
A report on

**SAKHAR SHALA – AN EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN OF MIGRANT LABORERS IN
SUGAR FACTORIES**

MODEL DEVELOPED BY JANARTH

Report by

**Jyoti Wadiker & Mamata Das
Mumbai**

March 2004

Table of contents

- Introduction

I Migration

- Background : What is Migration ?
- Seasonal Migration of Sugarcane cutters
- Migrant laborers and their life – A closer look
- Migration and its impact on child education

II Education

- Education as a Fundamental right
- How the fundamental right of migrant children is violated

III The Model

- What is Sakhar Shala?
- Janarth Sakhar Shala
- Quality Education and Sakhar Shala
- Operational Structure of Sakhar Shalas
- Activities under Sakhar Shala programs

IV The Path Ahead

- Impacts and Achievements
- Hurdles or Constraints
- A SWOT Analysis
- Future Strategies

V Conclusion

- Annexure – Case Studies
 - Map showing location of Sakhar shala
 - Feedback Reports

Introduction

Janarth literally means “for the people”. Janarth has been working in the field of Rural Development since 1988. It is based at Aurangabad and began its interventions in the Gangapur block, which is officially declared to be “chronically drought prone area”, by the Government of India.

Janarth’s head office is located in Aurangabad, a small city that is approximately 400 kms. north-east of Mumbai, the financial capital of India.

Janarth is working in both poor rural and urban areas with an emphasis on children’s education, women’s organization, community based rehabilitation of challenged persons, natural resource management and agriculture marketing assistance and processing.

A major focus of Janarth’s work in development is education. This comprises of strengthening existing Govt. schools, enriching the schooling experience for children, reducing the rate of drop outs and preventing further drop outs. It has worked closely with government functionaries at all levels in education.

The focus of this report is Janarth’s work among migrant children at sugar factories.

Janarth has developed a model for the education of children of migrant sugar cane cutters around sugar factory sites in Maharashtra. This report is an effort to document the model and make it available to the government and enable other NGOs to replicate this model and reach out to the children of migrant laborers.

Background Situation - Migration

The concept of migration is as old as human civilization. It is actually a cornerstone in human history. People migrate on account of economic, social, political, marital, educational and religious reasons. Migration is an integral part of tradition for some communities like Gujjars and Rewaris.

Maharashtra being the most developed state in India is a hub of migration. It provides a dynamic environment for migration for both inter and intra state. Inter state migrations are mostly semi-permanent or permanent in nature, whereas intra state migrations are seasonal in nature.

Seasonal employment provides livelihood to millions of poor in the state, especially in rural areas. People from socio-economically deprived categories and resource poor regions migrate to those with intensive agriculture or other labour opportunities. In the destination areas, migrants work in cultivation, mining, quarrying, and construction for low wages. Migration therefore plays a very important part of the livelihood strategies of the rural poor.

Seasonal migration is a norm in Maharashtra. It has long history of labour mobility and labour migration. There are basically two categories of seasonal migrants. The first category consists of regular seasonal migrants who travel for work during the non-agricultural season. The second category consists of small and medium farmers who migrate to support their livelihoods as a consequence of agro-ecological crisis in the areas they live in. Though the percentage of regular seasonal labour is usually more in the state due to vagaries of the monsoons, lack of adequate infrastructure in terms of irrigation is one of the main reasons for the number of migrants from the second category to be on the rise. Irrespective of these considerations, migration acts as a compensating mechanism to reduce the disadvantageous position of the poor.

The sugar factories in western Maharashtra, the brick kilns in Thane district, quarries in Ratnagiri and various construction sites form the centres of seasonal migrations. People from under-developed areas who are prone to calamities and lack employment opportunities outside the agricultural season, prefer migration.

Usually laborers migrate with their families. Women and children constitute a high proportion of the migrant population. The motive behind migrating with the family is obviously more employment. According to statistics, Maharashtra occupies the third place in India in the use of child labour. They contribute significantly to the income of households. Migration often involves longer working hours, poor living and working conditions and poor access to basic facilities like access to education, health, food distribution system, etc.

Seasonal Migration of Sugarcane cutters

India is the world's largest sugar producer and Maharashtra is the country's largest sugar producing state contributing over one-third of the country's output. Maharashtra has approximately 172¹ sugar factories and, most of them are managed by cooperative societies of farmers. Sugarcane farming was introduced in western Maharashtra by the pioneers of the cooperative movement during the 1950s. Since then it has progressed considerably and contributed immensely to the development of the rural economy.

According to official statistics issued by the Maharashtra State Sugar Cooperative Federation, 1.6 million farmers in the State cultivate sugarcane on 0.7 million hectares of land, producing 60 million tonnes of sugarcane. The sugar factories in the State have a combined turnover of about Rs. 8,000 crores and provide employment, directly or indirectly, to 1.5 crore people

(Source :- Frontline).

Sugarcane is known as a lazy man's crop since it does not require much care except watering at regular intervals. On the other hand, sugarcane harvesting is a heavily labour-intensive operation and thousands of laborers come from drought prone areas to work as cane cutters. When all options for livelihood cease, there is no alternative to migrating to other areas for subsistence. Sugar factories in the region provide an easy solution for them.

The sugarcane-crushing season is operational from November to April/May. During this six-month period, people from central Maharashtra and Marathawada region, (that are resource-poor areas), migrate to the lush sugarcane belt. A large majority of laborers come from Beed, Jalgaon, Ahmednagar, Nashik, Jalna, Parbhani, Aurangabad, and Latur districts, all in the Marathawada region except Ahmednagar, Jalgaon and Nashik. Those families normally belong to the poorest strata of society and are mostly landless or marginal farmers. Scarcity of resources and debt burden accompanied with dry spells of monsoon force people from these areas to migrate to nearby districts. Over 90% of sugarcane cutters belong to OBC, SC and ST categories. The remaining 10% consist of higher castes and Muslims. These laborers come through contractors/ agents, popularly known as Mukadams appointed by the factory management system. Contractors/Agents bring laborers in *tolis* or groups. Each *toli* consists of 30 to 100 laborers. The factory management makes advance payments to these agents, who in turn give advances to the laborers. The agents get a commission from the wages of the laborers.

