

KHABARBAZ

January to March 2024



Participation of Field Staff in the Monthly Work Presentations

At Unnati, we insist on a bottom-up approach in all aspects of work, from planning to policy making. This nurtures a sense of ownership in everyone's mind, boosts confidence, and offers clarity to everybody about the work and the roles involved. Every month MEL presentations are conducted for each program. Previously, only senior team members from Shahapur participated in these presentations. However, over time, all school sakhis have begun contributing in these MEL meetings to accomplish program objectives.

Data Management Work Started

In our work, we have to gather extensive data monthly for future reference. This includes the number of books read by each reader, the frequency of books read per month, village library statistics, circulation days per village, children attendance, and sessions conducted, among others. Currently, this data is entered manually by the staff into computers to generate required reports. However, this method is quite time-consuming. An automated system to generate certain reports would be beneficial. This leads to time savings, allowing the team to focus more on project implementation. Therefore, we engaged Vaikhari for data management.

Presentation of Unnati's work

BSI organised a meeting for its partner organisation on 8th February 2024 at Hindu Gymkhana, Pune. Unnati's concept of village library and an overview of our work were presented. In total, 12 organisations participated and showcased their work.

Staff Training on Effective Work Management

The core team of Unnati participated in a workshop organized by Mr. Ibrahim Afghan. This one-day workshop was accompanied by weekly mentoring sessions over two months. The workshop provided the team with clear strategies for planning their daily and weekly tasks. Allocating free time for any unexpected tasks is essential, ensuring that planned activities can be completed within the same day. The weekly mentoring session provided insights into various aspects, such as the importance of prioritizing tasks based on their deadlines. Additionally, when planning weekly tasks that necessitate collaboration with colleagues, it is essential to consider their availability to ensure the work is planned effectively.

Systems and Processes for Effective Work Streaming

At Unnati, we have weekly coordination meetings, bi-monthly administrative meetings and a monthly off-site staff meeting. Additionally, we have initiated weekly work review meetings for each program. These meetings are designed to offer direct guidance and support on crucial matters from Unnati's Director, Hemangi Joshi, which has had a positive impact on our productivity. Quick action is taken due to timely guidance on the issues faced by the team. Also the ongoing discussions related to the program helped to improve resulting in the completion of all tasks.

Participation in two-days conference

The Aarohan organisation hosted a two-day conference in Pune focusing on the health conditions of Adivasi (tribal) children. A representative from the Unnati team attended the conference. Presentations and discussions centered on the health and educational status of tribal children. Despite government claims of satisfactory conditions, the reality remains dire, with previous schemes being repackaged rather than improved, leaving the overall situation unchanged. Thus, it was decided that we must proceed through negotiations.

School felicitated Unnati's Shalasakhi

The literacy class run by Unnati in Babare School has seen numerous positive transformations among the children. Those who previously could not read the alphabet have begun reading books, and the children have started narrating stories during lessons and expressing themselves more freely. At the ashram school annual cultural meet, the school principal and the board of trustees honoured Unnati team member BharatiJadhav.



Learning Exchange visit by Swadhar, Pune

Seven team members from Swadhar, a Pune based organisation visited Unnati's village and school library project in Ruikhed, Akot. This was a one day visit in April.



School allocated a room for library

In Shahapur, the Babare Ashrams school, where our library project is conducted, lacked a dedicated space for this initiative. Previously, we occasionally set up the library in the computer room. After rigorous follow up with the school, finally in February, we got a separate room for the Unnati library project.



School picnic

At Unnati, we annually organize an educational excursion for the school children we support. This year, after a long gap, the schools arranged the outing, so we combined it with the school picnic. A total of 111 children from Januna enjoyed a trip to a waterpark in Amaravati. Meanwhile, 49 children from Dangarkhed and 44 from Koha explored a nearby dam. Additionally, 223 children from Khirkund Budruk visited a temple close to their village.



