



One Year of Uday

Annual Report 2005

Gramin Shiksha Kendra

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One Year at Uday

(2004-2005)

1. The beginning

The first day at Uday was on 15th June 2004. The school had a very shaky beginning. We had spent almost one year with the community understanding their needs, the concept of the school, forming an understanding between the community and the school. The community had its doubts regarding the school and us. They were not very sure about the organization, some even said that our motivations were commercial and we would build a hotel and cheat them of their land!! At last the community identified a piece of land and planned a Bhumi-pujan of the land in February 2004. The people of Jaganpura (a small hamlet in Rawal panchayat) offered their land for the school. It was on this land the community constructed a thatched structure and the school began here on 15th June 2005. We all knew that we had to make the structure almost free of cost because we knew that we wouldn't be able to raise funds from the community without running the school. Approximately 10 members of the community worked day in and out to make the school. They collected *bajara* thatch, *babul* and *khejari* trees (which the farmers were planning to remove from their fields) and completed the school in just five days. We estimated that the school would have at least 50 children to begin with. In fact on 15th we had some 60-70 children, and when on 1st July when the government schools opened the number of children in Uday came down to 25. This was very depressing. All four of us decided again to go house to house and try to bring the out of school children to the school. The number started increasing slowly and by the end of August the school had 65 children coming regularly to the school.

2. First days in the school

Things happening inside the school were quite different to what was happening outside the school. The teachers were full of energy and were very excited to start this new school. One of them was my old colleague in Bodh Shiksha Samiti and the remaining two were from the neighbouring village. Vishnu, the experienced one was very excited to begin a new school and use all his learning of the past three years in Bodh, whereas Mukesh and Ramesh were wondering on the difference this school had with the other schools they had seen in the area. Although we would have liked to train the two new teachers before asking them to work with children, we could not because of the fund constraints. We decided to go ahead without formal training. But the excitement of Mukesh and Ramesh were not to last long. They began feeling the workload and often complained about the time and energy they had to put in. We had long discussions on the need to work so much and managing our time to the



we play like this

best possible use. The best thing about both these teachers was that they were ready to listen and ever eager to learn new things. It took almost 6 months for both of them to get acquainted and committed to the school and its philosophy. The children, were the most excited. They had never seen a school like this, never seen teachers playing with them and loving them. Everything done here attracted them – the songs they sang in the morning, stories the teachers told, the games they played and places they visited. Children were never asked to sit in line with their fingers on their lips, walk slowly, not to make noise and so many other things, which they associated with schools or were asked to do in their earlier school. They did not have to carry heavy school bags and the teachers never asked them to study- in fact they did things, which children liked.

They never came to know when they started sitting in the classroom and learning language and mathematical skills. They always thought that they were coming here to listen to stories, play and see interesting things and places the teachers used to show them. One of the major reasons of increase in the strength of children rising to 70 were these children, they all used to call their friends to come along. But the life was not that easy. We neither had drinking water facilities nor toilets (we still do not have). We decided to buy a water tank (200 litres) and bring water every morning from the nearby village and for toilets – the open area, as was the standard practice in the area. The school being far from habitation there was always a fear for someone picking up things from there. Vishnu therefore decided to stay in the school. The school being made of thatch used to get very moist after rains as a result of which Vishnu got a viral infection and had to be treated by doctors in the city. But still there was something that kept the motivation level of the team high. The teachers never got their honorarium in time and everybody knew that it might take long for things to get stable.