The advance amount is offset against their labour. If they are unable to pay off the advance money in a season, they have to go in for employment for another season. It's a vicious cycle.

¹ Numbers of operational sugar factories keep on fluctuating as it is directly dependent on sugar cane production.

Migrant laborers and their life – a closer look

The Migrant laborers who work as sugarcane cutters fall into three categories. The first consists of those who own a pair of bullocks and a cart and the second consists of those who do not. Those who do not, carry head loads of sugarcane to the main road from where it gets transported to the factory in vehicles like trucks. Those who have bullock carts, transport sugarcane to the factory directly. A third category of laborers are those who own bullocks but no cart. They are given carts with rubber tyres, popularly known as a *tyre gadi* by the factory on payment of Rs. 10/- per day.

Life for these migrant laborers is nothing short of abject misery. Lured by money and the chance to lead better lives, they come in hordes but ultimately are left with no choice but to accept whatever comes their way. Life is tough for these migrants as they have little to access basic amenities. Since it is a hand-to-mouth existence for most of them, accessing food is the first

priority followed by paying off their loans. The factory managements, thankfully, provide drinking water facilities, that takes care of a major need of the families.

There are major issues like unavailability of on-site facilities for housing, lack of children's education, lack of sanitation facilities and health concerns. Small tents made of bamboo and mats, that are given by factories, form their abodes. These tents are known as *Khopi* in the local language. *Khopis* do not have doors and the family barely manages to fit in. There is no electricity in the settlements. Educational facilities for their children are conspicuous by their absence.

Long hours of work, inadequate sleep, lack of proper food accompanied by poor hygiene and lack of sanitation facilities at the site leads to poor health standards among the people. While cutting and tying the sugar cane, they get cuts and wounds. Since no government hospitals are located nearby, they visit private doctors or doctors appointed by the factory for medication.

While all migrants have ration cards in the village, it is unfortunately of no use during the migration period. Even then, the fact that they do possess cards is a good thing. They just about manage to eke out a living. But there are some factories like Hutatma Kisan Ahir Cooperative, Sangli, which provide better living conditions for the workers on site.

Finally, most laborers face a tough life. A good sleep during the biting cold season is a luxury for sugar cane cutters. But then, proper sleep is immaterial till the burden of repaying loans remain. Many laborers take cash advances or loans while in their native villages and when they migrate, they would not have any financial resources. Once loans are taken, the whole family gets engaged in paying off the debt burden. They have to work overtime and in the process, there is not much time they can rest or think of other activities. They barely get a few hours' sleep during the harvesting season. Their day starts much before 4 AM, because, by that time they have to be in the field. At around 12 noon, farmers leave for the factory with the cane that they have cut. Delivering sugar cane at the factory is also not easy. Cutters wait in queue till their turn comes. Since the queue is long, sometimes they stand well into the night to deliver the sugarcane. Sometimes the wait extends to the morning of the next day. After delivering the sugarcane, they come back to their settlements to rest. Women also wake up very early to begin household activities, which persist through the day.

Cane cutters prefer younger children to be at the settlement when they are away in the fields. Though theft is not very common, in order to protect their children from stray animals, they leave young children at home. Older girls stay at the settlement for cooking, washing, taking care of younger children, etc.

Most migrant laborers come with their families, which usually consist of wife and 2-3 children. They generally leave old parents and in some cases, children behind. Since there is no work in their native villages, and no agriculture due to droughts, they

take money from the agent and migrate to pay off the loan.

A typical migrant household usually earns between Rs. 15,000-25,000 in the migration period (six months) and cuts 1.5 to 2.5 tons of sugarcane a day. At their native village they do agriculture, labour work, and participate in various drought relief schemes. They avail of the facilities of the Public Distribution System as they all have ration cards. When they migrate, they bring with them bulls, buffaloes, goats, vessels, wood, clothes, grains and some necessary household articles.

The Laborers are not covered by any insurance scheme. Last year, two women met with accidents while walking alongside the *tyre gadi*. They sustained serious injuries and the sugar factory bore their medical expenses. Of course the resulting loss of employment has to be borne by the family.

Sugarcane cutters come from districts concentrated in dry land areas like Beed, Jalgaon and Ahmednagar. Next to these are also Nashik, Dhule, Aurangabad and Jalna districts. The sugar factories are located in western Maharashtra. The Laborers typically migrate from dry land areas into the irrigated regions. The CDRD report also point to the fact that the area under Sugarcane cultivation as well as the production capacity has increased over the years. This directly relates to the increased demand for laborers since sugarcane cutting is necessarily a manual job. But there is no certainty that they keep migrating to the same factory year after year. This is dependent on many factors such as the factories being operational that year, availability of sugarcane in a region and the availability of a *mukadam*-labour contractor.

Income Analysis

The Minimum piece rates are fixed by the authorities. However individual factories can give more if they wish. Piece rates differ according to categories of laborers. Head load carriers normally get Rs. 66/- per ton and those with their own transport get Rs. 74/- per ton. Those who have bullocks but no cart hire a *tyre gadi* from the factory for Rs. 10 per day.

Head load laborers normally referred to as *Doki centres*, carry sugarcane from the fields to the trucks. Bullock cart owners popularly known as *Gadi centre* labour carry sugarcane from fields to the main road to be loaded into trucks/tractors. The third category of laborers who hire carts with tyres, bring sugarcane to the factory. Usually, head load carriers stay along with their vehicles whereas the *tyre gadi* labour stay close to factories.

The contractor earns approximately 15% commission on these wages.

