Annual Report

2017 - 2018

Vikramshila
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Sitting down to write this note I am filled with a sense of sadness and loss, as last year we lost our beloved President Dr. Atindra Sen, who passed away suddenly on 15th of October 2017. He had been with us as a member since 2002 and then as our President from 2006 on - a constant source of inspiration and courage. Though he belonged to the cadre of Indian Administrative Services, he was an academic at heart and took a keen interest in all our activities as he was an ardent votary of the idea of universalisation of education and kept reminding us that it was an arduous journey through a long and unchartered territory that we have undertaken. I remember with the deepest sense of gratitude his invaluable contribution to our work through his long years of association. After his passing away, there was a period of void and uncertainty, but we were fortunate to have Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose- former Justice of Supreme Court of India and currently Honourable member of National Human Rights Commission, succeed as our new President. An eminent public personality and a person of rare sensitivity and erudition, we hope to have him as our guide and mentor in the coming years.

Last year we reached out to over 26,000 children through our 12 projects and partners located in 9 states of India and Nepal. Our work extended to directly working with 142 primary schools, 108 secondary schools, 44 government and private madrasas and 38 Anganwadi centres. The geographical spread and demographic variety gave us a unique opportunity to see how children learn in different parts of our country, the struggles that teachers go through in classrooms, the changing aspirations of parents, and the mind-boggling complexities of education all over the country. The bigger picture of education tends to overshadow the small triumphs but I strongly feel that it is important at times to celebrate success in order to hold on to our optimism and belief that things are changing - however slowly, and that things can be changed for the better. Our Annual Report is an effort not only to highlight our achievements to the external world and our donors, but also a kind of affirmation to ourselves to carry on the work with renewed faith, hope and optimism, regardless of the challenges that lie ahead.

Shubhra Chatterji
We reached 26680 children in the year 2017-2018 directly through classes, learning camps and workshops.

Vikramshila worked in 38 Anganwadi centres, 36 government madrasas and 8 private madrasas.

We also directly reached out to 142 primary schools, 108 secondary schools and 27 education centres through our programmes and activities.
139 workshops/trainings and orientations across geographies
1692 teachers and 176 government functionaries/officials
796 NGO teachers and 157 government and private madrasa teachers
358 Community leaders
TEACHER-DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO AGENCIES

- Knowledge Creation and Dissemination
- Reading Improvement Programme - Tripura
- Madrasa Intervention
- Early Childhood Education
- TMF Headway
- Standardization of Tools
- The Math and Science Project Pilot Programme
Knowledge Creation and Dissemination

The Central Resource Unit (CRU) can be termed the ‘heart’ of Vikramshila Education Resource Society- creating and disseminating knowledge being its salient role.

In the area of ‘knowledge creation’ the CRU works at three levels – i) it develops training modules for teachers, (ii) handbooks of classroom-processes for teachers and (iii) learning resources for children. With regard to ‘knowledge dissemination’, we offer in-service capacity-building programmes for both government and non-government teachers and other stakeholders in the field of education while also conducting events such as learning camps and seminars to further the capacity-enhancement both within the institutional ambit as well as at the community-level. This year, CRU has played a significant role in enriching Vikramshila as a resource organization, expanding its work to states like Mizoram, Nagaland, Andaman and even beyond national borders - Nepal, while continuing our work in Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura and West Bengal.
The poor learning outcomes visible across states is a cause of major concern and has been pointed out repeatedly by national level surveys such as ASER. A number of grassroots organizations (some of which we are partners with) across the country have been working to address this, providing learning support to children beyond school hours- whether within school premises or in community spaces through the setting up of learning-support centres. The CRU has been instrumental in these processes by offering technical support in the form of designing and monitoring the programmes, continuous-capacity building of different stakeholders, design and development of teaching learning materials and adopting context-relevant strategies for advocacy.

The major focus of our work over the past year has been on language-learning, especially English language-learning, followed by Science and Mathematics education – areas highlighted as low-performing subjects for a majority of children according to the National Achievement Survey. Over this year, our work with new partners in regions like Odisha, Andaman, Nagaland and Mizoram has helped us evolve further from providing capacity-building support to teachers to capacitating entire organizations based on their focal education issues at the local level. While the content of the work (poor learning outcomes of children, language-learning, environment issues, school safety, etc) is familiar territory to Vikramshila, the sheer political, socio-cultural diversity offered by these engagements has enriched us immeasurably as a resource organization. From the dooras tea-gardens of West Bengal and the industrial tribal belt of Keonjhar to remote villages in Nagaland and tribal pockets of Mizoram – our exposure to multi-lingualism and multiculturalism and its consequent implications on learning, has been rich to say the least.

As a part of knowledge dissemination and capacity building, our major thrust has always been on working with government organizations and teachers. To create a parallel alternative system has never been part of our agenda. Rather the central principle that has determined our work has been to strengthen the government system. In terms of knowledge creation, we have developed teachers’ resource books in Odia for learning support centres, students’ workbooks in Nepali, Odia and English, teaching learning materials in Nepali, Odia and English.

### Interface with governmental organizations and capacity building of government teachers

This year we had an opportunity to work in the state of Jammu and Kashmir as technical support partners of UNICEF (Delhi office). In spite of the geo-political challenges present in the state, a strong political will to take things forward was evidenced at all levels – from the senior officials at the state level, down to the teachers and the anganwadi workers in the field. It was heartening to see the keen desire to bring about positive changes and the high motivation level of participants. Their openness to learn and receive new ideas in turn helped motivate our staff. Our primary areas of work in Jammu & Kashmir have been in the following three areas: Early Childhood Education (ECE), Special Training for out-of-school children and Early Grades Language Learning (ELL).

The Early Language Learning package developed by us has been much appreciated by SSA and a decision was taken by them to implement it
not only in schools in the three pilot districts, but in all the schools of the state. The package has also been appreciated by their text book committee who are currently in the process of modifying their textbooks, having adopted some of the activities and resources of the ELL package to ensure convergence. The Foundational level English material that was developed by us for use in STCs¹ (for OoSC²) has also received appreciation and been adopted by the state. It is currently being used on a large scale in all schools for Remedial Teaching. In ECE, there has been a spirit of collaboration and cooperation between the NGOs and the CDPOs/ Supervisors and the MLTCs³ during the setting up of model centres. It was heartening for us to see that the different kinds of technical support provided by us was well-accepted by the state. Given above is a diagrammatic representation of the work covered over the year.

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**Education to Employability programme in Bihar**

The CRU team supported 20 govt. schools in Bihar by facilitating state-level and district-level master trainers’ trainings. Additionally, we provided direct support to schools by conducting classes on career counselling, communicative English and life skills Vikramshila was also a part of their celebrations of Bihar Diwas and Shiksha Diwas.

**Improving Mathematics and Science teaching in government schools in West Bengal**

In 2015, MHRD, GOI initiated the Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan(RAA), responding to the global recognition of scientific and technological innovation as markers of national development. The programme aims to inculcate in children a scientific curiosity and to promote a shift towards enquiry-based learning in the education system, utilizing the expertise of higher education and

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¹ Special Training Centre  
² Out of School Children  
³ Middle Level Training Centres
research institutions such as IITs, IIMs and IISERs for technical support.

The need for the RAA to be implemented in West Bengal was acknowledged by the state’s School Education Department, in light of the results of learning achievement surveys conducted by NAS and Utkarsha Abhiyan among others. 2016 saw UNICEF developing a pilot programme to address this situation in partnership with Vikramshila. The Maths and Science Project launched was aimed at students of classes VI, VII and VIII (an estimated 4000 students) in 10 government schools across Kolkata selected by the SSM.

We conducted three teacher-training workshop series on Mathematics and Science for 48 high school teachers from the schools under the project. Apart from the centralised workshops, one of the key aspects of the intervention was onsite mentoring and monitoring support not only by our internal team but also by an expert panel created for this purpose. The experts conducted sessions with the students and demonstrated how a hands-on approach can be adopted to enrich and enliven Science-learning, even in populous classrooms. Appreciated by teachers, this process actively generated an enthusiasm for Mathematics and Science among students. Another primary feature of the programme was the installation of Maths and Science corners in classes 6-8 of all 10 schools. This was intended to increase students’ familiarity with hands-on experimentation and demonstrate how affordable and easily available material from our immediate surroundings can be used to understand science conceptually.

Subject-related exposure visits were also organized for students and teachers- we arranged for 26 teachers to be taken to Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur and Bose Institute, Kolkata. Exposure visits to Birla Industrial and Technological Museum and Bose Institute also proved to be a source of motivation for the students of these schools.

State-level workshop for govt. secondary teachers on inclusive education

Vikramshila had developed a module on inclusive education and career counseling for the State in collaboration with Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) back in 2016. Using this module we had conducted training for 155 KRPs. These Key Resource Persons have further conducted district level training and reached out to 5000 schools in the state. As a continuation of this effort, this year we have trained 407 KRPs (Key Resource Person) in collaboration with RMSA and SCERT through which 20000 secondary teachers will be trained.

Engagement with Partners at grassroots

In collaboration with the Tata Trusts

JMECT

There are two partner organisations in Assam with whom we have had intensive engagement. Out of these, our engagement with JMECT encompasses capacitiation of the organization through development of the staff for working on issues related to education. This year we conducted four workshops for 35 staff-members (on an average) after identifying four subject areas for capacity building- namely ECE, First Language Pedagogy (Assamese), Second Language Pedagogy (English) and Mathematics. Aiming to capacitate the organisation on these components, we conducted workshops with their core team. We also organised an exposure visit for their leadership and conducted an orientation
on accounts and administrative matters.

**Ajagar Social Circle**

Ajagar Social Circle is another grass-root level organisation in Assam we have engaged with in past years. This year, we extended our support during an external evaluation conducted by the Tata Trusts and facilitated the process on the request of Tata Trusts and local partners. Through this, we shared the capacity-building process, the nature of our mentoring and monitoring support, field level issues etc. with the evaluator.

**CESR, Purulia**

This was our third year of engagement with CESR, Purulia and we focussed on partnerships with the government schools and capacity-building of government teachers. The CESR team conducted government teachers’ training with handholding support from us. Two primary teachers’ trainings have been conducted for 20 primary school teachers from 12 schools in the locality. The first training was focussed on subject pedagogy and the second on organizing learning camps for the children. CESR works in a difficult geographical terrain, at the top of the Ayodhya hills. Most of the staff-members hail from tribal communities. In this light, it is quite a remarkable achievement that the organisation has been conducting training of government teachers, many of whom come from non-tribal backgrounds.

**CINI, Raiganj**

A 3-day orientation programme was conducted in Raiganj in 2017 for 28 volunteers of CINI Raiganj. Based on the needs assessment we focussed on hands-on activities in language and mathematics. There were discussions on theory as well as demonstration of hands-on activities. The participants were exposed to different strategies for classroom management, lesson plan preparation and development of TLMs with indigenous low-cost and no-cost materials.

**The Howrah Samaritan**

A 3-day workshop was conducted in Howrah Samaritan School for 24 teachers/education volunteers at Salap, Howrah in 2017, focussed on pre-primary education. The basic concepts of pre-primary education and the five domains of development were discussed with practical demonstration. Language matrix and Pre-number concepts formed an important part of the training programme.

**PVCHR, Varanasi**

A 4-day refresher training programme focussed on first language and Mathematics pedagogy was conducted in Varanasi with 22 education volunteers of PVCHR. These volunteers work directly in the Madrasas. Another area highlighted in this training was Environmental Science (EVS). The importance and necessity of teaching EVS in the context of NCF 2005 was shared with the teachers. Practical demonstration helped them understand the effectiveness of the teaching methodology clearly.

**In collaboration with WIPRO**

Vikramshila has also been working with grass-root level organisations in collaboration with WIPRO. The main role of Vikramshila in this light has been to capacitate the staff members through different training programmes, to enable the organisation to address various local level educational issues. Under the purview of this engagement, there are several organisations from diverse geographical and socio-cultural backgrounds including for instance, Dooars Jagaran and Rural Aid in West Bengal, Patang and Chale Chalo in Odisha, ANET Dakshin Foundation in the Andamans and NCHD in Nagaland.
At the onset of the intervention, we conducted needs assessment visits and planned our course of action accordingly.

**Dooars Jagaran & Rural Aid**

Dooars Jagaran and Rural Aid are two grass-root level organizations working in the tea gardens of Dooars. The tea gardens at present are facing severe socio-economic challenges in terms of procurement of rights of the workers, lack of basic utility services and non-functional schools and so on. In this context, both the organisations are working to improve the state of education in the area by running activity centres for children. They work directly with the children with technical support from Vikramshila.

The CRU team has been bolstering these organizations by building the capacity of their teams. We have conducted a foundation course on education for their teams based on our assessments of these organizations’ needs.

**Patang**

The engagement of CRU with Patang has been through a training workshop on language learning, specifically focusing on language bridging strategies.

**Chale Chalo**

For Chale Chalo, the CRU rendered their support through a training programme on the foundations of education. Besides this, an exposure visit to Kolkata & Howrah was organized with members of Chale Chalo in order to expose them to different teaching and learning methodologies practised at learning support centres run by Vikramshila. All the chief functionaries took active part in the programme.

**ANET, Dakshin Foundation (WIPRO)**

Vikramshila started working with ANET, Dakshin this year. The organisation works in the Andamans, to improve the quality of education through learning support centres. The chief functionary and facilitators of the organisation were oriented by the CRU team on the foundations of education, language pedagogy and teaching strategies. They were also exposed to several teaching and learning strategies practised at Vikramshila’s model school and learning support centres in Burdwan, Kolkata and Howrah.

**NCHD (WIPRO)**

Our engagement with NCHD commenced this year. The organisation is working in the remotest hilly areas of Nagaland. Members of the CRU team conducted a needs assessment meeting with the chief functionaries and the facilitators of the organization. Like Chale Chalo and ANET Dakshin Foundation, an exposure visit was arranged for them as well.
World Vision

Our engagement with World Vision India started in 2016 and continued this year. The organisation is working in Kalimpong (West Bengal) and Bhubaneswar (Odisha) with the aim of improving the quality of education at the primary level. They run several remedial education centres beyond school hours in both the areas.

