



LIFE AT SHISHUR SEVAY

Shishur Sevay
To Not Feel Alone in the Universe

Quarterly Activity Report April – June 2022

From the Founder:

Shishur Sevay Gives Birth to Children's Smart Centre

Shishur Sevay, a non-institutional home for orphaned girls was envisioned as just a beginning, but back in 2005 I had no idea what would come next. The rest could only appear as a consequence of how its foundation evolved. By June 2006 we were a Registered Society (NGO) and in February 2007 we received 12 girls by way of CWC Court Order, 4 with severe disabilities. We had begun.

Three themes became clear:

1. Having children with disabilities had a profound effect on the other girls and on us, the staff. They needed each other. They wanted to be together. Inclusion became the defining signature of Shishur Sevay.
2. The children expressed many times wanting to take in more children. They wanted to teach children like themselves, abled and disabled.
3. The economically marginal in the community wanted us to do for their children what they saw us doing for our girls.

In 2018 we were mulling over our next steps. The girls were becoming young adults, but Shishur Sevay's work was not done. One of our Founding Principles was to teach our children to be responsible and contributing members of the community, and to participate in the care of those less fortunate. The idea of establishing a free inclusive playschool grew. We would serve those in the community who could not afford nursery schools. Our girls would be teachers under the



This is when we briefly believed it would open in 2021 but another year of lockdown followed

guidance of our Shishur Sevay teachers. Our girls, who entered this community at the bottom of the social ladder would become leaders. Shishur Sevay would establish itself as a substantial and contributing part of this community.

Education was beginning to change throughout India, with more focus on thinking and problem solving and less on memorizing. **The National Education Policy of 2019 reads, "While learning by rote can be beneficial in certain contexts, pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic and integrated, discovery oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable. The curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, in order to develop all sides of learners' brains and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling to the learner."**

For us this was wonderful because our focus on a "playschool" was to teach through play, to give the children a more substantial education than what comes of learning by rote. Equal Health, our friends and colleagues in Australia gave us our first backing to get started and their enthusiasm and support gave us great encouragement.

By 2020 Vesuvius India Ltd. approved our proposal and agreed to fund Children's Smart Center under their Corporate Social Responsibility. We had rented and made wheelchair accessible a former nursery school just a short walk from Shishur Sevay. We had visited nearby slums and had children enrolled. We planned for a Grand Opening on 12 April 2020, but everything came to a halt on 23 March 2020 when India went into a lockdown that was expected to last weeks, but ultimately it was two years before schools could open.

During the repetitive ongoing lockdown, we grew increasingly concerned about the lack of education and language development of the children we planned to serve. By the summer of 2021 we decided to begin visits to their homes and continued until we finally opened. For some children it was a unique experience in connecting written symbols with meanings and sounds. And it also meant that we would not be strangers to them when we eventually opened. We put together school kits which included some of the bilingual materials we had prepared for the school.

Children's Smart Centre		VESUVIUS	
ESTABLISHED BY CHILDLIFE PRESERVE'S SHISHUR SEVAY		Numbers 1-10	
1 ONE	এক	6 SIX	ছয়
2 TWO	দুই	7 SEVEN	সাত
3 THREE	তিন	8 EIGHT	আট
4 FOUR	চার	9 NINE	নয়
5 FIVE	পাঁচ	10 TEN	দশ



Home visits during the lockdown



We provided the students with study materials

And then finally, in mid-April 2022, two years after our initial planned opening, Children’s Smart Centre opened.

Ganga Harrison and Bornali Harrison are the Didis (elder sister) at the school. They are playing increasing roles as Didis. They both talk through Tobii Eye Tracker and we are planning to incorporate it at the school. We are planning to make their role more active at the school.

Disability is a taboo in the community. Disabled children are locked in their houses and the family denies their child to be disabled. Spreading inclusion in this community is challenging. Once denied entry in local community parks because of our girls with disabilities, today we are running an inclusive playschool in the same community.

