

Jharkhand



She had never dreamed of going to school

Twelve-year-old Rekha Kumari is an bright girl who carries a heavy burden of responsibilities on her frail shoulders. She wakes early in the morning and sweeps the house—a thatched hut where she lives with her parents and two younger siblings. Her day is spent cooking for the entire family, washing and collecting water from a nearby well. She also looks after her young brother, one-year-old Teja. Her mother and younger sister spend the day rolling *beedis*, along with other women, to supplement the family income.

Rekha had never imagined that she would ever see the inside of a school. Besides, she was too old now, she thought. However, thanks to the efforts of Janshala volunteers, Rekha is a student of class V at the Latasarae Government School, Mohanpur block, Deoghar. She reaches the school at about 10 o' clock, after finishing her household chores. She often brings along her little brother.

Rekha is not an isolated case, but one of the countless girls in Mohanpur who never go to school. It is such children that Janshala seeks to reach.



Jharkhand



Project Area

Districts	No of blocks
Deoghar	7
Giridih	12

Major indicators (as per Census Report 2001)

Population	26.9 million
% share in total population of India	3.57
Population density (per sq. km)	236
Average annual exponential growth rate (1991-2001)	1.48%
Sex ratio	972
Literacy rate (%)	
Persons	63.61
Males	75.95
Females	50.97



A board in a school in Deoghar displaying accounts of school development fund

Introduction

Jharkhand, the 28th state of the Indian Republic, came into existence on 15 November 2000, after the bifurcation of Bihar. About 23 per cent of the state is covered by forests. Being the oldest geological formation of India, the state has vast deposits of minerals like iron ore, bauxite, copper, uranium, etc. The land is crisscrossed by hills, rivers and rivulets. However, Jharkhand is one of the most educationally backward states.

With a total of 21,386 schools for 32,620 villages, on an average only 65 per cent of villages in Jharkhand have a school. In a typical Jharkhand village, there are around 10-12 *tolas* (habitations) and the distance between the tolas is sometimes more than 5 km. This indicates the difficulty in access faced by children in Jharkhand.

In 1998, a society called SPEED (State Programme for Elementary Educational Development) was formed to implement Janshala in Bihar. On 31 March 2001, the programme came under Jharkhand, as both districts in which the programme was operational had become part of the new state. At present, the programme is implemented by Jharkhand Education Programme Council (JEPC), Ranchi.

The programme has been implemented in three phases. In the first phase, from 1998 to 1999, two blocks of both Giridih and Deoghar districts were covered. In the second phase, from 1999 to 2000, three more blocks of both districts were added. In the current phase, the programme is operational in all 7 blocks of Deoghar and 12 blocks of Giridih. Since 2001, the reach of the programme has been extended to cover all blocks of these districts.

Access to schools is a severe problem in both the districts, where large numbers of children are out of school and working. In Giridih, only 66 percent of the villages have access to primary schools.



Children of an alternative school in Deoghar

An important feature of Janshala in Jharkhand is that it is working within the existing educational structure of the state. At the same time, community empowerment has been the main strength of the programme. Other main features include capacity building of teachers and women's participation and empowerment.

Community empowerment and micro-planning

From the very beginning, Janshala functionaries realised that the only way to effect any sustainable improvement in the

quality of education was to bring the community closer to the school system. This was achieved through community sensitisation and mobilisation, community participation and support, and community ownership and sustainability.

Community sensitisation and mobilisation

Systematic activities were carried out to achieve the first stage of community empowerment. As a first step, a community sensitisation and mobilisation team (CSMT) was formed for generating awareness and community involvement in the management of schools.

The blocks were entrusted with the task of identifying the mobilising groups and NGOs to participate in a workshop. Individual or voluntary groups interested in mobilising and sensitising the community were also invited to attend the workshop.

A Community Sensitisation and Mobilisation Exercise (CSME) was conceptualised as a 20-day module with two aspects--environment building and forming and training of village committees. The CSMT conducted field visits. With the help of local youths called *Uthpreraks*, they conducted awareness campaigns through posters, banners, distribution of pamphlets, *padyatras*, streetplays, folk music and puppet shows; and meetings and conferences at all levels, involving government officials and NGOs.



In the third stage, the Uthpreraks collected detailed data from every village and conducted a school mapping exercise to obtain a rough estimate of the educational status of the particular village or tola. The data was recorded and tabulated, and is now available in the form of the micro-planning report.

Subsequently, the CSMT, with the help of the Uthpreraks, invited people in the “feeding area” of every government school for a meeting and elected a 15-member village education committee (VEC). In villages where access to schools was difficult, *Prerak Dals* (motivating groups) were formed, who took the initiative to provide alternative schooling facilities.