Art Festival in school- A place to rejoice:

Children are often eager to engage in art activities for as long as they are allowed. They would happily participate in art sessions all day if possible. Unfortunately, children in the village do not often have the opportunity to experience art in school or in their surrounding environment.



Unnati organized a Kalaotsava week from December 26 to 29 for children across four schools in Akot Tehsil featuring activities mainly in pottery, paper art, and painting. At a school in Khirkund Budruk, a teacher named Ms. Malawe demonstrated how to create a paper toy – Bhingri for children in 2nd to 5th standard. The workshop lasted from 11 am to 1:30 pm, with the teacher guiding the children through each step of the process. The children were so engrossed and delighted with the activity that they didn't even remember to take a bathroom break. No one was fighting; instead, they were all eagerly engaged in crafting the toy, anticipating the completion of the final product. When the toy was finally ready, the children were overjoyed. Children are naturally drawn to the arts, immersing themselves in the learning process, finding joy in every moment.

Children's assessment

Unnati's Shiku Anande classes (Mother tongue-based multilingual education classes) operate year-round.. Assessments are conducted twice a year. The year-end exam was conducted from March 11 to 18, 2024. The outcomes are as follows:

Enhanced writing capacities in children

	Marks %	% of Children * Januna	% of Children * Dangarkhed	% of Children *Khirkund budruk class 1	% of Children **Khirkund budruk class 2	% of Children ** Koha
Excellent	100	0	31	4.76	0	5.6
Very Good	75 To 99	73	56	47.62	70	38.9
Good	61 To 74	0	6	19.05	10	22.2
Satisfactory	50 To 60	5	6	9.52	10	16.7
All right	35 To 49	9	0	0	5	5.6
Non-satisfactory	01 To 34	9	0	19.05	0	5.6
Absent for the exam	0	5	0	0	5	5.6

Enhanced reading capacities in children

	<u>Mulakshar Group</u>		<u>Chaudakhadi Group</u>		<u>Jodakshar Group</u>		<u>Vachan Group</u>	
	Jul' 23	Mar' 24	Jul' 23	Mar' 24	Jul' 23	Mar' 24	Jul' 23	Mar' 24
* <u>Januna</u>	36%	9%	64%	9%	0%	5%	0%	73%
* <u>Dangarkhed</u>	38%	0%	63%	6%	0%	13%	0%	81%
* <u>Khirkund Budruk Class 1</u>	90%	29%	10%	14%	0%	48%	0%	10%
** <u>Khirkund Budruk Class 2</u>	100%	70%	0%	30%	0%	0%	0%	0%
** <u>Koha</u>	100%	44%	0%	17%	0%	17%	0%	22%

(Mulakshar Group: Children at the very primary stage of reading.

Chaudakhadi Group: children who can read Chaudakhadi;

Jodakshar Group: children who can read Jodakshar;

Vachan Group: children who can read paragraph

* Started classes since July 2022

** Started classes since September 2023

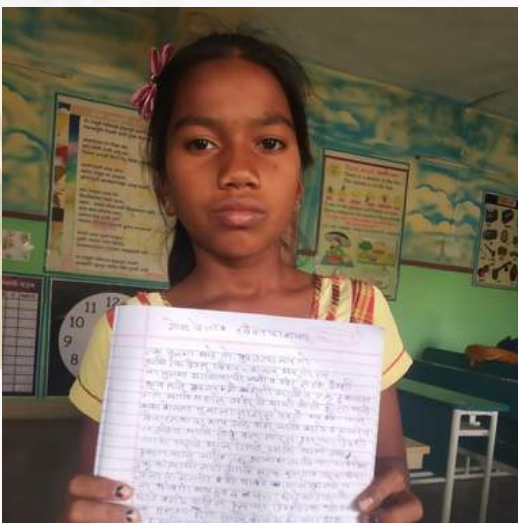
We will be assisting the children who have fallen behind in their academics this year.

Our stories in our own language....