3. The Community (different phases)

The Beginning

Gramin Shiksha Kendra had started interacting with the community in September 2003. Initially we were interacting with communities in three areas – Rawal, Bodal and Pharia. We decided to set up the first school in the area where there was availability of land and community support was likely. This was so because we wanted to establish standards of quality education from the beginning so that replication could be easy. Rawal panchayat was chosen because the probability for availability of land was the highest here. We started spending time with the community, trying to understand their needs and their understanding of a good school and education. It was very evident that no one was happy with the quality of education their children were getting and were excited with the idea of opening a new school of their own. A lot had to be discussed on the idea and how the



The meeting before Bhumiujan

school would function. We had meetings in all the nearby villages and we got a very positive response and also many suggestions regarding school management and the place where the school could be opened. We were not able to come to consensus on this issue, every village wanted the school to be as close as possible to them so it was difficult to agree upon a place. We had a big meeting, in which people from three villages participated. A piece of land in the revenue village of Rawal was identified for the school and this land was also centrally located.

We decided to do the Bhumi-pujan¹ of the land in February. Here we did a mistake - we did not realize that a section of people from Rawal had abstained from the meeting. This section was against the idea of giving so much land to an unknown organization and they feared that the organization would cheat them and open a hotel on their land. On the day of Bhumi-pujan this section objected and asked villagers not to participate and agree to give the land. We had another meeting to discuss the matter with everybody. We said that if the community had any questions or doubts, Gramin Shiksha Kendra would try to answer them and until all doubts are clarified we would not open the school. The organization is here to work with children and would do that and land would come when the community had confidence in us. Then, the people of Jaganpura (a small hamlet in the panchayat) stood and offered their piece of land for the school. They said that they trusted the organization and were concerned about the education of their children. Finally, the Bhumi-pujan happened on land offered by Jaganpura.

4 Construction

In the month of June we started planning to start the school, we had the support of the community, we had identified children, we had the land but we had no shade or structure where the children could come. It was decided that until the pucca concrete construction was done we could make a temporary thatched structure. We gathered bajara thatch, tree trunks, bamboo, ropes and wire from the village and constructed the school building in 5 days. This was a 60X25 sq. feet structure with enough space for three groups of children and a space for office. The total estimated expenditure in this structure was Rs. 15000 and the entire amount came from the community.



School under construction

Reconstruction of the School

The school being made of thatch fell down on May 2005 due to heavy rains and strong winds. The trunks had been eaten away by termites. Due to this we had to close the school some 10 days earlier to the planned schedule. We still did not have funds for starting the *pucca* construction so again a thatch structure (this time of *sarcanda*) was erected on stone pillars. This structure was stronger than the previous one. One *pucca* room was also constructed to keep the things of the school protected in any such incidence in future. The total expenditure was Rs. 40,000 all of which has been done with loan from friends of Gramin Shiksha Kendra. The community is trying to raise funds for repayment of this loan, but still with very less success.

¹ Gramin Shiksha Kendra does not see religion as a part of education. The Bhumi-pujan, was a social event rather than a religious one; we saw it as group building activity. It was also simpler to agree to a bhumi-pujan rather than begin a debate on religion in education and would have meant further delays.

Construction Plan

Gramin Shiksha Kendra definitely does not want to run the school in the temporary kuttcha construction. We would like to have proper infrastructure for the school. There should be enough space of every child to study and play. We wanted the plan of the school to be laid down properly, so we asked Development Alternatives² (DA) to help us for the same. We had a detailed discussion with DA on our concept of the school and the possible help they could provide us. An architect from DA visited the school in December 2004 and made a detailed plan for the school. Members of the community and teachers got involved in the activity. We concentrated on planning for low cost construction technology and the estimated budget for primary wing was Rs. 7,50,000. A detailed plan layout for the entire school is in progress. DA has also assured us of technical support at the time of construction on the school.



Designing the school

5. School Committee

After the school began we had decided that we would discuss the progress of the school and children with community members every month. For this we called members of the community to the school every month to the school. In spite of all our efforts we could not organize any proper meeting till 15th August when everyone gathered to take part in the Independence Day celebrations at the school. We had a long discussion on the need of these meetings and community getting involved in school matters. Although suggestions came that a committee of responsible individuals should be formed, we decided that everyone living in the area should be responsible for the school and be a member of the school committee. Our objective is to get everybody involved in the school. But this was not to happen; we could organize only a couple of meetings and in these too only 5-6 individuals participated. Although most of them kept coming whenever they got time but on a given date and time for meeting, most of them abstained. Again on 26th January everybody came and on that day a committee of 18 members was formed who would be responsible for organizing school meetings and taking decisions on behalf of the community.

