



Gramin Shiksha Kendra

# Reinventing Education During the Pandemic

## **2020-2021**

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Annual  
Report



# About Gramin Shiksha Kendra

## The Crux of Our Work

### **PHILOSOPHY**

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We believe that schools are an extension of the community- not delinked from society, but an integral part of it. There is a need for active participation and accountability from the community towards their own schools, for the overall growth of the community. The community is a partner in the process of education, rather than schools merely being a service provided to them.

### **VISION**

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Thoughtful, supportive and sensitive children will create a world which is sustainable, less inequitable, more supportive and one which believes in peaceful co-existence- recognising and celebrating diversity and culture.

### **MISSION**

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Education will set children free and help them to be curious, supportive, sensitive, thoughtful and aware- open to learning, and with capabilities to take on responsibilities and fulfil them.







## On Completing 25 years— Our Journey So Far...

**1991** – Started Eco–development Livelihood Project by Centre for Environment Education (CEE).

**1995** – Conclusion of Project by CEE.

**1996** – Registration of GSK as a Society.

**2004** – Established Uday Community School at Jaganpura.

**2007** – Established Uday Community School at Bodal.

**2009** – Established Uday Community School at Fariya

**2011** – Launched Vistaar intervention with government schools

**2012** – Adopted two government schools and two government anganwadis

**2014** – Established Uday Community School at Girirajpura

**2015** – Recognition of Uday Schools as Change–maker Schools by Ashoka Foundation



**2016** – Piloted Umang intervention with cohort of 35 adolescent girls (from Ranwal and Khawa)

**2016** – Two adopted anganwadis were declared as Adarsh Anganwadis by the Department of Women and Child Development

**2016** – Adopted two more anganwadis at Fariya and Katar

**2017** – Exit from the two government schools and government anganwadis adopted in 2012

**2017** – Established a STEAM laboratory at Bodal

**2020** – Reinitiated the Umang intervention at Shyampura

**2020** – Initiated education intervention with De-notified & Nomadic Tribes (DNTs & NTs)

**2021** – Exit from Uday Community School at Jaganpura

**2021** – Launching the 'Ranthambore Shiksharathi Fellowship Programme'



# Need for Reinventing Learning

It was recognized that the longer children from under-resourced and disadvantaged communities are kept away from learning, the harder it would be to retain them when schooling resumes; they would be increasingly likely to drop out and engage in activities to support their families—financially or otherwise, or be married off.

During the early phases of the CoViD 19- induced national lockdown in 2020, teachers would routinely call the families of their students to remain updated on their well-being. Additionally, WhatsApp groups were formed and students were regular recipients of study material/worksheets (especially from Rajasthan government’s e-learning platform- SMILE), shared on the group. However, this was not a sustainable method to continue learning engagements, as only a small percentage of the households in our programme areas own phones and in the ones that do, children are often not given access.

After certain relaxations were introduced, teachers initiated community and home visits, while taking all recommended precautionary measures— most students and parents were anxious for schools to reopen and wished for us to safely resume education, such that the children’s time could be constructively utilized. There emerged a community-driven demand for learning spaces.

## Emerging Needs in 2020





The tireless efforts of

**30+**  
**teachers**

to continue engaging children in learning through innovative ways during the pandemic mitigated the possibility of over

**300**  
**students**

dropping out, across close to

**75**  
**villages**

in our programme area!

Emerging  
Needs in  
2020





## Transformation of Uday Schools with Community Support

### Academics:

In July 2020, close to 15 locations for smaller, yet accessible, dhaani-kendras (community learning centres) were identified, in collaboration with families, across hamlets (dhaanis) in the catchment areas of the three Uday Community Schools in Jaganpura, Fariya and Girirajpura. These were open spaces with sufficient light and ventilation, and located such that students and teachers didn't need to travel long distances and risk infection. Physical distancing, wearing of masks and washing of hands at regular intervals was being ensured.