In general, literature depicting tribal life is underrepresented in Maharashtra's literary works. Both adult and children's literature are lacking in narratives about their experiences. As we continue to implement library programs, this has been consistently and strongly brought to our attention. As a small contribution from our side, we have initiated a project of writing stories from people from the tribal community where we are operational. Within this period, we conducted two activities:

1) In the 2 tribal villages in Akola, we have been engaging with adolescent girls and women aged 15 to 25 years. We motivate them to write stories, initiating the process by writing on their life experiences with assistance from a village worker. The narratives they've crafted comprise their life events, personal challenges, and local festivals. Our collection has 18 stories, with 12 originating from Januna and 6 from Khirkund Budruk.

2) On the occasion of World Mother tongue Day on 21st February, in our Shahapaur project of Thane district, class 5th to 7th standard children from five Ashrams schools, translated 18 stories into M. Thakar, Katkar and Warli languages. A total of 19 girls and 6 boys participated in translating these stories and added great value to the collection of stories.



World Mother tongue day was celebrated with great enthusiasm

At Unnati, we celebrated February 21st as World Mother tongue Day in the tribal (Adivasi) villages and schools where we operate. This year, with the school's support, we celebrated it together. Teachers, children, and Unnati team members had been preparing for this event for a week. In 4 villages in Akola, the celebration took place on school grounds with the teachers' involvement. The day was celebrated by singing songs in Korku language, children read stories from Korku language books, and parents who are members of the village library, also engage in reading books.



In the Shahapur project of Thane district, five Ashrams schools which traditionally celebrated Marathi Day, teachers reported that for the first time, they observed Mother tongue Day. Children selected some story books from Unnati's library and translated it. Some children performed few songs representing their culture. Children from Babare school performed stories and songs in M. Thakur language, whereas children from Shenave school performed songs and stories in M. Thakur and Warli language. All the children from these schools had the opportunity to listen to the program in their own language. The teachers expressed gratitude by seeing the children speaking in their native language. Additionally, the program was attended by children, teachers and non-teaching staff.

Teachers' study circle (Akola district)

Working closely with the school teachers is one of our main areas of working in the project of Mother tongue-based multilingual education in schools where we closely work with. We started 6 study circles from October with teachers of 1st to 5th grade. In the previous newsletter, we have reported about 2 study circles. Here are the details of all the study circles that are formed. 13 teachers from 9 schools of Zilla Parishad were present on this study circles.



Sr. No.	Date of formation	Time	Place	Subject	Name of Expert
1	21/10/2023	10 to 2	<u>Ruikhed</u>	Interview on Study circle opening and it's format	Hemangi Joshi, Tr. Suresh Karande
2	25/11/2023	10 to 2	<u>Ruikhed</u>	Neuroscience and children's education	Dr. Shruti Panse
3	30/12/2023	10 to 2	<u>Ruikhed</u>	Maths-Part I	Vipula Abhyankar
4	06/01/2024	10 to 2	<u>Ruikhed</u>	Maths-Part II	Vipula Abhyankar
5	24/02/2024	10 to 2	<u>Ruikhed</u>	Teacher as an excellent planner-I	Hemangi Joshi, Tr. Suresh Karande
6	21/03/2024	10 to 2	<u>Ruikhed</u>	Teacher as an excellent planner-II	Hemangi Joshi, Tr. Suresh Karande

Teachers' training (Thane district)

Teachers' training (Thane district): With a demand from schools, Unnati had organised a training of the Door Step School, Pune for the schools. Six teachers from the four ashram schools, participated in this training. The teachers were from Shenave, TakiPathar, Gandulwad and Babare ashram school. The details are as follow-

Sr. No.	Date	Time	Place	Subject	Name of Expert
1	10 & 11 January 2024	10 to 5	Unnati's Shenave Office	Usage of educational materials tool bag for literacy education	ManishaBhosle, RanijitaPadwalkar

The workshop covered various topics, such as assessing children's fundamental skills, grouping them based on their abilities, and utilizing tools and language bag resources. It provided insights on how to make learning enjoyable through interactive games and activities. Additionally, it offered advice on addressing challenges faced in planning literacy classes for children. The workshop's success was attributed to its practical demonstrations, which many teachers have integrated into their classroom practices .