We have been working with the World Vision team for capacitating the staff members in both Kalimpong and Bhubaneswar. In both areas, the course of action was similar; we have conducted training on Language and Mathematics for the REC facilitators and helped them conduct SMC meetings. We also conducted mentoring and monitoring support visits during which we observed the classroom arrangement and the teaching and learning process. We gave necessary feedback to the facilitators for better functioning of the centres and also conducted an orientation programme with the government teachers, HMs and members of the School Management Committee on the functioning of RECs. Through group and individual exercises, the participants were capacitated to realise the points laid down in RtE 2009 and NCF 2005.

Magic Bus

Vikramshila also partnered with Magic Bus India this year. The aim of this collaboration has been to provide learning support through the functioning of remedial learning centres. We are working with the organisation in Keonjhar (Odisha), Mizoram and Nepal. The first intervention was a needs assessment visit, followed by an orientation programme, where the REC facilitators were oriented on the foundations of education, the need for remedial education and on the process of conducting baseline assessments. During this programme, the headmasters of government schools were also invited. We shared our experiences in the field of remedial education and explained the functioning of the RECs. This training was followed by a 5-day training of facilitators on subject pedagogies for English and Mathematics. Through mentoring and monitoring support visits to the centres, members of the CRU team also shared their views and suggestions for further improvement.

Support to our internal projects

TRI, Bankura

Vikramshila is working intensively with the local community and govt. school teachers in the remote villages of Bankura district in West Bengal. We are working in 4 gram panchayats in Ranibandh and Hirbandh blocks to bridge the school-community disconnect, thereby strengthening the school system through
community ownership. We have conducted 2 trainings for SHG members on perspective-building. We reached out to 187 SHG members through these trainings.

Presently we are working with the SHG members and govt. school teachers simultaneously. In a first of its kind attempt, we have been able to bring together government teachers and SHG members in a joint platform to impart training for conducting learning camps for students. The experiment turned out to be successful in bringing the community and teachers together in the teaching-learning space, with the CRU facilitating the training process. We have reached out to 423 students directly through the camps, with teachers from 21 schools taking part in the camp. The SHG members also participated actively.

**Promoting Equity in Learning**

Vikramshila has been working in South 24 Pgs. with Child Rights Workers of Seva Kendra Calcutta. The CRU extended their support to conduct a camp orientation on English language and Mathematics for these Child Rights Workers (CRW) whose main role is to facilitate the children to acquire grade level competencies. These workers also facilitated English language and Mathematics camps later on, with handholding support from the CRU team. We also conducted training programmes for pre-primary and primary levels.

The other partner in this intervention is Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, who work in Purulia. The engagement of CRU in this intervention has been during one camp orientation on English language. There was also an annual meeting during which we shared our experiences and pedagogical practices with government school heads and teachers.

**Headway**

CRU, along with other experts in the field, extended their support to the Headway project in terms of training government school teachers in Maths and English (in Kolkata, West Bengal). 26 teachers were trained through this process. We also gave hand-holding support to the project team in designing lesson plans and conducting regular classes at 10 government schools.
ITC Mission Sunehra Kal

Vikramshila is running learning support centres within the premises of 30 govt. schools in Howrah to help students achieve grade appropriate competencies. The centres are run beyond school hours by Education Volunteers who are trained from time to time by the CRU team. This year, the CRU facilitated two trainings on English language teaching, one on Bengali language and one on Mathematics in addition to facilitating an orientation programme on the rationale and process of running supplementary learning centres, for government school teachers. The CRU has also played a significant role in advocacy with government officials.

ECE intervention

Vikramshila’s CRU team also extended their support in strengthening the Early Childhood Education centres in different districts of West Bengal. The main focus this year was to strengthen the AWTCs (Anganwadi Training Centre) and MLTCs (Master Level Training Centre) in West Bengal. In this process, 3 trainings were conducted for the AWTC and MLTC principals along with the resource group members in the 3 districts of South 24 Parganas, Bankura and Birbhum.

Support in Tripura Intervention

In Tripura, the CRU has played an important role in providing intensive support to the schools in Tulashikhar. Starting from BaLA\(^3\) implementation for providing an input-rich environment to developing materials and plans for virtual learning classes, CRU has had a crucial role to play. We made a draft Users’ Manual for the teachers to be able to use the BaLA paintings as teaching supplements. For VLCs\(^4\), CRU initiated the pilot programme and oriented the local resource person in Agartala in conducting classes through the virtual medium. More than 500 students have been reached out through the VLC.

All trainings and workshops on English language teaching have been facilitated by members of the CRU team.

Sharing of different activity-based methods to teach language without curtailing the importance of the textbook, has been the focus in all the training programmes. With respect to multilingual education, the CRU has played an active role in developing the multilingual teaching and learning package along with Kokborok experts from the state. We have oriented Primary teachers on the usage of different components of the package. The CRU has reached out to around 300 teachers in Tripura through English and bilingual training programmes.

Along with the training of government teachers, we have also trained the cluster coordinators from CML, who work at the field level to provide handholding support in the govt. schools and to the community members. Two perspective-building training programmes have been

Performative Story Telling Workshop

An innovative 4-day workshop on performative storytelling was conducted by the CRU along with expert resource persons from Kolkata, in Khowai. Students and teachers from 10 govt. schools participated in this workshop. ‘Breaking the Silence: One Story at a Time’ aimed to address specific social issues through dance forms and body movements. The workshop helped to promote positive activism and civic engagement while also creating a space for school-community interaction.

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\(^3\) BaLA : Building as Learning Aid
\(^4\) VLC : Virtual Learning Classes
conducted by CRU resource persons on the foundations of education and basic subject pedagogies of first and second languages.

The module development process in Tripura was started last year. This year we handed over Physical Science, Life Science, Environmental Science and Mathematics modules to the State SSA.

### Knowledge Creation

#### Module, Workbook & Material development

Preparation of modules for the teachers and facilitators & workbook and teaching learning materials (TLM) for the students is another function of the CRU. A list of materials developed by us this year is listed below.

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<th>Name of material</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English Workbook</td>
<td>Children (in whichever state applicable)</td>
<td>For Supplementary learning support on English language</td>
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<td>Odia Workbook</td>
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<td>Board Games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>Alphabet Cards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>Activity card</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>EVS Package</td>
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<td>23.1</td>
<td>Conversation Charts on personal hygiene</td>
<td>Teachers, students (West Bengal &amp; Tripura)</td>
<td>Materials to conduct activities on EVS and Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>Charts on organ systems</td>
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<td>23.3</td>
<td>Food value chart</td>
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<td>23.4</td>
<td>Board Games</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Mathematics Package</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>Number cards</td>
<td>Teachers, students (West Bengal &amp; Tripura)</td>
<td>Materials for better understanding of Mathematical concepts through activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>Concept boards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>Number rods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>Fraction kit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>Cards on concept of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>ECE Package</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>Puppet</td>
<td>Teachers, Students, Govt. (West Bengal, Assam, Jammu &amp; Kashmir)</td>
<td>Materials for language and cognitive development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>Story Card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>Concertina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>Colour Mixing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>Dot cards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>Number Card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>Shapes Domino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>Activity card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading Improvement Programme, Tripura

Vikramshila’s Reading Improvement Programme will complete its third year in July 2018. The programme aims to provide quality education in Tulashikhar block of Khowai district in Tripura. In the first year, we had trained block and cluster resource persons with the expectation to receive their support in capacity building of teachers. But since their support was not obtained as per our expectations, in the second year we focused on identifying and training teachers who would act as resource persons for future training programmes. However, this year the Supreme Court passed a verdict declaring the recruitment of 10323 teachers throughout Tripura as illegal. This affected the course of action and threw us the challenge of developing new strategies to keep the programme going.

The programme encompasses capacity building of teachers through centralized workshops and regular on-site support visits. It also includes development of materials and resources for the teachers and students for improving classroom practices. This year, our major works have been in the areas of teacher training on providing learning support to students through learning camps (bridging the learning gaps) for Bengali, training on strategies for bridging language gaps, Primary teachers’ training on English language pedagogy and perspective building programme for cluster coordinators of CML. A major work that has been initiated this year is the intensive support programme for 10 schools. Other activities include conducting Virtual Learning Classes, implementation of BaLA in schools, conducting midline assessments, installation of an offline digital resource called ‘Read to Me’ and development of English workbooks.
## At a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of activity</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Training of Upper Primary teachers on bridging the learning gaps for Bengali</td>
<td>25 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bilingual training for Primary teachers</td>
<td>154 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>English language training for Primary teachers</td>
<td>113 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Perspective building programme</td>
<td>12 Cluster Coordinators from CML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bilingual training for Primary teachers (Refresher)</td>
<td>154 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Perspective building programme (Refresher)</td>
<td>10 participants from Vikramshila and CML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Virtual Learning Classes</td>
<td>Students of class IX from 12 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>BaLA implementation</td>
<td>Completed in 25 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Midline assessment</td>
<td>Bengali- 678, English- 785 (Class II-V) English- 242 (Class VI-VIII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Performative Storytelling</td>
<td>Teachers and students from 12 schools participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Intensive support Programme</td>
<td>Work has started in 10 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Installation of Read to Me software</td>
<td>The software has been installed in 12 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Development of English workbooks</td>
<td>English Workbooks have been developed for classes I to V and distributed to 38 schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Work done so far

This year we trained primary and upper primary government teachers as well as the cluster coordinators from CML in addition to developing learning enhancement activities.

#### Training with government teachers

The trainings with teachers were conducted through centralised workshops in Tripura. These included training of Upper Primary teachers on bridging the learning gaps for Bengali, training of Primary teachers on bilingual strategies and English language training for Primary teachers.

**Training of Upper Primary teachers on bridging the learning gaps for Bengali**

The main idea of conducting remedial education classes is to bridge the learning gaps of students. Learning gaps are caused due to a variety
of reasons ranging from children being first generation schoolgoers, who do not get academic support at home, frequent absenteeism, poor health and insufficient nutrition, to low proficiency of teachers, social distance between students and teachers, teachers’ absenteeism and other infrastructural issues. In case of language learning, the main aim of remedial education is to help students attain basic literacy and reading ability. Since time is a constraint and the learning gaps are massive, accelerated learning techniques used during camps help to improve the learning levels of students. With the view of orienting 25 Upper Primary teachers on how to apply appropriate techniques and strategies in a Bengali language camp, a two-day training programme was organised. The training emphasised the use of activity-based teaching and learning methods during camps as well as regular classes.

**Bilingual training for Primary teachers**

The need to bridge the gap between students’ mother tongue and their school language has been underlined in the NCF 2005 as a vital component for language learning. Language bridging is an essential part of teaching and learning in contexts like Tulashikhar, where the mother tongue (Kokborok) of the students (as well as teachers) bears no lexical similarity with the medium of instruction at schools (Bengali). Since language is not just a subject in itself but also a medium of learning other subjects, it is essential to be proficient in language. In this case, students coming from Kokborok-speaking backgrounds face huge challenges to learn Bengali, which in turn affects their comprehension of other subjects. It has been observed that the bilingual approach that uses both the mother tongue of the students and the target language (Bengali) is an effective way to address this scenario. Moreover, if the gap is bridged in the early years, students benefit more from it. A training was thus organized to expose Primary teachers to the bilingual approach. A refresher training was also conducted wherein the participants were shown the use of different components of the bilingual package developed by Vikramshila in collaboration with language experts from Tripura. 237 teachers were trained on bilingual strategies to enable them to bridge the learning gaps of the students.

**Primary teachers’ training in English language pedagogy**

113 primary teachers were trained in English language pedagogy. The training was based on the module that Vikramshila had developed and submitted to Tripura SSA for the training of Primary teachers, in alignment with the textbooks and the NCERT learning outcomes of classes I-IV. Several language-based games and activities were demonstrated during the training. The participants mapped these activities
with the learning outcomes and the training module, the idea being to demonstrate that the activities had a sound pedagogical root as explained by the NCERT.

**Training of Cluster Coordinators**

**Perspective building programme**

The recruitment-annulment of 10,323 teachers was a severe blow to the school system and the need for forming a pool of resource teachers who could implement teaching-learning strategies at the field level and bring about sustainable changes in the education scenario of the state, was felt. Hence CML and Vikramshila jointly decided that 12 cluster coordinators from CML would be trained on the basics of pedagogy so that they would be equipped to provide academic support to the teachers when they visited the schools. In this light, a training was conducted in workshop mode for 6 days, in Kolkata. There were sessions on understanding quality education in the light of the NCF 2005 and RTE 2009. Further, the CCs were taken to the Vikramshila School in Bigha, Burdwan where they observed the child-centric and activity-based classroom processes, sharing their impressions with the teachers. A refresher training was organised to enable the participants to not only use TLMs for conducting activities with the students but to also share them with the teachers during field visits.

**Learning-enhancement Activities**

**Virtual Learning Classes**

Integrating technology with education has been seen to make learning not only more interesting, but also effective. It additionally helps to reach out to a greater number of students at the same time. With this in mind, we developed digital resources based on the English syllabus of class X that was used for conducting classes through the virtual medium. Starting in 2016, the virtual learning classes this year saw a focus on class 12 students from twelve schools. Local resource person Mr. Dilip Deb, with technical support from Vikramshila conducted classes on English literature and grammar.

**Development of English workbooks**

We have developed supplementary language resources in the form of English workbooks called the Learning Tree for classes I-V. Along with the workbooks, a manual has also been developed to help teachers use the workbooks effectively. The manual lays down the details of the activities that the teachers need to do before asking students to write in the workbooks. The workbooks are meant to ensure continued use and practice of the English language.
**BaLA implementation**

Building as Learning Aid (BaLA) is an innovative concept towards qualitative improvement in education which aims to develop a child-friendly physical environment through changes and alterations in the school infrastructure. It helps students to get exposed to new content and ideas consistently through activities and games. This has been completed in 25 schools in Tulashikhar so far and has already brought change into the school environment, turning it input-rich.

**Intensive support**

The Supreme Court’s verdict on the annulment of recruitment of 10323 teachers has affected the functioning of schools in Tulashikhar block. There has been a sharp decline in the number of teachers in most of the schools and qualitatively, a dip in motivation among the teaching faculty which has resulted in infrequent classes. In response, Vikramshila has stepped in, working with 10 schools by providing onsite academic support. These 10 schools are expected to act as models for the other schools in Tulashikhar.

