

# annual report (2020-2021)

## **tribe kamar**

a particularly vulnerable tribal  
group of chhattisgarh


## **phoolbati**

access to quality early  
childhood education.



AVANITI EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING  
FOUNDATION



A young girl with dark hair, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and a plaid dress, is seen from the side, looking down at a pig. The pig is dark brown and is standing on a ground covered with dry leaves, twigs, and some trash like a white plastic bag. The background is filled with more twigs and debris, suggesting an outdoor, possibly rural or urban slum, environment. The lighting is natural, suggesting daytime.

“to the child, her play is her activity, her life,  
her business. It is intensely serious. it is an  
occupation.”  
- Dewey.





# AVANITI EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOUNDATION

*Towards a society where every child's voice and ways of learning are respected*

**Not for profit organization registered  
under 12A & 80G**

**CIN:** U80904PN2018NPL178372

**Country of origin:**

India

**Founded:**

2018

**Location:**

Pune, Maharashtra

Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh

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# message from the founder

Society has high expectations from children, we expect them to grow up into adults, who thinks out of the box, someone who will find innovative and creative solutions to today's problems, a critical thinker, a compassionate individual, and a democratic citizen of the society. But, with the very first step that the child takes into the society, we want them to stop and slow down. Whenever they have something to share we shut them down, their theories about how surroundings work goes unheard, their diverse ways of expression and presenting theories are unseen and unvalued. When they crave for human contact, love and attention we call them tantrums. We interfere with every decisions they take and meddle in with every step. We as adults are responsible for their future, drill them with ABCD and 1234, because that's the solution for everything. And, the condition is far worse for a child belonging to a marginalized community who are even deprived of basic amenities.

Avaniti Education and Training Foundation envisions a society where every child's voice and their ways of learning are respected. We consider children as a powerful, strong, and full of potential individual. And, child holds central position in our pedagogy.

We are currently running PHOOLBATI program in the tribal district Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh. This program works at two levels- It provides access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) to children of the Kamar tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group with no access to any kind of preschool education. At another level, this program works towards developing the quality of government anganwadis.

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AVANITI EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING  
FOUNDATION

# about avaniti

Avaniti Education and Training Foundation is a not for profit organization registered in August 2018 under section 8 (1) of the companies act, 2013 (India). The organization is currently working in the tribe dominated regions to provide access to quality early childhood education. Avaniti's program *PHOOLBATI* is focused towards providing access to early childhood education to children from Kamar community (a PVTG) with no access to any kind of pre-school. The organization also works on developing quality of early learning in government anganwadis with the collaboration of the concerned departments.

