" mixed with jaggery is being given to the children in the form of a drink twice a week. This has been going on for over two years.

"Pandies", the theatre group of *Mr. Sanjay, Lecturer at Hansraj College, New Delhi*, has been continuing to involve the children with theatre.



Through them they have had opportunities to perform as well attend performances staged by this group.



The children love the presence of this group at the school, whenever they come.



The bond between the "Bhaiyyas" and "Didis" of Pandies and the children is very real and very affectionate. Thank you Sanjay.

Thanks to *Dr. Shalini Gambir* who arranged for and coordinated the *Dental check up camp* with the association of the Noida branch of the *Indian Dental Association* and the *ITS Dental College and Hospital, Greater Noida*.



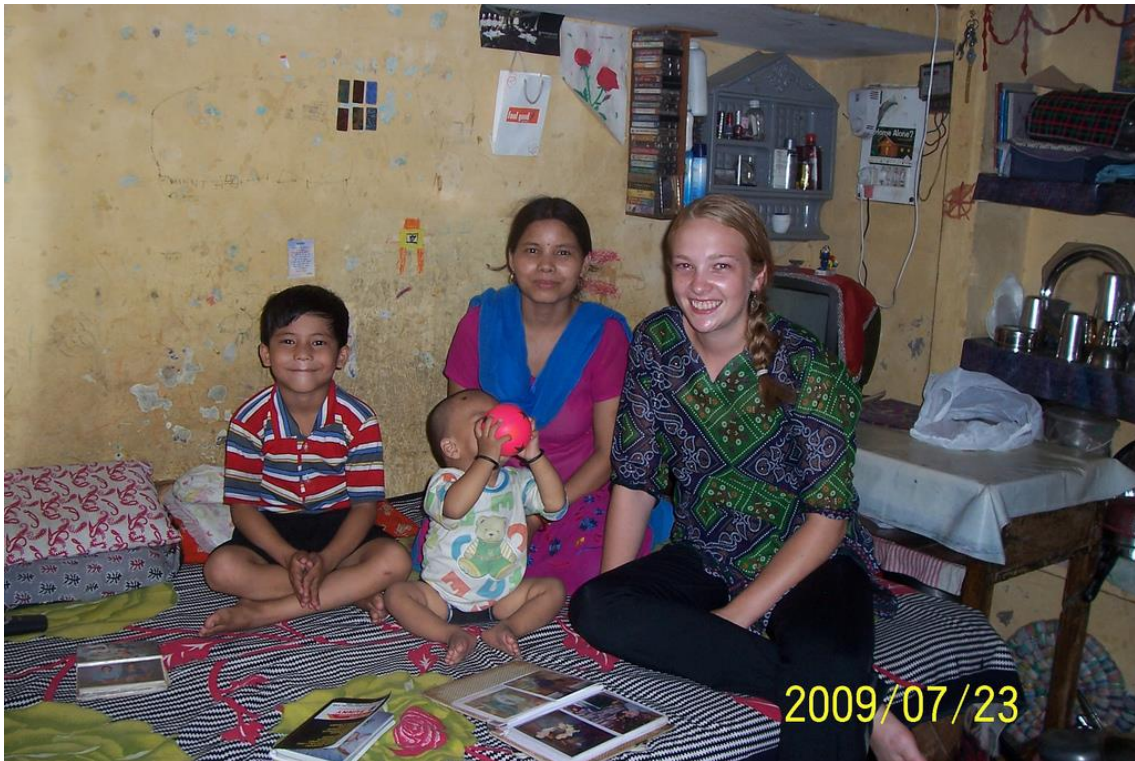
We are grateful to all the doctors who attended to over 500 patients and also followed up with further treatment in needful cases.



A big thanks to Eliza Wolosan , the founder of Global Education Fund, Colorado,



who sent us another batch of beautifully illustrated books for the children on various subjects which are quite an useful visual aid for the younger children. For the older children who can now read English, they are valuable reading material.



MariaTerese Rannallo an intern with Global Education Fund brought these books along with her on her visit to Delhi. Thanks to you too Maria.

Thanks to Ms. Manisha Seth



Ms. Manisha Bhandari



Who have been closely involved during the past year and who have roped in many others in their neighborhood to be friends and supporters of Saksham.

Thanks to everyone else who have aided Saksham's efforts in cash and kind. Truly without you all being there to support us with your encouragement, we would not have been able to take it this far.

We have been trying to create an environment of love and regard for each other in the school, whatever be the religious or other affiliations.



We have been celebrating all the festivals such as Diwali, Christmas etc. as also the national festivals.



Children are eager to participate with their individual expressions of creativity.

Our website is, as you may know is

www.sakshamkids.org

We have uploaded many of the photographs taken since the inception of Saksham at the following link:-

www.flickr.com/photos/30504548@N03.

Do visit to get a visual idea of our activities through this period.

If there is a need to emphasize the importance of your continued association and support to Saksham, let me use this opportunity to do so. Let's take this forward together.

Do keep visiting. Do keep helping us in as many ways as you can. Financial assistance is a big priority; so please do send the word around and persuade your friends to get involved. We guarantee you that all the money that is received will only and wholly be used for the benefit of the children. None of the trustees take any kind of remuneration,

nor have we so far incurred any expenditure for an office or administrative staff. Whatever has to be done in this regard is being done on a voluntary basis.

Please also find attached a copy of the accounts submitted by us to Shri Madan Jha, C.A. who has been so kindly assisting us with the auditing and other related formalities. Thanks a lot Mr. Jha.

If any of you have any suggestions/observations please do revert.

With thanks to all of you,

Nadira Razak

General Secretary, Saksham