**Read to Me**

In order to cater to the needs of Madhyamik students, digital offline resources in the form of digitized textbooks have been developed in alignment with the syllabi of classes IX and X. The offline resource called ‘Read to Me’ has been developed by English Helper, a trusted organisation with expertise in this field. The digitized texts have an audio component to help both students and teachers listen to the stories and poems, imbibing multiple aspect of the language with the use of visual cues, etc. This software has been installed in 12 schools.

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**Highlight**

**Performative Storytelling Workshop- “Breaking the Silence, One story at a time”**

An innovative workshop on performative storytelling was conducted at Khowai Government Class XII School. The 3-day workshop saw the participation of teachers and students from 12 schools along with cluster coordinators from CML.

An ensemble of artists came together to promote positive activism and civic engagement. Using a combination of modern and traditional methods of storytelling, they aimed to directly empower and influence young leaders to combat gender imbalance and discrimination and other social issues at the microcosmic level within the communities. Since it was felt that the involvement of the community through the school was necessary for bringing in any sustainable change, the workshop was conducted to initiate engagement with the community and to start a dialogue between the school and the local community. Due to the primary focus on psychomotor exercises and body movements, the otherwise dominant linguistic barrier failed to hold and the workshop saw enthusiastic participation from teachers and students, of both tribal and non-tribal backgrounds.
Madrasa Intervention

Vikramshila has been working with the Madrasa Education System in West Bengal since 2004, aiming to offer high-quality pedagogical interventions both at the level of classroom processes and whole-school transformation programmes. This is an effort to address lacunae in the areas of educational quality and equity, thereby reaching out to the most marginalized and under-served children of the predominant minority community in our state. Recognizing the crucial role these institutions play in providing the Muslim community access to formal education, we joined hands with the state in its efforts to modernize Madrasas and bring about an all-round improvement in their quality. In collaboration with the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education (WBBME) and supported by Tata Trusts, the project covered 36 government-aided and 8 private madrasas in Hooghly district.

- **44 Madrasas**
- **318 teachers**
- **8181 students offered learning support**
- **2730 students availed ITE supported**
- **3017 students supported in Science Education**

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**Establishing models of good practices**

- Learning Enhancement activities
- Setting up science corners to promote hands on classroom teaching
- Integrated Technology in Education

**Supporting state system**

- Support to state-wide Bridge Course Development
- Support in Bridge course training in Hooghly
- Support in data analysis of results for Hooghly
- Class V students
(a) Strengthening Science Education
The science education program’s convergent framework aims to nurture a love for science and cultivate a spirit of inquiry and creativity among the Madrasa students. Offering the scope to move beyond the textbook and better realise the theoretical aspects of Science through experiments, this programme has provided students with the space to re-think and explore science. Students of Classes 6, 7 and 8 in both Government aided and private Madrasas have been included in this intervention. The students perform simple experiments with easily accessible materials, guided by their teachers. In addition to Science modules specifically designed for teachers, the science corners come with display charts that comprehensively list the experiments from the Physical Science syllabi (as per the class) for the ease of students.

The reverberations of this program were felt when the Madrasa students not only performed experiments on different scientific topics learned from their textbooks using the science corners, but even filmed and photographically documented their experiments as part of their ITE projects. The project has, in addition to rousing students’ interest in Science, compelled children to access their higher order thinking skills in causing them to analyse and evaluate their own learning. Science corners have been set up in 16 Government-aided and private madrasas so far.

(b) Learning-enhancement activities
Our remedial support in the government-aided madrasas was implemented in order to provide quality educational support and to address the issue of equity among children of a largely marginalized community. Keen observation over the course of our work has shown us that the academic leap from primary schools (upto class 4) into Junior (class 5-8) and High (classes 5-10) madrasas often proves to be too high for the students. The class 5 batches of students that join these madrasas display major learning gaps. It was in response to this recurring problem that we designed the form our Remedial Support to madrasas would take – the Bridge Course Initiative. This initiative works to strengthen students’ language-fluency, concept-clarity, etc in the initial phase, thus helping smoothen the otherwise difficult leap. The process entailed an HMs’ orientation, a students’ assessment, teachers’ training, learning camps and demonstration classes.

Students’ performances in our competency-wise assessments have shown varying degrees of improvement across categories.
Fig 1- Improvement has been shown across all competencies. There has been an improvement of more than 25% in ‘Sentence Making’, ‘Paragraph Writing’ and ‘Writing Skills’. There has been about 27% improvement in comprehension. Overall the average improvement of 25% from baseline to endline is encouraging.

Fig 2- All competencies have shown satisfactory improvement with the highest % improvement in Sentence Making. There has been improvement in writing skills also. The effort put in by the students is visible in the comparison between baseline and endline results.
Fig 3- All competencies have shown improvement from baseline but there was an improvement of more than 22% in Division, Fraction, Time, Decimal and Conversion. The methods used in the bridge courses have shown satisfactory improvement as reflected in the results.

(c) Integrating Technology in Education

We were introduced to the concept of ITE by the Tata Trusts in 2014. It is an innovative concept in the domain of ICT-enabled education, with technology and curriculum fitting complementarily. ITE (Integrated approach to Technology in Education) is a pedagogical framework designed to improve children’s learning while also fostering higher order thinking skills using technology. What is novel in this framework is that the agency of creation lies with the children, furnished with support from the teachers. We saw in this the potential for a vehicle for equity and social justice – principles that determine our work and work ethics. Employing ITE enabled us to support the madrasa students with the unique scope of unprecedented exposure to authentic learning through access to digital resources. The more we work with ITE, the more we realize the possibilities it holds. ITE, Science education and IDD (Integration of Dinni and Duniyavi Talim) are separate components that we have curated into an amalgamation that has become a new way of learning - enhancing the impact envisioned for this project. Set against an increasingly positive acceptance of our intervention by both, the madrasas and the government, we have so far effectively implemented ITE in 14 government-aided and private madrasas.
An Inter-Madrasa ITE Artefact-sharing meet was convened on 10th of August, 2017 by and at the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education in collaboration with Vikramshila. This meet provided the students with an excellent platform to showcase artefacts that they created after laborious and skilfully conceived applications of their ITE knowledge. Confidently handling critical questions from teachers of other districts as well as Government officials, the students were assessed by a group of subject-experts on the basis of project value, presentation and interpretation skills- a task that proved tricky owing to the very competent work put in by all the participants.

A felicitation was also organized to acknowledge the admirable efforts of the HMs and Assistant Teachers from the 10 madrasas- agents without whom the sustained implementation of this project would be unachievable. Attended by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary (WBBME) along with the Director, Deputy Director and Project-Coordinator from Vikramshila, the meet ended with prizes awarded to all participating students and the shared assurance to incorporate the insights of the meet when navigating the future course of the project.
While material concerns like imbalanced student to computer ratios, infrequent power and internet supply, physical inter-madrasa distances in Hooghly district and inadequate time-windows for improved effective implementation are everyday realities, our efforts have borne fruit in the improvements seen in the madrasa children, the capacity-building of madrasa teachers and the strengthened bond of trust and cooperation that now exists between the madrasa system and our team.

**Highlights**

1. **Outcome of the Bridge Course Initiative**

Vikramshila began the Bridge Course Initiative in 2015, working to ease students’ academic leap from primary schools into Junior and High Madrasas. In 2017 the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education expressed its wish to note the academic development in the first batches of students that availed this initiative. In light of this, Vikramshila designed the assessment papers based on NCERT learning indicators for the periodic assessment which covered the areas of Language, Maths, Science and computer literacy. 25th March, 2017 saw the WBBME conduct the assessment for 1900 students from 36 madrasas of the Hooghly district.

**Student Achievement Levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Below 40 (Level D)</th>
<th>41-60 (Level C)</th>
<th>61-80 (Level B)</th>
<th>81-100 (Level A)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Knowledge</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Percentage of students across different learning levels</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the figures above, more than 60% students overall have achieved grade-level competencies, with scores in the range of 41% to 100%. 28 out of 36 madrasas have more students at grade level than those below grade level. Teachers’ feedback revealed that the students’ enthusiasm for taking the test quelled the fear that usually inhabits exam-environments. The teachers welcomed the assessment process since it brought to light many otherwise neglected issues that plague the learning processes.
2. Felicitations
Acknowledgment and recognition of effort can often be potent motivation for its sustenance. Respecting this, WBBME in collaboration with Vikramshila organized a felicitation program on 30th October, 2017 at DOMA, Chinsura, Hooghly to appreciate the academic developments of the children who performed well in the assessment.

3. Certificate Course in ICT and Education for Madrasa Teachers
Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), in collaboration with Vikramshila has devised a Certificate Course in ICT and Education. Approved by the academic council at TISS and the Directorate of Madrasa, this course is aimed at the in-service teachers at upper primary and secondary classes. Drawing on contemporary concepts, models and standards in the area of teaching and learning with ICT, the course was implemented from 27th January, 2018 onwards. It focuses on:

- student-centred use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) for authentic learning connected to their personal context
- Improving understanding and analysis of concepts in subjects
- Promoting higher order thinking and critical skills
- Use of online and blended platforms for continued professional development forming Community of Practice (CoP) groups of teachers.

The TISS course, beginning with the 4 Day F2F workshop with handholding support by the entire Madrasa team, was availed by 28 madrasa teachers from the districts of Hooghly, North 24 Parganas and Malda. During the lesson plan implementations in March 2018 the team visited the concerned madrasas and provided direct on-site support to the students who were making ITE projects as well as the teachers who were implementing their lesson plans, simultaneously co-facilitating and monitoring during the district level training. 25 Master trainers conducted a 2 day workshop, training around 325 outreach teachers.

The positive effects observed over the year have given us further impetus to strive and continuously work towards improving our efforts, with added encouragement from the State government’s invitation to upscale our project and circulate our pedagogical methodologies to 4 newer districts.
The last five years have seen a sustained and systemic multi-stakeholder effort to transform the status of ECCE in West Bengal. Initiated by West Bengal Sarva Shiksha Mission (PBSSM) and supported by UNICEF, this effort has leveraged the technical expertise of Vikramshila to lead the state system in achieving compliance with the 2013 National Policy and the quality standards on ECCE.

This program, named ‘Shishu Aloy’ by the State Government in 2015, seeks to sustain and strengthen high quality ECE in 1.19 lakh Anganwadi centres spread across 23 districts in the state. The mission of the programme is to ensure ‘school-readiness’ among children. As of December 2017, the new ECCE curriculum was being implemented in about 12% (i.e. approximately 14,000) of the Shishu Aloys in West Bengal.

This year, Vikramshila in collaboration with UNICEF, West Bengal offered in-depth support at the block level to capacitate the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Service) functionaries so as to strengthen Shishu Aloys by implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum. The block level functionaries included the CDPOs, the supervisors and the nearest anganwadi training centres (AWTCs).

1 Shishu Aloy Center is the hub of quality ECE programme where “good ECE practices” can be observed and practiced. It implements a developmentally appropriate curriculum, has adequate & appropriate Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) & toys, trained/skilled AWW who demonstrates effective developmentally appropriate classroom processes.
Primary Activities Undertaken

State AWTC strengthened to support ECE scale up in 3 districts

Anganwadi Training Centers (AWTC) in Bankura, Birbhum and South 24 Parganas were selected as a part of the pilot to strengthen state AWTCs to support the state-wide roll out and implementation of the new curriculum. 5 model centres were developed in a 5 km radius of each AWTC, with members of the SRG (State Resource Group) and DRG (District Resource Group). These model centres were expected to be the laboratories for the faculty members of AWTC to get hands on experience of the activities that they are delivering theoretically in the training. 15-member teams were created in each district comprising the DPO, CDPO, Supervisors and AWTC/MLTC (Middle Level Training Centre) trainers. They were offered a refresher training as well. We also attempted to improve the convergence and coordination between the ICDS functionaries and AWTC faculty through organized joint visits to model centres.

The AWTCs are however, highly short-staffed and hence burdened with continuous trainings across the year, which leaves them very little time for valuable research and self-development. This we feel is a major challenge to their work as academic resources of ECE in the state.

Preparation of Assessment tool

We undertook a field test of the draft assessment tool prepared by the DWCD (Development of Women & Child Development), to assess the improvement of children in AWCs every quarter. The tool, divided into five domains, gives a

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1The anganwadi training centres are responsible for continuous capacity building of the anganwadi workers and are expected along with supervisors to provide consistent supportive supervision to the AWCs
comprehensive understanding of the child's overall development. We field-tested the tool in 2 centres in Bolpur with six children from varied age groups. Based on the findings, the tool has been further fine-tuned and an addendum added where a description of the activities through which the parameters would be assessed, are given.

**Development of Resources as a part of the Curriculum**

- We prepared a school-readiness package in consultation with national and state level experts and submitted the same to UNICEF, West Bengal. The package consists of a workers’ manual and an activity book for children. This package has been incorporated into the main curriculum as the third handbook.

- An activity book was designed for the children aged 3-4 years. Concepts like shape and colour were introduced through activities. These activity sheets are designed in alignment to the curricular themes spelt out in the handbook.

- The components of school readiness and assessment, so far not included in the training of the state and district resource groups, were now added after the package and the tool were developed and detailed out.

- The state of West Bengal now has over 14,000 model Anganwadi centres. We felt it was the right time to undertake a process of analysis and documentation through which we would try to map the trajectory of progress, laying special emphasis on those processes that have been significant in the success of the state ECE program.

**Support in district-level training**

With new components included in the training manual-namely school readiness and assessment, the ECE team of Vikramshila undertook a series of trainings at the state level to capacitate the SRG. Following this, we were requested by the department to support the district level trainings as well. This year we provided handholding support in Nadia, Howrah, Coochbehar and Birbhum.
An offshoot of the erstwhile E2E Project, the Headway programme is a pilot Vikramshila undertook in 2017. Covering 5 vernacular government-sponsored schools in Kolkata, the chief rationale behind this programme was to address the marked lack of space for employability-readiness in school curricula.