## **vision**

*Towards a society where every child's voice and ways of learning are respected*

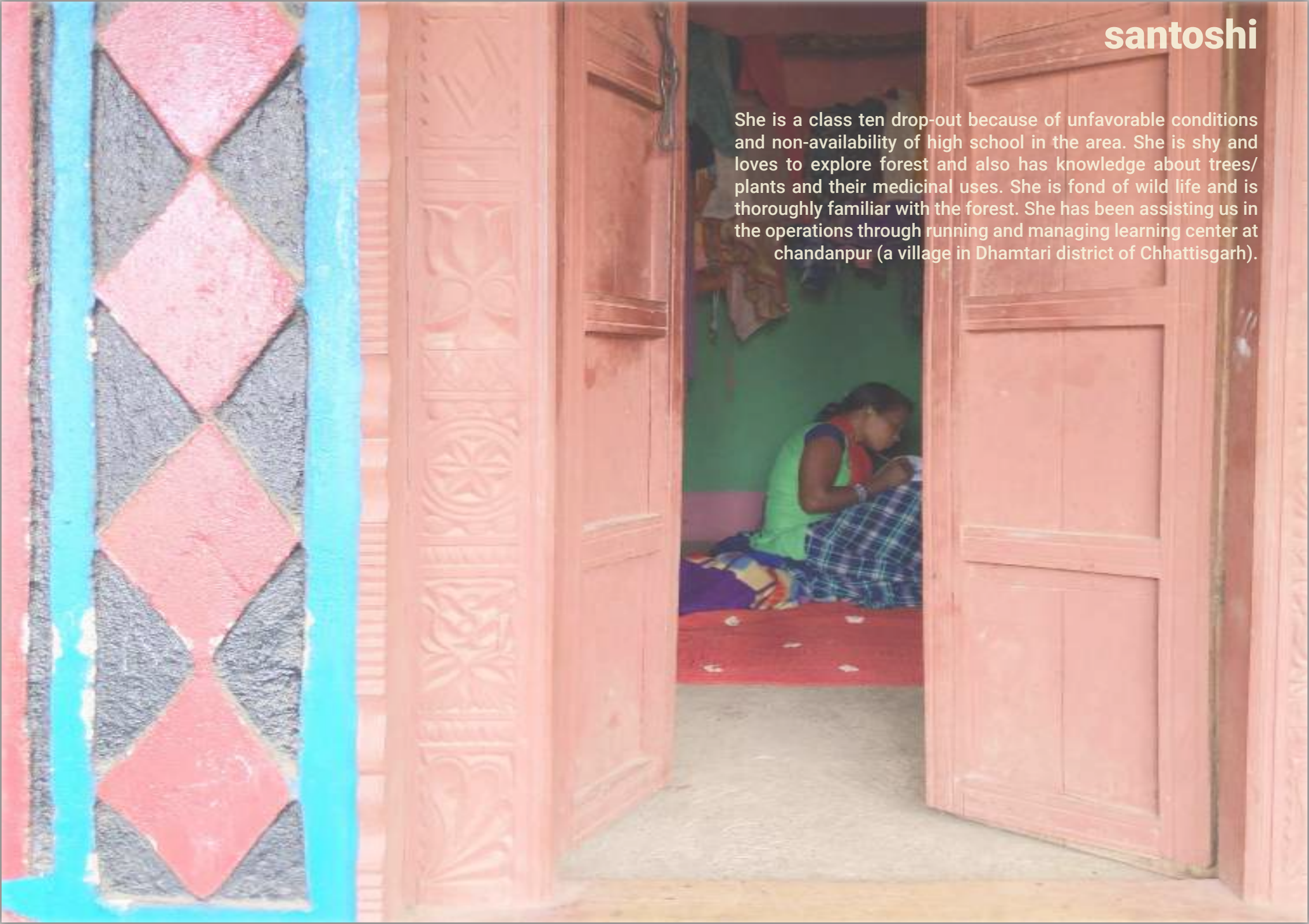
## **mission**

*To promote an environment of learning led by the learner*



**our team**

She is a class ten drop-out because of unfavorable conditions and non-availability of high school in the area. She is shy and loves to explore forest and also has knowledge about trees/plants and their medicinal uses. She is fond of wild life and is thoroughly familiar with the forest. She has been assisting us in the operations through running and managing learning center at chandanpur (a village in Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh).





## **fagni**

Fagni is pursuing college along with computer classes and is vocal about the differentiated behavior she has experienced while pursuing education, as she belongs to Kamar community. Fagni wants to learn to talk in English someday. She has experienced that the community in her village is less inclined towards education and it is essential to work with them towards schooling and education. She has been assisting us in operations through running and managing learning center at Banbagaud (a village in Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh).



## krishna

Krishna is having 10 and half years of mixed experience in social and telecommunication sectors. His work with Azim Premji Foundation included curriculum and course development, teacher education, research, monitoring and evaluation and team mentoring/building responsibilities. He has also worked with Globenet Software and Zephyr System Pvt. Ltd in telecommunication projects. Krishna has a Master degree in Elementary Education from TISS Mumbai and B. Tech in Electronics and Communication Engineering from West Bengal University of Technology, Kolkata



## ashwini

She started working with children at the age of 18-19, initially as a volunteer and later journey subjected her to diverse experiences. She found happenings and perspectives on children's planet (as she terms it) refreshing and they have never failed to astonish her. In her past role in the areas of teaching, curriculum development, and content development, as a teacher educator, and today at Avanti, she always make sure to share the perspectives about children, childhood and education, with will to share same joy and excitement that she experienced while working with children.

## apurva

Apurva, a graduate of NIFT Hyderabad has been supporting us in terms of handling our social media, branding, book illustration and some other vital tasks of the organization. Her technical skills and zeal towards social work is helping Avaniti in best ways.



**the tribe**





## ghar

Their philosophy of living addresses to 'present' and 'basic needs'. The houses that they live in show strong impression of this philosophy. They stay in houses that are isolated from main village and is closer to the forest. Houses are only used to sleep as major of their time is spent outdoors. They build tiny homes of mud with limited furniture and have outdoor kitchens with limited utensils and food is cooked on open fire. Day-to-day activities shows strong connection among community, every thing is done together with each-others help.

