

QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER

Jan-March 2024

Vol I Ed.II



Vikramshila Education Resource Society

Our mission is to make quality education a reality for all children in India. We seek to help create a peaceful and equitable society free from injustice and exploitation



www.vikramshila.org



HOMAGE



TAPATI GUPTA (DECEMBER 28, 1933 - DECEMBER 27, 2024)

In Memoriam

Last year on December 27 Vikramshila Education Resource Society lost one of its most loved members Tapati Gupta. Her connection with the organisation goes back to 1989 when Shubhra Chatterji approached her with a plan to take Montessori education to the rural, underserved areas of West Bengal. By then Ms Gupta was a name to be reckoned with in the field of children's education. She was an eminent senior Montessorian with over 50 years of work experience. Not only had she earned her Bachelor's in English but also a diploma from the Association Montessori Internationale in Holland. She was an assistant in all the AMI courses in Kolkata that were conducted by Mr A.M. Joosten, personal representative of Dr Maria Montessori. Moreover, she was the head of the Montessori section in Patha Bhavan, which was started in 1965 and its founder-president was Satyajit Ray.

"In the time that I spent with Tapati Di, I have never seen her get angry," recalled Shubhra Chatterji, Director of Vikramshila Education Resource Society. In the 1980s, Ms Gupta and Ms Chatterji were among a small group of teachers who spent their weekdays teaching in schools and their weekends taking the Montessori teaching methodology to the rural areas. "She played a significant role in translating the Montessori curriculum into Bengali which made it easier for its dissemination," said Ms Chatterji.

HOMAGE

In 1989, when Vikramshila was founded, Ms Chatterji approached Ms Gupta to help the organization take Montessori education to rural and underprivileged areas. “She had promptly agreed and the rest is history,” said Ms Chatterji. She was the secretary of the organization from 1993 to 2020.

“Tapati Di maintained a quiet demeanour, speaking sparingly yet with a sense of calm, asserting her presence with understated confidence. Most people were intimidated by her appearance, but she had the softest heart”, said Ms Chatterji. All she had to do was appear and people around her would go quiet, she continued. Besides, there’s one other characteristic of Tapati Di which stood out – she was always dressed to the T. “No matter the kind of day we had, not a strand of hair was out of place and her saree remained uncreased, I didn’t know how she did it,” said Ms Chatterji. Her ideals and teachings will always stay with us. She was an inspiration for all of us, said Ms Chatterji.

Vikramshila Education Resource Society held a small memorial for Ms Gupta at the organization on January 3, 2024.





VIKRAMSHILA AT DAKSHINAMURTI

A team from Vikramshila, including its Director, Shubhra Chatterji, visited Dakshinamurti Bal Mandir in Gujarat, one of the first pre-primary schools in India founded in 1920, on January 30 and 31 as part of the UNICEF-Bihar ECCE programme. The exposure visit included observing the school and understanding its daily routine, resources and TLMs, and observing their work at the Anganwadi level. Gijubhai Badheka, who founded the “experimental preschool, was a lawyer who left his job to understand and apply the principles of child psychology and development to children’s education.

PUPPET-MAKING WORKSHOP

The exposure visit to Dakshinamurti inspired Vikramshila to organise a puppet-making workshop at the Kolkata office on February 12 and 13.

At the Dakshinamurti training institute, there was a strong focus on teachers’ skills to create toys and materials such as dolls, puppets using easily available and low cost materials. This gave the organization an idea to create three to four varieties and also train the team to create simple puppets. This can be further taught to Anganwadi workers during trainings.



MODEL PTM IN UP

As part of the ongoing Career Guidance Programme, Pankh, in Uttar Pradesh, organised and implemented by the state government, UNICEF & Vikramshila Education Resource Society, a model parent-teacher meeting was held at Swami Vivekananda Inter College, Gonda, on February 8. The model PTM was put together by the school teachers and children and a team from Vikramshila. It gave the parents a preliminary glimpse into the kinds of future their wards can choose from.





MATH MELA AT MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

A one-day math learning camp (Math Mela) was organised for Kolkata Municipal Corporation Primary (KMCP) Schools at Munshi Premchand Community Hall, Khidirpur, on February 7.