The Headway programme was designed so as to sync with the school curriculum starting from class 7, following Piaget’s theory of cognitive development according to which this is the last stage for significant development in logic, ability to use deductive reasoning, communication skills and an understanding of abstract ideas. Children at this point become equipped to see multiple potential solutions to problems and think more scientifically about the world around them. This pilot project involved intensive work with the 5 selected project schools in multiple areas:

- **Intervention in the areas of Maths and Language:** Bolstering the knowledge-base and skills of students through intensive support in developing language and mathematical skills at the upper primary level (classes 7 and 8), the intervention was geared to develop basic communicative skills in English and numerical abilities among them. This took the form of regularly allotted English classes and Math and English camps.
Generic Employability Skill Development Programme:
The Generic Employability Skill Development Programme or the GE Programme spanned over 25 hours in one year with the students of class 11. Core transferable skills also known as twenty first century skills like Communicative English, Critical thinking, Digital Literacy (IT & Cyber Safety), Career Awareness, Time management and Stress management were introduced through regular classes to provide the holistic approach of life and career skills to the upper primary students.

Monitoring and mentoring support:
Monitoring and mentoring support was offered to classes 9 and 10 in the selected 5 and 30 other schools in light of the implementation of the RMSA-approved state module of Life Skills Education.

One-on-one career counselling towards stream selection for class 10 students provided.

Activities undertaken

Math and English camps:
Three Maths and three English camps were conducted across classes 7 and 8 in all 5 schools over the last year. Peer learning was incorporated in both camps which were also attended by the school teachers who have been working closely with Vikramshila over this pilot. The Maths camps were the primary mode of connecting with the students since the Maths intervention did not have regular classes, and were devised to impart and bolster basic mathematical concepts among students which would in turn equip them to better handle their Mathematics curricula. Since the year-long English intervention necessarily closely adheres to the set requirements of a time-bound syllabus, the English camps focused on English as a language and its grammatical aspects, instead of simply as one subject in school curricula. Designed as spaces for students to speak, read, write and listen to the English language, the camps utilized a range of interesting TLMs that ensured they were both effective and fun as learning spaces.

Given the large number of holidays and populous classrooms, it is often a challenge for us to implement our pedagogy as we envision it via our regular classes through the year. This limits the amount of face-time we have with the students—a problem that these fun interim camps have
helped us address to a large extent.

- **Capacity-building of teachers:**
  In order to strengthen the programme’s effectiveness and make it sustainable, two sets of teacher-training workshops were conducted (separately for Maths and English) to make our pedagogical methodologies available to the concerned subject teachers of the 5 schools. This would further increase students’ exposure to these techniques, heightening the efficacy of the programme. Focusing on conceptual clarity, communicative English, analytical thinking and higher order thinking, these trainings were facilitated by established subject experts in the format of workshops in order to encourage open interactivity between teachers and trainers.

- **Exposure-visits for students:**
  Visits to Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (B.I.T.M) and Science City were organized for the students of the 5 project schools. This was done with a view to widen their horizons by exposing them to a more hands-on aspect of mathematics and science. This exposure to technical material presented in fun, engaging forms at both sites, usually unavailable in school environments, was hoped to encourage students to link theory with practice. Both initiatives were actively welcomed by the participating schools.
Highlights

**Math labs:** One isolated visit to BITM or Science City was not considered enough. In order to sustain the effort kicked off by the exposure visits, we set up vibrant math labs in all five schools. Equipped with relevant mathematical charts and Jodo Gyan material, these labs hope to further students’ familiarity with hands-on approaches to Mathematics.

**Subject-based modules for Math and English:** Our team developed subject-specific modules for class 7 and 8 centred on the need to inculcate the practice of mathematization, logical reasoning, analytical thinking and communicative English among the students. To reach these objectives without compromising on the very practical urgency of syllabus-completion, we tailored the school syllabus so as to constructively use it as content in the modules. Taking it a step further, we also designed workbooks based on the modules for additional effectiveness.
Over the last 25 years, Early Childhood Education has been one of the integral elements of Vikramshila’s work towards ensuring the deployment of quality education across all sectors of society. Last year, Vikramshila undertook one such project—“Standardization of Assessment Tools” (SAT)—a venture of Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University, Delhi. CECED is an institution dedicated to addressing issues pertaining to early childhood and development.

The SAT project, with financial support from The World Bank, UNICEF and Central Square Foundation, aims to standardize culturally and developmentally appropriate tools, intended for nation-wide application to assess the learning levels of children between 5 to 8 years of age and the quality of preschools. Under this project, CECED has developed three child assessment tools and one quality assessment tool—School Readiness Instrument (SRI), two Achievement Tests (AT), and Early Child Education Quality Assessment Scale (ECEQAS).

However, to ensure equity towards education and development, it is absolutely imperative that standardization of these tools be preceded by an investigation into their regional and cultural relevance across rural, tribal and urban areas. Post-standardization, these tools can be availed by educational institutions across the social spectrum including government schools, Anganwadi centres and private institutions, NGOs, policy makers and individuals engaged in the field of ECCE.

In this regard, Vikramshila has been selected as one of the five zonal state partners of CECED that shall try out the tools with the primary stakeholders, i.e. the children and the educational institutions. In
the Eastern zone, Vikramshila has assumed the responsibility of conducting the study, over a period of 6 months, in three districts of West Bengal – Bardhaman, Bankura and Kolkata.

**Assessment Tools**

As mentioned before, three child assessment tools have been developed to determine the learning levels of children in three of the early primary grades, i.e. preschool or pre-primary, class 1 and class 2. These tools are designed to cover cognitive, language and numeracy domains at various competency levels expected from children as per the NCERT learning outcomes. The assessment process includes the use of various materials such as picture cards, counters, worksheets, audio recordings, crayons, beads, number cards and the like.

The School Readiness Instrument (SRI) was developed by The World Bank and then adapted by CEced. As the name suggests, this tool is designed for preschoolers or pre-primary children, aged between 5-6 years, since this age group marks the period when the basics are expected to be clear and children are ready to make their shift to the primary school system.

The two Achievement Tests (AT) were developed by CEced for classes 1 (6-7 years) and 2 (7-8 years). Since 6-8 years is considered the transition phase, the tests are designed with a mix of concepts which includes readiness and grade appropriate concepts linked to grade 1 and grade 2 curriculums.

The Early Childhood Education Quality Assessment Scale (ECEQAS) was developed by CEced to establish a direct link between learning outcomes of children in preschool and quality of the school programme. Therefore, this tool is designed to assess quality indicators such as physical infrastructure, classroom setting, availability of play and learning materials, management and organization of children in classroom, curricular transaction and teacher disposition.

**Project Implementation**

The project implementation has been split into two phases to be completed over a period of 6 months. Phase 1 marks the field test of the SRI tool in Anganwadi Centers, Government Schools...
and Private Schools, and Phase 2 for field test of the ECEQAS tool in Anganwadi Centers, Government Schools and Private Schools and field test of AT tools in Government Schools and Private Schools. The implementation of each phase of the project began with a training session conducted by facilitators from CECED, Ambedkar University, Delhi. In the training sessions, Vikramshila’s project team comprising of six research investigators were familiarized with the tools that were to be administered in the respective phases.

Combining phases 1 and 2 we have so far covered 21 villages in Bardhaman district (Manteshwar and Purbasthali Blocks) and 25 villages in Bankura (Hirbandh and Ranibandh Blocks). Our field tests were conducted in 15 schools in Kolkata in phase 1.

We have completed phase 1 of the project which commenced in November 2017 and are presently engaged in the implementation process of phase 2 in Kolkata.

The table below highlights the project coverage and investigation status in West Bengal.

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The Math and Science Project Pilot Programme

The MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) responded to the global recognition of scientific and technological innovation as markers of national development, with the initiation of the Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan in 2015. The programme aims to inculcate in children a scientific curiosity and to promote a shift towards enquiry-based learning in the education system, utilizing the expertise of higher education and research institutions such as IITs, IIMs and IISERs for technical support. The need for the RAA to be implemented in West Bengal was acknowledged by the state’s School Education Department, in light of the results of learning achievement surveys conducted by NAS and Utkarsha Abhiyan among others.

In order to address this, UNICEF in partnership with Vikramshila developed a pilot programme aimed at students of classes VI, VII and VIII in 10 government schools across Kolkata in 2016.

Activities undertaken this year-

Mathematics and Science module-creation

Math and Science modules were created for classes 6, 7 and 8 by Vikramshila, addressing the problems indicated by the discrepancies in learning achievement surveys (like those by NAS and Utkarsha Abhiyan) and modelled on the principles of the NCF 2005 position papers on Maths and Science. This was done keeping in mind the aim to structurally support the syllabi of the government schools so as to enable improved comprehension of scientific concepts among students. These modules were vetted by a panel of established
experts in the field of Science education including Samar Bagchi, S.K Mitra and B.N Das.

**HM Orientation**

An orientation for the HMs of the 10 government schools selected by the SSA was organized. Following talks by DI Secondary Chinmay Sarkar and Sundar Mukhopadhyay (SSM) on the prevailing conditions of poor understanding of, and performance in Mathematics and Science, Amrita Sengupta of UNICEF outlined the objectives of the RAA as well as the findings of learning achievement surveys conducted under NAS, Utkarsha Abhiyan, etc. Shubhra Chatterji, Director, Vikramshila presented the proposal of the Math and Science project pilot along with a detailed outline of its structure.

**Capacity-building of Teachers**

Led by eminent educationists in the field of Maths and Science including B.N Das-retd. Professor of Physics (Presidency) and independent consultant in the field of science education, Subrata Biswas-Research fellow, SCERT and Partho Karmakar-Acting Principal of Muragachha Govt.College, publisher of mathematics books and active contributor to various international mathematics journals, the trainings for Maths and Science were conducted in two phases. The objective of these trainings was to orient members of the teaching community to the pedagogical shift envisioned in the modules, for Math and Science dissemination in classrooms. This also provided a symbiotic platform for the exchange of ideas and challenges among stake-holders of Science education.

**Installation of Science-corners**

With the objective of familiarizing students with the fun, more hands-on aspects of Math and Science learning, each class (classes 6, 7 and 8) of all 10 schools covered in the project were furnished with a science-corner. Containing regular scientific equipment like manometers, mercury thermometers, spring balances, anti-gravity test tubes, laser torches, etc., the corners also hold common material from our everyday environments (filter paper, nails, among others). A team from Vikramshila conducted demo-classes which helped ease the teachers’ initiation into the practical application of the pedagogical apparatus disseminated in the training, and formed Phase 2 of the training programme.

| 10 schools |
| 30 Science corners installed |
| 48 nodal teachers capacitated |
| 3780 students reached |
Expert-visits

To fortify the pedagogical orientation and training delivered at the teachers’ trainings, a support-infrastructure comprising three members of the expert panel (Arindam Rana-Chemistry Professor, City College (North) and independent consultant, B.N Das, Samar Bagchi- former director, BITM) was created to ensure sustained engagement with the teachers and for the teachers’ easy access to informed guidance from experienced practitioners of Science education. Thirteen visits were organized across the ten schools in the May-September period.

Assessments

Baseline tools for Maths and Science in classes 6, 7 and 8 were constructed to assess the students’ rudimentary conceptual clarity and ability to relate the sciences to practical everyday life, before the project’s implementation. A monitoring tool to gauge ongoing progress of the project, and an endline assessment to appraise the pilot in qualitative terms, were also constructed.
“Backbenchers are the first to show interest when I ask who wants to make models...even more than students who are academically more stable!” - this remark by a Life Science teacher from one of the 10 schools, was a commonly shared observation among the teachers. That the hands-on heavy approach would turn science appealing for academically weaker students was a welcome, unexpected outcome of this project.

Highlight of the project

The exposure visits organized under this project deserve a special mention. Aside from a visit to Birla Industrial and Technological Museum, teachers and students of the project schools had the opportunity to attend the Annual Congress of Indian National Science Academy at Bose Institute—an event that featured many of the biggest names in the realm of Science internationally. Coinciding with the centenary of Bose Institute, the event oriented the attendees about the history of Science in India and the prospects Science holds as a living industry. Further, the nodal teachers attended a day-long session on Active Teaching and Learning held at and conducted by IIT, Kharagpur in June, 2017, discussing the pressing needs of Science education in contemporary India.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR EQUITY AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION

- Promoting Equity in Learning
- TRI Bankura
In 2015, Indienhilfe e.V Herrsching in association with Vikramshila Education Resource Society launched a project named Promoting Equity through Learning (PEL) in order to reach out to children from the most marginalized backgrounds. The primary objective of this project is to promote equity in learning- the emphasis being on equity rather than equality i.e. to specifically address children who have received most neglect in the education system.

The children in both these districts have little to no scope of receiving any kind of support from their homes as they are largely first-generation school goers- a factor illustrated in the severe learning deficiencies we encountered during our assessments. This further makes handling school syllabi a challenging process for the students.

Our efforts to work towards achieving the objectives of this project have chiefly taken the form of after-school support to children enrolled in nearby government schools, school dropouts, irregular students in need of learning support and even those students who have never been enrolled in formal schools. Vikramshila’s role is that of a technical support partner and we have, to this end, partnered with two organisations- Seva Kendra Calcutta (SKC) working in the North 24 Parganas and Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committe (DMSC) working in Purulia.

The CRWs (Child Rights Workers) and CDAs (Child Development Animators) who run these after-school learning centers, are selected from amongst community members. Though motivated, they often find it a challenge to support children at the Upper Primary level owing to limitations in their own training and experience. It is here that Vikramshila plays a pivotal role, capacitating these CRWs and
CDAs through technical support and training workshops. Our primary focus is firmly on long-term capacity-building that will develop the skills and content knowledge of the facilitators, equipping them to acquire an in-depth understanding of the structural problems that form the base of the contexts we work in.

**North 24 Parganas**

In the 3 Gram Panchayats in Swarupnagar block (North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal), namely Tepul-Mirzapur, Saguna and Gobindapur, we work in partnership with SKC- an organization committed to transforming the region into a child-labour-free zone. The students are mostly identified as school dropouts, child labour and those who have never been enrolled in formal schools. To effectively bridge the learning gaps seen in the children and impart quality education to them, we have been supporting SKC with Vikramshila’s research-based quality training and technical assistance to the CRWs and members of SKC. The training is imparted with a two-fold objective:

a) To enable the trainees to develop a holistic idea of education as a life-learning process and be familiar with the nitty-gritties of various educational concepts;

b) To capacitate them and hone their skills in English, Bengali and Math so that they can employ innovative and effective methods to make education a fairly easier and more interactive process for the children.