## the kamar

The Kamar is a particularly vulnerable tribal group residing majorly in Gariaband, Dhamtari and Mahasamund districts of Chhattisgarh. This region has been termed as 'Bindranawagarh' in the book called 'the kamar' authored by S C Dube. It is sad to see the current situation of the community which does not seem much changed from the situation of 1951 that has been described in Dube's book. The community still faces access to some basic amenities and rights such as education, health, employment or even social identity. Almost all the Kamar villages are devoid of Anganwadis or pre-school facilities, although they are having primary schools. According to Census 2011, Chhattisgarh has 26580 Kamar populations whose literacy rate is only 47.7% and is more vulnerable in women i.e. only 37%. In Dhamtari district, it is difficult to find people who are high school or higher secondary passed as most of them get dropped out after grade 5 or 8.

The Kamar community is majorly dependent on forest produces such as- making baskets and other bamboo products, tendu leaves (used to make Beedi), collecting and selling wild fruits and vegetables, Mahua fruits and flowers etc. They were also into hunting for food but now as the forest and wild animal conservation is strictly penned down in laws, the community is bound to shift their traditional livelihood means to agriculture and labour. The Kamar and Gond community in Dhamtari district are settled in villages which are in the forest and are disbursed which makes them difficult to access basic facilities such as communication, mobile network, and other amenities. The community has its own language called Kamari language but gradually it is on the verge of dying due to less attention and domination of state's official language Chhattisgarhi and Hindi.

## **dokri daai**

**She is from chandanpur village, by selling seasonal edibles from forests and making bamboo baskets she makes her living. She often makes visit to the center along with the children as they love hearing stories and songs from her.**





## **towards agriculture**

With the government's encouragement some of the tribal population are gradually shifting towards agriculture whose ancestors are best known for step farming. There are various schemes to attract this PVTG community towards agriculture as they do not have access to sustainable livelihood. But their social identity, bureaucracy, and complex processes, makes it hard for these people to access such schemes. Also, poor financial condition, non availability of means, and measures to increase the production make it difficult for them to reap its benefits. Therefore, they often have to take up another means to make their livings.

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a vibrant, multi-colored sari with floral patterns in shades of red, orange, blue, and yellow. She is sitting on the ground, looking slightly to her left with a gentle smile. The background is a plain, light-brown mud wall. To the right, there is a large, dark, rectangular object, possibly a woven basket or a piece of furniture. On the ground to the left, there are some small, colorful items, possibly pots or containers.

## daai

She lives further away from Kamar settlement, near her farm as she has to look after it. She lives here with her husband and have two peacocks as their pets. Recently, both of them have been visiting government office to get pension (a scheme of the government for older Kamar tribe members). She says, even after engaging in agriculture, they struggle to make their daily bread and are dependent on ration from the government (PDS). Most days they toil on farm without meals and other day they have one time meal, that too *daal chawal* availed from PDs and on rare occasions they eat vegetables (as they can't always afford to buy them).