Every teacher was assigned a group with which they worked on all subjects- Hindi, English, Social Science, Mathematics and Science. Subject teachers of the Uday Schools help fellow teachers with lesson planning for their respective subjects. Since the learning levels and educational needs of all students in a group are not the same, teachers used a multi-grade, multi-level pedagogy. The success of these learning centres in keeping children gainfully engaged during the pandemic also encouraged some government school students to enroll themselves here during this interim period. You can learn about them, and our efforts to reimagine education during the pandemic in the [article](#) co-authored by Mr. Shubham Garg (Director, GSK) and Mr. Vishnu Gopal (Academic Coordinator, GSK), published in Azim Premji University's magazine- Learning Curve.

Dhaani-  
Kendras





## Transformation of Uday Schools with Community Support

### **Co-Scholastic Learning:**

GSK's promotion of creative expression and critical thinking are rooted in its commitment to quality child-centric education. It is, therefore, that along with the classroom, students engage in learning through an array of co-curricular activities and clubs such as pottery, carpentry, arts, cooking, kitchen gardening, dance, reading, etc. However, with the pandemic impeding access to school set-ups and the significant reduction in hours of engagement with students at the learning centres, as compared to the schools, emphasis was on creating opportunities for self-exploration and self-learning.

This was done through the introduction of enjoyable and innovative project work, such as designing the menu of your own restaurant, conducting a bazaar simulation, personalising identity cards, framing house rules for keeping CoViD away, etc. On an average, students completed 3 projects a month and new projects were designed based on feedback from both parents and students.

Additionally, computers have been introduced in the curriculum and the students at the dhaani-kendras began with learning to use Microsoft Paint and Word on devices provided by GSK. Two Facebook Lives were also conducted to showcase our morning assembly, that forms an integral part of the day at Uday by providing students a platform for democratic decision-making and dialogue on issues that affect them, with an online viewership of thousands.

Project  
Work



# Transformation of Uday Schools with Community Support

Making  
Learning  
Fun!

## Co-Scholastic Learning:

### - Dhaani-Pustakalays

In response to the closing of schools halting children's access to library books, dhaani-pustakalays (community libraries) had been set up across the relevant catchment areas. These were self-run by students who managed distribution, kept records and co-ordinated with their teachers to replenish the books at regular intervals.

### - Creative Writing

Students are encouraged to creatively express themselves in the form of reflections, poems, stories, essays and songs. We compile their work in the bi-monthly children's magazine- 'Morange'. The importance of this effort had been enhanced during the pandemic as perhaps the only outlet the children had to share about their unique and often, quite difficult, circumstances. Read the CoViD-impact edition of Morange [here](#).

### - Sports

At the request of the community, we also opened up the school playgrounds in July; our sports teachers facilitated activities on the fields and reinforced the necessary CoViD-safety measures. Children from Uday Schools and our intervention (government-run) schools are often seen competing at district, state and national levels, and our sports teams continue to attend daily practice on the fields, especially of handball, athletics and Kho-Kho.





Amidst the closure of educational institutions across the country, GSK's efforts to continually and gainfully engage children in learning meant mitigating the possibility of more than 300 children dropping out. Read below testimonials from our teachers who have been working tirelessly on the ground.

## Uday Samudayik Pathshala, Jaganpura

"The lockdowns brought with them immense hardships for our communities. Right in front of our school in Jaganpura resides a family belonging to the Kumhaars, a social group engaged traditionally in pottery-making but now earning their livelihood through manual labour and daily waging. Three girls from this household study at Uday and the pandemic bringing most economic activities to a halt meant that they were left without income. The closure of schools pushed children into financially supporting their parents- when I saw one of the Kumhaar girls sell vegetables nearby, I asked her what she felt about her situation. She said that she felt uncomfortable and ashamed about manning the thela- बहुत शर्म आती है , she said. I realised then that it was crucial for us to find alternative avenues to continue education despite the circumstances, ensuring that our students have spaces to learn, play and socialise.