Over this year, we organised a series of residential trainings, an exposure visit to Vikramshila’s Bigha Resource School and conducted monitoring and mentoring support visits as well as community meetings with the objective of observing the development of students and CRWs. In addition to this, we conducted orientations, workshops and trainings, including ‘5-day learning camps’ in conjunction with SKC at the field-level. Review meetings are held to generate discussions with the goal of helping CRWs identify areas they can improve in and through what innovative pedagogical techniques. From time to time, Vikramshila has ensured direct intervention with the children to ensure effective implementation of our technical training while also sustaining our liaison with HMs, school teachers, community members and other government officials.

**Purulia district**

In 2017, Vikramshila expanded its scope to the district of Purulia, with the objective of catering to the needs of the Nachni and Jhumur communities. Our work here is in partnership with Usha Cooperative- an organization that had already been working with these two communities in the areas of livelihood-development and ensuring the education of the children therein. Our primary role here is also to provide technical support in education to the community, bolstering Usha Cooperative in the implementation of their objectives. This support also comprises integral activities which include

The members of the Nachni and Jhumur community are known for their unique folk dance forms as well as music, and are often addressed as ‘shilpi’ (artists) locally. The vibrancy of their culture has however done little to alleviate the stigma associated with this socially marginalized section whose everyday realities are set in poverty, malnutrition illiteracy and deep-set social ostracization.
curriculum-development, centre-reorganization, providing training to the animators, crèche mothers and other field workers.

Time constraints (in North 24 Parganas, in particular) that affect the efficacy of implementation are a significant challenge. As is the process of orienting these communities to treat education as a priority when even their basic material needs are often unfulfilled. We however have and will continue our efforts to involve the community for a sustainable, meaningful outcome of this project. The focal areas of our work will include strengthening collaborative efforts with the SKC to achieve a child labour-free region, increased involvement of the community and DMSC staff (in Purulia) to work at improving the communities’ standards of living and imparting quality education.
Transform Rural India is an attempt to trigger community-led change processes in the most backward villages of our country. It has emerged as a platform for galvanizing collaborative efforts of communities, civil society, government, market entities and donors to work towards rapid and holistic transformation of India’s most neglected villages into places of vibrant opportunities. Envisioned by Tata Trusts, this initiative aims to bring about integrated comprehensive development by working on all major life indicators simultaneously such as education, health, nutrition and sanitation, while embedding gender equality and self-governance at the core of its approach. As a part of this project, Vikramshila is committed to bridging the school-community divide by promoting a sense of ownership in the community towards education by building an informed, active and empowered community that leads and sustains change.

Partnering with Pradan

The TRI initiative is based on coalition of civil society organizations across sectors to trigger a concerted effort in the target geography towards realizing its vision in a specified period of time. We are partnering with Pradan, a pioneering organization working in the field of livelihood, as the grass-root actor in the intervention area. They have been working with the SHGs for a considerable period of time, supporting through capacity-building and empowering them to take on the role of change makers. We are building our efforts in education upon this existing social capital to create an aware
and responsible rural citizenry, ready to address educational issues and set directions for ensuring quality education for every child in the village.

**Strategic pathways**

As a part of the programme, we are working with the government primary schools and ICDS centres in the area. Our intervention is planned around five core co-ordinates which aim to reach out to all the stakeholders, leading to adoption of new normative practices in individuals as well as shifts in collective consciousness in the sphere of early education.

**The five pathways**

- Parent-child engagement
- Parent school engagement
- Better learning outcomes
- Strengthening education system
- Teacher motivation
- Community-school engagement

**Major activities undertaken last year**

1. **Learning camps in Ambikanagar and Gopalpur**

   Learning camps have emerged as an effective convergence point for all major stakeholders - children, teachers, parents and women collectives. In 2017 two learning camps were organized, one each in Ranibandh and Hirbandh blocks. 418 children from 21 government primary schools, 44 government teachers and 45 SHG members directly participated in these camps. These camps opened up avenues for multidimensional dialogue between different stakeholders and paved the way for critical discourse around quality education in villages.

2. **Community-led events in school**

   - **Teachers’ day celebration**
     Teachers’ day this year (2017) was a community-spearheaded effort with celebrations in 4 primary schools in Ranibandh. The entire process, from planning to execution, was conducted by members of 5 Upashangha in Ambikanagar Gram Panchayat in their respective village schools. This involved researching on the subject, felicitation of teachers, overseeing and organizing the cultural programme by school children. Entirely funded by contributions from SHGs, this initiative was a firm step towards building a (so far absent) shared platform for the community and the school teachers. This action proved to be a source of motivation for the teachers, as manifest in the spontaneity of their speeches during the programme.

   - **Children’s day celebration**
     SHG members from 11 villages came together to orchestrate and execute a Children’s day celebration involving students and teachers of 6 primary schools in the area. About 300 students, 700 SHG members, teachers and HMs of 6 primary schools joined hands to work together and make this event possible. Hundreds of villagers ended the programme to witness the spirit of creativity and co-learning as children performed a myriad of cultural performances upholding the local cultural tradition and showcased their work in theme based pavilions. The event was fully sponsored by contributions from the SHG members.
3. Teachers’ peer group
As an outcome of sustained dialogue with the primary school teachers, a group of teachers voluntarily came together to form an association in Ambikanagar Gram Panchayat of Ranibandh block. This group has gradually emerged as an informal platform for mutual sharing and a safe space for co-learning. Regular meetings are held where the members discuss issues close to their heart and decide the direction for future course of work. The group has helped to bring the teachers together from their otherwise isolated, separate existences and generate the self-motivation and agency required to work towards the betterment of their respective schools.

4. ICDS survey
Having made inroads into the primary school system in the first year of intervention, we intend to move into the ICDS space from this year. It is widely believed that access to quality learning opportunities in early childhood paves the way for full developmental potential among young children. Therefore we plan to work closely with the Anganwadi centres in these blocks in order to build a solid foundation that will help children to perform better in school in later years. A survey of 30 ICDS centres (15 in each block) was conducted as part of the needs-analysis process before starting the work around Anganwadi centres.

Impact so far

- **Subtle shift in community-school dynamics: from antagonism to co-operation**
  Already we see that the journey towards building a mutually supportive relationship of trust between community and school has begun. One instance of this development was when, towards the end of 2017, a teacher from Kesra Primary School, Ambikanagar Gram Panchayat, Ranibandh block, approached the didis at the SHG when faced with an electricity crisis in the school. Their intervention ensured the effective addressal of this problem, helping build the kind of relationship between the two groups as envisioned in the project.

2. Magazine
The teachers’ peer group in Ranibandh block published the first edition of a teachers’ magazine this Republic Day. Many teachers from the group contributed articles for the magazine- an exciting exercise that created a space for them to not just express their thoughts freely but also hone their writing skills. The magazine’s potential as a voice to promote progressive thinking and peer-learning in the region was recognized by the teachers.

Highlights

1. Joint orientation on learning camps and joint facilitation therein for teachers and SHG members
About 20 teachers from 12 schools and 25 SHG members from 5 upashanghas attended the joint orientation program for conducting school based learning camps in Gopalpur Gram Panchayat of Hirbandh block. It was a first of its kind attempt to bring community and teachers together on the same platform to engage in teaching learning process. Though initially hesitant to open up, the experiment became successful in bridging the school-community divide and created an atmosphere of mutual respect and shared concern for children’s learning needs.
by the end of the midday meal due to poor motivation and ineffective administration, now have classes till 4 PM, which is the official school timing.

- Regular PTMs organized and gradual increase in parents’ attendance.
- A few teachers have already started adopting activity-based learning in classrooms.

The road ahead- The journey towards scalability and sustainability....

The future of the TRI approach lies in the idea of change vectors—carriers of new ideas intended to inspire people to challenge normative behavioral patterns and adopt alternate practices. Change vectors under TRI will be women leaders building from their own experience, nurtured by safe and countercultural spaces. The idea of the “change vector” is a person who is from within the target community and is concerned about issues of education. She is motivated and willing to spend some part of her time to extend herself ‘voluntarily’ in her own village on education-related topics. They are like “vectors” of new knowledge, thoughts, belief systems based on scientific temperament, liberal outlook and constitutional value systems which they “embed” in the primary community platforms in the villages. These volunteers, when capacitated and empowered, will be able to take the work forward on a larger scale and sustain it in the long term.
LIFESKILLS AND CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMMES FOR EMPOWERMENT

- Programmes with the US Consulate General, Kolkata
- Active Citizenship
- Life Skills and Career Counselling, Bihar
Programmes with US Consulate General, Kolkata

_Udita: Inspiring Empowerment for Young Women_ is an English language training program Vikramshila undertook in collaboration with the US Consulate General, Kolkata. Udita aimed to reach out to young women with minimal exposure to education, primarily to the English language and offer a capacity-building programme on _Communicative English, Career Counselling, Digital Literacy and Financial Literacy_. The focus of the programme lay on working towards ensuring that these young women feel capacitated to speak for themselves and their rights. The program perceived English as an empowering tool- something that would give these women the edge to compete in a variety of life and work situations. From designing and planning of the tools to implementation, we received constant support from the US Consulate General and Madhu Balasubramaniam (counsellor).

**Role of partner organizations**

As a strategy, Vikramshila planned to collaborate with NGOs in Kolkata working in the field of women’s rights, protection and empowerment. A meeting was organized on 3rd November 2016 at the US Consulate General to share the proposed project with the potential partner NGOs that work with women with a history of gender-based violence or trafficking. The organizations played a pivotal role in selecting potential candidates through a structured assessment process comprising two steps: a) Language Baseline Assessment b) Needs Assessment.
Implementation of the Baseline Assessment

Developing the baseline tool was an exciting challenge for us since this was the first time that Vikramshila would be working with young women who are already competent in their own respective fields (as trainers, counsellors, managers, teaching assistants or as students) but have not received much exposure and are ill-at-ease when articulating and communicating thoughts in English. This tool was then applied to 81 young women representing 19 NGOs at US Consulate General, Kolkata and WBVHA, Ruby to assess their basic language proficiency skills. The language baseline assessment tool consisted of basic listening, reading, writing and speaking which were integrated in each of the test items.

Needs analysis

The assessment fulfilled the following purposes:
(a) to finalise the participants for this programme
(b) to generate findings that will enable Vikramshila to identify the needs and requirements of the participants
(c) help them structure the curriculum of the English Empowerment Programme. Besides their organizational information, education, employment background, physical health and training related sections, they also shared what kinds of expectations they had from the programme with regard to skills and resources.

With a list of 35 selected women finalized, the program was begun on 18th February, 2017 at American Centre.

Curriculum and Process

Vikramshila’s years-long expertise in the area of Life Skills, strengthened by support from a wide range of experts was applied to develop a 100-hour module that incorporated essential components on life skills, career readiness, digital literacy and financial literacy. The module had been tried out with high school graduates and was found to be immensely successful. Within a short span of 21 Days, we could maximize impact and learnings by making the sessions outcome-driven, experiential and targeted. The module was further fine-tuned and revamped to incorporate new ideas and skills for ‘Udita’. Even though the focus initially was on communicative English, career exploration and digital literacy, several sessions revolved around self-awareness and reflection under a larger ambit of empowerment. Counsellor Madhu Balasubramanium supported us in the curriculum development to ensure content and strategies were sensitive to the participants. The Career Awareness module was an intensive 10-hour module designed to identify their values, skills and interests and connect them with various career options. The module was supported in implementation by Soma Choudhury, Chief Operating Officer of ESDECS.

The sessions were held at the US Consulate General twice a week and facilitated by English Language Fellow, Katy McAlary and Vikramshila staff. With every session we tried to ensure that the content was being pitched at a level appropriate for each participant and the sessions were highly engaging based on the experiential learning model. This culminated in fun and innovative outdoor activities like ‘Scavenger Hunt’ and exploring the museum at Victoria Memorial. Over a period of six months, opportunities for reflection and peer-learning through theatre games and activities like Tree of Life, Dream Boards, Art Therapy, etc were made available. Over the programme, all the participants gained competent skills operating basic Microsoft Office
systems.

Sadia Akhter Aurna- a Bangladeshi youth feminist, UNICEF Voices of Youth alumni, and founder of an NGO offering free legal help for women and children suffering from domestic violence, was invited by Katy. She gave the Udita women the task of shooting footage of what empowerment means to them. After acquiring all of their footage, a professional video editor was roped in to compile the clips into a film that was shared with all the Udita participants. In July, a young artist, Masuda Khan Juti – also from Bangladesh – conducted sessions on how to sketch human figures, use colors to express emotions and essentially, how to pour oneself on paper/canvas artistically.

Udita has not just been about supporting these women with tools to use the English language in real life situations, to acquire digital skills, to make them aware of various career opportunities by the end of the program- but also to heighten their self-awareness. The sessions were often spaces of catharsis and self-exploration – encouraging them to confront both strengths and weaknesses and eventually, to learn how to connect and build a network of strong bonds of trust and camaraderie that transcend differences.

**Closing Ceremony : Empowered Women on the Rise**

The closing day of Udita was celebrated on September 9th, 2017, with preparation beginning by the middle of August. The preparation itself became an application of the programme with the participants divided into four teams with one leader each for guidance. Lakhi, Keya, Pinki and Sukla, the four team leaders led the process of creating the art display for the closing day. The groups were named Freedom of Life, Eunonia, Constellation and Wave. Throughout the sessions, we witnessed the rising confidence of the women who skillfully utilized their communication skills to calmly and deftly deal with the organizing tasks on hand. The four led with grace and stability, each group presenting representations of their learnings throughout the course of Udita.

The program commenced with a welcome note by Public Affairs Officer, James A. Dragon, followed by the screening of a short film on empowerment created by the Udita women with Sadia Akhter Aurna’s support. A photo story tracing the trajectory of Udita was displayed next. Over the programme, a series of AV presentations including photo stories created by the participants and a panel discussion by them on Udita as a learning process, were presented. The ceremony drew to a close with a cultural performance put up by the Udita women and a felicitation ceremony chaired by Craig Hall, US Consul General and his wife, Meeryung Hall. The Gallery Walk, featuring the art displays depicting the Udita participants’ journeys over the six-month programme, was opened to the audience.
The Journey...