141 students from 11 KMCP Schools participated in the programme which was organized as part of the ITC Mission Sunhera Kal and implemented by Vikramshila Education Resource Society.

VIKRAMSHILA AT APU

Deputy director of Vikramshila, Atanu Sain, and Rakesh Kumar, senior manager of the UP numeracy project, presented a paper on Establishing Foundational Continuum in the Light of NEP at Azim Premji University on February 9 in Bangalore which was followed by a panel discussion. Many organizations and individuals, primarily from the South, working in early childhood education and foundational learning participated in the event.



STREET PLAYS AT ENROLMENT DRIVE

Vikramshila Education Resource Society organised an enrolment drive on January 19 to increase KMCP Schools' enrolment under the ITC Mission Sunehra Kal project. The SSM schools also participated in it. Four street plays were performed at four different locations as part of the endeavour.





MEETING SPACE SCIENTIST AT AMERICAN CENTRE

The STEM Empowerment Program for Women High School Students in West Bengal project, which Vikramshila is implementing in collaboration with the American Centre, was officially inaugurated on March 1. On the opening day, 52 students from three schools presented 5 projects at an official event attended by NASA rocket scientist Dr Swati Mohan. Over a period of 18 months, the program will conduct 15 hands-on STEM workshops, engaging 800 students. The program seeks to bridge the gender gap in STEM fields by providing transformative opportunities for female high school students from marginalized backgrounds.

VIKRAMSHILA TO CONTINUE MAKING A MARK IN CHATTISGARH

Vikramshila and UNICEF Chattisgarh have signed up for continued partnership this year in ECE in the area of curriculum implementation and parenting program across 7 districts with scale up across 5 more districts taking the numbers to 12.



POINT OF VIEW

Director and Secretary of Vikramshila Education Resource Society, Shubhra Chatterji was interviewed by the Central Square Foundation in February where she shared her views on the three policy focus areas for improving ECE in India – efforts to strengthen the Early Childhood Education (ECE) component in the ICDS system at anganwadis, prepare a good curriculum based on ground realities that can be easily understood and implemented and creating enabling conditions for the teachers on the ground acknowledging their multiple roles and structural constraints.





ASSESSMENT IN MP

The Madhya Pradesh government in collaboration with Vikramshila and Room to Read conducted an assessment to gauge the learning level of basic literacy and numeracy for Classes 2 and 3 students. The assessment was conducted at 4,848 schools and covered all the blocks in the state. The total number of students covered was 82,000 and it took about a week to complete the exercise, which started on February 19. 5,646 Field Investors, students from DIET, played a vital role as assessors. Based on the results the teams sought to decide the future strategy on how to improve the learning level.

BAL MELA IN JHARKHAND

As part of Vikramshila's continuous commitment to FLN, Bal melas were conducted in 30 schools starting on February 2.

Parents and teachers along with the children participated in the learning fair. Different counters on literacy and numeracy activities were set up where people through games and play could strengthen their mathematical concepts.



WOMEN'S DAY AT NABA DISHA

This Women's Day, a few mothers were invited to our community learning centre at Taratala, Kolkata, where they watched a short film, Seema Rastogi SSP Jhansi, which centres around women's empowerment. This was followed by a short interaction among the parents about the film; some of them even shared their wishes and dreams. Meanwhile, 10 selected children from the same centre were invited by the Vesuvius company where three children received awards for their achievements in sports, leadership roles in teams and artwork, respectively.





CONTEXTUALIZING NCF FOR TRIPURA

The Tripura team is currently working with the state government to contextualise and review the National Curriculum Framework to make it more relevant to the needs of the state. One of the primary reasons for the exercise is that Tripura has a large tribal population who use various languages and dialects. The project is funded by West Bengal and initiated by (Tripura Rural Economic Growth and Service Delivery Project (TRESP). The three-year project will be piloted in the 12 aspirational blocks of five districts — Khowai, Gomati, Dhalai, North Tripura and South Tripura.