Another matter of concern was the misinformation spreading due to our school suddenly being directed towards closure. Surrounding communities came under the incorrect assumption that we were shutting down for good. During door-to-door visits to check on their well-being, one of my students- Vishnu informed me that his parents were forcing him to get enrolled at the nearby government school, now that the Uday Samudayik Pathshala was no longer functional. He refused to comply and wished to continue studying with us. I then spoke to his parents about the fact that all educational institutions across the country- governmental or private, were temporarily closed. This left them very worried- हमारे बच्चों का क्या होगा? They were concerned about their wards' futures being in jeopardy due to this indefinite break from schooling. This provided us the impetus to discuss with them possible solutions and ways to continue engaging our students in learning, and thus emerged our collaborative plan to conduct sessions for a few hours everyday in small groups at community-identified locations across 4 villages!"

- Maansingh Sirra, Teacher





## Uday Samudayik Pathshala, Fariya

"We had almost all the necessary community support to run dhaani-kendras at 4 identified locations in the catchment areas of our school in Fariya, except in Small Katar, where people were either concerned about teachers coming in from outside and becoming spreaders of the virus, or too occupied with financial woes caused by the lockdown to be thinking about their children's education. However, upon seeing and hearing about daily sessions being safely and successfully conducted at the other three centres, and a continued enhancement in the learning levels of the children there, the community itself demanded that their children's time too be meaningfully utilized during this period, leading to the setting up of the fourth centre at Small Katar. It is this need-based, community demand-driven approach that I believe is one of our greatest strengths."

- Rajesh Kumawat, Teacher

"A student at our Uday School in Fariya, Ajay regularly receives study material and links to online content. However, during a recent meeting with him, he insisted that I send him even more to read! What was being sent was apparently insufficient to keep him engaged. It was heartwarming to notice the development of the habit of studying independently during the lockdown. Additionally, committed to their own learning when teachers are not around, students are seeking guidance from their older siblings at home on their different school subjects. Another instance of children taking home learning from school is the success of kitchen gardening in our communities. In 2019, apart from the plethora of co-curricular activities- including dancing, drawing, cooking, carpentry and other forms of creative work, we introduced kitchen gardening at our school in Fariya. This exercise soon reached the communities, with parents being overwhelmingly supportive of it. In any available plot of barren land around their homes, families began growing several kinds of vegetables for household consumption. Manju, a 7th grader from the Bhopa community, has been expanding her kitchen garden over the last 2 years, currently growing over 10 different kinds of plants- from lady's finger, lauki (bottle gourd) and turai (ridged gourd), to tomatoes and chillies, and peanuts! This has reduced their need to go out to markets, especially helpful with the lockdown completely hampering movement, and the consumption of home-grown nutritious vegetables has even reduced household expenditure. Manju often involves her mother and younger siblings in the gardening, making this activity one that is not only utilising an otherwise waste piece of land, but a fun learning process for the whole family."

- Tarun Sharma, Teacher



## Uday Samudayik Pathshala, Girirajpura

“Would children forget important concepts necessary for further learning? Will they drop out due to a break from schooling? Will they lose interest in education? With the closure of schools in accordance with CoViD-safety guidelines, these were the questions causing us great concern. After conversations with members of the community, we noticed that they were plagued by the same! They provided us with solutions such as teaching small groups around the village or giving study material/worksheets to be completed at home. They were worried that children would waste their time and not do anything productive. After discussions at the organizational level, the community themselves made available appropriate and viable locations to set up dhaani-kendras. GSK’s constant efforts to help reform the education ecosystem by making people more aware and conscious of the importance of education has paid off in the form of their enduring support for our work, even in the face of great adversity.”

