

Orissa



Breaking the conventions

Is strict discipline the best way to control? Are textbooks and a rigid syllabus the best way to teach? Check these out at the Janshalas in Orissa, where innovations are replacing the age-old norms. At Rendua Primary School, children themselves mark their attendance every morning on the list of names put on the school wall.

At a primary school in Mahanga, children learn in groups, and the better students teach the other students. "I must confess that at times students turn out to be better teachers than us," says the teacher.

Since the children were taught with the help of songs, stories, activities, etc, and without much use of textbooks, parents were skeptical in the beginning. "We don't send our children to play," they said. However, after seeing the progress of their children, the parents are convinced that their children are learning—joyfully, for a change!



Orissa



Project Area

Districts	No of blocks/urban area
Cuttack	3 blocks/1 UA
Puri	3 blocks/1 UA
Khurda	1 UA
Balasore	1 block

Major indicators (as per Census Report 2001)

Population	36.7 million
% share in total population	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



Peer group learning

Introduction

Orissa is a state rich in natural resources, but it is also exposed to disastrous natural calamities like floods and cyclones year after year. The state has a substantial ST population of 22.2%. It has a strong rural character, with 86.62% rural population.

Initially, the state government had decided to cover 20 blocks in two phases under the programme. The first 10 blocks were selected, and pre-project activities such as baseline survey, social assessment, household survey, selection of NGO partners and preparation of blueprint of the programme were carried out in 1997-99. However, due to the proposal for expansion

of DPEP to eight new districts, the original 10 blocks had to be dropped. The entire process had to be redone and eventually, nine blocks and three urban slums were selected.

Janshala was formally launched in Orissa on 26 October 1999. Only three days after the launch, the state was struck by the super cyclone, badly affecting the project blocks and urban slums.

Though these impediments adversely affected Janshala and its execution in the beginning, the programme has taken off since 2000, the programme is having an impact in its area.

The strength of the programme in Orissa lies in community mobilisation, especially through *Ninad*, interventions for teacher training and quality improvement, and a decentralised management structure.

Community participation and micro-planning

Community participation can be seen in varying degrees in the programme areas of Orissa. The community has been involved in household surveys at some places. Forums for mobilising the community such as village education committees (VECs), parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and mother-teacher associations (MTAs) have been formed and are operational.



Meeting with village women during Ninad

Ninad

Ninad (resonance) was a campaign for community mobilisation held in 10 blocks and two urban slums covered under the EFA programme. It aimed at putting every child in school and empowering the community to monitor and support school activities.

Each programme area had 12-15 *Ninad* teams, whose key resource persons and coordinators were drawn from DPEP. The activities started with identification of teachers from programme blocks to form a Core Training Team (CTT). The

team members were given two-day training at the state level by Resource Persons from DPEP districts. After the training, the core team went to their blocks and prepared the plan of events for covering the entire block and urban slums simultaneously.

During the campaign, the teams undertook door-to-door community contact, village meetings, and theme-based cultural programmes with focus on the girl child. Songs, skits and street plays were used to highlight the importance of education for all. In some blocks, schoolchildren were involved in the cultural programmes, along with professional troupes. The campaign generated tremendous enthusiasm in the community. Its achievements may be summarised thus:

- Government and non-government stakeholders came together with common concerns and objectives.
- The exercise succeeded in reaching the unreached and in generating positive thinking towards the need for primary education.
- The campaign identified habitations that were not served by schools.
- It generated goodwill among the community for teachers and helped break the ice between teachers and community.

Micro-planning

Micro-planning has two crucial elements, namely village-based planning and school-based planning. Village based planning requires involvement of village community in mobilising people to enrol each child for universalisation of education, and to provide support to the school in financial and non-financial ways. School-based planning aims at making the school function effectively.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments have laid out that panchayats have to play a major role in the organisation, provision and supervision of primary and secondary education. In Orissa, the government issued guidelines in 1989 to establish VECs in all villages having schools. Thus, most schools in the state now have VECs in place. A training module for VEC members has been developed under the programme.

Decentralisation

The programme envisages to function at three levels—state, block and village. It emphasises the role of the state as the operational focus of programme formulation and implementation with necessary

Ninad: Highlights

- In Nischintakoili, Ninad resulted in the enrolment of 852 children. Twenty places were identified for opening alternative schools, out of which 8 have been sanctioned.
- In Nilagiri, 858 dropouts were enrolled, and 70 out-of-school children were identified.
- In Machhua Primary School, the community has taken steps for the beautification of the school.
- In Jamuna Primary School, Nilagiri, the school's stolen doors and windows were returned by the villagers and the vicinity of the school was cleaned by the community.



VECs: Supporting the schools

In Khandagada Primary School, in the backdrop of a shortage of teachers, the VEC has appointed two teachers in the school. Chandrashekhar Nayak, a freedom fighter in the village has instituted an award for the best girl student every year.

In Kapileswar PS-IV, the VEC has appointed two teachers for the school. Raghunath Jena, a retired teacher, gives a scholarship to the best student of the school every year.



Village map prepared after micro-planning

guidance provided by the centre. The conceptual approach conceives of a centrally facilitated, provincially designed and locally implemented programme. The programme activities place the blocks as the units of intervention. Thus, the administrative setup consists of the following bodies:

Village Education Committees

The village education committee (VEC) is the core structure at the grassroots level. It is broad-based, representing all stakeholders and is empowered to function effectively in management of local primary schools through training and exposure visits. VECs are involved in micro-planning, school mapping, and community-level monitoring of school programmes.

