

J.B. Singh School for Girls, Village Kaliyachak, District Nalanda, Bihar

22 December 2022



Figure 1 Shrivani makes sure that each student has understood each word of what he has taught

Background

The school is run on the premises of Samaj Kalyan Mandal, a community-based organization and a partner of FORRAD's. The school has classes from Std 1 – 6 and runs 6 days a week from 7 to 9:30 am after which the girls return to their chores at home or register their attendance with the government day school in the village.

The circumstances have changed somewhat since we restarted this school in 2017. While most of the children are now registered in the government schools in or near their village, these schools are severely understaffed and are in a neglected condition. The families of the children register them in the schools to avail of the cash benefits accorded to them annually by the state. We hope to mobilize the parents to petition the state and district administration to ensure the schools function properly, but these efforts will take their time to show results, till then we commit to continuing this centre.

Student strength

The school now has an enrollment of 141 girls with approximately 120 children attending every day. The increase is significant as the year began with an enrollment of 80 with 60 students attending each day. There are at present, an additional 13 students attending the tailoring class.



Figure 2 Morning assembly now includes a few minutes of exercise

The class-wise distribution of students is as under. The teachers move classes according to the subject they teach but are each also assigned responsibility for a specific class.

| Class | No. of students enrolled | Teacher name |
|-----------|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | 47 | Sinku Kumari assisted by Mahesh Manjhi |
| 2 | 31 | Tarawati Kumari |
| 3 | 19 | Shailendra Kumar |
| 4 | 14 | Shravan- Ji |
| 5 | 14 | Sweta Kumari (head-teacher) |
| 6 | 16 | Ranjeet Kumar (teacher trainer) |
| Tailoring | 13 | Rajesh Tanti |

The new admissions have been largely in classes 1 and 2.

For us, the surge in enrollment is one of the signs that things are going well in the school. Here are some of initiatives that showed results this year.

- **The arrival of a committed passionate teacher.** Ranjeet Kumar joined the school in August 2022. While Ranjeet does not have a B.Ed degree, he has gone through training courses held by various NGOs specializing in child education. He also brings with him over a decade of experience in the field. He has been tasked with sharing his skills and knowledge with the

rest of the staff making learning more focused and interactive and significantly improving the quality of teaching for the school.



Figure 3 An unforgettable lesson in the shape and size of a Jodhpuri sari

Three days of training sessions with teachers and activities with children. Tejaram, a teacher educator with 35 years of experience in Rajasthan spent three days with the teachers and children brought fresh ideas and colour and pushed the teachers to a more child-centred approach. “What is the most important quality of a school?” was the question he asked in a session with the teachers – the right answer was “Love for the children”. The school has begun to incorporate ‘learning by doing’ into its till now overly theoretical approach. The classrooms are also gradually becoming more colourful with art and maps being displayed on the walls, improving the atmosphere as well as instilling in the students, a sense of ownership and pride in their classroom.



Figure 4 Winter has brought with it red carrots for snacks. Approval from the children pending!

- **The distribution of nutritious snacks daily.** This continues from the previous year, and for the parents of children from low-income families, as all the students are, this one initiative is reason enough to send their girls to this school.
- **Coordination from the Delhi office** via frequent video calls provided the teachers witnesses for their work and encouraged them to do better. What started as a supervisory task has now been turned into something that both the teachers and the staff in Delhi find rewarding.
- **The PTA meeting.** A meeting held with the parents at the end of September this year sent out the message that the school takes the education of their children seriously and that they are interested in their future. The PTA has definitely had a sustained impact on the parents and the children, as we see that the children are now arriving largely on time and are more regular with their attendance. There are also attempts at grooming before coming to school (combing hair, cutting nails, washing hands etc).

Sports Day

11th December, 2022 was a red-letter day for us. The school held its very first sports day. The events included the 300 m run, lemon and spoon, thread the needle, collect the pebbles, match the



alphabet and long jump. From 9 am to 3 pm, they packed in the heats, semi-finals and finals! There were over a 100 children in attendance with some outside spectators coming in as well. The prize winners received cheers and applause and received coloring sets, stationery and books as prizes. The day ended with a vote of thanks to all the students for their participation, enthusiasm and discipline.

Figure 5 The start of the match the alphabet race

The backgrounds of Supriya and Preeti, the two students profiled below, are no different from the circumstances faced by most of the students. We hope the descriptions will offer some context.

Profile: Supriya Kumari



Figure 6 Supriya Kumari photographed in December 2022

Supriya is 12 years old and has been a student of the school since August 2020. She studies in Class 6. She used to previously study at a school in her father's village, Amera, Post Bhathar, Tharthari, district Nalanda. Supriya has been staying with her maternal grandmother and three uncles in nearby Linepar village since her mother's passing. Her uncles work in factories in Patna and one of her uncles who is

unmarried takes care of her and encourages her to study. When Supriya's father remarried, she shifted to her grandmother's home. Her step mother does not show any affection or care for Supriya and does not allow her father to give money to support her. She has 3 step brother who stay with their grandmother in Amera. Her father works in a factory in Delhi and visits home once or twice a year. There is a government primary school till class five in Linepar and another nearby village there is a government high school, but for now, Supriya prefers to walk the 1.5 km to reach the JB Singh school.

She is a serious student who is attentive in class and does her work well. She participates in all activities and also helps out her classmates with their studies. Supriya wants to be independent. She dreams of having a government job after finishing her high school and will be preparing for competitive exams to that end.

Profile : Preeti Kumari



Preeti Kumari belongs to Aganubigha village in the Akbarpur Panchayat of Nalanda district. She is the daughter of Shivalprasad and Urmila Devi. She has five siblings - three sisters and two brothers. Two older sisters are married. The third sister is studying in class 7 in the government school in Akbarpur Village. The parents have a small patch of farm land and also work as labourers on other

Figure 8 Preeti photographed in November 2019

to find work as a casual labourer. Preeti's mother works in the fields and manages the household activities. Preeti and her sister too help their mother out with the chores at home. The family has frugal resources which are spread thin and reflects in her clothes and the care with which she uses her stationary and books.



Preeti is 9 years old and studies in class 3. She walks a distance of 1km every day to reach school. She is regular in her attendance at school and is passionate about learning. She is very good in math as well as languages and helps her classmates who have difficulty with their work. She likes to play sports and participates in all activities.

Preeti is enrolled in Class 5, in the government school in Aganubigha. She attends this school after she finishes her classes in our school. But she says that most often her class in the government school the classes has hardly any students and at times, no teachers. Preeti, however, hopes to continue her education.

Figure 9 Preeti photographed in

The sewing classes



There are now 13 girls attending the sewing classes. Two of them are from the school, the rest are older girls who have come in to acquire a skill. The classes run 6 days a week from 10 – 2. The centre has three machines that are often in need of repair. Some students attend the entire 6 month course and some come to learn to tailor just a few garments.

The girls attending the 6 month course learn:



Garments for new-borns and babies
Sari blouses of various styles
Sari petticoats
Salwar kurtas
Umbrella cut dresses
Vests and shorts (like boxers) for men
School uniforms
Bags of two styles

Of the 30 students who completed the course last year, 15 now earn from their skill within the village, stitching for the local community while the rest sew for themselves and their family.

This has been an eventful year for us and we look forward to the year ahead. We plan to continue to work with the teachers more intensively, helping them see that teaching and working with children can be immensely gratifying. Coming up soon will be the Republic Day celebrations where along with the march past and a (hopefully) tuneful singing of the National Anthem, the students will also learn the significance of the day. Thank you very much for your generosity and support. We absolutely could not have done any of this without you.