

Shared Blessings Odisha Report

January 2025

Happy New Year. Hope you had a wonderful Christmas and are now thriving in the new year. Wanted to give you a brief update on what has been happening in Odisha.

There are currently 51 children residing at the school. Out of which thirty-three are living long term. The fluctuation is due to the local child welfare agency dropping off children at the school when they need temporary care while deciding their permanency plan. It is possible that at least some of the children will become permanent residents of the school. We currently have nineteen sponsors who are sponsoring thirty-one children and one child is supported by Shared Blessings without an identified sponsors. We will begin supporting one remaining child who does not have a sponsor as we have earmarked portion of donations that came in 2024 for sponsoring and can easily absorb one more child.

Several sponsors, in addition to supporting a child, also contribute money towards education, sponsorship fund and special gift fund. We have two dedicated donors, not sponsors, who regularly contribute; this is earmarked for the education fund. Money from education fund is used to pay tutors and the librarian. We also send occasional funds to purchase educational supplies for the children.

Children continue to thrive at the school. They are healthy, active and enjoy learning. Library continues to be very popular. Younger children are learning to identify and write English alphabets using coloring books that we purchased for them.

Gardening is an activity most children participate in. They grow various vegetables depending on the season. The vegetables are routinely used in preparing the meals. In addition, there are banana trees and jackfruit tree; both produce plenty of fruits – which are sometimes used as vegetables when raw. They eat three meals each day with snacks provided when the school day is over.

Children enjoy participating in variety of sports. Volleyball and soccer are very popular. Several of the boys did so well that the school team went and won many tournaments at the state level. They also enjoy simple local games such as skipping, badminton and cricket

As always, cultural activities are thoroughly enjoyed by the children. They routinely participate in local and state level dance competitions. This year several of the children won prizes at art contests. Walls at the school are often painted by these talented children depicting various scenes. The school puts on celebratory events for holidays, specially identified days (such as Children's Day, Teachers' Day, Flag Day, Brother and Sister Day, etc.) Children love to dress up and participate with dance being their number one favorite activity.

As much as they enjoy all of the holidays, their favorite one is Christmas like children all over the world. Each year our children eagerly look forward to Christmas; this year was no exception. With

the help of the staff, children decorated the school with lights, flowers and balloons. Chrisdatta Sanjeet Kumar, the priest from the local Pentacostal Church visited the school on Christmas eve and spent time with the children. He spoke about the true meaning of Christmas, led the children with prayers and at the end, helped them celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ by cutting a cake. As always, our children received their gifts which was made possible by many generous donors here. This year, in addition to two outfits, the children received blankets, sweaters and shoes. The children enjoyed two special meals this time – one on Christmas and a second one on New Year's Day. On Christmas, they got to wear the new clothes they received the previous night. This year, we sent additional money so the staff also received a small gift from us. Next Christmas, I am planning to be there and celebrate the day with the children.

One big project that we took on last year was the chicken coop. We quickly raised funds for the building as well initial purchasing of the chicken. Support came from unexpected sources – for which I am always thankful. The construction was delayed due lack of available workers. They finally started the work in December, and it is expected that it will be completed by March or April. It is expected that the coop will have one hundred chickens. In addition to providing eggs and chicken for the children's meals, Behera anticipates that they can sell some eggs regularly which will help pay for expenses incurred in maintaining the coop. Hope to send an update soon about the completion of the coop and housing it with chicken.

I have enclosed a few photos of our school and the children for you to enjoy. Without you and your support, none of this would have been possible. All of us at Shared Blessings, IDS, AGPV (especially the children) thank you for your generosity.

Shaila
Odisha Program Manager

Highlights from fourth quarter



Children enjoy spending time at the library



Children participate and win prizes at various contests throughout the year!



Sowing seeds and working the land



Learning about cleanliness and hygiene



Talent shown on the school walls



Celebrating Diwali Light Festival



and Christmas



Children receiving gifts



Dinners on Christmas and New Year's Day



Beginning of chicken coop construction