Block level implementation committees and Block Resource Groups

The block level implementation committee is chaired by the Sub-Collector, and its members are the District Inspector of Schools, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Block Development Officer (BDO), Sub-Inspector (SI) of schools, teachers' representatives, local educationists, and representatives of community-based organisations (CBOs). The senior most School Inspector is the member secretary.

Block Resource Groups (BRGs), consisting of 8-10 members, have been functioning in each of the seven blocks and three urban slums, providing teacher training, monitoring, and on-site support in various areas like development of TLM.

District level implementation

There are no formal structures at the district level, but the District Collector, who looks at the overall development of the district, has a key role in overseeing programme implementation in the blocks.

State level implementation

At the state level, the programme is implemented through a society called the Education for All (EFA) Society. This is a governing body vested with all executive powers. In addition to this, the State Programme Management Unit consists of a Director, Assistant Project Director, State Project Coordinator and supporting staff. A state level coordination committee with representation of all social sector departments, educationists, representatives from NPMU and NGOs acts as the advisory and policy-making body under the chairmanship of the Secretary.

Capacity building of teachers

Teachers need training to address problems and issues concerning enrolment, retention and quality of education and special skills to handle multi-grade and multi-level teaching. The teacher also needs to learn the art of interactive mode of teaching, creating a child-centred classroom, and play-way methodology.

Teacher training

Almost all categories of primary school teachers, CRCs, SIs of schools, BRCs and headmasters have undergone two rounds of training under the Janshala programme. The training programmes focused on understanding children and their learning processes, activity and its components, developing activities in the classroom, managing multi-grade situations in the classroom, preparing TLM and handling the problems of disabled children. The teachers have reported a big difference since they introduced the play-way method of learning in their classrooms.



A village education committee

Core trainer team

A Core Trainer Team (CTT) has been constituted, consisting of 45 members drawn from DIETs and primary schools, including resource trainers. The CTT plans and prepares training modules for pedagogical activities, and conducts training programmes at the state, district and block levels. They also engage in monitoring activities at the block level.

Knowledge exchange

A team of 20 teachers, educationists, district inspectors and SIs of school visited Rishi Valley in April 1999 to understand the Rishi Valley system of education. A post-visit workshop was conducted for six days in which self-learning materials were developed for class I.

Five members of the CTT attended the National Workshop on Content Enrichment at Digantar, Jaipur, in September 2000. This was followed by a visioning workshop in October in which they shared their experiences with other CTT members. A package of experiments related to the science syllabus of class III, IV and V, using low-cost/no-cost aids, was developed in the form of a handbook called *Asa Kari Dekhiba*, for primary school teachers to bring about a qualitative improvement in the teaching of science. Teachers' handbooks have also been developed and printed for class I and II.

Quality improvement

Efforts towards quality improvement include the introduction of activity-based (joyful) learning, as well as a monitoring and academic support programme.

Activity-based learning

All schools under the programme follow the activity-based learning method. It is aimed at making the learning process participatory and enjoyable. This method is now appreciated by



Learning corner in a school



Wall magazine

The teachers at Badasankha Primary School have floated the idea of a weekly wall magazine. It is a notice board handled completely by students. The students select the best of their drawings, poems, essays and stories, and put them on the display board for a week.

teachers, as well as by parents and children. Almost all schools have introduced various methods of sitting arrangements. This encourages competition among groups and peer-to-peer learning within a group. Learning takes place systematically in accordance with age-wise competencies in an interactive situation. The children are grouped; they master the competency and move on to the next group to learn the next level of competency. Walls are widely used in almost all schools for painting and learning purposes.

A list of standard TLM has been developed in the state and circulated among teachers. Supplementary reading material developed by DPEP has been provided to teachers and students.

Monitoring and academic support

Janshala launched a monitoring and academic support programme called *Ahwan* (clarion call) in November 2001. The programme has been completed in Bhubaneswar and Puri Sadar. Monitoring activities are going on in other areas.

The Ahwan team consists of resourceful teachers, headmasters, CRCs, BRCs, SIs, DIETs and NGO members. They have received a seven-day training on monitoring and providing academic support to teachers. The main objectives of Ahwan are:

- monitoring pedagogical activities in a coordinated manner
- providing on-site support to teachers in classroom practices and material development
- increasing involvement of parents and community in enhancing retention in schools and in school activities
- observing and reporting on school environment, classroom teaching-learning processes and verifying records

Learning to communicate

Parueshwar Nayak, a core training team member, Nilagiri, gathered 10 students to be enrolled in school, among which were two brothers who did not know their names. Nayak named them Chandan and Nandan, and enrolled them in school. Nayak points out that Nilagiri being a tribal area, the teachers face a communication problem, as they do not know the local language. He goes on to say, “Without knowing their language, it is very difficult to relate to the students and win their confidence.”

Thus, now teachers in Nilagiri have started organising classes to learn the basics of Alchik—the tribal language.

Urban interventions

Janshala has made efforts to provide education to the poor and marginalised children of urban slums in Bhubaneswar, Puri and Cuttack.

One hundred alternative schools have been opened in the slums of Bhubaneswar through Ruchika, an NGO. More will be opened through other NGOs like CYSD, The Mother and Sikhya Sindan.

Ruchika has appointed 100 educational volunteers (EVs) to teach in the alternative schools. Out of these, 57 EVs have undergone a 12-day training. More than 2000 students are enrolled in Ruchika's schools. The EVs conduct classes for four hours and then spend an hour interacting with the community. EVs also prepare TLMs for use in the classroom. Ruchika has six CRPs, who visit two or three alternative schools daily to monitor, train and provide on-site support to EVs.



An alternative school in Bhubaneswar city