An essential qualification to become a VEC member is regular attendance of the member’s child. The VEC is headed by a chairperson and vice-chairperson, elected with the consensus of VEC members. One-third of the members are women. Selected VEC members are given training by the CSMT. The training has an in-depth focus on

Percentage of literate population in Giridih and Deoghar in 1991 and 2001 censuses

	Deoghar			Giridih		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1991	54.12	19.74	37.92	49.81	13.91	32.24
2001	66.93	32.33	50.53	63.07	27.05	45.16

Three stages in community empowerment

Stage I
Community sensitisation and mobilisation:
 Increasing awareness about the importance of education and bringing the community together for this purpose.

Stage II
Community participation and support:
 Encouraging the community to actively participate in and support school-related activities to fulfil the needs of the school.

Stage III
Community ownership and sustainability:
 Effective and efficient management of schools and a gradual building up of the desire to own and sustain the school.



Gram sabha in progress

effective planning with regard to enrolment and retention, maintenance of schools, school management, and other issues regarding education.

The social mobilisation campaign took a very long time to complete, but the dividends have been invaluable. Effective CSM exercise has provided an ideal platform for the functionaries to move to the second stage of community empowerment, i.e. community participation and support.

Community participation and support

After the completion of the first stage, the community became involved in all school activities, thereby extending its support to fulfil the various needs of the school.

Besides a committee at the school level, two other committees, one at the panchayat level and another at the block level, have been set up to increase community participation and ensure its proper representation at every level. These committees are the Panchayat Education Committee (PEC), comprising one member elected from every VEC of the particular panchayat, and the Block Education Committee (BEC), formed by selecting one member from every panchayat in a block. The VEC holds monthly meetings presided over by the chairman to review the progress of the school, as well as to formulate plans for its advancement. The PEC also holds monthly meetings, while the BEC meetings are held every quarter.

Teachers have also been posted as resource persons (RPs) at the district and block levels to facilitate community empowerment. They organise awareness programmes, give further training if needed and hold meetings with government education officers to discuss problems related to their schools.

The VEC is given a grant of Rs 3000 per annum for school improvement. The basic purpose of giving annual funds to the VEC is to empower and motivate them and to instill in them a sense of responsibility, as well as association, with the school.



Teacher training in progress

Community ownership and sustainability

During this phase, the community members visit the schools for overall inspection, as well as to ensure that both teachers and students attend school regularly. They also help in bringing out-of-school children back to the school as well as track down absentees; provide support in the form of “physical labour” such as cleaning the schools, maintaining the gardens, constructing approach roads to the schools, painting the schools, etc. Community members also donate material for construction and

repair of classrooms as well as other articles which can be utilised in the school.

Quality improvement in schools

Teachers' training

Training is one of the most critical means of empowering teachers. Prior to Janshala, instances of primary school teachers being given in-service training were rare. This not only affected the quality of teaching adversely, but also lowered the motivation level and involvement of teachers. Janshala adapted the UJALA training module developed under the Bihar Education Project (BEP). Almost the entire target teacher population—2470 primary school teachers—was administered training. As a result of these efforts, approximately 88 per cent of teachers in Deoghar district have been trained.



Village mapping in Pipsad village, Deoghar

The training module focuses on increasing community contact, training in gender-sensitive teaching methods, developing communication skills and effective use of teaching aids. The module follows the interactive methodology, ensuring active participation of all teachers. Some of the important aspects stressed in these modules are activity-based approach, teaching-learning materials (TLMs), and multi-grade and multi-level teaching.

Teachers are trained to follow the activity-based approach. They are also taught to make the learning environment interesting through activities, which help the child find joy and meaning in the learning process. The teachers are trained to design learning activities to correspond with the child's developmental stages.

Aspects	Deoghar	Giridih
No. of teachers trained	1310	1160
No. of teachers receiving TLM grant	1302	1121
No. of CRCs constituted	42	32
Strengthening of CRCs	25	25
No. of CRC meetings held	585	171
No. of CRC coordinators' training	24	1
CRC coordinators' meeting	29	4
MGT	5	Nil
TLM exhibition and workshop	16	Nil

Teacher training centres

Teachers are trained at three teacher training centres, two at Deoghar and one at Giridih. Established primarily to train teachers from the project schools, these centres at times also provide training to teachers of community-based schools (CBS) and women community workers (WCW).



As part of this exercise, teachers who had the talent to train were selected. Thereafter, a workshop was conducted to screen suitable and appropriate Master Trainers (MTs) from the group. The MTs conduct further training at the BRCs. So far, 12-15 MTs have been selected from each district.

Teaching-learning material

Teachers often use representative teaching-learning materials called TLMs to illustrate new words, as well as abstract relationships and concepts. Teachers are provided a sum of Rs 500 to buy materials to make TLMs. This serves as a motivating factor for teachers and also helps to make the learning process

joyful and interesting. Teachers are given special training in understanding the various uses of TLM and its importance in the learning process.

