

Educate A Child

About Gyan Shala – EAC association, India



School of Wisdom and Knowledge

Tulsi Khetaji Meghwal, daughter of a roadside vegetable vendor in Ahmedabad, India, has just passed her board exams with distinction and is off to study engineering at college. Tulsi could never have imagined reaching this point in her life had she not attended the Gyan Shala school from grades 1 to 7.

Gyan Shala, which means ‘school of wisdom and knowledge’, is a local NGO that addresses the quality aspect of primary education.

While it is estimated that more than 95% of India’s children attend school, studies have revealed that many children in grades 4 and 5 cannot perform simple two-digit arithmetic or write a paragraph in their own language. Access to education may be readily available, however, the quality of education varies and drops significantly in poorer areas. With almost 23% of the population living on less than US\$1.25 a day, access to quality education can be the only real hope to lift children out of poverty.

In order to improve the quality of primary education for children living in urban slums, Gyan Shala adopted a three-year model that strengthens children’s skills in numeracy and literacy. Upon completion of the programme, children can join mainstream schools empowered with a strong foundational education. Gyan Shala saw its first batch of 300 graduates in 2000, and since then it has moved from strength to strength with more than 44,000 children enrolled in its programmes across nine cities in four states. Independent tests by leading assessment organisations have revealed that Gyan Shala children match the performance of their counterparts in India’s best schools. The cost of education in Gyan Shala is merely US\$55 per child per year, inclusive of classroom rent and learning materials. The support



from Educate a Child (EAC) has been instrumental to the growth of Gyan Shala, and the joint partnership will bring 69,200 children into quality education programmes over the course of four years. Scaling up through the EAC partnership has also allowed Gyan Shala to introduce its model practices to the government school system, which now impacts on more than one million children.

Suhana Khatoon, from a slum in Metiabruz, Kolkata, shares, “I could not get admission in a formal school, because I was born with no arms. I have studied (at Gyan Shala) for three years, and am presently in class 4 in a normal school. Now my parents, who have lots of dreams for me, want me to study further. Gyan Shala helped me to realise my potential.”

Gyan Shala also provides opportunities for young women to become teachers. Teachers such as

Shaikh Habibi, Hasumati Parmar, and Rehana Ansari agree that working in Gyan Shala has contributed to their self-confidence. They feel they can raise their voices without any fear and speak confidently in front of others. 🗣️

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