



*Students of Class 2 of Kaliyachak Girls' Learning Centre.*

## **KALIYACHAK KANYA SHIKSHA SETU** *Learning Bridge for Girls*

*Enabling girls from vulnerable communities to reach learning levels  
commensurate with their age*

**Foundation for Rural Recovery and Development**  
December 2024



*Anushka Kumari from Class 1 is absorbed with times 4.*

## Background

The Kaliyachak Girls' Learning Centre operates on the premises of Samaj Kalyan Mandal, in the village Kaliyachak, District Nalanda, Bihar. Samaj Kalyan Mandal is a 40 year old, community-based organization. The Centre has classes from Class 1 – 6 and runs six days a week from 6.30 am to 8.45 am after which the girls return to their chores at home or attend the government day school in the village. The students come from Kaliyachak and the neighbouring hamlets of Saristanagar, Aganu Bigha, Mal Bigha, Linepar, Nauliya Bigha, Bhadauan and Bhat Bigha.

Approximately 75% of the children attending the Centre regularly go to the government school later in the day. The rest go home to help with household chores.

## Student Strength

Class	1	2	3	4	5	6
No of students	42	27	24	22	14	6
Teacher	Sinku	Tarawati	Shravan	Vikash	Priyanka	Ranjeet (Head teacher)

Class 1 has the maximum number of children this year, and has seen new admissions throughout the year. The girls' ages range from 5 to 10 years in Class 1. Most of them are first generation learners. Their parents have enrolled them in the government schools' age appropriate classes for which they are simply not prepared. After being assessed most of these students find themselves in class one at the learning centre. The wide age gap and large number of students in this particular class is making it a challenge for the teacher.

### **Summer and winter timings**

The government schools in and around Kaliyachak change the school timings in summer and winter. As a consequence of this our Learning Centre also adjusts timings accordingly. In summer the Centre runs classes from 3:15pm to 5:45pm and in winter from 6:30am to 8:45 am.

### **Staff changes**

Sweta Kumari left at the end of November 2023, as she has now been appointed as a government school teacher. She has been replaced by Vikash Kumar. Vikash has been running private coaching classes. He approached the Learning Centre as he wanted to teach in a more structured environment.

Shailendra Kumar was unable to fulfil the English teaching requirements mandated by the Bihar state government and has been replaced by Priyanka Kumari. Priyanka has prior experience teaching in a private school. She is also completing her Bachelor of Science degree.

### **Goals for 2024**

The year began with fresh goals and intentions for the Learning Centre. Three goals specific to this year were:

- i. To make Saturday an activity day.
- ii. To focus on improving reading skills
- iii. To have regular and frequent assessments through the year in order to gauge progress.



*Shristi from Class 1*



*Students of Class 2*

## Saturday is an activity day



*Class 2 girls learning a new game.*

Recognising that most of these girls do not have real leisure at home as they help with the housework, care for their younger siblings and assist in farm work, we decided to dedicate Saturdays to art, music, reading books, exercise and games. Unsurprisingly, Saturdays have become their favourite day of the week.



*Exercises in progress on a Saturday*

## Improving reading skills



*Reading the newspaper aloud for practice*

Interactions with the students showed that most of them read very hesitantly, not completely comprehending what they are reading. Hindi, the medium of instruction and the language in which the books are written, is a second language for them. Their mother tongue is Magahi, and though it does have similarities with Hindi, it is an entirely separate, older language. To familiarise themselves with Hindi, the students are encouraged to read aloud in class. They take turns to read aloud paragraphs of the lesson being taught in class every day.

Reinforcing our own observations of the students, the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report); Pratham, in their 2023 report has found that in Bihar, while the percentage of class 3-5 children, who could read class 2 level text was 32.8 in 2018, it decreased to 30 in 2022. Similarly, the class 6-8 students who could at least read class 2 text was 63.1% in 2018, it dropped to 61.3% in 2022.

## Regular assessments of the students

The teachers conduct monthly tests and mid-term and final exams to monitor the progress of the students. The monthly tests were introduced this year in order for the teachers to keep a closer eye on the students' progress. 90% of the students are first generation learners and regular assessments are important to ensure that they are keeping up.

## Nutritious snacks

The practice of offering the children nutritious snacks everyday continues. This is especially important and significant given that child malnutrition is crippling Bihar. The National Family Health Survey conducted in 2020 has revealed that the state has 43% stunted, 23% wasted, and 9% severely wasted children. While the students do require a much more wholesome diet for their day, our health assessments show that the snacks do provide them significant nutrition. They also follow a deworming regimen and have been administered three months of multivitamins (B Complex +) during the year. This will be resumed in the New Year.