- Ashok Sharma, Teacher

“Ankit is a student of Uday Community School, Girirajpura. His father is a farmer and his mother remains engaged in running the household. The land in front of Ankit’s house was one of the 5 identified dhaani-kendras that I was teaching at. However, in the initial days, whenever I would take a class, he would run away and disappear! Neither his mother, nor his classmates, were able to help me locate him or get him to attend the study sessions. One day, fortunately, I was able to get a hold of him- I tried to engage in friendly conversation, in an attempt to understand what was bothering him, and why he didn’t want to learn and play with his friends. I tried my best to encourage him to come to class the next day. During that day’s meeting with my colleagues, I shared my predicament with them and received some advice on how to move forward in such a situation. To my pleasant surprise, the next day, Ankit came to class! While he was still quite unresponsive and not participating actively, I was happy that at least he came. He came with a notebook and pencil, but after taking some time to evaluate his learning levels, I realized that more rudimentary, colourful and activity-based teaching-learning material (TLM) would be of greater use to him. Soon I noticed an enhancement in both his interest as well as performance in class! Even his father exclaimed to me one day, “I don’t know what magic you’ve done, but now Ankit never wants to miss class! In fact, he refuses to go out with us anywhere, concerned that he might miss a study session and fall behind.” Ankit’s progress during this period is very close to my heart, and is testament to the fact that a lack of GSK continuing crucial efforts would have had an immense adverse impact on our children’s education.”

- Shailendra Singh, Teacher



# Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE)

## Tarang Programme

GSK's engagement in the ECCE space is through pre-primary schooling at Uday and the two adopted Anganwadis in Fariya and Katar. For children aged 3-5 years, teachers worked closely with parents, especially mothers, to engage the young ones in activities that aid their motor and cognitive skills, and psycho-social development, through easy-to-comprehend assignments for parents to carry out with their children at home.

Parents, whom our teachers also educate on the nutritional requirements of their wards, monitored their growth using WHO-recommended growth charts, including monthly weight checks to look out for and prevent symptoms of malnutrition.

Additionally, mothers were made aware of their entitlements from nearby Anganwadis- dry ration, nutritional supplements and regular vaccinations for young children, such that they are empowered to hold local authorities accountable to promised goods and services for their children's well-being.







## Enhancing the Agency of Adolescent Girls

Deeply entrenched gendered social norms regulate women's role in society, restricting their agency, everyday conduct and aspirations, and determine the importance of certain attributes with the lens of marriageability. With high rates of child marriage and girls dropping out of school in the district, a problem exacerbated by the pandemic-induced break from schooling that has taken young girls further away from education and towards the confines of household chores, an intervention to support them becomes crucial.

Piloted in 2016-2017 with a cohort of 35 socio-economically disadvantaged girls, the Umang Programme aims to strengthen the agency of adolescent girls through academic support, digital literacy and life skills development- by providing a space for growth not available to them at home or their schools. Everyone in the first cohort graduated grade 10 and has continued their education. With most of them in college now, engagement was sustained with our alumni this session through English and Computer learning classes, excursions- the most recent one being to Jaipur, and an open and free platform for socialising and discussions.

The current cohort, 30 girls in grade 9, part of a fresh pilot at Shyampura started in August 2020, attended daily academic and digital literacy classes, and worked on life skills development either through modules built by teachers post extensive training, or events such as the Sports Camp, Leadership Camp or excursions, aimed at helping them grow into confident, communicative, empathetic and critically-thinking young women. An important aspect of the programme is community meetings, primarily organised to encourage families to continue educating their girl children. Since the pandemic prevented large gatherings, these often took the form of conversations going door-to-door and in fields where parents work.

# Umang Programme





## Engaging with De-Notified & Nomadic Tribes (DNTs & NTs)

De-notified Tribes are those communities which were notified as 'criminal' under the British colonial Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. After almost a century of horrors as a result of this discriminatory law, they were de-notified by the government of independent India in 1952. The Criminal Tribes Act was repealed only to be replaced by the Habitual Offenders Act (applicable now to individuals, and not entire cultural groups). Caste-based stigma, however, persists. DNTs continue to be denied access to housing, healthcare, nutrition, education, livelihood, political representation, justice and lives of dignity. In 2020, we initiated engagement with five De-notified and Nomadic Tribes in and around Sawai Madhopur- Gadiya Lohar, Moghia, Bhopa, Kanjar and Bawari communities, who are rag-pickers, blacksmiths, folk performers, cattle traders, labourers and sex workers.