Problems in the school committee

Two of the committee members had a fight with each other for personal reasons and one of them beat the other up. These two were the most active members and both had followings in the village. After this incidence there were no further meeting. Both say that the school is out of their personal fight and support it but they will never sit together and it is true for their followers. We decided to give time for the situation to settle. We still have not been able to make the two groups sit together.

6. Classroom Systems

² Development Alternatives is a Delhi based non-government agency who works in developing alternative technology and also provides special expertise assistance to smaller groups.

The school is divided in three sub groups namely *Phulwari*, *Bagicha* and the *Guldusta*. *Phulwari* has 20 children in the age group of 6-11years; most of who are first-timers and is looked after by Mukesh Meena who is a local youth. *Bagicha* has 23 children in the age group of 6-11 years; most of who have been to the school for varying durations and are either dropouts or have come to this school because they believe this school is better. Vishnu Meena who has an experience of working as a teacher for three years helps this group. The third group is the pre-primary group, which has 22 children in the age group of 3-5 years, and Maneesh Pandey/ Ramesh look after this group. There are 10 more children who have been coming to the school, have not yet been enrolled, as they are not very regular and also joined the school quite late.

The first two groups i.e. *Phulwari* and *Bagicha* are further divided in sub-groups and this division is according to the level on which a child is. Each sub-group has children of similar level and these sub-groups are different for different subjects. For example if Bharti is sub-group 1 in Hindi because she has better reading and writing skills she can be in sub-group 2 or 3 in Mathematics. These sub-groups are not permanent or rigid, children keep changing their group (if a child learns fast s/he is moved up or if a child is slow moves down. And this happens with every child and at each learning level). The pre-primary group has only two sub-groups. One has children who are almost five years and the other has smaller children

7. Curriculum

Gramin Shiksha Kendra would like to work on making a curriculum that is more relevant to the conditions and place we are working. This is a very intense activity and requires quite a lot of experience, hard work and support from educationists. It is also a continuous process and evolves from experiential learning. But when we are running a school we need to start with some curriculum and build upon it. So we made levels of learning in Hindi, Mathematics and Environmental studies. These are based on experiences of working on different syllabi of NCERT, SCERT, Bodh, Digantar and Eklavya. For English we are following the guidelines of teaching English as a Foreign Language from the experiences of David Horsborough at Neelbagh. We have divided the entire syllabus of primary education in a continuous series of levels, which apart from providing guidance to the teachers is also a tool of monitoring the progress of each child. Every level a child completes is marked and the child is taken to the next level only when s/he has completed the previous.

8. Review of Activities

Half-yearly review



Parents during half-yearly evaluation

After completion of six months of the school, the half yearly evaluation of the performance of the school and teachers was done. Members of the community participated in it. We organized a small exhibition at the school in which, we displayed the half-yearly progress of each child, drawings, origami, and clay-work done by each child. Parents came and saw the progress of their children. People from the city and government teachers in the area also participated in this exhibition.

Annual Review

The teachers and the community members in April-May 2005 did the annual review of the school. Teachers with a few educated members from the community analyzed the learning level of each child as per the information given by the teachers. It was confirmed by the community that this is much more than what children in government and private schools learn in one year. Then all the participating members made an assessment plan for each child. This included written, oral and practical activities. The review of the school continued for five days and was participated by five people from the community all the time (members did keep changing from group to group and activity to activity due to their personal engagements.) After this a progress report of each child was made which contained the academic status and behavioural aspects of the child when s/he first came to the school and the changes after coming to school for one year. Teachers took these reports to every parent and read them out and also tried to answer any questions or queries that the parents had.