Whether the objectives of Udita have been truly realized can only be seen over time in the course of the participants’ lives. But as of now we have a few wonderful stories of the kind of growth Udita made possible, in addition to the impressive display of structured skills by the participants over the duration of the programme.

In the early months of Udita, Soma Mondal of Jewels in a Crown was very resistant to the idea of coming to the sessions. In a room full of strangers, Soma felt intimidated. Madhu tried to encourage Soma to attend, but she was still resistant. Gradually being made to engage in team work exercises, she started to feel connected with the facilitators and her fellow-participants. After struggling for a couple of months, Soma began attending the programme regularly. She made deep friendships and spoke to all the women during the “Tree of Life” session, admitting that she initially didn’t want to go through the programme. In hind sight she realized that this programme was more like building a family and was thankful that she did not discontinue. Soma’s confidence blossomed in the following months and her confidence was palpable before the audience on the final day of the programme.

Sathi Bakly of All Bengal Women’s Union is another one of Udita’s participants that began the programme as a very shy and reserved person. Initially it seemed that Sathi did not trust those around her to be herself with, and she certainly didn’t trust her English skills in front of a room full of strangers. As the sessions went on, Sathi began to gain more confidence, respond to questions and actively participate. With an inclination towards computers, she was eager to learn more about PowerPoint and Excel. She proved to be a fast learner and was able to grasp the concepts swiftly, taking a leading role in creating a photo story on “Tree of Life”.

Synergy

Last year Vikramshila became involved in a unique high school orientation programme called Synergy. Synergy seeks to introduce 240 pre-collegiate youth (from Kolkata high schools—both government-aided vernacular medium and private schools) with basic proficiency in English and visible leadership qualities to the facilities and opportunities available at US Consulate General.

Through this program, Vikramshila aimed to connect with 8 high schools in the city and bring approximately 30 selected students from each of these schools for a two to three-hour session to the US Consulate General. The sessions included an orientation on higher education in the United States and other leadership development activities around strategic areas of interest such as: entrepreneurship, environmental protection, women’s empowerment, digital media, and human rights.

The orientations comprised activities such as Scavenger Hunt in the library, activities for reflection and discovery of students’ aspirations, introduction to the college selection and application process (including timelines), meeting with an American diplomat to understand student life and culture in the United States as well as the scope to explore leadership development activities and opportunities for further support offered by the US Consulate General.

Schools such as Bethune Collegiate School and Behala High School have participated in the programme so far.
Vikramshila began its Social Science programme in association with Wipro in 2012, endeavouring to build a clear-cut, thorough understanding of democratic principles among children. With this in mind, we have over the last six years, developed a detailed curricula that allow students to engage with the areas of Democracy and Rights, Diversity, Gender, Local Government, Media, Judiciary, Market dynamics and Livelihoods. Working with more than 3000 children across institutions including government-aided schools and madrasas, the common factor we found was the shared belief in the need for such a programme. An education in active citizenship is inarguably the most important ‘life skill’ to possess in order for a democratic society to function in reality – especially in times that are increasingly exposing the fragility of democracy and emphasizing the need for people’s participation to uphold democratic ideals as espoused in our Constitution.

The two primary learnings that led to us initiating a discourse on active citizenship at the school-level were:
- That traditional teaching of social science has precluded any engagement with citizenship education, as we learned through our engagement with stakeholders i.e schools/ teachers/ teacher educators/ policy makers, and
- Even when these stakeholders are convinced about the primacy of an active citizenship consciousness among children, they are not necessarily familiar with the appropriate pedagogical path to take.
Advocacy for Active Citizenship

In the face of increasingly visible cases of intolerance, communalism, insensitivity and blatant disregard for Constitutional principles, the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBPCCR) organized a conference on Active Citizenship Education in June, 2017, in collaboration with Vikramshila. Attended by Heads and teachers of a diverse range of educational institutions including private and government schools and madrasas, representatives from NGOs and of different government institutions such as SCERT, SSM and NUJS as well as international representatives from the Consulate General of America, the conference also featured the active participation of WBCPCR chairperson Ms. Ananya Chakraborti, Anjali Noronha (Eklavya), Mr. Chinmoy Sarkar (District Inspector of Schools, Secondary, Kolkata), Greg Pardo (Assistant Public Affairs Officer, US Consulate General, Kolkata), Devi Kar (Director, Modern Academy), Ms. Ruchira Goswami (Assistant Professor, NUJS) and Mr. Ranjan Mitter (Future Foundation). Aside from significant conclusions such as the need to work across cross-sections of society and involving the family and community in the process being drawn, this conference led to the organization of a district-level Round-Table on Active Citizenship.

“I cannot be friends with someone who is from outside (Bengal)” – a class 9 boy declared. The Vikramshila Active Citizenship team was discussing the survey questions with the class 9-10 students of a government school in Kolkata and had just reached a question addressing diversity. When asked why, he answered that he would not know what to say to them because they were too different. A discussion on how we form friendships, what sameness and differences mean to us, ensued between the facilitator and students. Forty or so minutes after that discussion had ended, a boy said he spoke Hindi at home, in response to a discussion on a different question. At this, some of the students looked expectantly at the first boy, who grinned sheepishly and said to the facilitator: “Yes yes I know, I am friends with him, I hadn’t thought about which language he speaks in at home!”

This was only one instance. Many rich expansive discussions on issues such as women’s role in society, gender bias among children, understanding of household labour, child labour, ‘menial’ labour– born out of strategic questioning and informed facilitation, occurred during these sessions. Somehow, issues stemming from the very social fabric that the children are part of, rarely get addressed within the classroom-space. To think that such self-awareness could be glimpsed after only a 90 minute session makes us wonder at the potential a more-sustained effort could hold.

District-level Round Table on Active Citizenship-

The District Inspector of schools (Secondary), Kolkata, organized a follow-up roundtable discussion and orientation on Active Citizenship in Schools in August 2017. The chief purpose of this roundtable was to build consensus among a group of like-minded Heads of Institutions and stakeholder government officials on the best possible way forward. Participants included Sri. Kartick Manna, Chairman (District Primary School Council & SSM Kolkata), Sri. Chinmay Sarkar (in absentia) (District Inspector of...
2. Engagement with varied youth groups
Taking Active-Citizenship beyond the school ambit, Vikramshila organized two-day workshops with three youth groups- Nabadisha Citizenship Group, Suchana Group (Bardhaman) and Dooars Jagaran Group (Dooars). The primary objective of these workshops was to enable a platform where group members could articulate their work-experiences – in the case of Nabadisha and Suchana, members from different chapters of the citizenship groups could share their experiences with each other. We used this opportunity to provide the groups with theoretical scaffolding that would help enable them to link their every action as a group with larger democratic governing principles and ideas. Employing tools such as mind-mapping, film-screening and related group-discussion, role-play and enactment, the theoretical concepts of democracy and other related ideals espoused in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution were discussed.

This year Vikramshila brought a different kind of excitement to the International Kolkata Book Fair. On February 6th, 2018 we conducted ‘Are You an Active Citizen?’ - inviting people to find their location on the citizenship metre. Inspired from the national benchmark CMCA-conducted study ‘Yuva Nagarik Metre’, this was organized in

Schools (Secondary), Kolkata, Sri. Pijush Kanti Bera (District Project Officer, SSM & Additional District Inspector of Schools, Kolkata), Sri. Sundar Banerjee (Pedagogy Consultant SSM, Kolkata) as well as Soumitra Ray and Shakila Sultana Shams (West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights). The need to explore spheres within and outside the school space in which young people can voice their opinions and critically engage with social issues was strongly felt and helped structure what would become our programme for the year that followed.

Programme Implementation - Activities Undertaken This Year

1. Engagement with students in the school ambit
Acting on the recommendations proposed at the Round-Table, Vikramshila took up the task of conducting two hour sessions on Citizenship practices and launching Citizenship Awareness posters at 6 government schools in Kolkata. Commencing in Chetla Boys’ School with the attendance of Soumitra Ray and Shakila Sultana Shams (WBCPCR), these sessions followed in Jadavpur Vidyapith, Barisha Girls High School, Behala High School, Binodini Girls High School and Jadavpur Sammilita School.

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collaboration with West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

The event generated a lot of interest with an unpredicted 106 people taking the assessment. Its popularity drove us to continue the event and so we found ourselves at the WBCPCR stall at the Book Fair again on February 9th. Excitedly putting up their hands to answer, the quiz saw participation from a diverse multitude of people including everyone from a 13-year old schoolboy to the stall’s sound-manager, to a published poet to a government school teacher.

4. Development of a 10-hour course module on ‘School and Society’

We believe that outside the family, the teacher is the most important role model for children. Being primary agents of socialization for children, teachers’ own biases and prejudices—both spoken and unspoken—have a greater impact on students than any text book/activity book. For the success of the active citizenship curriculum, it is imperative to address teachers’ perspective of society as this is the lens that will most shape a child’s world-view.

With the above mentioned objective, Vikramshila developed a 10 hour course module on ‘School and Society’ as part of Modern Academy’s Enrichment Module for Continuing Education, conducting the session with both in-service and pre-service teachers. Through this course the participants explored the place of school and schooling in society. Generating discussion on the aims of education and the roles of schools in a democracy, the module also addressed the process of socialization that leads to the cultural and ethical basis of democratic practice in the classroom space. The focal areas of the session were gender, socialization and the role of media as a socializing agent in contemporary times.

5. Engagement with teachers

In collaboration with the SSA and with the cooperation of Block Level Resource Persons, Cluster Level Resource Persons and teachers, we reworked our social science modules to cater to the upper primary level in Tripura. A training was conducted for 150 teachers from three different districts (Sipaijala, Dharmanagar, Unokoti) on this module.
We often disobey laws/ rules because

- 18%: There is no reward for following rules
- 40%: A little money can go a long way in bypassing punishment for lawbreaking
- 25%: Others don’t, why should I?
- 17%: Other

One of many findings of ‘Are You an Active Citizen?’, held at Kolkata International Book Fair, 2018

900 govt. school students reached

163 young adults capacitated

200 teachers equipped
Life Skills and Career Counselling, Bihar

Making the right career choices at the end of school is critical in the lives of students as it defines their future trajectory. Equally important is inculcating essential life skills among the citizens of tomorrow so that they can manage their future with responsibility and sensitivity. The mechanisms within the school system though geared towards academic excellence, perhaps miss out on the relevance of timely and useful information that may help students to make such career decisions. In the absence of relevant information, most grow up with a very limited and skewed understanding of life’s goals and are often found to be succumbing to pressure without knowing how to cope with difficult situations.

With increasing work in the area of career counselling for high school students, it is important to provide a holistic solution in order to really make a difference. It is also important to demystify career counselling and facilitate career awareness so that school teachers are equipped to provide the last mile support and guidance to their students in mapping their interests with their aptitude and choosing fitting career options free from inter-generational occupational rigidities. In an innovative attempt to do this, the Life Skills and Career Counselling Program was undertaken by the Department of School Education, Government of Bihar through its nodal agency, the Bihar Madhyamik Shiksha Parihad (BMSP) with sponsorship support from Unicef Bihar. The programme was launched in 100 schools across 6 districts of Bihar.
Vikramshila was invited to provide technical support to this programme that was inspired by Education to Employability, an existing programme in West Bengal which receives implementational support from Vikramshila and benefits over 30,000 students and 600 teachers. Spread over Patna, Vaishali, Darbhanga, Madhubani, West Champaran and Purnea, the programme focussed on Life Skills, Career Counselling, Communicative English and IT skills. The content shared by Vikramshila was customised jointly to adapt it to the context of Bihar. The project was formally launched on Bihar Diwas 2016 by the Education Minister, Ashok Chaudhury. UNICEF Bihar further engaged Vikramshila in providing direct hand-holding and monitoring support in twenty schools of Patna out of the 100 schools overall, with a view to establish model schools. For sustainability, ownership and better impact, the project was implemented through nominated teachers from project schools who were trained by resource persons from Vikramshila.

The program’s practical implementation was conducted through 9 steps, each of which further branched out into smaller sub-steps.

To make the programme both sustainable and scalable, a 5-day training was conducted by resource persons from Vikramshila to train a pool of master trainers, who would in turn conduct district level training for teachers of the 100 schools. Continuously engaged through monitoring and reporting, we could effectively assess the capacity-building of each of the trainees. A 5-day training on each of the 4 strands- Life Skills, Career Awareness, IT and Communicative English was organized for teachers, with the first batch being the teachers of the 20 Patna schools. This was repeated in the other 5 districts with Vikramshila providing both training and hand-holding support. Our three-pronged training structure, fortified by repeated direct interactions with the concerned teachers and schools helped us adapt our model according to the needs assessed. Aside from the teacher trainings at various levels and refresher
trainings, Vikramshila was invited to participate in the district-wise introductory meetings held in Patna and Vaishali districts, intended to be a sharing platform from which an informed model implementation plan could be sculpted. In response to the problems of insufficient presence of teachers, limitations owing to the teachers’ IT-unrelated backgrounds and poor IT infrastructure, we conducted IT camps across the schools after consultation with the BSMP, much to the excitement of the students. Students also took psychometric assessments as part of the career counselling module - a career guidance instrument that helps students connect their interests and skills to educational and occupational alternatives including a plethora of unconventional contemporary options such as jewellery designing, content writing, curating, fisheries’ scientists among others.

**Career Hubs** - The setting up of a physical space within school premises that would house a variety of informational material for the students to access was an integral vision of this programme. This space was to serve as a good starting point for the schools to build upon by involving students in engaging, relevant activities.

**Highlights**

**Career Day Celebration in schools**
Career Day celebration was conceived of as a stage for students to showcase all that they learned in the program to other stakeholders including teachers, school heads, peers and parents. Conducted in each school with teachers’ support, the celebrations included activities such as a quiz, debate, motivational speech, poster-making, slogan-writing, poem-writing, skit, theme-based calendars, theme based jingles and songs etc. The enthused cooperation and enthusiasm that went into the celebration was heartening.

This apart, Vikramshila participated and put up stalls in other state level events like Bihar Diwas and Shiksha Mela ‘Lakshya’. In fact, on the request of BMSP, we even invited representatives from The American Centre and Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute (SRFTI) to put up stalls at the event and interact with students.

