

Sita School Report - January 2014

Winter is here, and Sita kids are keeping warm with a new volleyball and net. In addition, there has been a steady stream of visitors, special events, and new projects and activities.

Projects

Academic subjects have literally covered everything from the nearby schoolyard to the ends of the earth.

- **Library:** Roshan has continued to engage students in the re-organized library. Every week there is some new activity that relates to the library in creative ways. This has included making books (including origami and pop-up versions), and studying categorization (both in library books and then more widely). The children eventually sorted materials in the environment, such as stones and leaves, according to the criteria they developed.
- **Climatic Regions:** The children have been learning about different climate regions, including the Arctic and Antarctic. As part of this, they enjoyed watching "March of the Penguins".
- **Exploration of India/Pakistan relations:** The school day provides an opportunity to explore issues that arise during conversation and play. One children's choice afternoon activity reflected societal messages about Pakistan, and these were explored with a story about Partition and a discussion on similarities and differences between the countries.

Waste: In addition to the projects at Sita, Jane and Georgina, a social worker in the village, have been working with the 8th standard students at the nearby convent school to develop solutions in handling rubbish. So far, they've hosted a speaker from an NGO who gave an overview of the problem, and also explored ways to recycle waste into crafts. There's still no obvious and easy solution, and we welcome any ideas from the wider community (or links to expertise!)

Special Events

- **Diwali and Christmas celebrations:** Sita students prepared for the Diwali and Christmas holidays with, dance, drama, arts, and crafts such as lantern-making and clay work. The Christmas play illuminated the difference between wholehearted giving and giving with the intention of personal gain.
- **Music performances:** Imogen has been working on music with the smaller children – and the entire school is treated to their performance when the pieces are ready. Some of their pieces have included variations on Peter and the Wolf themes and Animals of the Jungle.

Project from JNU on Alternative Schools: Sita was one participant in a study on alternative schools, examining what impacts were on the lives of graduates over 30 years. This is part of a collaborative research project of the Transnational Research Group on Poverty and Education in the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to JNU, other research partners in this project are from Centre for the Study of

Developing Societies, Delhi; University of Goettingen, King's College, London, and German Historical Institute, London.

- Balavendra – an artist now working in the UK
- Violet – who has worked as a social worker in a community centre in Kolar Gold Fields
- Rebecca – a teacher in Sita School
- Munzeera – formerly a teacher in Sita School.

Visits

- **Thulir:** Sita was delighted to host children from Thulir Trust (an alternative education programme at Sittilingi Village in Tamil Nadu) as part of an ongoing relationship between the two institutions. The children shared games, songs, craft ideas, and even sleeping spaces for the nights of the visit. Together they went on a bird watching walk and enjoyed a movie about African myths. Each child also hosted one or more of the Thulir visitors as guests for lunch at their own homes. Fifteen children and 2 teachers from both schools also participated in a run at Shristi Academy organised by Runners High.
- **Asha Silicon Valley:** While the Thulir visit was in progress, Sita also hosted a visitor active in Asha-Silicon Valley and some of her family members. As the group were Kannada speakers, they were able to engage directly with the children.
- **Government School Teachers:** Twelve government school teachers visited Sita as part of an Azim Premji Foundation program. The teachers were glad to have the opportunity to get a look at the alternative methods Sita uses, and had a very positive experience.
-

Transitions:

- Congratulations to Abhilash, who passed his NIOS exam in Kannada! Abhi is now preparing to take his English exam in April.
- Condolences to Edwin and Sneha, two students at Sita, who lost their mother in December after an extended fight with cancer.
- Santhosh Padmanabhan, a faithful volunteer over the last four years, unfortunately met with an accident in November and has been unable to come for the last two months but will probably be back in school by the end of January. We wish him a speedy recovery.