

Social and Development Research and Action Group

SADRAG: Progress Report

April 2008 to December 2008

Submitted to

Noon.ch

Switzerland

By

Social and Development Research and Action Group

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The Ugta Suraj program has gone through many ups and downs since its inception in April 2008. The journey began with three Learning and Support centers operational at that time in Nithari, Nayabans and Harola villages. So the search for three more locations began with a survey in the areas around Sector 41, 49 and 50 in Noida (U.P.).

The present status of Ugta Suraj: A network of learning and support centres in Noida may be seen as following:

S.No	Location	Began since--	No. of out of school children found during the survey	No. of children presently enrolled in the centre(Regular*)	No. of children presently enrolled in the centre(Irregular**)
1.	Harola, Sector-5	April 1, 2008	369	43	4
2.	Nayabans, Sector-16	April 1, 2008	243	42	4
3.	Nithari, Sector-31	April 1, 2008	438	45	5
4.	Agahpur, Sector-41	May 1, 2008	207	38	5
5.	Basti, Sector-50	1 November 2008	206	43	3
6.	Barola, Sector - 49	1 December 2008	102	35	10
		Total	1565	246	31

* These children attend the centre everyday.

** These children do attend the centre everyday due to responsibilities at work or home.

The Event Calendar

Various events are planned every month in the form of inter-house competitions, observation of festivals and participation in common events organized independently or jointly with other centers. The details are as following

- **The Centre's Timings:** All the centres function from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for six days a week. However, in winter season, the timings are changed to 9 in the morning to 4.30 in the evening. This change is done at the suggestion of our children's parents.

- **The House Division:**

During the month of June 08, the children in all the centers were divided into Houses for carrying out group activities and inculcating team spirit and healthy competition amongst themselves. There are SIX Houses, named after the major rivers of India: Ganga, Yamuna, Satluj, Kaveri, Krishna and Godavari. Each house has children 6-7 children in it.

- **Independence Day Celebrations:**

15 August is India's Independence day. Since it is a National holiday, the children celebrated it on 14 August. In each centre, the children were narrated stories based on the life of those Great leaders who fought for our country's freedom and sacrificed their life for the same. In particular, they learnt about Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru who became the first Prime Minister and Dr.Rajender Prasad who became the first President of free India.

The children organized a debate on the life of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru which was followed by a question answer session. The facilitators coordinated these activities with the help of children. They all made paper flags and sang the National Anthem. Later they carried the flags home. They were distributed sweets on this occasion.

- **Community Interaction on 5 Sept. and 18 Nov.08:**

Community is the backbone of Ugtā Suraj program. Apart from regular visits and interaction with the communities, the specific days on 5 September and 18 November 2008 were kept for direct interaction with the local community members. The parents of our children and local community people were invited to the centers for the first hand experience of Ugtā Suraj program. People turned up at the center and watched their children read and play with the facilitators. The facilitators discussed many issues besides the performance of their children on day to day basis and during the exam held in the centers. The procedure for formal admission of our children into the various schools was also discussed.

- **Inter-House Poem Competition on 25 September, 08:**

An Inter-house poem competition was organized in all the centres on 25 September 08. Children represented their respective houses and recited Hindi poems, some of which were Ooper Pankha Chalta hai, Hara Hara Main Tota Hoon etc. The facilitators judged the performance of the Houses. The winners would be facilitated on the Graduation ceremony to be tentatively held in the month of May-June 2009.

- **Gandhi Jayanti on 2 October, 08**

2nd October is the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our nation. It is a Gazetted holiday in India but all the centres were open and the children celebrated the day with their facilitators. The facilitators narrated the story of Gandhiji and his role in getting freedom to our country. The children sang patriotic songs and Gandhiji's favorite prayer, Raghu Pati Raghav---. The children were particularly fascinated by the Non-violence movement as started and preached by Gandhiji when they were told its significance in present times.