Book fairs in tribal villages

On the occasion of World Mother tongue Day, a book fair was organised in 4 tribal villages where Unnati's village libraries are run. In every village a total of 6 types of stalls were put up; which includes Korku language books, Arts books, Story books, Books relevant to girls and women, Anandi Newsletter and Picture books. Attendees took part in many activities like solving puzzles, drawing and question and answers.

In this process, we got enormous response in Januna and Koha villages as compared to four others, where people performed actions that were set up in the stalls.



Training of the staff

16 staff members from Akola and Shahapur teams participated in a total of **11 trainings** during January to March 2024. Among these, 5 trainings were conducted by an outside organisations which were attended by 8 team members from Unnati. The details of trainings by an outside organisations are as follows:

1. Library Educators Certificate Course- organised by Parag in Bhopal
2. Towards joyful education- Part II- organised by Khelghar in Pune.
3. Canva 101 and Branding at no cost- organised by Atma (virtual training[A1])
4. How to prepare effective annual reports- organised by Atma (virtual training)
5. Program management- organised by Atma (virtual training)

Apart from these, **19 staff members** participated in **6 trainings conducted internally.** The details are as follows:

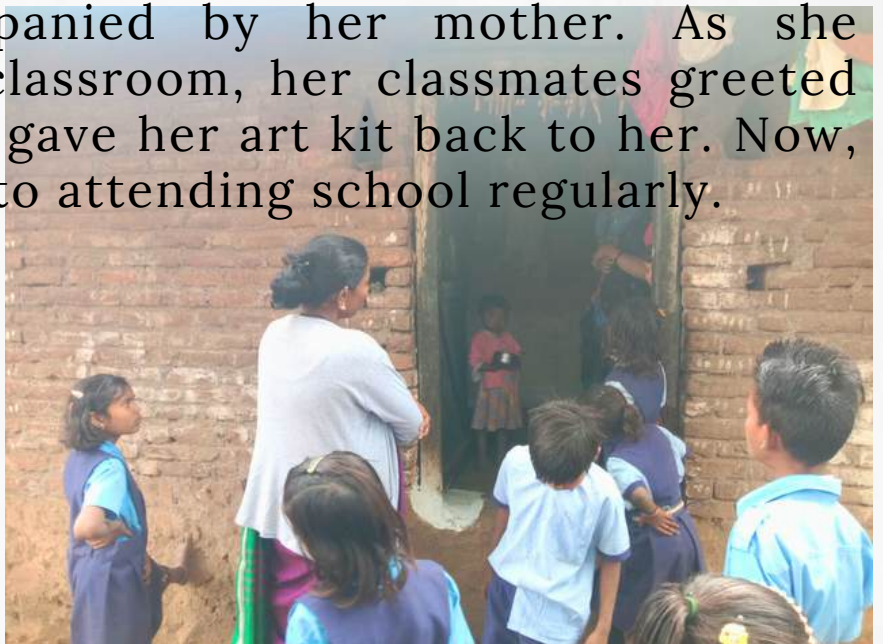
1. Experience based learning
2. Future creation of self and
3. Future creation of the organisation
4. 6 pillars of library system
5. How to write a story
6. Literacy training.

Reading study group

During January to March 2024, 6 study groups of Unnati's team members were conducted. In January, the team read a book 'Ek hota Carver', followed by discussions. And In February, they read the book 'Tottochan'. The study group is formed for knowledge building of the team members through practice based discussions. On every Thursday, for an hour, we intend to have this study group meet. 7 team members from Akola have participated in this. Due to various reasons such as MEL preparation, meetings with Hemangi, staff meetings, Mother tongue Day program, it was not possible to hold study groups on the expected days. Therefore, the study group and the teams' reading discussions lasted only 6 days.