This is primarily done through assessments to ascertain their lives and challenges, determine academic levels of children, strengthen their collectives, and empower them to claim their rights and entitlements from local authorities, from a position of enhanced agency. We became a part of the network of organisations created by Bhasha Research & Publication Centre, to undertake community surveys pertaining to DNTs & NTs, across Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The aim is to design suitable need-based programmes for the well-being of these communities.

The access of these communities to government benefits or the Public Distribution System (PDS) is severely limited, with a considerable number of households without ration cards and several with 'Above Poverty Line' (APL) cards, despite living in acute poverty. Our survey during the latest lockdown of 385 families, with an average of 4-5 members in every household, across several bastis inhabited by DNTs & NTs, suggested that about 24% of them didn't have a ration card at all and only 16% have 'Below Poverty Line' (BPL) cards, while a staggering 60% are considered APL, which does not reap them timely or sufficient ration benefits. Among the Bawari and Gadiya Lohar communities (constituting the largest percentage of those surveyed), of the ration card holders, 32% did not receive any free ration samagri at all during these times of distress; additionally, only 2% have received employment benefits under MGNREGA, with most not being able to produce the necessary documentation or settled in areas considered urban, beyond the ambit of rural schemes. These predicaments, exacerbated by institutional apathy and negative public perception of them as criminals and petty thieves, keeping them out of schools, hospitals, markets and even policy, makes them one of the most marginalised social groups in India.



# Engaging with De-Notified & Nomadic Tribes (DNTs & NTs)

## An Empowerment Project

We have initiated 'Baal-manch' set-ups for children of the Bawari community, seeking to provide first-generation learners a structured environment through daily sessions, in an attempt to ease them into eventual enrolment to the teaching, playing and socialising set-ups at nearby government schools. Over a duration of about 6 months, enrolment at our centres has increased from less than 10 interested children, to a batch of about 60! With constant and concerted efforts to undertake gainful community engagement by our teacher, through door-to-door visits and community meetings, parents' interest and participation in their wards' education has also significantly increased, such that we are beginning to notice a diversion of children out of rag-picking and other forms of labour.

Health Camps were organised for the Bhopa and Bawari communities, with the aim of conducting routine checks, identifying common health issues, distributing medication and spreading awareness about healthcare needs, which attracted a total of 750 people, across all ages, at two locations. Malnutrition among children and lack of access to prenatal care for pregnant women are some of the major issues here. Additionally, we conducted digital literacy sessions for young Bhopa girls at our school in Fariya, distributed ration during the pandemic-induced lockdowns at identified vulnerable localities and have sought to provide immediate short-term support in cases of health emergencies, including late-stage deliveries with complications and potentially fatal snakebites.