Laborers earn some income from selling sugar cane tops to people who require it as fodder for animals. The average daily income from sugar cane tops hovers in the range of Rs. 50 to Rs. 100.

On the whole, it is very evident that life is a great struggle for the laborers, with children suffering the most without any education or the means to have a better life even in future.

*Migration by itself may not be necessarily negative if it is taken into account by development planners. In fact sugar factories have assured thousands of families of a means of livelihood in months when their own villages cannot support them. It is the indifference or even thoughtlessness with which this is done, both at the level of sugar Factories and the Government that is appalling. **The reason is obvious – the migrant community form an exploited voiceless group.***

Migration and its impact on child education

Clearly, sugarcane has played a significant role in bringing prosperity to the State and its people. However, hidden under this success are the lives of thousands of labouring families who have lost out on social and educational development due to the seasonal and migratory nature of their work. Migration affects schooling of children and forces many children to work. Children drop out from school and join their parents. Short-term interests take centre stage.

It has been estimated that a staggering two lakh children of migrant sugarcane cutters, below 14 years of age, accompany their parents to districts all over the state, every cutting season. Over half of them, in the age group of 6-14 years (54% boys and 46% girls), totalling 1.30 lakh, end up being deprived of primary schooling. The reason is that there exists almost no provision to educate them at the destinations they reach (Source – Study conducted by the Centre for Development Research and Documentation - CDRD ^[2] in April 2003).

The migration period is around 6 months i.e. November to April/May. This coincides with the second semester of the school in the State. As the first semester normally ends with the Diwali vacation and the second semester starts after the vacation. Migrant children discontinue studies to be with their parents. In some cases, elder children who are studying and can look after themselves are left in the native villages. Younger children accompany parents since there is nobody at home to look after them. Due to long absences from school they fail to cope with the syllabus/ studies. When they are back in their villages by the end of the sugar-harvesting season, either they appear for the final examinations and fail or do not appear and are therefore not promoted. Their interest level also goes down. Gradually they get dissociated from the education process and end up working as child laborers alongside their parents.

Majority of the migrants are illiterate and belong to the lowest stratum in terms of income. A study conducted reveals that a high 79% of adult sugarcane cutters are illiterate (Males: 62%, Females: 90%). These figures are way above the national average and suggest that the younger generation would have a better level of educational performance, only if arrangements

are made to ensure that schools are run for them, regularly and properly. (CDRD ^[3] in April 2003)

²The substantive study covered 6406 households selected randomly from 25 sugar factories, spread over six districts in Western Maharashtra. Three different methodologies were used to determine and cross check this awesome figure. These children are forced to leave their schools and go to the settlements located near sugar factories, where there is usually no provision to school them.

³ The substantive study covered 6406 households selected randomly from 25 sugar factories, spread over six districts in Western Maharashtra. Three different methodologies were used to determine and cross check this awesome figure. These children are forced to leave their schools and go to the settlements located near sugar factories, where there is usually no provision to school them.

Education as a Fundamental right

Why education?

Poverty cannot be just defined as a condition resulting from lack of resources for adequate livelihood. It is rather a state created due to lack of access to adequate opportunities to build up individual capacity to identify and exercise various options for holistic development. Here, holistic development implies to individual as well as community development.

Education is vital for human beings. It helps in bringing out the best of an individual. It broadens understanding of an individual about his social, economical, political and environmental surroundings. It enables to assess his surroundings and take rational decisions for betterment. It helps an individual to be self-reliant, express himself in a better way, make right decision and to choose the right action. Therefore, education is the gateway to social, economic and political empowerment of an individual. This is the only way in which individual capacity can be fully tapped and utilised. On the whole, it provides a solid foundation for human development. It is the fountainhead of the culture of the society.

Education and development go hand in hand. With the baggage of illiteracy and low level of education, India cannot move forward. The staggering illiteracy rate is one of the main factors responsible for India's undeveloped status. Without education, our proud boast of being the world's "largest democracy" has no meaning. How can people who cannot read or write be expected to govern their own lives with any measure of success?

Education is a must to fulfil the potential that India has been promising for years together. Lack of education creates slavery. In the past, education was limited to certain high caste persons. The general mass was neglected. Education is a basic right for everybody. It is vital for the masses to be knowledgeable and acquire skills that will help in boosting individual as well as

national productivity.

Education is a major stepping stone on the path to improving the general quality of life, ensuring human rights and engendering progress.

Right to education is a must for a balanced progress of human society. Each and every child must have this right to grow as an individual and contribute effectively to the development of the nation. In addition to being a right, it is a means to fulfil other rights.

How the fundamental right of migrant children are violated

The Indian government has brought a constitutional amendment on 13th December 2002 that makes the right to elementary education a fundamental right of every child between 6 to 14 years of age. Article 45 of the Constitution of India states that “the State shall endeavour to provide, *within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years*”

It is envisaged that the spread of elementary education would have a good impact on other social indicators like population growth, health and women’s development, as well as enhancement of productivity of the economy and reduction in unemployment. Ultimately it will lead to a just and humane society and better place for everyone by providing a level playing field for the disadvantaged section.

Migrant children are deprived of their fundamental right to elementary education. They migrate with their parents to sugar factory areas. Education of the child is disrupted at the site. They are too young to realise their right and exercise it. Even parents are not aware of the benefits that accrue from education and the fact that elementary education is a fundamental right and any negligence on their part may cost them heavily. But it is difficult to lay the blame on parents squarely. When parents are strug-

Some facts

- Children of migrant laborers do not attend school in their villages from October to the end of the academic year since they migrate with their family.
- There is no provision to allow these children to continue their term in another school near their place of migration.
- Existing schools like Zilla Parishad schools do not have the capacity in terms of infrastructure and teachers to take on this additional burden even if they so desire.
- Sugar factories do not look upon this as their responsibility since they do not employ the labour directly.

gling for subsistence, education of these children takes a backseat. In the sugar factories these children work with their parents. Since more hands fetch more income, parents too encourage it. They bring additional income for the family.