Block-wise data on the number of trained teachers in Deoghar

No	Blocks	Total teachers	Trained teachers
1	Mohanpur	313	278
2	Sarwan	275	222
3	Sarath	257	221
4	Palajori	209	177
5	Madhupur	311	309
Total		1365	1207 (88%)

Cluster Resource Centres

In order to ensure that teachers get enough opportunity to share and reflect upon their experiences, Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) have been constituted at various sub-block levels. Regular monthly experience-sharing meetings are held at these centres. These meetings facilitate the process of planning classroom activities, identifying classroom problems and exploring possible solutions in a participative manner. At times these monthly meetings also serve as refresher training programmes for teachers.

Some of the activities that take place during the monthly meeting of teachers at the Cluster Education Centres (CECs) are lesson demonstrations, planning of activities, TLM preparation, discussions on problem areas identified by the teachers, etc. At times, issues like shortage of teachers and interaction with parents and VECs, are also discussed.



Teachers taking a pledge, with lamps in hand, to work for UEE

In every training programme, efforts are made to invite teachers from adjoining schools so as to encourage them to keep in touch after completion of their training programme, and to form a cluster. In a training session, approximately 30-35 teachers from 8-12 schools are invited. Close interaction during the residential training programme ensures that a strong cluster is formed. A Cluster Coordinator is selected from amongst the group and regular cluster meetings are held at the Cluster Education Centre every month. These meetings

are also attended by the RP and BRC. Every two months, field visits are conducted by the RP along with the CRC. CEC coordinators are given five-day training by the RPs at the block level, with modules on leadership, motivation as well as various aspects of pedagogy.

Improving access

Micro-planning revealed that there were several habitations without school within a radius of one km. Moreover, certain habitations had a primary school within this radius, but were still not accessible to children because of physical and social barriers. Community-based schools are an important initiative to improve children's access to primary schools.



Cultural programmes in a children's fair

Community-based schools

Community-based schools (CBSs) and alternative schools were suggested to tackle the problem of inaccessibility. The most important aspect of these schools is the manner in which they are established and the manner in which they function, all with the active involvement and participation of the community.

Over 400 CBSs with 2300 children (an average of 40-50 children per school), have been opened under the programmes in the two districts of Jharkhand. CBSs provide the opportunity of quality education to a large number of disadvantaged children in remote areas. Around 90% of the students enrolled in CBSs would not have had access to education, but for this programme.

The activities of the community mobilisation team also included the formation of *Prerak Dals* (motivating groups) in unserved habitations, to generate demand in the community through mobilisation exercises. Over a period of time, as the role of the *Prerak Dals* grew, they were redesignated as *Sahyog Dals* (companions). Initiatives were also taken to form women's group, which primarily included mothers whose children did not attend schools. These women's groups, called *Mata Samitis* (mothers' committees) were given the responsibility of initiating and managing CBSs.

At present, most CBSs are run by *Mata Samitis*. There are now around 500 *Mata Samitis* in Deoghar and Giridih. The samiti members are trained by Resource Persons and Women Empowerment Workers (WCWs), before they are entrusted the task of managing a school. The training creates awareness about the main issues in education, the importance and the process through which village members are to be initiated into the functioning of the schools, steps involved in opening a bank account, and most importantly the need to uphold a sense of gender equality.



Procession by teachers, students and community for enrolment

Around 55 per cent of the Mata Samiti members in Deoghar have received formal training and others have obtained guidance and support from WCWs. Moreover, each school is also given a grant of Rs 4100, and the chairman of the Mata Samiti or Sahyog Dals is responsible for using this money.

Teachers in CBS

The minimum qualification of a CBS teacher is matriculation, and females are preferred, so as to promote education among girls. However, the criteria are flexible. The teachers are given residential training of 30 days. During the first 15 days, theoretical background in subjects such as education, child development, women's empowerment and girl's education is taught. During the subsequent days, they are trained in new teaching methods.

The teachers have monthly meetings with the District Resource Person (DRP) and Block Resource Person (BRP) to plan their teaching schedule and share their problems and experiences.

Children in CBS

Most CBS schools are single-classroom, single-teacher schools with children of different age groups. Therefore, multi-grade, multi-level teaching is a necessity. The children are assessed in many different ways throughout the academic year and teaching is joyful and activity based. The schools provide an environment which encourages self-expression in children in different ways like articulating their views, representing their ideas, illustrating the lessons with examples, clarifying their doubts with the teacher without any apprehension or hesitation and so on. Learning is completely child-oriented.