- **Dushehra Celebrations on 9 October, 08:**

Though all the schools and colleges are closed for almost ten days on account of Dusherra, all the centres continued to be thronged by children everyday except on the particular day of Dusherra. The children celebrated Dusherra on 10 October 08, one day prior to the official holiday. They were told the story of India's great epic, Ramayana. The children were fascinated when told how Lord Ram fought with Ravana, killed him and brought back Sita to Ayodhya, the victory of good over evil. The children made colourful face masks with paper and enacted the various scenes from Ramayana. Sweets were distributed to them.

- **The festival of Diwali:**

Children like Diwali festival particularly for the crackers they get to burst on this day. One day before Diwali on 14 October, the festival was celebrated in all the centres. The children learnt why Diwali is celebrated. They learnt about Lord Rama's return to Ayadhya after spending 14 years of exile in the forest. In the festive spirit, the children drew colourful diyas on paper and made beautiful paper cuttings to decorate the halls.

Each child also painted and decorated one small earthen diya and took it home to wish the parents, **“Happy Diwali”**. They came dressed up in their best dresses and in the end all had sweets together.

- **Children's Day:**

Every year on 14 November, the day of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru's birthday is celebrated as the Children's Day. Nehru was a great leader who was instrumental in getting India free from colonial rule. He has been respected all over for his vision for India as a developed nation. The day was marked by children drawing and colouring the picture of a Rose flower, a favorite of Chacha Nehru. The day was marked with fun and frolic for the children in the form of games, skits and dramas. There were no studies the entire day.

- **Mid-Term examination:**

After introducing formal teaching for six months, i.e., May to October 08, a formal examination of the children was conducted on 29 Oct.08 as a revision exercise and also to know how much they had retained during the entire period. The examination paper was prepared by the facilitators under the guidance of Ms. Karuna Kher. The papers were based on the syllabus covered by facilitators in each subject. The children were given Photostat copies of the papers and were asked to attempt the questions on the question paper itself. The older children were provided separate sheets to write the answers.

- **Cutting and Painting Competition:**

An inter-house competition on cutting and pasting the paper was held in all the centres on 28 November08. The children did picture cuttings and pasted them on paper to make thematic scenes. All the Houses participated in the event. Since it was a group activity, the best house was adjudged for its performance in neatness and concept.

- **Vastra Bank:**

A Vastra Club has recently been started whereby old clothes are collected and given to the most needy. We have taken this initiative because one of our children's jhopri was engulfed in fire and all the family belongings were reduced to ashes. This initiative aims to help such children and their families with support from the neighbourhood social clubs and the civil society at large.

- **Sports Day:**

Sports day was organized in each individual centre on 20 December 08. The children participated in frog and spoon races, throwing the ball, rope pulling and many other outdoor activities. These activities were held in the afternoon from 2 p.m. onwards. Children were given sweets at the end of the program.

- **Christmas Day celebrations:**

Christmas was celebrated in all the centres on 24 December 08. The children drew stars and bells on soft cardboards and coloured them. They decorated the halls with their creations. They all sang Jingle Bell poem together. Sweets were distributed among them.

- **New Year celebrations:**

The first day of the year 1 January 2009 was announced a holiday for Ugta Suraj children. On this day, a day long meeting for the entire Sadrag team was organized in Nithari centre. The agenda of the meeting was to discuss the new year's action plan. Therefore, 31 December 08 was celebrated in all centres to welcome the new year. The children made new year cards and gave these to each other. They also took these cards home to wish their parents a very happy new year.

The Associated Activities

- ❖ **Founder's Day: Shopper's Stop:**

One of the leading retail supply chains, The Shopper's Stop had its Founder's Day on 27 October 2008. Its Noida store housed in The Great India Mall, celebrated the day with Ugta Suraj children. There were about 10 staff members led by their Marketing Head who visited the children with loads of gifts. The children presented scenes from the skit that they were preparing, **Say No To Crackers This Diwali**. They also showed their talents through recitation of poems, jokes and story telling. Towards the end, the guests were very impressed and they interacted with children as their friends. They also invited the children for a visit to their store. The children were happy when they received gifts from their new friends.