Younger children help in making bundles of sugar cane tops, which is used as fodder. These fodder bundles are sold in the market and each bundle fetches Rs.2. It is also a means of good income for parents. Older children (around 10/12 years old) join other family members in cutting cane. Older girl children do domestic chores such as cooking, washing and looking after younger siblings while they are themselves at work, or help in farm work. These children provide extra hands to their parents and life goes on. Their childhood gets lost under the burden of a heavy workload.

The government is trying to target children from economically weak sections through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) that covers the entire country and a series of measures and facilities — such as free mid-day meals, uniforms and textbooks are provided. However, migrant children are always neglected. Though the Government proposes to provide mobile schools to help students who are never long enough at one address — construction workers' children, for instance — or giving examination on demand to kids unable to meet regular schedules, it is yet to take shape.

The Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE) program for children in the age group of 6–14 years was operationalised from 1 April 2001. The strategies include setting up of schools in school-less habitations or condensed courses for migrating children, bridge courses, residential camps, drop-in centres for street and slum children, remedial coaching for children enrolled in formal schools, short duration summer camps etc. Being a part of SSA, it has no separate budget provisions but expenditure on the scheme is incurred from the overall budget provision of SSA.

The Maharashtra government has implemented the Mahatma Phule Sikshan Hami Yojna (MPSHY) which falls under the SSA. The Government Resolution (GR) passed on 23rd April 2002 includes children of migrant sugar factory workers, brick kiln workers, etc. under the MPSHY scheme. MPSHY had made provision only for teacher's salary @1500/month i.e. for the months when the schools are functioning, support for

Goals of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

- All children in the 6–14 age group in school/EGS centre/bridge course by 2003
- All children in the 6–14 age group complete five years of primary education by 2007
- All children in the 6–14 age group complete eight years of schooling by 2010
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life
- Bridging of all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010
- Universal retention by 2010

educational material @ Rs. 40 / per child and miscellaneous expense @ Rs. 1000/ centre. The program however has its own share of lacunae. Critically, it does not even cover 10% of migrant children.

The children are deprived of the benefits of state-run education programs. For instance, *Zilla Parishad* schools are not located near settlements. They also do not have capacity in terms of infrastructure and teachers to accommodate all children from settlements due to their limited strength.

The issue is that though the responsibility of providing education is well recognized in principle, but in practice the Government is a long way behind in achieving the goal of the right to education for children up to 14 years. Education is an entitlement that is sanctioned by states, through legislation and the national constitution. However, there is a massive gap between the language and practice of rights.

Article 24 states that no child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment. Yet, children are employed in sugarcane cutting, brick kilns, and other works. The government lacks adequate monitoring and support mechanism to control this and poverty and poor quality of education provided in government schools has made parents indifferent towards education of their wards / children.

Be it irresponsibility of the Government or apathy of parents, the fact is that children's fundamental right to education is violated. An appropriate educational system, that can facilitate the growth of a child as a responsible and productive citizen, is lacking. Lack of education makes them handicapped in several senses and forces them to lead a life of penury.

What is Sakhar Shala?

Sakhar Shalas are schools in the settlements of sugar cane cutters, which intend to provide primary education to children of sugarcane laborers who are deprived of education because of their parent's migration to the factory areas on a regular basis, for long periods.

Since there is no special provision for migrant children to continue their education at factory sites, they usually drop out from the educational process. Sakhar Shalas try to solve problems in continuing education by opening schools and providing adequate educational services in settlements of migrant laborers.

Another term used for these schools is **second semester** schools. There is a valid reason for it. Sakhar Shalas do not function round the year. It functions only during the second part of the educational year. Usually schools commence new

classes in the month of June after the summer vacation. The children of sugar cane cutters migrate during the crushing season, which is in between October/ November and March/April. They attend schools in their respective villages before migration. During migration children do not attend schools for several months. When these families return to their villages in March/April the following year, children are unable to pick-up their education from where they left off and thus fall prey to illiteracy as they are forced to drop-out. In Sakhar Shalas the classes are held between the migration periods, which is around six months. Whence the name, 'second semester school'.

The main objective of the Sakhar Shalas is to retain children in the quality education process and decrease the drop out rates caused by migration. It also helps the children to get back into the mainstream education.

Janarth Sakhar Shalas

In a state where millions of children are deprived of their fundamental right to basic education, Sakhar Shalas offer hope to poor parents and children to dream of a better future. Sakhar shalas' main target group is children in the school-going age.

Year	No. of Sugar factory	No. of Sakhar Shala	No. of families	Students covered			No of Teacher
				Male	Female	Total	
2001 - 2002	2	10	1816	416	396	882	21
2002 - 2003	7	34	4723	1717	1433	3230	130
2003 - 2004	20	73	12104	2274	1982	4256	225

Janarth Sakhar Shala started off in the year 2001- 02 with 882 children of migrant laborers at two cooperative sugar factories in Ahmednagar district. Gradually it expanded to 7 sugar factory areas in Ahmednagar and Aurangabad districts in the year 2002-03 and catered to 3230 children. Today they work in 19 sugar factory areas in Ahmednagar, Pune, Nashik, Sangli and Satara districts. There are 73 Sakhar Shalas which cater to 4256 students. These schools conduct classes from 1st to 4th to continue their education.

Janarth realised the need of childcare centres in these Sakhar Shalas. In the first year, no childcare centre was proposed. Later, Janarth incorporated the same in its action plan. Childcare centers also known as Balwadis or Pre-School centres aim at preparing small children for schooling. The reason for high dropout rates in rural schools is that there are no facilities for pre-primary education. The child enters primary school totally unprepared and either rebels against the system or loses interest altogether. Secondly, balwadis also play an important role to motivate parents to

Case of Vandana Maruti Kunde

At the western end of the Nashik Cooperative sugar factory, there is a medium-sized ground near which the Janarth Sakhar shala is situated. This shala or school is surrounded by small huts belonging to the sugar cane cutters.