Two major interventions in accordance with the Women's Empowerment Programmes are Women Community Workers (WCWs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

A woman's struggle

Ms Abha Mandal is the vice-chairperson of the VEC of Abhyas School, in Ghomara village, Deoghar. Thanks to this active leader, and member of the Women's Empowerment Group, 25 SHGs now function in the village. Like other Women Empowerment Workers, Abha recalls the bitter experiences she had to face when she began her work two years ago:

"The men misunderstood my efforts and it irked them that the women of the community were gaining strength due to their united stand. The women were voicing their problems, defying male supremacy and becoming more self-dependent. The men gave me resentful looks, used abusive language and tried to create hurdles in my way. This was a difficult period of my life, but I weathered this rough patch with the support of the other women, who stood by me all the way. Now, the only problem I face as a Women Empowerment Worker is the long distances I have to travel—villages can be 6-8 km away from each other and this is an arduous journey without proper roads!"

Women's empowerment

To enhance the status of women, the Women's Empowerment Programme has ensured that at least one Uthprerak out of two, in each habitation, is a woman. Rules have been formulated to ensure that at least one-third of VEC members are women. It has also been made mandatory that the office of either the chairman or vice-chairman should be held by a woman candidate.

The constitution of Mata Samitis has also proved to be successful in helping women come together to serve as a unit for action. Their ability to conduct tasks like running a school, holding a bank account, professionally interacting with men, has given them the needed impetus and self-esteem for further empowerment.

Women Community Workers (WCWs)

A total of 47 Women Community Workers (WCWs), 22 in Deoghar and 25 in Giridih, are working to promote the goal of education. These WCWs are entrusted with the following tasks:

Creating awareness about gender equality:

Campaigns are conducted to create awareness about the need for women to participate in the community's social and economic development, the importance of educating girls and the need to respect women's rights.

Promoting girls' education: Door-to-door campaigns are conducted to bring girls to school and efforts are made to provide needy children monetary support by collecting funds.

Training Mata Samiti members: Training programmes on themes like school management and methods to bring girl children to school are conducted frequently.

Initiating women's SHGs: Self-help groups are initiated and managed by WCWs, with the primary purpose of helping women become self-sufficient financially.

Coordinating women's groups: Various mobilisation activities are undertaken by WCWs to coordinate activities within existing women's groups to help create a social force.

Selection of Women Empowerment Workers (WEWs):

WEWs are selected during community sensitisation and mobilisation activities. At the district level, a workshop is conducted to screen the ideal women workers. Training is given on different aspects of education, as well as on women's empowerment, to these candidates.

The representation of women as RPs, both at the district and block levels, as well as preference given to women teachers in CBSs, has helped in enhancing the status of women in the state.

Self-help groups

Self-help groups (SHGs) are women's groups formed with the help of WCWs to address the problem of economic hardship. SHGs aim to address issues of social and economic reform.

In Deoghar, these groups function with the help of a president and a secretary. However, the SHGs are in the initial stages of development. They function as small banks for the community, lending people money at very low interest rates and providing loans to start small-scale businesses. Around 50 SHGs managed by various NGOs function efficiently in Giridih. These groups, although not under the direct supervision of Janshala, work in close association with WCWs.

Girls' Education

Owing to the poor female literacy rates, girls' education has been given primary importance in Janshala. Meena Week is one of the main programmes



Children in an alternative school (CBS)



conducted, along with door-to-door campaigns, to promote female education.

Meena Week

This is a weeklong celebration conducted every year, to generate awareness about the importance of girls' education. The spirit of festivity makes it an attractive programme for villagers. "Meena" is an animation character and represents an ordinary village girl who stands up for her rights and is bold enough to question the inequalities and discrimination faced by girls.

During Meena Week, panchayat meetings to discuss the importance of girls' education, as well as painting competitions with themes on girls' education, are organised. Bal Sabhas are held, wherein out-of-school and in-school children exchange views and share their experiences. It has been seen that many out-of-school children are fascinated and motivated by the experiences of in-school children and frequently express their desire to get enrolled in school. Such children are enrolled immediately.

Educate a girl: Ensure well-being for seven generations!

In Latasarae village, Deoghar, the wall writings at the bus stops speak volumes of the community's enthusiasm to eradicate illiteracy. One slogan said, "Educate a girl child and the future of her seven generations are going to be safe."

Though not very well worded, the message was loud and clear—this community believed in girls' education.

Padyatra and rallies are conducted by the children, teachers and the community. Video shows on "Meena" and other films on themes like dowry, child marriage, harassment of women, female illiteracy, etc., are held and bal melas are organised with stalls for games, health check-ups, singing competition, dancing competitions, etc. In these melas too, children are enrolled.

At the last Meena Week in Deoghar district, 173 girls, most of them child labourers who made *beedis*, were enrolled in nearby schools.