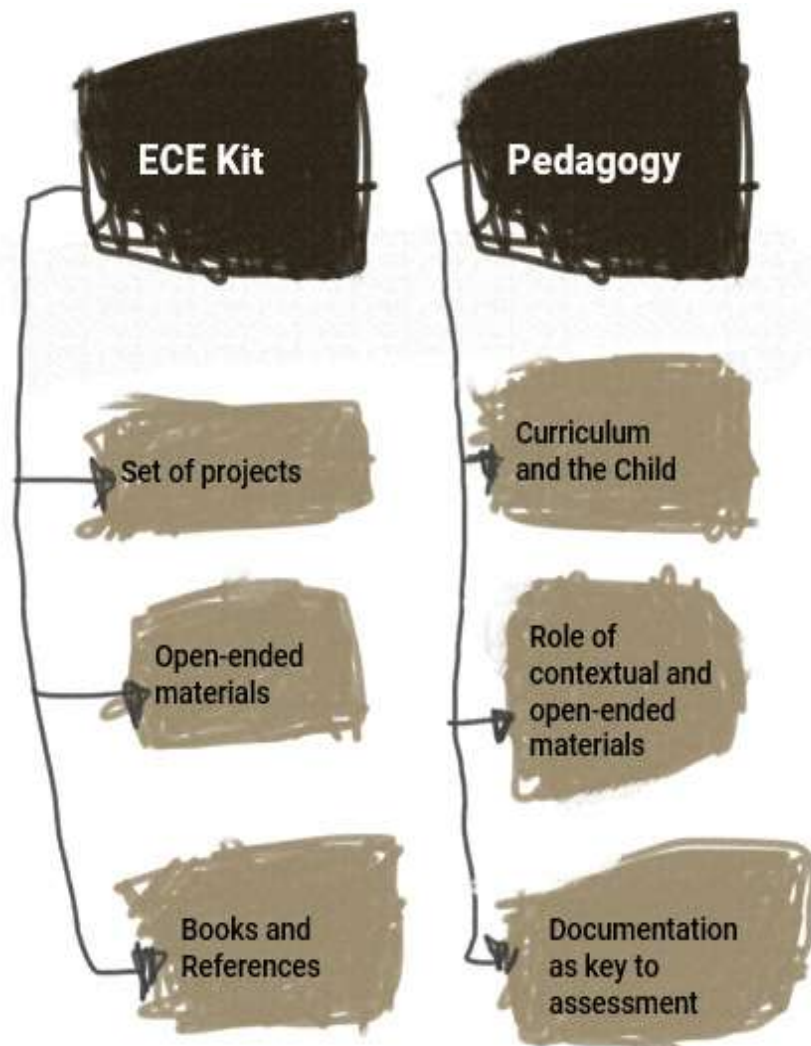
**program phoolbati**



# phoolbati

Phoolbati joins her parents when they go to the forest for collecting forest produces. She likes trees and animals and is always excited to watch Cheetal (deer). At the same time, she also enjoys playing unnamed games with sand, dust, wooden sticks, fabric or any other leftovers. She along with her friends makes putrikas (dolls) and they assign them different characters, to build their own world, a world where she is empowered and in-charge. She is extremely shy and does not talk to strangers easily. Phoolbati is smart and creative, but she is scared of going to school as she has heard stories of teacher beating up children in the classrooms. Phoolbati is 5 years' old and belongs to Kamar tribe, a PVTG, residing in Chandanpur (a small village in deep forest of Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh) with no access to early childhood education. This is usual routine of almost every child in the age-group of 3-6 years in Kamar dominated villages. Despite several differences between Phoolbati and children in other parts of the country, there could be one common thing i.e. their wish to be heard, seen and nurtured. It is every toddler's right to have access to stimulating environment focusing on their overall well-being, irrespective of their social and economic status. PHOOLBATI is a program that embraces childhood of every child. It provides access to child-centered, play-based quality early childhood education to Phoolbati and other such children.

# our program and approach



**outreach**



**access**

**2** villages

**40** children

**38** households

Location: Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh



**quality**

Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh

**35** supervisors

**92** anganwadi workers

**1800** children

Dibrugarh, Assam

**12** DIET Faculties

**20** anganwadis workers

**380** children



## Setting up libraries

Libraries could be set up for children from tribal community of Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh along with distributing books to some individual children. This could be possible through the support of many people who contributed in the crowdfunding which was done in collaboration with PrathamBooks.

**impact stories**



## rajkumari suryawanshi

“Anganwadi mein haman baccha ke sharirik aur mansik vikas ke upar kaam karthan. Khel aur Gatividhi ke madhyam se baccha sikhthe. Iske sath-sath jaruri poshak aahar bhi hamlog bacchon ko dete hain (We work upon physical and mental development of the children in anganwadis. They learn through play and activities. Along with this, we also provide essential nutritional foods to the children)” Says Rajkumari Suryawanshi, an anganwadis worker in Dokal which is situated in the middle of the forest of Nagri block of Dhamtari and situated at around 31 kilometers from district headquarter. Her anganwadi is the nearest one from our learning centre of Chandanpur situated at 3 kilometers distance. Rajkumari says that it is extremely important to open an anganwadi center in Chandanpur as number of early age group children is reasonably more and nutrition level of children are also a matter of concern. She also said that it is good that something is being done for the children of the village. Rajkumari used to distribute ready to eat food materials in the village before two years but it got halted due to some technical issue in the department but now she is happy that with our effort the initiative is back again. We celebrated Nutrition day in the village which was done for the first time with the support of Rajkumari where we could aware the parents on children’s health and nutrition. The anganwadi worker also visits our center to provide her inputs and suggestions.