Vandana studies in this school in second standard. She has three elder sisters and a brother. Of the three sisters, two sisters are married. They were not fortunate enough to attend schools and ended up working as sugar cane cutters. The other sister has studied till standard 5th. However, she dropped out to join her parents in sugar cutting. Her brother is in the fourth standard and he stays in the native village.

During the migration to sugar factory areas, Vandana and her sisters accompany their parents. Her sister goes along with her parents for sugar cutting. Since her parents have got a big patch of sugarcane field for cutting, they go to the field in the night at 10 o' clock and come back at 11 o' clock in the morning. They feel unsafe to leave Vandana alone in the hut in the night hence she also accompanies them. Janarth convinced Vandana's parents to send her to the Sakhar Shala after she came back from the fields. Vandana now goes to school at 11 am after returning from the field.

Vandana's parents have a 1-acre agricultural land in the village. But it is not enough to run the household. Hence, they migrate during the sugar-harvesting season and work for sugarcane cutting for the sugar factories. Usually they earn around Rs. 15000 to Rs. 25000 during a season.

They highly esteem the education provided by the Sakhar shala. The teachers conduct classes regularly. Parents meetings are also organised at regular intervals. This helps the parents in communicating with the teachers and discussing issues related to children's education. All such activities have impressed parents and have helped them appreciate education as a whole.

Vandana is doing well in her studies. She aspires to be a teacher. In the face of tremendous hardships, she does manage to carry on with her studies. It is this tenacity and the desire to learn that is heartening. If circumstances remain conducive, one can be sure that she will indeed be what she aspires to be.

send their older children to school. Older kids do not have to miss school to take care of the younger siblings.

Balwadi details

The *balwadis* were initiated in the year 2002 with 635 children. Now it caters to 1785 children at 20 factory sites.

Janarth Sakharshala follows the curriculum adopted by government schools. Being a second semester school, it does not try to experiment much with course curriculum since it will be difficult for the children to adjust to the formal school system once they are back in the village. It pays more attention towards training of teachers who are instrumental in facilitating the learning process among the children and the mode of teaching. Use of various teaching aids are also employed to make for a smoother learning experience.

Case of Praveen Kailash Pawar

Praveen Kailash Pawar is a fourth standard student in one of the Sakhar Shalas run by Janarth. He is from village Mohadi in the district of Dhule. He has a younger sister studying in the 1st standard and elder brother in the 6th standard. Praveen's father, Kailash works as an ironsmith who fixes bullock shoes. The sugar cane cutters bring bullocks with them for transportation of sugarcane through carts. This provides good amount of work for him. He stays with the sugar cane cutters for six months. Kailash comes with his family to the factory site every year before Diwali.

After coming to the factory area, Praveen wanted to go to the Zilla Parishad School to continue education. Due to procedural problems in getting a transfer from the village school to the Zilla Parishad School, he lost two years. However, in the Sakhar shala, he does not face any problem. Praveen attends the Sakhar Shala and after coming from school Praveen helps his father in making iron shoes for the bullocks.

In the village Kailash does not have any agricultural land. Therefore, he is into this business. By working in the factory area he saves around 5 to 7 thousand rupees during the season. But collecting money from the cutters is also not that easy. Sometimes he visits around 40 villages to collect money from the cane cutters.

Kailash and his wife want Praveen to be properly educated. They send him to school regularly and take care of his educational needs. Praveen is also keen on going to school and dreams of becoming a teacher one day.

Janarth believes that the conducive environment for learning will help the students like him to get away from the trap of poverty and find their way to a better life.

Year	No. of Sugar factory	No. of child care centre	No. of children
2002 - 2003	7	08	635
2003 - 2004	20	32	1785

Examinations are conducted at the end of the session by Janarth and checked by the Zilla Parishad and certificates are given to the children thus enabling them to continue their education after returning to their native villages.

When children leave school, Janarth Sakhar Shala sends letters to all the schools from where these children have come. They also send a list of children and ask the schools to enrol them.

After the completion of the project, follow-up activities include visits to the various villages from where the children hail, ensuring that these children have rejoined the correct schools and classes, supplying the native schools and district education authorities with lists of these children and ensuring that there are no drop-outs. In the year 2002, supervisors went to 90 schools personally to discuss the issue with the teachers.

Quality education and Sakhar Shala

Education ^[4] is essential for the overall human and national development. Providing quality education to the general mass is the best road to prosperity for any nation. Quality is a relative term and it has various individual or context specific connotations. However, the main intention of quality education is to provide an enabling environment to the learners to unleash their creativity and develop their diverse capacities with certain values to become productive individuals and contribute effectively towards self as well as community development.

To cater to the huge mass of uneducated population, very often trade offs between expansion of infrastructure and quality education takes place. There is a challenge for developing countries like India to strike a balance between the expansion of

educational infrastructure and quality education. Both of these are prerequisites for holistic development.

Janarth believes that quality education can only empower and enable the marginalized populace to break through the poverty net. It also understands the evolving nature of quality education and concentrates on continuous improvement for developing latent talent and skills of the children.

Most of the time, poor parents are blamed for being apathetic towards their children's education. The Public Report on Basic Education in India (PROBE) survey (Oxford University Press, 1999) reveals interesting facets of standard of education in India. It points out that parents in even the most backward states want their children to be educated. It is not that poor people do not understand value of education; rather they are discouraged by the schooling system that fails to provide education. Even after spending a good number of years in the school, say 4 or 5 years, if a child does not know how to read and write properly, it is natural for the parents to engage them in other work instead of wasting time in school. Even if the State promises to provide free education to all, quality of education in the government run schools demoralises the parents from sending their children to school.