MEDIA COVERAGE FOR DEVIPATAN TRAINING

Vikramshila's Uttar Pradesh developed a handbook for Anganwadi Helpers in the Devipatan division who were then trained by our team so that they can effectively help the Anganwadi Workers. The training received a lot of media attention

4,500 anganwadi helpers get training in playing 'preschool teacher' to kids

www.bhaskar.com

Delhi: For over two decades, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been going and picking up toddlers and from the anganwadis (AWCs) in Haldwari district. Devipatan, an anganwadi helper (AWH), is also entrusted with writing cleanliness at the time. Soon, she will have a part to play. She will be telling stories, reciting rhymes to the kids, so that they attain functional literacy and numeracy (FLN). "This is the first time I understood the developmental phases of a child and feel the value of preschool children in this age group," she said. Devipatan is not the only AWH to start preschool activities.



An anganwadi helper in Bahadur conducts preschool activities after the training.

In a unique intervention, the department of women and child development (CWCD) with support from Unicef, has roped in AWHs in implementation of preschool education after giving them proper training through a comprehensively designed module consisting of five job-creative activities using clay and mud (read).

So far, 4,500 AWHs have been

trained in Devipatan division comprising four aspirational districts — Gorai, Bahadur, Bahadur and Bahadur — as a pilot project.

To capacitate the AWHs in conducting the preschool education programme effectively, both in the absence of the worker and to support the worker in conducting different activities, a handbook with a repository of stories and poems, both with pictures and written text, has also been developed.

AWHs are an essential support in providing quality services to children and mothers through anganwadis. In fact, they are the strongest link between communities and centres. "Through this intervention, we expect to improve their capacities in supporting the anganwadi workers (AWWs)

in delivering quality preschool education," said Binodini, education specialist, UNICEF. She optimism that all the preschool activities

will be depicted pictorially, including the stories which have been done into poems with illustrations, which will help the AWHs gather through the story and rate it to the children in their own words.

Director, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) Saran, Katar Bhoj, said, "5000 AWHs were trained in a childhood care and education which is essential for ensuring quality services on ground." The project will be replicated across the state. UP has 1.08 lakh AW and 1.26 lakh AWHs in 1.08 AWCs.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF 50 AWWs

50 AWWs were trained in Baisi block, Purnea district in two batches, in February and March respectively. "I enjoyed the two-day training where I learnt how to introduce concepts such as colours, sizes etc. to children," said, Asana Khatun, AWW

First ECCE Day with 15 caregivers

The team planned to celebrate the first ECCE day on March 14 in one of the model Anganwadi Centres in Baisi block. 15 caregivers took part in the event as they tried their hands at tower making and discussion on the development of children of 0 to 6 years.





VIKRAMSHILA IN SANGAREDDY

Azim Premji University developed the Early Learner Assessment (ELA) toolkit between 2014-18 to assess children aged 3-5 across various domains beyond FLN skills. The need for the tool arose from the demand for evidence-based data to buttress organizational interventions. Recognizing the role it can play in evaluating ECE program initiatives and in ensuring consistency and accuracy in its usage, a team from Vikramshila visited the Azim Premji Foundation in Telangana in February and received a three-day training on the tool. It helped the team to understand the tool's purpose, administration procedures, and interpretation of results.

ONLINE WORKSHOP ON ECD

A two-day online workshop was organized on ECD with Professor Nandita Chattopadhyay, a leading paediatrician and expert in Early Childhood Development (ECD) on February 3. She spoke on the neurobiology of a child in the first 1000 days of its life. On the following day Dr. Kaliprasad Pappu, a public health leader with three decades of experience working with UN agencies, the World Bank, and International and Indian NGOs. He talked about the importance of the first 1000 days of a child and various influences that shape its growth and development.



OVER 100 AWW TRAINED

As part of ITC's initiative to provide 200 Anganwadi Centres in Howrah with resource materials, a two-day orientation programme was organized in Uluberia Block 1 and Block 2, respectively, on March 15 & 19. The programme sought to train Anganwadi workers on how to use the new materials and organize the centres to make them accessible to children during free play. 86 Anganwadi workers were trained on Day 1 and 60 on the second day. The training was provided by four members of the Kolkata team. So far 128 centres have been provided with the new materials. The remaining 72 centres will receive their resources in the next financial year.

