

SAKSHAM NEWSLETTER OF MAY 2011

Dear friends

Saksham is forging ahead full steam, thanks to all of you. The number of children in the school remains around 450, but that is not because of any let-up in our activities. It has to do mainly with the limitations of space in the premises in Nithari, where we are running the informal school.



We had received suggestions from some of our supporters about shifting the venue and finding better premises outside Nithari. We have considered that, but have been inclined more towards continuing within Nithari itself, primarily because the children, whom we have tried to focus upon, are more comfortable about coming to a place which is easily accessible. We have also started admitting very small children, so that they get into the habit of schooling before getting into habits of vagrancy.



More importantly, we have been trying to include children who are compelled to stay at home to look after the younger siblings while their parents are at work. We allow these kids to bring the younger ones to school along with them. If the school is at a distance from where they live, it would make it very difficult for them to attend the school and their parents too, would not be amenable to the idea.

As those of you who have been continuously and closely associated with Saksham know, we have developed a system in running this school that best suits its stated purpose, which is to provide basic literacy to the maximum number of children and also to ensure the continuity of schooling beyond the primary level. We encourage the parents to enroll the children who have been coming Saksham for two to three years, in the Government school in the vicinity or to some local school in the neighbourhood. This is being done for two main reasons:

1. To create more space for other children to get enrolled and to facilitate at least their basic literacy.
2. To allow the children to get documented proof of their education from a school that has been recognized or which is affiliated to a recognized school. All the children so enrolled do however continue to come to Saksham for the classes that are conducted in the evening shift. This guarantees that the foundation that has been provided to them at Saksham is not eroded in any way because of the lackadaisical approach in some of the local schools.

Saksham has unfortunately not been given accreditation under the "Open Basic Schooling" scheme of the NIOS, because we apparently do not fulfill the requirements of space and the qualifications of the teachers who have been engaged in the school.

Which brings us to the second unique feature of our project. From the beginning, we had put in place a system, where the older children who have managed to reach High school, are trained to teach the younger children. They do so in the evening hours after coming back from the school where they are pursuing their own education.



All of these young girls stay in Nithari itself and because of the proximity of the school, as well as because we give them a small monthly honorarium, the parents of these young girls have

taken kindly to the idea of their continuing with their education, which otherwise could've come to an abrupt end, because of financial compulsions.

It gives us great pleasure to inform you that one of our earliest students, Sony Kumari, who had started coming to the Saksham classes when she was in the Second Standard, has just appeared for her 12th Board exams.



Saksham has been supporting her education throughout. She has also been working in Saksham as a teacher, in the afternoon shift. She has already started working in a Real Estate Agency and is now supporting her family. We are proud of Sony. We hope that many others will emulate her example.

Apart from providing weekly medical check-ups , courtesy Shri P.C.Jain, Shri B.K Jain and Dr. Poddar, to the children of Saksham as also others living in the vicinity, and the Sattu drink that is given to the children, thrice a week, courtesy Shri Ashit Saxena, we have also started distributing one banana each, once in a week, to all the children. Funds for this are being provided by the Rotary Club (Delhi South), who have also helped our cause with financial assistance. Shri Vend Poddar, one of the Rotarians, had also provided T-shirts to all the children of Saksham in the age Group of 4-13years.



The Rotary Club (South Delhi) had also organized Hepatitis –B immunization drive.



Around 350 children were covered. The first dose was given in February and the two successive doses in the following two months. We are grateful to all our patrons who have made all the above activities possible.

An eye check up camp had been organized by the Nirvana Foundation in September 2010 in co-ordination with the Eye Care Centre, Noida.



Follow up action as deemed necessary was also arranged for. Thanks Naveta and Rahul.

Grateful thanks also to Mrs. Lata Jain, who has been consistently putting in sincere efforts to make the circle of Saksham supporters in Noida, grow wider, so much so that we now have a regular amount coming in towards our monthly expenditure, from the donors who have become associated with Saksham through her. We have also received money from some of them for being spent on specific items that were required in the school such as fans, steel almirahs, notebooks and textbooks etc. Sometimes money is also received with the specific wish that some snacks are provided to the children. We hope Mrs.Lata Jain will continue to support Saksham in the future as well.