The objective of Janarth Sakhar Shala is to improve the quality of life of the migrant laborers by providing quality education to the migrant children. Quality education at the primary level implies:

- Acquisition of basic skills of reading, writing and the numeric system
- Development of sound moral character and imbibing a good value system
- Physical fitness
- Preparing for higher level of education

The school concentrates on competency based teaching for the young children to enhance their capacities and potential and to have greater control over their lives. At the primary level the competencies are defined for three major subjects viz. language, mathematics and science.

The Sakhar Shala focuses on:

- Development of competencies of all students in subjects specified in the syllabus
- Using scientific equipments and apparatus
- Enhancing quality of education and team spirit
- Using remedial methods
- Teaching and learning becoming child-centred, and activity oriented

- Ensuring revision and reinforcement of mathematical concepts
- Making education enjoyable and interesting
- Enhancing children's natural power of observation and thinking
- Mathematics logical thinking, and memory

Along with developing competencies in various subjects, Sakhar Shalas also aim at incorporating value systems in the students that will help them be good citizens. Values which are imparted are nationalism, integration, gender equality, respect for physical labour, scientific temper, sensitivity, politeness, punctuality, and cleanliness (as recommended by the State Government).

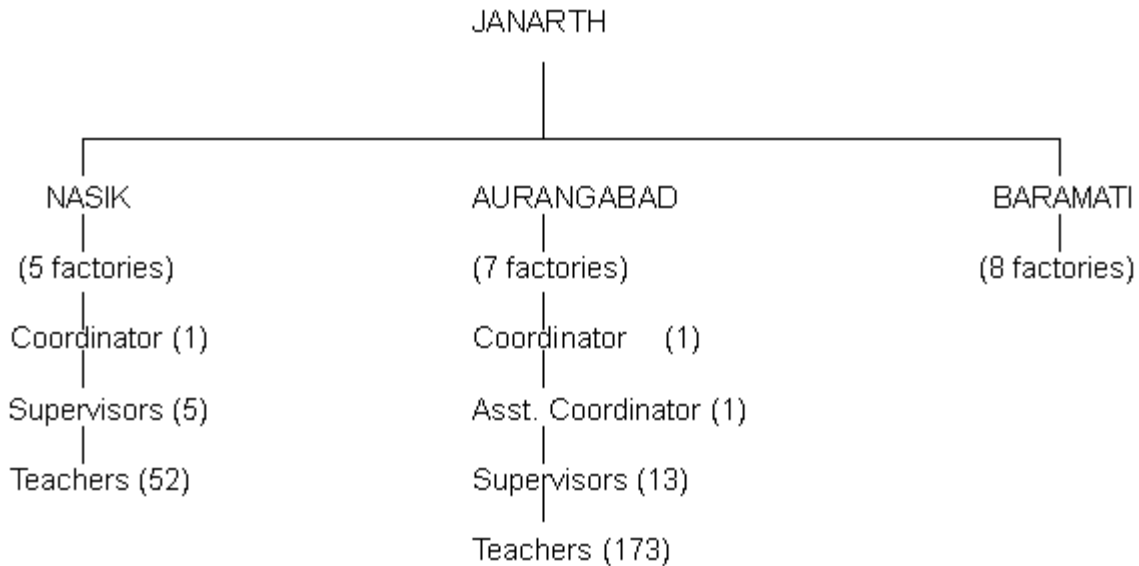
The internal paper written on 'Quality of Sakhar Shala' lists some 57 indicators that an ideal school may have. These indicators were the result of various internal brainstorming sessions. The Sakhar Shala fulfils 32 of these indicators. Most of the remaining indicators may not be necessary for the school. For instance, a gymnasium, dining hall, hostel facilities are some of the indicators of the wellness quotient of the ideal school but in case of the Sakhar Shala, it is not a necessity.

Quality education depends on various factors like funding level, class size, teacher certification, facilities in the school, methods of teaching, etc. The school tries to provide a good academic and extra-curricular environment, the absence of which is a major reason why many migrant children drop out of school. The healthy environment inside the school is made possible by the commitment of teachers, supervisors and other support staff. Teachers and Supervisors live in the factory area itself and that makes lot of difference to the running of schools. The commitment shown by teachers and other players set them apart from many Government schools.

In effect, Sakhar Shalas ensure that the education received by the children is not just bookish but one that makes them well-rounded human beings and responsible citizens of society.

⁴ Schooling and education are not synonyms. Schooling is a mode of education. However, in the report both the words are used as synonymously

Operational Structure of Janarth Sakhar Shalas



The Sakhar Shalas under Janarth, are present in 3 regions; Nasik, Aurangabad and Baramati. VACHAN, (Nasik based) co-ordinates activities in Nasik while the remaining two regions are looked after by Janarth itself. Nasik has one co-ordinator while Aurangabad and Baramati have a common co-ordinator. But there is one assistant co-ordinator for Aurangabad and Baramati. The supervisors report to the co-ordinators while teachers report to the supervisors.

Activities under the Sakhar Shala program

The major activities under the Sakhar Shala program are

I. Pre- class activities

The classes commence in the month of November but the preparations start much earlier. This process includes training the trainers, recruitment of teachers and training them. Usually, the supervisors go for ToT (Training of Trainers). These supervisors along with other resource persons conduct the teachers training program. The teachers training program is quite rigorous and is of approximately 1 month's duration. This includes introduction to the education scheme (MPSHY), how to create an atmosphere for the scheme to be successful, child psychology, different teaching methods, preparation of educational material, school management, etc. A total of 160 lectures are delivered in this regard. The training design includes taking up practice lessons.

The teachers also do groundwork activities like meeting the parents and motivating them to send their children to school, meeting the factory management to make necessary provisions, sending proposals to the Government, etc.

One of the major pre class activities is conducting the survey of each family in the settlements to assess the number of children who have migrated with parents, and their socio-economic-educational details. The survey provides a clear idea of the families and children. The Survey is also used as a strategy to build rapport with the families and introduce them to the concept of the Sakhar Shala.