INCLUSION IS ESSENTIAL. Shishur Sevay is doing it for years now in-house. Now we have spread our wings into the community.



APRIL

- The lockdown took its toll on the youngest children with minimal contact outside their home so the initial adjustment was difficult. We were ready with our big group of teachers and assistant teachers, the girls of Shishur Sevay, to help them work through that, to calm them down when they were upset, to engage with them and make the environment a happy and fun one. We also decided to remain open for the summer vacation so the children wouldn't have to readjust.

- The girls consoled the children. First few days we allowed the parents along with the children so that the children get acquainted.
- Art and dance had been an important part of Shishur Sevay and it is also an important part of the Children’s Smart Centre. It has many benefits like learning to work together as a group, following instructions, improving gross and fine motor skills and also having fun. Our dance and art teachers from Shishur Sevay have been working with the children at CSC as well.





- We provide a nutritious snack everyday of either eggs or fruits. They are learning to wash their hands before eating, eat by themselves and also to clean up themselves, picking up bits of food that fall while eating and also putting their bowls and glasses then handwashing in the sink after they are done.



MAY

- Our new Special Educator joined. We have a child with disability and she has been working with him and also his mother once a week to help her get a direction in how to work with him at home.



- Two pair of uniforms, a bag and a diary finally arrived.
- From the very beginning we had intended to involve the parents in what we do. We had our first parents teachers meeting and we had a group of parents who were thrilled about how it was going. They also had some suggestions, which we gladly took, they requested more meetings.

- We changed the banner outside from 'opening soon' to the current one.



- We decided early on to celebrate each child's birthday. Just celebrating together.



JUNE

- We also brought in Shishur Sevay's tabla teacher to work along with the dance teacher and that session has been fantastic. The children really enjoy it.



- One of the biggest and most remarkable changes that have happened in the three months since opening is not just how much they are learning but also their behaviour. In the first few weeks there were quite a few skirmishes, of not wanting to share toys, wanting the whole ride to themselves. They are increasingly sharing more, playing together and interacting more with each other. Initially they would respond to the teachers but not talk as much among themselves but they are doing that more and more and it has been wonderful to see the transition.

- The first few weeks were spent in just making them comfortable here but now more and more they are participating in activities with enthusiasm.

- Our first big festival celebration was Rath. We had various arts and craft activities leading up to the festival and then actually pulling a small chariot that they decorated themselves.



THE IMPACT

- Shishur Sevay has successfully created a family style inclusive home that has significantly changed the life direction the children we raised so today they are playing meaningful roles in the community. They are serving the community and in return the community is receiving the benefits of their upbringing at Shishur Sevay.
- Acceptance of inclusion is spreading in the community. Once where the daughters of Shishur Sevay were not allowed to walk or play, today they are being looked up to and setting an example.
- The daughters of Shishur Sevay are the junior teachers and are receiving guidance from our Shishur Sevay teachers and are learning professionalism. They are managing their time as they juggle in between their education, and other trainings of their own.
- In these few months +6 slums are being benefitted by Children's Smart Centre.
- Including the parents in decision-making has benefitted everyone. Our bilingual teaching materials have given the parents more ability to work with their children.
- Children's Smart Centre is following the National Education Policy 2019 & NCERT-The Preschool Curriculum 2019, consistent with our principles and practices.



We are thankful to Vesuvius India Ltd for their support.

Foreign Contribution

Account Name: Childlife Preserve Shishur Sevay
SBI New Delhi Main Branch, 11 Parliament Street, New Delhi - 110001
FCRA Current Account No: 40108969339
IFSC Code: SBIN0000691
SWIFT Code: SBININBB104

Domestic Contribution

Account Name: Childlife Preserve Shishur Sevay
RBL Bank Limited, New Alipore Branch
Account No: 309013832148
IFSC Code: RATN0000280

ONLINE DONATION

[U.S. Donation : friendsofshishursevay.org](http://friendsofshishursevay.org)

Friends of Shishur Sevay is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization

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