

### **Non Formal Education Center – Village Ushan**



The Non Formal Education Center (NFE) of Village Ushan was started in January 2007. What makes it unique is the fact that the Instructor in this NFE is a young woman Kesar (generally in villages it is difficult to find a woman who holds a Graduate degree and is allowed to work) and secondly the regularity of these children attending the NFE.

Interestingly, there is a Government primary school and also a middle school in the village, but the children do not go there. One main reason for the children not going to the school is the irregularity of the teacher. The teacher is the daughter-in-law of a powerful person of the village. Many a times, she is absent, even when she comes, she is hardly on time. And when the teacher is in school, she does her own personal work and at times, she even asks the children to do the same. Seva Mandir, field workers, who are associated with the village, started talking about this problem to the village committee. In one of the monthly village meetings attended by the Seva Mandir field workers and other staff members, the issue of the school was again brought up. The villagers complained about the teacher's irregularity and behavior with the children.

However, when the Seva Mandir staff members asked the villagers to take some action against the teacher, they said that it would be of no use. Some of them were also apprehensive of complaining against her as she belonged to a powerful family of the village. Coincidentally, the teacher also happened to be in the village that day. She had at some other time complained to the Seva Mandir field worker that the villagers don't send their children on time. So that day, the field worker called the teacher also in the meeting and said that let us resolve this issue today. In the meeting, when the villagers confronted her, the teacher said that the children do not come on time and even when they come, they are very untidy. However, the villagers countered that the children do not come because there is no certainty whether the school will open or not. Since, it had become a

matter of counter allegation, it was proposed in the meeting, that a visit register be kept in the school. The village committee members would visit the school and note the teacher's presence or absence in that. However, this system did not last too long. At times, the teacher hid the register, at others people forgot to ask for it, whatever the reasons be, the system failed to improve the school's effectiveness. The villagers even lodged a complaint against the teacher. In fact, the Block Development Officer and the Sub-Divisional officer both admonished the teacher but yet there was no improvement in her.

The struggle for the school continues but seeing no change in the school it was also felt that some alternatives would have to be set up for the currently out of school children. Subsequently, the NFE was set up last year.

The enrolment of children in NFE of Ushan has gone up from 25 to 35 as of today. These children attend the NFE on a regular basis and enjoy learning with Kesar. She is a dedicated worker and enjoys her interaction with these children. Kesar is amazed at the fact that these children have learnt the reading-writing skills in only few months whereas some of these children have attended schools in the past for years but were not able to read and write. The parents are extremely happy with their children's performance



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