- ❖ **Skit: Say No to Crackers:**

On the occasion of Diwali festival every year, crackers are joyfully burst by the children as well as adults. They are unmindful of the harm caused by lighting the crackers.

To sensitize the school children on harmful effects of crackers, Ugta Suraj children from Agahpur, Harola and Nithari centers prepared a 15 minutes skit in Hindi. The skit conveyed the direct message, **SAY NO TO CRACKERS THIS DIWALI**.

A total of 20 children participated in the skit prepared with the help of facilitators. These children belonged to Nithari, Agahpur and Harola centres. Ms Karuna Kher directed the skit while Mala Bhandari tied up with District Education Department for its presentation in various government schools within Noida. The children assembled in Nithari centre and practised the skit for more than a week.

The skit had separate scenes beautifully linked by a narrator. Each scene conveyed a separate message as following:

- Crackers lead to wastage of money
- Crackers cause noise pollution
- Crackers cause air pollution
- Crackers disturb the old and infirm people
- Crackers may burst in hand and cause injury
- Crackers are made by children so involve child labour

The skit was performed for three days from 9 to 12 November 08 in separate Government schools in Harola, Nayabans, Nithari and Agahpur. The participants were given small gifts by the principles of respective schools. The event was covered by the press, Noida edition of The Hindustan Times newspaper.

❖ **The World AIDS Day: 1 December 2008**

As an endeavor for community's wellbeing, an awareness program on HIV/AIDS was organized in Nithari center on 1 December 08. It was held in collaboration with Noida Obstetrics and Gynecologists Society (NOGS). A panel of five doctors participated in the program. The main aim of the program was to spread awareness on preventive measures of HIV/AIDS. The community people from in and around Nithari and Agahpur villages attended the program together with the police personnel camping in the area.

While talking about the social aspects of HIV/AIDS, Dr Mala Bhandari urged the people to shed their prejudices against those suffering with HIV/AIDS and help them stay in the mainstream. She also talked about the children born to HIV parents and the sufferings meted out to them by the society at large.

The panel of doctors was led by Dr Suman Kher, a leading senior gynecologist. The doctors educated the people about the symptoms, causes, treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS. They also discussed about cancer especially in case of women such as breast and ovarian cancer. An active question-answer session took place between the doctors and the community people. Many women shed their fear and shame and asked pertinent questions to the panel of doctors. On behalf of NOGS, food packets were distributed among the people towards the end of the program.

❖ **Lions Club activity:**

On 19 December 2008, The Lions Club organized a painting competition in Barola, Sector -49 centre. Around 30 children participated in the activity. They made many drawings and colored them beautifully. The President and the Secretary of the club facilitated the winners. They distributed notebooks and other stationery items to all the children. Sweets were also distributed among all of them. The Lions Club has now become a friend of Ugta Suraj children.

❖ **Zapak Game by Odysee:**

On 3 January 2009, ten children from Nithari and Agahpur LSCs participated in Games competition organized by The Odysee Book Store which is housed in The Great India Place in Sector 38 in Noida. The children were first explained the Zapak Game by the organizers and then they played the game for 3 hours. Bashim from Nithari LSC stood First in the Game and he was presented an Aeroplane by the Hostess, Ms Ruchi.

❖ **Debate Competition:**

On 12 January 2009, about five children from Nithari and Nayabans LSCs participated in the Debate competition organized by The Young Energetic Society in Indira Gandhi Kala Kendra in Sector -6, Noida. The subject of the debate was, “To fight against alarming situation of global poverty and corruption”. The children

spoke with conviction about the menace of corruption in our country and how it is related with poverty. The children from many institutions like Kothari International School and Government Inter College, Noida participated in the event.

❖ **Games Competition: Lions Club:**

The Lions Club, Noida organized a games competition in Nithari LSC on 23 January 2009. Around 37 children participated in the various events such as Frog race, Rope pulling, one legged race etc. The winners were given prizes by the President of Lions Club. They were also given refreshments after the games.