**Felicitation Event**
To mark the official completion of the pilot programme in the 100 schools, a felicitation event was organized with support from BMSP and UNICEF. The Honourable Minister for Education, Govt. of Bihar was the chief guest. Attended by senior government officials including the Secretary of School Education, the State Project Director, UNICEF’s Programme Manager, Shubhra Chatterji (Director, Vikramshila) and the organization’s technical support team, this felicitation event was organized to recognize the efforts of schools, teachers and students while also acting as a gallery for our collective learnings. While students took dignitaries on a tour of the themed galleries that showcased each school’s student-led contributions to the event, UNICEF unveiled their report, ‘Life Skills & Career Counselling Programme: A holistic approach to improving skills for student achievement,’ to the audience. Perhaps the brightest segment of the event was a presentation wherein some of the students expressed their thoughts on the programme in English - a remarkable feat for minds that had only started learning the language recently.

**Learning** A dipstick study was conducted in two stages (at the beginning and end of the programme) with approximately 3500 students, in order to study the efficacy of the program over the project period. A graphical representation of the improvements exhibited overall is given below.
Looking ahead
Combined with the sustained feedback from teachers, HMs and students, our experiences over this programme have brought forth learnings that have helped to shape its potential future course. In addition to sustaining the programme for its positive impact on the children (as testified by other stakeholders), the support to teachers in the form of continued monitoring and hand-holding will be maintained. Including the modules as co-curricular activity and a part of the school time-table will help establish more firmly this program’s ideals and can also lead to the construction of a mechanism whereby the remaining teachers of the involved schools are enfolded to ensure transfer of knowledge within the school’s ecosystem.
DIRECT OUTREACH PROGRAMMES
WITH CHILDREN

- The Bigha School and Resource Centre
- Naba Disha
- ITC Mission Sunehra Kal
- Advocacy Actions
The Bigha School and Resource Centre

The Bigha School, started in 1996 under the MHRD’s “Innovative and Experimental Scheme” has been our learning lab through the years, allowing us the scope to experiment integrating local knowledge with mainstream education in a bid to create a school curriculum that is contextual, relevant and life-centric. To build a space where children can acquire knowledge as a concrete experience, relating to it at a personal level and make meaning from this relation, has been our driving force.

The classroom practices that have emerged over years of our experimentation and improvisation with the curriculum, are reflected in Bondhur Khata (biography of a tree written by the children, each of whom adopts a tree as a bondhu or friend), wall magazine, Sahitya Sabha and other activities that require the children to use language to capture/convey their lived experiences.

The community’s involvement in the initial stages of the school’s formation as well as years of orientation regarding Vikramshila’s approach to education has contributed to their continued inclusion in the school’s practices. With upto four sharing meets a year with parents (primarily mothers) concerning their children’s performances, a sense of community ownership towards the
school can be seen to have developed. Aside from acting as a laboratory for innovating pedagogical practices, the Bigha School also functions as a resource and training centre, disseminating its teaching-learning practices among 17 government schools. Our classroom and community-based activities with primary schools, upper primary schools and SSKs over 15 villages in 3 gram panchayats, engage 4902 children in the 6-14 age group in multiple ways. The school has also been working in collaboration with the block level ICDS department to bolster their efforts in early childhood education.

**Highlights of the year**

**At the school level**

In all three gram panchayats, meetings with PRI members were conducted to voice and share experiences, drawing infrastructural concerns to the Panchayat’s notice as part of our long-term objective of driving the Panchayat to incorporate education among its primary agenda.

This year, 24 of our students appeared for and passed the Madhyamik examination. Sneha Khatun, having achieved 86% of marks is the highest scorer among them, with 6 others passing in 1st division.

At the Higher Secondary level, 8 of our students took the Uchha-Madhyamik examinations. Rimpa Garai, with 76%, scored the highest among them.

**Literary Enhancement Activities**

Making writing an organic vehicle for children to convey their experiences has been one of our efforts in the school. This endeavour has taken three primary forms that have also been extended to the government schools we work with. Wall-magazine is an exercise that involves children collecting local news and using the walls of their classrooms to display them, creating a news gallery. Undertaken 6 times a year at the Bigha School and 4 times a year at 10 local government schools, this activity engages 376 students. Creative writing exercises are ensured with regularity and are practiced by 460 students from classes III and IV of the Bigha School and 10 government schools. Bondhur Khata (a writing exercise initiated in our Bigha school in 1999) involves each student being assigned a tree that they adopt as their bondhu/friend before proceeding to make diary entries about them. Four government schools aside from the Bigha School have adopted this practice.

**Library Project**

Vikramshila has for long believed in the significance of libraries as spaces of language development which has naturally led to its application in the Bigha school. Aside from the central library at Bigha School, we have two extension libraries in Bhurkuna BM High School and Goutamdanga High School. So far we have been able to reach 8 primary and 2 upper primary schools via the Bhurkunda extension library. Our engagement with these schools involves distribution of grade appropriate books for students and demo-library sessions twice a week, undertaken by our volunteers. The sessions include facilitated discussions on the books the children have read and aim to not simply use literature as a means to cultivate language skills but to also create a sincere interest for reading and books in the children. We have connected with approximately 1180 students through this project.
**Sahitya Sabha**

In keeping with our focus on creative writing as a means of using language as a natural vehicle to communicate the children’s lived experiences, we organized two Sahitya Sabhas (in August and November). Alumni of the Bigha school, presently studying in classes 7-12 of the local government schools participated in this cultural event that required them to not only pen their creative expressions on given topics, but to also present them to their community members in a festive setting. All participants were given prizes for their efforts. This practice has proved to be an effective strategy for ensuring sustained relations with our school’s alumni. Although the event is conducted twice a year, the school’s teachers remain in touch with them, motivating them to give creative voice to their thoughts and feelings. Additionally, the experience of watching seniors from their communities write and perform in public has become a massive source of inspiration for the children currently studying in the school.

**Language and Maths Mela**

In addition to the annual practice of hosting a cultural meet and a sports day, a Language and Mathematics mela was held in November last year. This saw the attendance of students from 10 local government schools in accompaniment with their teachers alongside community members who were audience to an open gallery of maths and language-based models prepared by the participating students. Each participating school had a stall displaying a colourful variety of samples of creative writing and wall magazines made by its students. There was also a panel discussion on ‘causes of poor learning achievements of students’. Teachers and local PRI members participated in this discussion. A cultural programme that saw the participation of students from all 10 schools, concluded the programme.

This year, VERS, in collaboration with CRY organized a block-level sharing meeting on pedagogical practices in government schools, we are working with. This seminar, named ‘Right to Education in Action, was attended by the WBCPCR Chairman, the Joint BDO, SI, SabhapatiPanchayatSamiti, and was a platform for local government schools’ presentations of their applications of the pedagogical practices disseminated by Vikramshila. The schools also exhibited a number of teaching learning materials, children’s works etc for 42 government teachers for 38 primary schools in the block. The Wall magazine, Creative book, TLMs as well as picture of kitchen garden were among the gallery of teaching-learning materials and children’s handiworks on display. Child protection was a major issue of discussion at this meeting. The exemplary story of a girl named Ananya was shared: she had stood up against child marriage and set herself as an example.

The Chairperson of WBCPCR was highly appreciative of this initiative and requested the block administration to adopt these practices in all schools with utmost sincerity.

**Outreach Program with Anganwadi Centres**

Being early practitioners and now recognized as experts in the field of early childhood education, the Bigha School at present works directly with 10 Anganwadi centres and overall with 38 ICDS centres in the project area. Working on theme-based classroom decoration
worth noting is the involvement of increasingly vocal mothers from the community, who in a few cases have even been known to support an ICDS centre’s helper to run a day’s sessions in the absence of the concerned Anganwadi worker.

With 5 centralized orientations conducted, we have trained 152 Anganwadi workers overall, this past year. Two of the ten Anganwadi centres have been functioning as satellite centres- acting as models for the remaining spoke centres. One of the Anganwadi Workers who has availed our training has been selected as Block Level Resource Person.

**Suchana – towards building a social consciousness**

Formerly called CRG (Children’s Resource Group), Suchana has 12 groups (from as many villages) and comprises students from the government schools with which we are working. Preventing child marriages, child labour, working to re-enrol drop outs into the school system, keeping track of teachers’ regularity in schools and most recently, campaigning for better-planned and more varied kitchen gardens in schools to ensure nutritious mid-day meals at low costs- these are the primary areas of action for the Suchana groups. The groups largely constitute girls whose active participation propels the action-plans the groups undertake. Two cases of child marriage were prevented with the cooperation of the local BDO this year. Ananya Ghosh, group leader of Dhenua village scored 84.8% marks in Higher Secondary examination and became a role model among girls in the surrounding villages for her impactful leadership. Her case story has been published in leading Bengali newspaper ‘Ei Samay’ and other Bengali newspapers at the district level.
Naba Disha

This year Naba Disha stepped into its nineteenth year, providing educational and technical support to Kolkata Police’s flagship program for disadvantaged children of Kolkata. We worked with 13 centres of the Kolkata Police and 24 government schools in the vicinity of the centres reaching out to more than 2000 children in this period.

Naba Disha Centres

Located within Police stations or next to it, the program catered to children between 3 to 18 years offering a basket of services such as Early Childhood Education (ECE) for preschoolers (3 – 6 years), Learning Support for primary school goers (6 – 14 years), Integrated Technology in Education (ITE) and Citizenship Education for upper primary children (11 – 18 years). The core components were complemented by child friendly and accessible libraries, set up in all the centres.

Early Childhood Education

The ECE component in Vikramshila’s Naba Disha centres, designed for children aged between 3 to 6 years, is instrumental to their

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1 Kolkata Police organizes a number of community-oriented projects for improved human interaction, reduction of mistrust between Police and community and greater inroads into the community to improve the overall law and order situation. Under the Community policing initiatives of Kolkata Police ‘Nabadisha’

Is an educational and health care project of the under privileged children of the city of Kolkata, living in slums and squatter colonies of the city.

2 1258 children in Naba Disha and 755 children in government schools
holistic development encompassing the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language (vernacular and English), creative and cultural domains. This academic year the programme reached out to 385 children.

**Learning Support**

Learning Support is primarily available to the elementary school-going children, who are also enrolled in the Naba Disha centres. In 2017-18, Vikramshila provided learning support in Language, Math and Science to 873 children. This component does not replace but augments school education, since it is structured around the State curriculum. The learning support sessions are available to children either in the morning before school or after school in the afternoon. This year the teachers received training in the English language, with classroom strategies and activities around vocabulary enrichment, rhymes, total physical response (TPR), social graces, action words, grammar and reading activities.

**Integrated Technology in Education and Citizenship Education**

ITE and Citizenship Education were offered to the older children of the centres, adolescents from classes 5 to 12. In ITE the children completed 13 projects using computer applications such as Multimedia, Scratch, Digital Story, Spreadsheet,
A student of Nadial Naba Disha centre participated in the “I 4 INDIA: Active Citizenship for a Vibrant Democracy”, organized by the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) in collaboration with Vikramshila on June 30th. She shared how a personal tragedy in her life led to a big awareness movement in her locality. Beginning with her life’s incident, she reiterated the process of awareness that the Nadial citizenship group undertook to ensure that every member of the community understood the need for knowing one’s blood group.

Library

Each of our centres has a library set up with graded books targeting children from the emergent literacy stage. Large illustrations, interesting stories and pictures and activities around books make our libraries vibrant and active all year through. This year some of our centre teachers participated in a workshop conducted by Pratham Books on the use of the Story Weaver website. The teachers learned how to browse through the stories that are uploaded and how to filter their search by children’s’ age group, language, comprehension level. They also learned how to create stories that could be suitable for children entering the Naba Disha centres. The objective of the workshop was to help teachers expand their collection of stories by not just reading stories of other authors but also by creating stories for children based on their daily experiences.

OUTREACH

This year we worked with government schools on two components - Early Grade Reading (EGR) and Integrated Technology in Education (ITE). Reaching out to 755 children on the whole, the EGR component was offered to children in grade 1 and the ITE component for students of classes 5 to 9.

The objective of the EGR intervention is to enhance a child’s reading skills and language proficiency. Commencing with book handling and moving up to development of good vocabulary, comprehension abilities and finally to the independent reading stage.
Vikramshila continued to extend the ITE intervention designed by Tata Trust to government schools this year, both through classes and workshops.

**Highlights**

**Collaboration of TISS and SSA for ICT Certificate Course for government schools teachers of Kolkata**

This collaboration facilitated by Vikramshila led to 36 Master Facilitators completing the 4 month course and receiving their certificates through a convocation ceremony. Vikramshila continues to offer handholding support to the MTs and efforts are being taken to link these MTs to our Naba Disha centres for improved ITE classes.

**School Completion and success in Board Exams**

31 students of Naba Disha successfully passed their board examinations this year – 10 children graduated secondary school and 21 students graduated higher secondary school.
The firm belief that quality education holds the potential to empower people – including those whose lives are determined by poverty born from generations of discrimination, has led Vikramshila to take on varied projects to this end. In November 2015, we entered into a partnership with ITC’S Mission Sunehra Kal-a multi-sectoral project pivoted on working towards the uplift of communities located around their recently set up factory in Howrah district.

This program’s primary focus is on improving learning levels of primary school children in the three gram panchayats of Joargori, Kanduah and Beldubi in Howrah district through supplementary learning support provided through before- and after-school interventions. These interventions mainly take the form of library-based literacy activities and remedial education to cope with and mitigate learning gaps. Innovative strategies are used intermittently to encourage the foundational learning skills of reading, writing and numeracy in students. The programme also aims to act as a model to government school teachers to motivate them to adopt important pedagogical practices from the centre into their own classroom-spaces.
The Programme Partnerships

The journey so far

Building supplementary school spaces has been integral to the implementation of this project. A beyond-school hours learning support infrastructure was devised to improve students’ learning levels as well as to encourage attendance levels in schools. ‘Education volunteers’ selected from the local community and trained by Vikramshila, facilitate the students in these spaces. A library has been developed in each school for sustainable, qualitative improvement. Resource rooms painted and decorated on the basis of the concept of BALA (Building as a Learning Aid) have been set up within government school premises. Competitions designed to hone students’ skills in areas such as handwriting, spelling, drawing, creative writing and elocution, have regularly been conducted. Convergence with other ITC partners in the area was prioritized to increase impact, create a strong network and synergize efforts for improved results.