Mrs. Rageshwari Tyagarajan, a resident of Sector-22, Noida, has also been spreading the word around in the community and we have received help in kind from many of her acquaintances.



As a member of the Rotary Club Noida, she has also roped in other members to visit the school .She had has also arranged for the visits of Interact Clubs of several schools in Noida.



This has facilitated a positive interaction between the children coming from a well to do background and the children of Saksham who are all hailing from economically weaker migrant families living in Nithari. We are grateful to her.

The members of the Society of Vincent De Paul Noida Conference (St. Mary's Church), Noida Branch has also become associated with Saksham and they have on several occasions, supplied eatables, clothes, toys and books to the children.



They are likely to continue doing so. Thanks to all of you.

This year too, Mrs. Unny has helped us by arranging for a large number of textbooks for the primary classes, including a sizeable collection of G.K books from the Amrita Vidhyalaya in Pushp Vihar. The children are making good use of them. Thank you Mrs. Unny.



The NGO, "I Volunteer "had arranged for a day long event in November 2010, sponsored by the ICICI Prudential, at their Jhandewala premises. The kids had enjoyed the interaction and so had the Sponsors.



In March this year "I Volunteer" had also organized a Gender sensitisation programme for the older children at Saksham. Thanks to Priya Modi of "I Volunteer" and to Anuradha and her group, who conducted the workshop.



We are also glad that many young people have also committed themselves as Volunteers, some of them through "I Volunteer", and they have been taking classes for the children individually, once or twice in a week. Thanks from Saksham to Siddarth, Anupam, Sanghamitra, Smriti, Akanksha and Mukti, Anuj Jain, Sumeet Jain and Saurabh Jain.



Saurabh Jain had also arranged for a big group of Saksham children attending the Delhi Heritage Exhibition that was held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi. It was quite an educative and enjoyable experience for the children.

Thanks to Elsie Mathews, Senior Teacher in St. Michael's School, Pusa Road, New Delhi , for arranging for special classes being held in their school for the senior group of kids in Saksham . They really enjoyed the experience of being taught a few lessons in Maths, Science and English with the help of the computer aided "Smart Class" modules.

Gandhi Jayanti and Republic Day was also celebrated. This time however we thought it best to celebrate the occasions with a cleanliness drive. The precincts of the school and the adjoining bylanes were all cleaned up by a bunch of very enthusiastic kids from the school. All our activities are being documented with visual images which are being regularly uploaded on the Facebook page of Sakshamkids. We have also uploaded drawings, poems and other write-ups of the Saksham children on this page. This is the Link:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Saksham-Kids/162722063756271>

Recently, we held our Annual day celebrations in the Community Hall of Sector-26, with a cultural Programme of dance, drama and songs.



It was a well-attended event and most of the Saksham supporters and well wishers were there to encourage the children. Special thanks to Shri M.I. Khan who got us the premises from the Residents' Welfare Association of Sector-26, Noida.

We also thank all the donors, big and small, because without the money, this project would indeed come to a standstill despite the best of our intentions. Special thanks to Shri P.V.Shamsuddin, who has borne the expenses towards the rent of the new premises that we had taken up just next door as also the salary of the teachers for the three classes functioning in those premises for the whole of last financial year, Thanks to Shri K.Venugopal, Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court, and Ms.Komal Aggarwal, who have been particularly large-hearted.

If anything of import has been left out from this Newsletter, please do pardon us. Of course it is not intentional and the omission is in no way indicative of lesser significance awarded to any person or group or their efforts in taking forward Saksham's project in Nithari. It is purely inadvertent and we would be happy to include it in our next newsletter, if pointed out to us.

Statement of contributions received and the details of monthly expenditure is also being sent along with this as an attachment. All those who have helped Saksham with financial contributions are requested to make sure that their donations are reflected in this statement. If not, please do let us know and we will sort out the discrepancies, if any.

Thank you all and please continue to lend your generosity and goodwill.

Warm regards,

Nadira
General Secretary, Saksham.