



Annual Report 2013-14

The year was speedy in a way we did not realize until it went by. From planting new ideas to implementation, all of it took place in a span of a few months...

We found a bigger space in July and that too our old school space at 62B Alipur Road. We shifted in September '13 and spent the next three months in planning, decorating and putting things in order.

Happy hours of 2013-2014

- We found new space – a big space, our old space and shifted in September, 2013
- Sajahan, an ex-student of Shikshamitra, joined the team in November, 2013
- The library took off in November, 2013
- Our materials (mathematics and English) are being used by individuals and organizations in other states
- We made our promotional film. Notsoabsolute films did it for us most beautifully. It can be seen at this link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIW5cYu8E4Y&feature=youtu.be>
- Various organizations and funding bodies start showing interest and trust in our teachers' training program.



Not-so-happy hours of 2013-14

- Swati (Sircar) left Shikshamitra in September, 2013 to join Azim Premji University
- Aditi Mazumdar joined as the English teacher, chiefly to offer communicative English course for outsiders. Lack of students discouraged her to continue

Intervention through teacher trainings

| | Bengali | English | Mathematics | Art | Class Management | Library orientation |
|------------|---------|---------|-------------|-----|------------------|---------------------|
| Government | 8 | 20 | | | | |
| Non-govt. | 23 | | 13 | | 50 | 20 |
| Children | | | 70 | 130 | | 110 |
| Mothers | 11 | | 11 | | | |

*the figures denote the total number of teachers who have received our training over 2013-14

With government schools in West Bengal: Shikshamitra’s intervention with the government education system has mostly been through teacher trainings. This year’s training was in Kolkata and 24 Parganas (North). **Sujata Devi Vidya Mandir (SDVM)** approached us for language (Bengali and English) and mathematics. Their need was to teach English and Bengali to children lagging behind the respective language (reading and writing) levels in a short time, and to bridge conceptual gaps in primary mathematics. Teachers here had no previous training in pedagogic practices and were very enthusiastic to implement these in the classroom. A total of 6 teachers participated.

In 24 Parganas (North), Shikshamitra’s Basic English Programme took place over 3 phases for **17 government teachers of Swanirvar’s (partner organization) network schools.**



It was felt by Swanirvar regarding the partner schools that the teachers faced difficulty to grapple with English teaching. Despite their teaching qualifications (of the new teachers) and years of experiences (of the older teachers), teaching English remained a challenge. And this is increasing manifolds with the coming of the new textbook. Shikshamitra’s intervention with the Basic English Programme over three phases, of 2 days for each helped teachers cope with the English syllabus and the new textbook.

More training:

- In June, 2013, the Basic Bengali Programme was held for teachers of **Snegam (rural educational centers supported by St. Xavier’s College)**, for 13 teachers. Children came to these support centers before and after school. Our training would help the centers supplement school education.
- Training for functional literacy was held for **Kotalipara Development Society (KDS)** in July, 2013, and was addressed through Bengali and mathematics. The organization runs centers for mothers and children of families involved in manual scavenging. The training was to facilitate local women in daily accounts and family logistics.
- In January, 2014, training on class management took place for teachers of **Save the Children.** The training addressed ways to deal with children of various levels – academic and social. It took place through hands-on interaction and activities.



- Shikshamitra was asked to plan and conduct art sessions with children with special needs in **Shishu Mela** on 9th February, organized by St. Xavier’s College.
- We held a cooperative art game session with students from various organisations -- at the **Parichiti Meyebela** festival for the empowerment of girl children.

- On request from **Praajak** our old partner, we also conducted a one-day **library orientation** programme for the would be facilitators, who are to run libraries **in different govt, homes for children** in conflict with law.

Assessment: Assessment has always been a prelude to our trainings. We believe in closely looking at the present academic status of children in order to place our training in the appropriate context. This year, we could meticulously carry out our assessment programmes prior each of the training. We were asked to carry out extensive **assessment for partner organizations of our funders – Asha for Education**. The range of assessments over the year provided an insight to not only the academic levels of children but also largely their relation with schools/centers, within class – with peers and teachers and more.