Project Highlights

Remedial Camp

From 6th-10th November 2017, we held a ‘Remedial Camp’ in 30 SLCs with approximately 1058 students from classes III and IV. This was preceded by a Camp Orientation wherein 57 EVs and 3 supervisors were oriented on camp methodologies and other related activities. The camp focussed on strengthening basic reading, writing and numeracy skills to facilitate students to acquire grade-appropriate learning levels.

English Language Teaching (ELT) training

We organized a workshop over 4 days in two batches in June, 2017. English Language Fellow Katy McAlary (from the U.S. Consulate General, Kolkata) conducted the workshop at IITD Ruby, focusing on new approaches to teaching English with the aim of bringing qualitative changes in practical pedagogy and making the process more student-friendly. Twenty EVs selected through the English assessment process, 3 supervisors, MIs and the project manager availed the training that concluded with a feedback session and an action plan for the second training which would be aimed at the remaining EVs. The second training was conducted with 60 participants at the Project Office in the last week of June.

5 days Teachers’ Training (15th-19th Jan 2018):
We organized our Teachers’ Training programme in January 2018 in Howrah. Designed for 30 teachers, we were pleasantly surprised to welcome a total of 53 enthusiastic teachers from across 30 schools. Each day focused on a separate subject, including an orientation on child rights’ protection and was facilitated by subject experts.

A Celebration of Learning

‘A Celebration of Learning’ was organized on 22nd March 2018 at Sarat Sadan. Ms. Bulan Bhattacharjarya (DPO, Howrah) Mr. Manjunath L, Regional Head (East), ITC, Mr. Bhuvnesh Programme Manager, ITC MSK, and Mr. Prabhas Naskar, Siksha Karmadhyakshya, Panchla, along with Shubhra Chatterji, Director, Vikramshila gave out prizes to the 30 children who were felicitated for their performances in categories of attendance, punctuality, attitude towards learning and in various curricular and co-curricular activities.

Though our work has run into its fair share of complications, the gradual but distinct improvement noted over the last few years, especially in terms of students’ attendance has given us ample motivation to work towards furthering community-connect and sustaining the positive impacts of this project. As per discussions with ITC, we are also looking to extend our intervention to 10 new schools in Chandipur, Uluberia.
Shramik Mela

The State Labour department has taken the initiative to organize a state-wide Shramik Mela to create awareness among workers on issues related to labour laws and other related matters. As decided in a partners’ meeting, all partners attended the Mela on 21st-23rd February, 2018 at Sarat Sadan, Howrah Maidan.

Set amidst discussions on issues related to labour laws and welfare, the Mela comprised many stalls put up by the partners who displayed and demonstrated materials developed by them for awareness among labourers. ITC’s Mission Sunehra Kal which envisages achieving “Adarsh Habitation” through a holistic approach with a goal of empowering communities to promote sustainable livelihood, also had a stall. In addition to government officials, ITC Officials, NGO workers visiting the mela, an average of 500 labourers along with their families visited the stall and had their queries directly answered by facilitators from ITC and their NGO partners. The active attendance by those directly affected by this Project is what made this event a success.
Advocacy Actions

This has been a bustling year for us at Vikramshila in terms of our engagement in advocacy actions, which can broadly be categorized into three areas.

**Protection of child rights**

Our long-standing association with the Women and Child Department and Social Welfare (Shubhra Chatterji, Director, Vikramshila has been a member of the ECCE council since its inception) was further cemented over this year with a formal exploration of the potential of possibilities our intervention in government and shelter homes through supplementary learning centres (SLCs) could hold.

Satya Gopal Dey, Head, Child Protection Advocacy, Vikramshila, an Executive Body member of State Child Protection Society and associated with the protection of child rights in India for over three decades, received the honour of being included in the Drafting Committee of WBCPCR’s Child Protection Policy for Schools.

Aside from being invited to be represented as a panellist for an International Seminar on Child Trafficking organized jointly by WBCPCR and the Loreto schools, Vikramshila was represented at five consultations on the issues of education and protection of child rights by both governmental and non-governmental organizations including the State Labour Department, the SCPCR and Save the
Children, among others.

**Active Citizenship**

Our sustained efforts to institute the necessity of active citizenship in the larger discourse of education in India received recognition by the WBCPCR that declared Vikramshila a lead actor in the field, at a State-Level consultation on Active Citizenship in June, 2017. Jointly organized by VERS and WBCPCR, the consultation saw the attendance of Heads and teachers of a diverse range of educational institutions including private and government schools and madrasas, representatives from NGOs and of government institutions such as SCERT, SSM and NUJS as well as international representatives from the Consulate General of America. With active participation from dignitaries including WBCPCR chairperson Ms. Ananya Chakraborti, Anjali Noronha (Eklavya), Mr. Chinmoy Sarkar (District Inspector of Schools, Secondary, Kolkata) and Ms. Ruchira Goswami (Assistant Professor, NUJS) among others, an invigorating discussion on the need for increased inclusivity for an effective meaningful education, was generated. This conference led to the organization of a district-level Round-Table on Active Citizenship that launched VERS’ year-long programme of disseminating the concepts of active citizenship to ten government schools across Kolkata.

Further, we received the unprecedented honour of an invitation by the WBCPCR to use the colossal public platform of the Kolkata International Book Fair, 2018 to promulgate our ideas on active citizenship. The wide, diverse appeal of our quiz ‘Are you an Active Citizen?’ earned us a second invitation to the same edition of the fair—helping us directly reach a wide cross-section of approximately 250 book fair-visitors.

**Quality Education**

A highlight of our work in the education sector this year, in terms of advocacy, was a state-level consultation on the Madrasa Education system in West Bengal. Held on 26th March, 2018, it was organized jointly by WBCPCR and VERS and attended by members of NGOs, Madrasas and the SCPCR and chaired by Ananya Chakraborti, Chairperson of WBCPCR. Conducted with the purpose of dispelling the deep-seated, easy otherizing propensities/biases of society at large, the consultation also proved to be an important step towards an improved understanding of the Madrasa system, and thereby to chart out a plan of action to further develop the quality of education in these institutions.
## Audited Accounts

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH 2018

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| Accounting Policies & Notes On Accounts | J         |            |            |

### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICULARS</th>
<th>Rs.</th>
<th>PARTICULARS</th>
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In Memoriam - Dr. Atindra Sen

This year we lost from amidst us our beloved President Dr. Atindra Sen, IAS (Retd.). It has been an honour to have him by our side, an unstinting pillar of support for 15 years - the last 12 of them as President of our Governing Body. His untimely and abrupt departure left us with a void impossible to fill. We grieve for the loss of an exceptional man who was both dear friend and mentor to us. May he rest in peace.

Farewell, Dr. Atindra Sen.

We welcome our new Governing Body members

Justice Pinaki Ghosh
President

Karthik Manna
Member

Surojit Chatterji
Member
Behind the scenes

Main Office (Kolkata)
Shubhra Chatterji
Atanu Sain
Sutapa Chakraborty
Namrata Ghosh
Ankita Gupta
Satya Gopal Dey
Rit Mukherjee
Priya Roy
Sumana Ganguli
Sutapa Baksí
Probal Saha
Uday Samanta
Babita Dutta Majumder
Md. Mehedí Hasan
Samima Seikh
Quazi Md. Imran
Md. Mujibur Rahaman
Sk. Julfikaruddin
Sk. Abdul Dayem
Syed Ejaz Husam
Md. Sarif Hossen Midya
Soumitra Bhattacharya
Rita Das
Abhijit Sinha
Madhubanti Bhattacharya
Jhuma Ghosh
Amartya Sen Sharma
Sulata Tripathi
Md. Nurul Hasan Bora
Ahana Dasgupta
Sayani Kushari
Ria Banerjee
Mustafiz Iqubal
Sanchari Roy Chowdhury
Ananya Dam
Rimo Mondal
Soumi Mukherjee
Sanjay Bhattacharjee
Kaberi Prasad
Manjula Das
Soudipta Bhanja
Shadma Goolnur
Suvam Das
Sanghamitra Roy
Majumder
Srimanti Mukherjee
Suparna Basu
Oindrila Chakraborty
Irani Bhattacharjee

Koustav Dasgupta
Momali Banerjee
Payal Malik
Arnab Singh Chowdhury
Sibani Chakraborty
Ritwik Mukherjee
Ranita Roy
Srabanti Basak
Sourav Goswami
Debjoty Dhar
Madhumita Guha
Priyasmita Bhattacharya

Bigha School and Resource Center (Burdwan)
Arun Kr. Sain
Partha Sarathi Mukherjee
Atanu Kundu
Aynul Sekh
Milon Kumar Sarkar
Mujibur Rahaman Sk
Nazrul Haque Mondal
Saherunnessa Khatun
Samser Ali SK
Sudip Samanta
Keka Mullick

TRI Project Office (Bankura)
Subandu Roy
Arup Mondal
Atanu Das
Jayanta Pal

Tripura Office
Reajul Islam
Subhabrata
Bhattacharjee
Dhrubajayoti Nag

Nabadisha Centre Teachers, Kolkata
Gulnaz Begam
Noori Begam
Shabnam Bano
Tabassum Begam
Roshon Israil
Shabana Alam

Guncha Kahkansa
Sabitah Halder
Mridula Chakraborty
Jasmin
Kanchan Prasad
Sugata Roy
Sangeeta Dutta
Piyali Biswas
Shyamali Bose
Nasim Banu
Sangita Banerjee
Kanchan Paul Naskar
Soma Saha
Dolly Mukherjee
Mehnaz Bano
Durga Rajak
Pinki Kumari Rajbhar
Simra Roy
Sucheta Mondal
Anjana Guhait
Naseem Ara
Amna Khatun
Piyali Patro
Afreen Afroz
Nagina Parveen
Parveen Bano
Nikhat Ara
Ruby Khanam
Nazneen Begum
Alam Ara
Mukta Kundu
Baby Deb
Masahweta Roy
Asthma Khatoon
Saleha Anjum
Radha Chowdhury
Raushan Ara
Rupali Ghosh
Madhumita Das

EVs & Supervisors (Howrah)
Modhumita Adak
Diptanshu Huit
Chandana Panja
Tirtha Chowdhury
Minakshi Manna
Chameli Deshmukh
Shrabanti Dhul
Eishita Panja
Shibani Santra (Jana)
Jayasri Ghosh
Kaberi Sinha
Joyshree Malik
Sanghamitra Dwari
Krishna Dalui
Putul Rani Malik
Anuhree Karmakar
Jamuna Sinha
Monalisa Bag
Shampa Hazra
Priyanka Roy
Avijit Sardar
Avijit Pramanick
Samina Begam
Suvra Das
Ikbil Malik
Marufa Khatun
Papiya Sen
Ajmira Begam
Joyashree Mondal
Sadhana Koley
Animes Kanji
Suparna Ari
Sudha Hudati
Priyojit Panja
Rita Malick
Mithun Bhandari
China Mollick
Samar Kanji
Swarup Patra
Surochita Manna
Pallab Ghosh
Peu Golui
Piyali Bar
Sulekha Barick
Chiranjit Golui
Milima Begam
Arpita Manna
Soma Patra
Banashree Raut (Hazar)
Sagarika Mondal
Moumita Ghosh
Imran Khan
Mita Koley
Indranil Deti
Baby Adak
Sagarika Hazra
Kanika Ghosh
Acknowledgments

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all our NGO partners who have worked with us over the year. We would especially like to thank all the school heads and teachers for the untiring hard work they put in each year, for being open to new ideas and challenges in education and for believing in our work and encouraging our efforts on the ground.

Our donors:

- UNICEF (West Bengal, Bihar and Country Office- Delhi)
- Tata Trusts
- WIPRO
- CRY
- Tech Mahindra Foundation
- The U.S Consulate General Kolkata
- The Regional English language Office- American Embassy
- ITC Mission Sunehra Kal
- Transforming Rural India (TRI)
- Tata Petrodyne
- Genius Consultants Ltd.
- World Vision India
- Magic Bus
- Indienhilfe e.V. Herrsching, Germany
- Dr. Shelley M. Brown (through Ramakrishna Foundation)
- Mr. Vinayak Lohani (through Optimum Stock Trading)

We thank the following Government Departments:

- The Department & Directorate of Women & Child Development – Government of West Bengal
- Sarva Shiksha Mission, Tripura
- The District Offices of Sarva Shiksha Mission, Kolkata, Howrah, Bankura and Burdwan
- West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education
- Kolkata Police
- West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights
- Directorate of Madrasa Education
- Bihar Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad- Government of Bihar
- SSA- Jammu and Kashmir

We would like to thank all our partners, friends and well-wishers who have continued to support us over the years. Not to forget our community partners- parents of children, the didis of SHG groups of Bankura, who trust us, believe in our work and make it possible for us to turn our objective of ensuring the right and access to quality education to all children, into reality. Most importantly, we want to thank the thousands of children who motivate us and push us to keep our expectations high each day!
Vikramshila Education Resource Society (1989) is a nonprofit nongovernmental organization working in the area of education with the mission of “making quality education a reality for all children”.

Make a Donation Today to Bring Lasting Changes in the Lives of the Children

I want to join hand in the effort by donating Rs 10,000 □ / Rs 5000 □ / Rs 3000 □ / Rs 2000 □ / Other: Rs ____________.

Full Name: _______________________________________

Address: _________________________________________

City: __________________________ State: ___________ Pin : _____________

Phone: ____________ E-mail: __________________________

Donation method:

1) Account Payee Cheque in favour of “Vikramshila Education Resource Society” and send it to: Vikramshila Education Resource Society 256B, Prince Anwarshah Road Kolkata – 700 045

2) For online payment: A/c No. – 20791445042 IFSC code – ALLA0210034 Allahabad Bank, Jodhpur Park Branch

For queries please contact: Phone : (033) 46003331, (033) 24224855 Website : www.vikramshila.org Email: vers.admin@gmail.com, satya.dey@vikramshila.org

Any amount of Donation is exempted under 80G of Income Tax Act