Daily snack menu - each serving is approximately 75 grams

Monday – roasted gram and jaggery  
Tuesday – peanuts and jaggery  
Wednesday – seasonal fruit

Thursday – roasted gram and jaggery  
Friday – puffed rice with peanuts  
Saturday – puffed rice with roasted gram

## Parent-teacher meetings



*The parent-teacher meeting in progress*

Parent-Teacher meetings were held in August 2024. One meeting was with the parents of class 1, as it has the largest number of students, and another with the parents of children from classes 2 to 6. A total of 70 parents were present for the meetings.

The agenda for both meetings covered the same points, but since class 1 is the first point of contact with the school system for the family and therefore unfamiliar to them, it was held separately. In this meeting, we encouraged the parents to be more involved and participate more proactively in their wards education.

It is important to understand that schools in the villages are very different from the schools in the cities. Here attendance fluctuates according to the agriculture cycles of sowing and harvesting when more hands are required in the fields. Festivals and traditional religious practices take precedence over school attendance, especially for the girls. Consequently, completing the year's syllabus becomes quite challenging. It is only consistent reinforcement about the importance of being regular and punctual at school that we hope will convince the parents and help their daughters benefit from an education.

## Commemorations and events

### 26 January: Republic Day

January 26 is the day that India's constitution came into force. All the students and staff were present for flag hoisting. The ceremony was conducted by the elders of the village. The girls recited the preamble and the teachers explained the significance of the Constitution in a democratic country. Refreshments were served to close the day.

### 4 February: Sports Day



*Sports day: matching the alphabet Classes 3 and 4*

125 children were present on sports day and every child participated. Aside from the students and teachers, there were around 55 spectators! They held 200m, 300m, marble and spoon, needle and thread, long jump, match the letters. The day began at 9 am and closed by 2:30 with the prize distribution ceremony and refreshments of samosas and jalebis. The teachers observed that the students were far more confident and competitive this year.

### 15th August: Independence Day

In celebration, the students presented a song and dance show. They sang songs commemorating the day and after the national flag was hoisted, the head teacher narrated stories of those who led India's freedom fighters

### 5th September: Teacher's Day

The students organised a cultural program for their Teachers. There was a lot of song and dance.



*Independence Day assembly just before hoisting the flag.*

#### **14<sup>th</sup> November: Children's Day in India**

Children's day is celebrated in commemoration of the birthdays of erstwhile President Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who were both invested in children's education and development. This year the teachers performed a skit to the delight of the students and as always, sweets were distributed.

#### **Tailoring classes**

The tailoring class continues to be a popular choice for students who graduate from school and young women from the community. Two additional sewing machines were purchased this year to expand the sewing unit and offer additional opportunities for the older girls. Thirty girls enrolled this year for the 6 month course.

There are currently 15 trainees taking the course. The sewing unit successfully completed an order for 300 cloth carry bags for the artisan enterprise, Baragaon Weaves, in Delhi. We hope to get more such orders so that the sum earned is distributed among the girls, who are good at sewing and volunteer their time.



*Bags being made by a trainee in the tailoring unit.*

## **Project monitoring and capacity building for the teachers**

### **Project monitoring**

Regular monitoring of the Centre also entailed providing guidance and support to the teachers to schedule and prepare lesson plans to ensure that they remain focused, child-centric and complete the syllabus on time. As part of the monitoring process, the head teacher debriefs the project manager every day. The project manager also holds online meetings with all the teachers every month.

### **Workshop on gender sensitization**

The teachers attended a two day gender sensitization workshop conducted by Nirantar, a feminist NGO. Nirantar's approach is intersectional and rooted to the socio-economic realities of the region. We consider this an important first step as rural Bihar is still steeped in feudal, patriarchal systems and both the men and women need to learn to question these inequalities in order to move forward.

### **English as a second language**

In response to the teachers' requests to learn spoken English, as they felt it would help them feel more confident, FORRAD approached Inlingua, a Delhi-based institute specialising in teaching English as a second language. They organised classes especially for this group.

The teachers have completed two levels this year, one hour a day for 80 hours in all. Their understanding of sentence construction and conversation skills have improved and they now have some confidence to help the girls at the Centre as well. It will be up to them to practice and stay in touch with the language. If their interest sustains, more advanced courses will be organised next year.

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