## Ration Distribution Drive

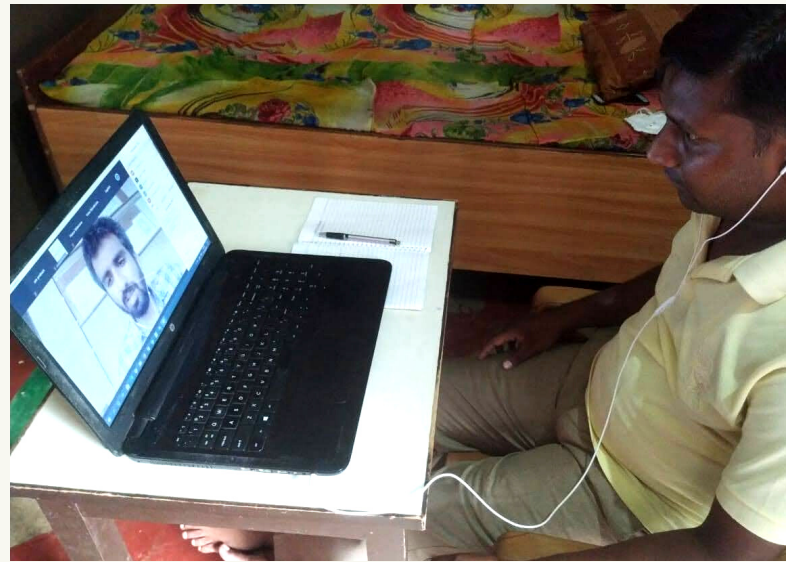
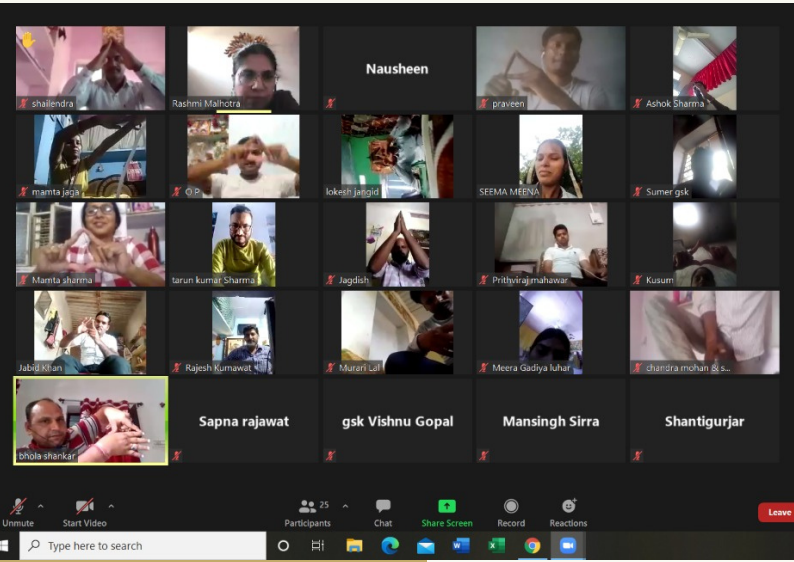
During the national lockdowns, landless labourers and migrant workers were left most vulnerable, with the inability to travel for livelihoods during periods of restriction on movement. For the DNTs & NTs, the pandemic compounded their already acute socio-cultural and economic marginalisation, severely jeopardizing food security. We identified such families in need, to help them overcome this situation by providing dry ration kits. Each of the kits was composed of daily commodities (flour, pulses, oil, sugar, salt and basic spices, sooji, tea leaves, reusable cloth mask and soap) to last a household of 5 members for 15 days. Including this year's relief drive and efforts undertaken in 2020, we have distributed about **5000 ration kits** in total, across close to 25 locations.

"While visiting the basti during the ration distribution drive, I observed firsthand the plight of the most vulnerable during this time of crisis. The summer heat had driven residents outside their tarpaulin tents and into the main road outside, where I chanced upon about 60 of them. The monsoon will be more difficult, when water-logging causes their tents to overflow every year. Some of them don't own tents- they cook on chulhas at the footpath and sleep under the bridge at nightfall. I noticed the children here picking up and eating whatever fell on the ground from the nearby fruits & vegetables thelas. They hadn't eaten a proper meal in quite some time. I overheard two women talking, with one offering the other one of the only two rotis she had at home, to feed the children; the mother herself was supposed to stay hungry or go begging. The settlement was shrouded by an aura of desperation and helplessness, with many crying from not having eaten anything the whole day. I was glad to have been able to give them some assurance, and provided close to 250 Bawari families dry ration that hopefully helped them a little in tiding over this time."

- Radheshyam Sain, Secretary & Community Coordinator, GSK

Relief  
Efforts





## Capacity–Building of Staff

**English Programme:** The crux of English teaching at Uday is a theme-based approach; contextually relevant themes are decided upon every month, and students' reading, speaking and writing are worked on based on the chosen theme. The resource teacher provides support to their peers, through assistance in lesson planning, execution and reflection. During mentorship sessions, teachers are given tasks to enhance their own capacity and are encouraged to take initiative.

**Online Training:** During the last academic year, teachers have attended a plethora of workshops online- training in life skills development by an external resource person, in participatory & activities-based STEM teaching, in collaboration with Avishkaar, and in mindfulness and stress-management during the pandemic by Antarang.