**poshan mela**

location: Chandanpur

## fagni bai



Fagni Bai, mother of Manish came to the learning center so that her child does not feel uncomfortable during the initial days. However coming to the centre was not easy for her as she does not have agricultural land and her family is totally dependent on the forest produces and while she sits with her child, this time could easily fetch her some seasonal fruits or vegetables that could be sold into the market to buy vegetables and other required essential for the day. The community does not believe in saving and therefore is required to go every day to the forest to ensure two times meal of the family. Similarly, mother of Jitendra struggled in initial days to send him to the newly opened center. She told that this is completely new for us as before this children below the age of 6 years were not allowed into the school and even the teacher scolded school going children if they went with their younger siblings.

This seemed impossible to us during initial days when parents did not even respond to our Hi!.. Hello!...However, our efforts of building connection and trust kept going as one of our key approach was to collaborate with the parents to achieve effective and sustainable results. We could taste positive results within few weeks and now the same parents prepare their children in the morning and come to drop them to the learning center.

Today, whenever possible mothers and elder siblings visited and participated in activities. There is still shyness in them, but they are standing strong behind this initiative and are curious to know about the recent developments and how they can help.



International Women's Day celebration where grand-moms, mothers and elder siblings also joined us.



## bhumika



“This is our two storey’s house where I will be staying on the first floor and my parents would stay at the ground floor.”-said Bhumika. She also made some shops using circular bangles and one group member brought a car (toy made of plastic) and started carrying people to and fro the Madai (a term used for local fair). She called us and explained about her shop and story along with her cheering experiences of the Madai.

However this was not the situation when we started our work in Latipara, Banbagaud (a Kamar dominated vicinity of Banbagaud gram panchayat situated at a distance of 2 kilometers). The children did not come near us for almost 2-3 weeks and we had to be disappointed. Some parents and community members also tried but children refused to come and play or even interact with us. Same situation happened in Chandanpur where children flee to the forest, climbed on the tree, and refused to interact with us. With small kids language was also a barrier as they communicated among themselves in Kamari language which was difficult for us to understand despite having familiarity with the local Chhattisgarhi language. It took us several days of roaming in the forest along with them, playing and building a trust. Now, we face questions such as- “where were you for this long?” “why are you coming after a long time?”. Children now help us to understand conversation of two younger kids in Kamari and also have several narration and incidents to narrate.

Bhumika and two other children of the group used loose parts and other toys to resemble a scene from the Madai that occurred in their village in this week. In fact, all the children today seemed busy with making something that they saw in the fair (Madai). It was also interesting to observe that they mixed Kamari, Chhattisgarhi, and Hindi during their conversation while making an imaginary story of the Madai.

**glimpses of children's learning  
journey.**



## tea in making....

devraj and priyanshu (also called tractor by his friends) are making tea while following a recipe that requires measuring every ingredients accurately. They used mud, sand, leaves and water to make this tea. For hours they were engrossed in this activity and after several attempts, experiments and restructuring of recipes they came up with six different types of tea. They talked endlessly about how they drink, eat at home and how people before going to work drink tea at Kukrel (nearest market area) tea stalls. Later they even came up with different ways to measure their tea, they used ruler scale, measuring tape and ropes. It was amazing to watch them learn about basics of measurements on their own terms.



exploring themselves in the mirror





railgadi-railgadi chuk-chuk-chuk-chuk-chuk-chuk-chuk.....



Just some days earlier they had watched a train video, and heard stories about what its like to ride a train. It inspired them for a theme of play and this lasted for upcoming weeks. They used blocks, tiles, wood, clay, and leaves to make train. They fought for a chance to be a train driver. None of these children have ever seen trains in their real life but its only through stories, television and videos that they know how it looks like and what it might be feeling to ride it. They, endlessly told us stories of what they will do and where they would like to go.



a boat,that will take you to places far far away.....

"a friend of mine will be visiting our center once in a while..."





## **best part of me..**

Golu loves his hand more than any other part of his body. He says that he likes it because hand helps him do many things and they make doing things easy and without his hands, it will be difficult for him to live. But most importantly, he likes his hand because it has a heart on it.

children from government anganwadi, siyadehi are exploring light, shadows, colours and shapes.



**thank  
you**