Poonam, who was absent, started coming to school

Poonam, a grade three girl from the small village of Khirkund (Budruk), had been absent from school for the last two weeks. A staff member from Unnati decided to pay a home visit. During the first two visits, Poonam ran away. However, on the third time, the staff member smartly visited her home in the morning, when her parents were at home. When the staff member spoke with her parents, they revealed the reasons for her frequent absences from school and why Poonam fled upon seeing the staff member. Poonam has been caring for her younger sibling due to her mother's illness, which has resulted in her missing school. She has developed a fear of being scolded or punished by the teacher, leading her to stay at home and play with her brother instead. The staff member reported the situation to the concerned teacher. Accompanied by the teacher, the staff member from Unnati made another visit to Poonam house. Once again, Poonam fled upon seeing them arrive together. Fortunately, her mother was present. She informed us "I am willing to send her back to school, but Poonam is resistant to the idea". The teacher, along with a member of Unnati staff, reassured her mother that no one would scold or beat her at school; she just needed to be brought to school. Remarkably, two days later, Poonam arrived at school accompanied by her mother. As she stepped into the classroom, her classmates greeted her with joy. They gave her art kit back to her. Now, she looks forward to attending school regularly.



The issue of children missing school to fulfil family responsibilities, like caring for younger siblings, is significant. We recognized for years that villages need well-managed, cost-free day care centres. The government lacks a day care scheme or if one exists, it is not functional.

In tribal villages or among deprived groups, home visits are crucial to ensure that children remain in school and thrive. These visits uncover the primary reasons for absenteeism and the families disadvantaged status. Through home visits, parents can be engaged in their children education and informed about their academic performance. Unnati learning centres offer Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) year-round. We have designated two days a week, specifically Tuesday and Wednesday, for conducting home visits.

Illustrations in books captivate children and draw them towards reading

It can be seen that the reading culture among school children is declining day by day. However, in areas where Unnati's library projects are implemented, there is a positive picture of children developing interest in libraries, especially if the books are engaging with lots of illustrations. Seema Gira, one of our students, demonstrates this trend. Seema, a cheerful 5th standard girl, studies at an Ashram school in TakiPathar. Her parents work as labourers in Ghat regions, and she along with her two siblings resides in the Ashram School's hostel. Seema is a member of our library project, where we conduct separate weekly sessions in her school. During these sessions, the children are encouraged to pick up a book and read it wherever they feel comfortable. Seema once attended such a session, and had already decided on the book she wanted to read.

She began searching for the book 'Dhamal Ravivar'. But before she could locate the book, Jayesh had already begun reading it. When she requested the book from Jayesh, he refused to give it until he had completed it. Seema felt nervous and took a seat in one of the corners of the room. She remained silent, otherwise she is a very talkative and book-eager girl. Observing her unusual behaviour, our School Sakhi Ashwini started conversing with Seema. That book is quite brief, Jayesh will quickly finish it, and will give it you. But Seema refused to listen. Then Ashwini suggested Seema, that she could take the book to the hostel, and read it for as much time as she wanted. This gave a smile on her face and she took another book 'Rangancha Utsaah' to read. But her mind was not interested in the book and Ashwini understood it. Again Ashwini spoke to her to understand why Seema is so eager to have this book. At that time, she said that during a book exchange session in class 7, Sonali Didi has brought the same book to the hostel to read. As Seema read the book at night, she was drawn to the big pictures and also the lengthy sentences. She loved reading the book at that time.

Sundays are usually of leisure days in the hostel, distinct from other days. She could imitate herself with the book, the big pictures were resonating with her. She was fond of the character 'Bunty' from the book and the fun he did. She too wanted to have the same fun. The book's curiosity and the joy of living through its pages seemed to have stirred something in Seema.





Unnati's teacher telling a story to children in class



Video of children singing song with teacher in class

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