Consultation: Consultation for teachers, parents and other organizations has been a constant outreach support of Shikshamitra. In the last year, many parents came to us for teaching support for their children. Also, consultations with **Anjali**, a mental health organization, to help women in their government homes spend quality time with themselves. A significant programme was mothers' awareness programme in early childhood education with the **Neotia CSR group**.

Library

Our library started on a Saturday afternoon of November, 2013. We were actively planning since October. On a very out-of-the-blue moment, we thought, why not begin the following week? And who took the lead? Of course Sajahan, who had joined us by that time. We asked him and he willingly took the initiative to shift his library from the community club (they were facing indifference from the authorities with strong political backing) to Shikshamitra. This meant not only having children come over and its necessary preparations, but also making Saturday a working day for us. We chose Saturday for the library since it is a half day for the government schools and hence children would be able to come from 2pm to 4pm.



What we have been focusing here:-

- Getting children acquainted with books and to read on their own for at least a brief while.
- Connecting art and stories
- Introducing various expressions of imagination
- Self-discipline



Since this is an open library, we saw fresh groups of children coming in from time to time. Children who attend school, who are out of school, who have never been to school come here. The challenge was to get non-literate children pick up a book. For a few of them, we saw the change. They began to take interest in picture books. However, the achievement trail is often lost since they stop coming to the library in phases. The noticeable change was, the loud and restless children learned the disciplining act and took ownership of the place. It seems they find home here which has been very rewarding for us.

Publication

This year, we have re-told stories in Bangla for children which are in English and other languages. These are primarily for early readers. On the other side, we have Sudeshna's book on equity pedagogy. Our 3 publications of the year are –

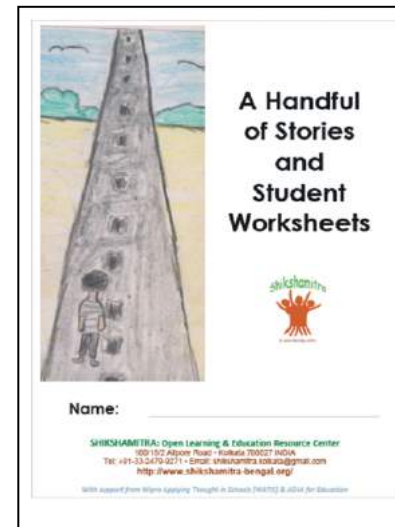
- *PoRa lekha: Onyo Mukh, Onyo Chahida*



- *Khude Deshlai Wali*



- *Munia Pakhir Galpo*



- *English Workbook*

Documentation and Studies

- Documenting the interactive programme on *Language: Home and School* – an in-house discussion on issues of socio and psycho-linguistics related to education has been prepared. This is a documentation of each day's content. It also contains a few reading material.
- Documenting the Basic English Programme – this is also a process documentation of the programme along with reflections on the pedagogic practices it addresses. It also talks about teacher reactions and their implementation of the training, the effectiveness.
- Shikshamitra's Library: A document on Shikshamitra's library through school and its emergence as an independent unit.
- Looking at 'Errors' – Understanding children's writings and tracing logic for what is considered 'wrong'. A few districts and ethnic groups across rural and urban Bengal have been identified for the study. This has begun in March, 2014 taken up by Dripta Piplai, a linguist from Delhi University.

New recruitments

- Sajahan, who studied at Shikshamitra School, has joined Shikshamitra from November, 2013. He brings to the organization alternative approaches to learning. He is interested in mathematics, language and art and takes a deep ownership towards the library. He is one of the librarians.
- Gopal Mandal joined the Shikshamitra team. He is our mathematics teacher and helps develop materials. He brings to the organization his 18 years of experience in working in primary education.
- Taufique Riyaz, artist from Kala Bhavan, is now a part of Shikshamitra. He is our illustrator.

Flooded with training offers, many of which challenging our innovative skills, with dreams for our library program and publications, we are set to embark on new ventures from April 2014. To make it meaningful and reinforce the enthusiasm, we all from Shikshamitra are on a trip to Ekalavya for the 1st week of April. Hoping to come back refreshed, energized and make the most of the months to come!

