

I visited the Mukti project sites in the Sunderbans on 23rd December 2006. For details of my previous visit in 2006, see the 'SiteVisitMay06' link at <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=671>.

The immediate purpose of this visit was to evaluate Mukti's tuition-center program. Therefore, we visited in sequence the four coaching centers being run currently. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, time at each center was only restricted to ~15-30 minutes. The overall impressions noted at these centers are as follows:

- Students are reasonably confident and eager to answer questions.
- The teacher-student relationship seemed fairly informal, and conducive to interaction.
- Some of the younger teachers, being inexperienced, need more confidence. They need to take ownership of the centers. The training being planned for these tutors is, therefore, highly recommended.
- More interaction between the tutors and Mukti may be necessary in the near future. In particular, student's progress must be monitored more methodically (both the tutors and the project coordinators need to be responsible for this), so that the future course of the coaching program may be decided.

Rationale for the project

The level of performance of the local student population is very poor due to a variety of reasons. These include poverty, lack of human and material resources at school leading to poor teaching levels, and lack of role models and a favorable educational environment outside of school.

These causes are all interlinked, and a possible solution to the problem would be the upliftment of the local schooling system as a whole. However, this would be a vast and long-term undertaking, and could be envisioned as a future goal. In the interim, it would be helpful to provide assistance to students to break out of the cycle of lack of education and poverty. This is where the tuition centers come in. To avoid undermining and alienating the school system, Mukti is actively seeking advice and participation from the local schoolteachers. As stated on the project page, another important side effect of the coaching project could be the training of local educated youth to be good teachers.

Participation of local schools

Only by working together with the local schools, can the overall educational scenario in the region be improved. On this visit, we visited four of the local schools in the Kankandighi region. The teachers were encouraged to take advantage of Mukti's programs (coaching, sponsorship, and book distribution) for the children in their schools, and to offer suggestions and guidance to Mukti. In general, the teachers in all schools seemed appreciative of Mukti's work, and were in resonance with Mukti's aims. Mukti aims to work proactively in the area of building greater cooperation between itself and the local schools.