



THE FRIENDS OF SEVA MANDIR

RESIDENTIAL LEARNING CAMP
April to June 2016



Learning for Life

On 5 May 2016, 154 children aged between 6 and 14 joined Seva Mandir's learning camp for their third and final semester. Some 86 girls and 68 boys from 18 villages attended the camp, this gateway to a very different life for the wonderful children.

During their time, the children would have learned Hindi and basic English, mathematics, computers, environment science, arts and crafts, general knowledge and participation sport.

Extra-curricular activities embraced personal and environmental cleanliness, health and hygiene, and good eating habits.



Continuous assessment is vital to track the children's progress. The first assessment takes place when children arrive at camp and then at the end of each camp. We have adopted a three level system: level A indicates a child's ability to read and write independently with comprehension, level B kids have acquired intermediate learning skills but need support to continue the momentum they've built up. Level C remain complete beginners.

Learning Level	Joining Status	First Camp	Second Camp	Third Camp
Level A	0	1	8	64
Level B	8	33	46	33
Level C	92	66	46	3

The greatest gift of all is that all Level A and B kids are able to hold their own in Government schools, and Seva Mandir works with the families to see that the children do get enrolled into Government schools.

Instructors and Instruction

The quality of instructors is obviously a vital part of the success of any camp. The teachers are selected following written tests and personal interviews. They are evaluated on their mathematics skills, their Hindi and English abilities, and their child-centric approach.

Classes are no more than 10 in size so the kids can get appropriate individual attention. Teachers are not simply teachers but also the guardian of the children during their time at camp.

Most of the children on arrival do not speak Hindi but a local dialect. To capture the kids' imagination, flash cards and stories help them identify common objects like fruits, colours, animals and flowers. As they advance, the children begin to construct small sentences, and ultimately write stories.



Once familiar with flashcard methodology, English begins with the names of the alphabet, body parts, vegetables, fruits and flowers. Worksheets are then used to match objects, fill in blanks, identify colours and shapes and, especially, the ability to write their own name.

Our approach to maths is to use familiar items like pebbles, leaves and flowers. Then, beads and flashcards to teach counting, ascending and descending and identification of numbers.



Moving on, we incorporated maths and language skills into computer lessons. From being able to type and handle the mouse confidently, students use the computer to reinforce what is being taught in the classroom. Working on computers was a favorite activity of most of the children as they would wait eagerly for their computer class.

Opening new worlds

We pay special attention to physical and sports education. A professionally qualified physical training Instructor had been employed to teach children games, exercises and stretching related to the sport. Children learned new sports such as volleyball, cricket and traditional Indian sports like Kabbadi and kho-kho. Having such exposure, allows children to play and develop team spirit and confidence.



Some 50 Level A children learned the process of printing, mailing, cutting and binding of publication material. Children were very curious to see the process a book undergoes before coming to their hands.

Health and Nutrition

With the children coming from impoverished backgrounds, many are undernourished. Others suffer from illnesses, so daily medical aid and weekly health checkups are a mandatory component of the camp. We have a pediatrician appointed specifically to conduct the weekly health-check-ups.



Keeping in mind the local tastes, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks are provided. Milk and fruits are an essential part of the menu. Proper nutritional balance was ensured by following a strict weekly menu of food.

Children are taught about personal and environmental hygiene. This includes proper use of toilets, washing hands before meals and after using toilets, brushing teeth, bathing and drinking clean water.

A separate session was provided for girls approaching adolescence to discuss the menstruation cycle and hygiene practices required in those days. The girls were also trained to make sanitary napkins for personal use.

Surta's journey from kiln to class!



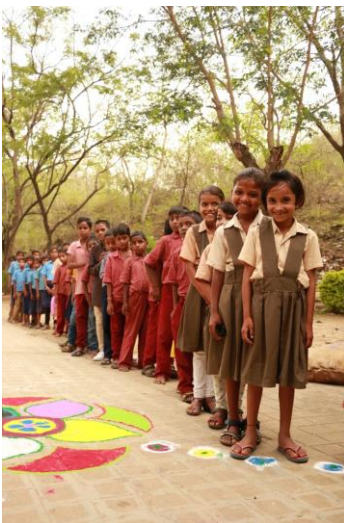
Surta, aged twelve resides in Netaji Bara village of Jhadol Block. Her father- Naru Ji has been suffering from tuberculosis for the past few years. He is unable to farm, or earn a livelihood. This resulted in severe financial instability in the family. Surta and her sister worked in a brick Kiln, earning a daily wage labor of 50p per day.

Surta's parents became involved in illegal manufacturing and selling of liquor through which they made £1 per day. Many a time, the police caught her father, and the meagre earnings of Surta and her sister would go to bribe police to release their father.

As luck would have it, Surta came to know about the residential camp organized by Seva Mandir. Children who had attended the camp told her about the quality of learning and facilities provided. It was hard for Surta to convince her parents but with brave efforts, she won their confidence and started attending the learning camps.

Surta said - "when I came to camp for the first time, I knew nothing, neither reading nor writing. I found it very difficult to learn in the initial days. But now I can read and write. It's been an amazing experience and I wish to continue learning further."

The end of the beginning



The camp closing ceremony was held on 28 June 2016. The day was celebrated as Bal Mela, a Fair for Children. Along with the 154 children from the camp, 112 Children and 7 instructors from local Seva Mandir registered schools joined the event.

Children enjoyed many fun and learning activities. At the end of the ceremony, all 266 children were given lunch boxes and water bottles.