❖ **Campaign Against Terrorism:**

Children from Harola, Nayabans and Agahpur LSCs together with Sarthak women participated in a Signatory Campaign against Terrorism held at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on 9 January 2009. On this occasion, the noted child rights activist, Swami Agnivesh and Mahar Ali from Pakistan spoke about the need to end terrorism and stressed upon the need to work towards it jointly by the respective governments. They said that WAR is no solution to any problem or misunderstanding between the two countries. They also emphasized that terrorism must be delinked from religion or any particular community.

Later in the day, the children visited the historic India Gate and learnt about the Amar Jwan Jyoti burning there all day and night. It converted into a joyful picnic for the children once they reached the sprawling lawns of magnificent India gate. They played games and had a sumptuous lunch together. They returned at 5.30 p.m. in the evening.

❖ **Health Check Up Camp:**

A Health camp was held in Harola community centre on 15 January 2009. It was organized by Sadrag in partnership with Noida Obstetrics and Gynecologists Society (NOGS) and DMPA. A general health check of around 90 women and 60 children was conducted by a team of leading physicians from the participating organizations. Besides the general check up, cancer detection examination was also conducted among the women. The people were also told preventive measures to be taken up in case of gastro- intestinal complications.

❖ **A Birth control awareness talk**

A talk was held in Harola on 28 January 2009. It was delivered by DMPA . The women were told about the trimester pregnancy control injection which is an easy and safe method of preventing unwanted pregnancy. It is 99 percent safe and has no side effects for women using it. Around 40 community women including Ughta Suraj children's mothers participated in the talk.

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Capacity Building and Networking activities:

Sadrag believes in collective approach for its various programs. It is therefore a member of many networks which are advocating for child rights in the country. During the reporting period, we participated in several events organized by other stakeholders and network members.

- Mahey Alam, the Program Coordinator attended the QIC&AC GROUP meeting in CRY office, New Delhi on 26 November 2008. The main agenda of the meeting was how to curb child labour and development in Foster Care Rules by Delhi Government.
- Mahey Alam, the Program Coordinator participated in the World Congress for Children and Youth organized by Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture. It was held on 3 January 2009 at India Habitat Centre, Lodi Road, New Delhi
- Mahey Alam, the Program Coordinator participated in a Demonstration on Safety of Women in Noida held by organizations working in women's issues. It was held at The Great India Place, Noida (U.P.) on 12 January 2009.
- The facilitators attended many in-house meetings to discuss the challenges faced by Ughta Suraj program and find strategies for the same. These meetings were also marked by detailed discussions on teaching methodology, performance of children, their enrolment in the formal school system and the present status of children mainstreamed last year..

Advocacy:

- Sadrag took up the issue of children under 18 years selling cigarettes and tobacco products in Noida. The issue was highlighted through print media (The Hindustan Times, Noida edition). Our team collected case studies of children engaged in this activity and these were produced before the City Magistrate, Noida city.
- SADRAG represents the NGO sector in the Gautum Budh Nagar District Education Committee. We have raised the need to improve the condition of government school system in Noida so as to minimise the drop out rate among our children. We have also prepared a Report on the **status of government primary schools in Noida** and have submitted the same to the District Administration.

This is a major challenge before us since there is a strong discontentment among the children as well as parents towards the state of govt. schools. We have also brought together the parents and children associated with various government schools for a direct interaction between the two. We are strongly advocating for establishing a Redressal system whereby the children's complaints are heard and acted upon by the administration.

➤ **Networking the organizations working on women's issues in Noida**

In the wake of the recent incident involving rape of a management college student in Sector-71 and several such incidents increasingly taking place in Noida, SADRAG is taking an initiative to gather like minded organisations and individuals to raise a collective voice against such an heinous crime against the women.

As the first step, a meeting was held in V V Giri National Labour Institute, Sector- 24, Noida (U.P.) on 12 January 2009. There were present many local organizations working on women's issues in Noida. A document with suggestions based on the meeting's outputs was submitted to the local administration and the concerned authorities based in Noida and Greater Noida.