**Enhancement of Basic Digital Skills:** The times demanded a shift to virtual modes of communication, with training and team-meetings taking place via video-call, and building and sharing of study material taking place digitally. This provided our teachers the opportunity to enhance their capacity when it came to basic technical know-how.



The  
Teachers  
Learn!



# Looking Forward to the Way Ahead

## The Journey Continues

**Vistaar Programme:** Emerging from the work at the Uday Samudayik Pathshalas is the Vistaar (to Spread) Programme. We initiated Vistaar with 14 government schools in the year 2011, which has now been extended to 70 government schools and their associated parents' communities, in the catchment area of our three Uday Schools. Through Vistaar, we emphasized on introducing our unique child-centric practices and systems to the government schools, while ensuring active participation of parents and effective governance by the School Management Committees (SMCs). Through a combination of initiatives undertaken with SMCs, children who have dropped out or are irregular and government school teachers, we help implement the two-way change process of encouraging communities to demand and the school system to deliver. Over a period of time, the Uday-Vistaar model has made a significant change in the education ecosystem of Sawai Madhopur, as indicated by an [external evaluation report](#), marked by an enhanced participation of students in co-scholastic initiatives, particularly performance in sports, commitment of parents to hold government schools accountable to promised standards of learning, teaching and infrastructure, and teachers building better relationships with students by adopting inclusive and interactive classroom practices.

Moving forward, we aim to work with 30 government schools, with the help of their teachers, community members and the youth, to support nearly 4000 children to reach age-appropriate levels, especially crucial now after a severe [loss of learning](#) due to the pandemic, and the schools to improve their quality of STEM education. We also seek to continue efforts to empower associated parents' communities and SMCs, through the adoption of a three-pronged strategy:





## Looking Forward: On to the Road Ahead

### - **The fellowship programme:**

We plan to offer a year-long fellowship to local youth, who are motivated and willing to give back to their community, and have passed class 12, currently pursuing graduation or post-graduation. They will undergo capacity-building organized by GSK, pivoting our philosophy of education and child-centred teaching practices, that they can then implement with the children in their respective village communities. Selected through a robust screening process, the fellows will receive an honorarium and will be provided mentorship to continue their education and/or avail career options as per their interests and aptitude.

### - **Academic Support to Government School Teachers:**

We will appoint three resource teachers who will be providing on-field support to the fellows to strengthen our work with the children. They will also be responsible to work directly with the government school teachers to demonstrate child-centred teaching practices within the classrooms, help the teachers plan sessions so as to effectively bridge learning gaps and facilitate the adoption of activity-based STEM teaching by Science and Mathematics teachers of classes 6-8.

### - **Enhancing Community Participation Using Forum Theatre (Theatre of the Oppressed):**

We believe that the community must remain at the centre of all development interventions to make the efforts sustainable. In order to strengthen community collectives, we will work through Forum Theatre, to create spaces for dialogue among members, geared towards helping them question the existing state of affairs in the education ecosystem and act to resolve the problems causing poor quality of schooling. For the same, we have partnered with Jana Sanskriti, a grassroots theatre collective and global leader in Forum Theatre.





## Looking Forward: On to the Road Ahead

### **Others:**

- Umang: We plan to expand the programme from a single centre in Shyampura to 4 more new locations in the new session; efforts are underway to identify areas and communities best suited for this intervention to support disadvantaged adolescent girls. In collaborating with Kolkata Sanved, we will also introduce Dance Movement Therapy as a tool for healing and empowerment for our cohorts.
- Tarang: We hope to exit our two adopted anganwadis post their transformation into 'Aadarsh Anganwadis', recognised by the Department of Women & Child Development, as was the case in 2016, with our previously adopted anganwadis; moving forward, we are exploring opportunities to scale up our interventions in the ECCE space for systemic impact.
- Engagement with DNTs & NTs: We will continue running the 2 'baal-manch' learning centres for children from the Bawari community and start 2 more for the Gadiya Lohar community at Khandar and Allapur. We also seek to identify opportunities to work with the Moghiya, Kanjar and Nath communities in the new session.

The  
Journey  
Continues