II. Conducting classes

Classes are conducted for primary schools for standards 1 to 4. Childcare centres and tutorials (support classes) are also held. The major focus is on primary schools and classes are conducted according to the curriculum followed by government schools. Pre tests are conducted to decide the class of each student followed by regular units tests. Annual exams are conducted in tandem with those conducted by the education department.

Janarth also runs childcare centres, which are usually set up within the schools. This enables the school-going children to focus on their studies while their younger siblings are taken care of by experienced & trained caretakers. This also comforts the parents. Another advantage of such a system is that childcare centres act as pre-schools, helping toddlers to be exposed to a school-like environment which prepares them for school later.

Tutorials or support classes are also conducted for child laborers. These are child laborers who have dropped out from school while in higher classes. Since there is no school catering to their needs, evening tutorials are held for them from fifth standard to ninth standard. This enables them to catch up with regular schoolchildren of their age and continue their studies. During 2003-2004 classes were held in three different factories covering 103 students.

Along with teachers, it is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that the quality of teaching is maintained. The supervisor attends at least one period per class per week to assess the quality of teaching. He also provides the concerned teacher with feedback to enhance teaching performance.

III. Follow up with students – Janarth’s work does not end with providing migrant children with schooling facility near their settlements during the migration period. In order to ensure that these children go back to mainstream schools and that there is minimal dropout, Janarth’s volunteer workers regularly monitor and follow-up with children admitted to formal schools back at the village.

Educational Year	No. of villages covered	No. of schools covered	No. of children covered	Retention rate*
2001 – 2002	98	98	252	66.31
2002 – 2003	192 villages from 8 districts	192	1126	72.17

Retention rate is calculated on the basis of number of children appeared for the exam and number of children contacted for readmission in schools.

In the year 2002 – 2003, villages from where more than 4 – 5 children attended Sakhar Shala were followed up physically by visiting schools and meeting teachers. A team consisting 22 persons visited the villages and found that barring a few instances, all students were enrolled in upper classes. Janarth wrote to the school, (206 of them) that were not covered by the team. Major reasons of lower retention rate could be due to 1. non returning of many families to their native village by the time school reopens and 2. the possibility of local schools being far from attractive to these students. More accurate information on these aspects will be collected during the follow up in June 2004.

Education Progress Card: The organization is pursuing the idea of issuing Education Progress Card to each Migrant student. The card will provide details of the child’s attendance and the development of capacities as listed in the syllabus. As the child migrates from one place to another this card can automatically ensure entry into the nearest school, thus ensuring continuity of education. Such cards could also be issued by the school from where the child is migrating. The card issued should be recognized and respected by schools within the State.

IV. Capacity building measures

Children suffer because of less effective teachers, and these may be related to lapses in the training process. They fail to encourage appropriate learning processes and strategies for learning. Their own model of learning, the classroom environment and curriculum imprisons teachers. They fail to understand child psychology.

It is not only the infrastructure in terms of school building, learning materials that affect the learning process, but also the teachers mode of teaching which is equally important. Janarth believes that appropriate capacity building of teachers is an essential ingredient of quality education.

In order to remove these roadblocks, monthly meetings are held and reports are presented. Issues are discussed and sorted out. Supervisors conduct feedback sessions with teachers. This helps teachers in gauging loopholes and improving methods of teaching.

V. Networking

The Sakhar Shala model is being successfully implemented by Janarth for the past three years. From the initial stage Janarth had realised that the program cannot be implemented single-handedly by one organisation. Janarth networks and collaborates with different stakeholders at different levels to make the program a success. Janarth collaborates with the sugar factory management for space and structures for the Sakhar Shalas. In some factories, the managements are cooperative whereas in some they are reluctant. Janarth also networks with the sugar authority who has sent instructions to the sugar factories to cooperate with the organisation in the implementation of the program. The other major stakeholders are the education department – primary education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Ministry of education, local level education officers and the Zilla Parishad schools. Networking with the education department is two pronged – advocacy to institutionalise the model in all the sugar factories, and programmatic in terms of making applications for the MPSHY, getting the BEOs to supervise the Sakhar shalas and providing passing certificates to students who appear for the examination at Sakhar Shalas. Apart from these, the project networks with contractors, doctors, parents, agricultural officers etc to get the necessary information on the migrants and their children. Network with NGOs has not yet begun. Presently only VACHAN, a Nasik based organisation is collaborating with Janarth in implementing the program in Nasik. Janarth plans to invite other organisations to take up the program and reach out to the many children who are deprived of their right to education.

VI. Advocacy

Primary education has been declared as a fundamental right. But migrant children are deprived of this right. Janarth has adopted a two-fold strategy to ensure the children's right to education is translated into reality.

It tries to create a model for migrant children's education in the form of Sakhar Shalas, which keeps it firmly grounded. The second strategy is to network with like-minded agencies to create pressure mainly at the state level and spread related information at appropriate levels. This also includes creating awareness among people of their right to education.

Janarth's main agenda is "institutionalisation" of schools meant for migrant children. The idea is to pressurise the government to allocate funds from the State's budget on education instead of covering such schools under a scheme.

By institutionalisation, Janarth expects the government to go well beyond making financial provisions. The government has to recognize such schools and treat them as any other government recognized school. The system of setting up such schools should also be institutionalised by the government to attract more and more players from civil societies to run such activities for migrant children. The demand for institutionalisation envisages a new structure of schooling to take care of such migrant children, as the existing school system is inappropriate to address such situations.

Samarthan, a State level organisation who raises issues on behalf of disadvantaged sections of the society as well as NCAS (National Centre for Advocacy Studies) a national level advocacy organisation based in Pune are regularly helping Janarth in case of advocacy matters.