School After one Year

Learning level of children in Hindi

Name of the Group	Girls	Boys	Total	Sub. Groups.		Level
				Sl.No	No. of sts.	
Bagicha	10	13	23	1	5	Working on noun, pronoun, verb, opposites
				2	4	Pronunciation of complex alphabets, vowels, and short stories.
				3	3	Working with all alphabets and matras, short stories
				4	3	Working with 40 alphabets and 6 matras, short stories
				5	5	Working with 19 alphabets and 4 matras, reading and writing small simple sentences, oral stories
				6	3	Working with 9 alphabets and 2 matras.
Phulwari	11	11	22	1	4	Working with 40 alphabets and 6 matras, short stories
				2	6	Working with 27 alphabets and 4 matras, reading and writing small simple sentences, oral stories
				3	4	Working with 19 alphabets and 2 matras.
				4	4	Working with 19 alphabets and 2 matras. At initial stage
				5	4	Working with 9 alphabets and 2 matras.
Guldusta	14*	16*	32*	All children work together as they are almost in the same age group		All children working on pre language activities- singing, telling stories, plays, eye-hand coordination, narrating activities at school and home etc.
Total	35	40	75			

* -- 10 children are not enrolled.

Learning Level of children in Mathematics

Name of the Group	Girls	Boys	Total	Sub Grps.		Levels
				s.l.	No. of sts.	
Bagicha	10	13	23	s.l.	No. of sts.	
				1	5	Working on division and averages.
				2	5	Working on measurement, units of measurement, conversion and transaction of money.
				3	5	Working till 999 (increasing, decreasing orders, greater than, lesser than, addition, subtraction, multiplication, expanded form, roman numbers)
				4	2	Working with numbers 1-99
				5	3	Working with numbers 1-99 (initial stages)
				6	1	Working with 1-9, additions, subtraction, increasing, decreasing order, <, >.
Phulwari	11	11	22	7	2	Counting 109 with concrete examples
				1	5	Concept to 100, working till 999
				2	5	Working with numbers 1-99
				3	4	Working with 1-30, know unit and 10s
				4	4	Working within 1-30- increasing, decreasing orders
				5	2	Can do addition and subtraction within 1-9
Guldusta	14*	16*	30*	All children work together as they are almost in the same age group		All children working on pre math activities- counting, arranging in order according to size, identifying big- small, thin- fat more -less etc, eye-hand coordination, imagining distances time.
Total	35	40	75			

* - 10 children are not enrolled.

Learning Levels In environment studies

Name of the Group	Level
Bagicha	Most of the activities done are oral discussion, experiments, and observations. Only five children are given papers on different topics to read and written assignments on it. Children are up to level 7 of our learning levels.
Phulwari	Most of the activities done are oral discussion, experiments, and observations. No child is given written material, as they have not yet reached skill level in Hindi required for the same. Children are up to level 4 of our learning levels.
Guldusta	Not yet started

In English we are working on speaking the language. For this we talk to children in English, say rhymes aloud, tell stories, and identify the names of things around us. Apart from 26 children who are working on alphabets rest of the children in the school are doing oral activities.

9. Support for the School

The school till date is being run on sheer will power and determination of the teachers and the community with minimum outside support. Friends of Gramin Shiksha Kendra have also been supporting from time to time in terms of small grants and loans. The community has also been collecting their agricultural produce for the school. We have been talking with several support and funding agencies to support this initiative and it seems that in near future we would be able to get both technical and financial support.

10. Work Plan for next year

We had earlier planned to set up the second school in the year 2004-6 as we were expecting to get financial support for the initiative, so had also identified the place for the school. The community had also identified a suitable land for the school, but in the absence of support we decided to go ahead with only one school and leave the idea of the second school for next year. In the coming year we hope to strengthen the organization and the school at Khawa. We also plan to get different agencies visit the school and support it. We will also be working on alternative funding sources like donations from individuals. We also plan to start the construction of the school building at the school. Gramin Shiksha Kendra also plans our initiatives with government schools in the district.