The Path Ahead

Impact and Achievements

Sakhar Shalas are functioning for the past three years. These initial years have been very crucial and despite all odds, Janarth has been able to achieve some milestones. Its impact has been felt at various levels. The following paragraphs highlight some of the outcomes and achievements.

- The study conducted by CDRD with support of Janarth has acted as a torchbearer for the Government and public. It brought to notice the magnitude and seriousness of the issues of migrant children.
- Janarth has been able to generate awareness among the parents on importance of education. Parent's attitude towards education is changing. Some parents whose children discontinued studies to accompany them regret now. For instance, one boy who studied in Standard 7, left school and came to the sugar factory. His parents regret it now and have decided to leave him at their village to continue studies.

Because of Sakhar Shalas, migrant children remain in touch with their studies. It helps in developing children's inclination towards studies. Therefore, after going back to the village, they voluntarily opt for school. Parents are happy that their children's education does not suffer. Otherwise children used to loiter around and help parents in their work.

In some cases where the families have to migrate from one factory to the other within a span of one or two months, availability of the Sakhar shalas, have provided scope for children to continue their edu-

Case of Chanda Arjun Gite

At the site of the Chhatrapati Cooperative sugar factory, quite a number of migrant laborers live in small tents made up of bamboo and mats. Chanda's family is one of them. Her parents work as sugar cane cutters.

Chanda is the youngest child in her family. She has two elder sisters and a brother. Her eldest sister is married. Other sister is studying in class 7th and her brother is in class 4th. Her brother stays with her grandparents.

Chanda and her sister had accompanied their parents to the sugar factory. But her elder sister had to go back to their village since there was no educational facility available for her near the factory. Chanda's father has 1 acre of land in the village. He goes for sugar cutting for six months.

There are two schools run by Jannarth at the sugar factory site for migrant children. Out of two, one is a Balwadi or pre-school centre, whereas in the other school, classes exist only till the 4th standard. Chanda's parents would have sent her back to the village if there were no schools nearby. Because of Sakhar shala they kept her with them.

Chanda is in class 2 now. Initially, Chanda was a bit reluctant to come to school and would hide from the teachers. However, now she attends classes on her own. She participates in the song and dance sessions and other cultural activities enthusiastically.

Chanda is very small now. She does not understand the importance of education. Her parents' interest and the environment at Sakhar shala are two factors responsible for she continuing with her education. One day this opportunity will lead her to dream of a future beyond the sugar cane fields.

Year	No. of students appeared for exam	Students covered				
		Distinction	First	Second	Third	Fail
2001 – 02	380	6	117	149	106	2
2002 – 03	1560	133	380	503	449	95

cation where ever they go.

- Sakhar Shala students are performing well in the examinations conducted by the education department.
- Janarth has secured recognition both from the Commissioner of Sugar and the State Education Department, to run such schools in more areas in the state. Presently 117 classes have been approved by the government to get a grant under the MPSHY.
- Janarth's advocacy efforts are also bearing fruit as the Commissioner of Sugar, a post created by the state Government to oversee all sugar co-operatives in the state, has now constituted a committee under his own chairmanship to oversee the education program in the state. Janarth is a member of this committee.
- It has been successful in involving the sugar factory management in the Sakhar Shalas. The managements are coming forward to address the issue of child education. Their support includes provision for structures for the school, learning materials, etc. Factory managements have built a number of sheds for educational purposes. Over 500 children who attended a children's sports and cultural festival organized in March 2002, were given uniforms by one of the factories.

Hurdles or Constraints

- On an average most sugar factories operate for around 180 days a year. However, there is a significant decrease in the area under cultivation as well as production of sugarcane. Successive years of drought is one of the factors responsible for this. Due to un-remunerative procurement prices and water scarcity, farmers are shifting from sugarcane to more remunerative cash crops like soybean and cotton. This results in closing down of sugar factories much earlier. It forces migrant laborers who earn their living by cutting sugarcane to move from place to place, instead of settling down at a particular place for around 6 months. This affects children's education who are in the Sakhar Shalas.
- Finding location/space for school structures, which can be easily accessible by children, is difficult. Generally lands in factory areas are within the control of the factory management, therefore, constructing sheds for schools is not an issue. However, a majority of laborers live in private places or open spaces belonging to the village *panchayat* and construction of sheds at those places requires negotiations with owners and procurement of land for the sheds, which is not always possible. Usually the factory management negotiates when there are huge numbers of laborers working in one factory. But when the laborers are not that big in number and are working for different factories, it is difficult to motivate the

factory managements to negotiate.

- Inadequate finance is also a major problem in running Sakhar Shalas. There is inadequate financial provision from the Government as well as the factory managements. The Government does not support all Sakhar Shalas and wherever it supports, it is limited to a few provisions like teachers' salary, stationery, etc. It is difficult to convince factory managements to make all provisions for running schools. Their support is mostly limited to construction of temporary sheds, organising events, etc. The degree of support varies from management to management.
- Getting sanctions under the Mahatma Phule Shikshan Hami Yojana (MPSHY) is a tedious process. To get sanctions for MPSHY, separate application for schools is required. Since each application or proposal goes through the Block Education Officer (BEO) and the schools are in different blocks, the process is both cost and time consuming.
- MPSHY suffers from various lacunae. The provision of school structures is missing in the scheme. School maintenance expenses are not covered by the scheme. Besides, it does not have any allocation for any kind of furniture or seating arrangements for children. The government claims that all children receive uniforms, textbooks and free meals, but this doesn't actually happen. It is still not covered by the mid day meals scheme and essential teaching materials like blackboard for the children. Though the government has accepted the demand for mid-day meals, Sakhar Shalas are yet to receive them. The scheme envisages teachers to be employed on part time basis i.e. when the Sakhar Shalas are operational and paid for that period only. It fails to understand that though Sakhar Shalas function during harvesting season, activities like surveys, follow-up with the students, visits to schools from where the children come, trainings, advocacy, etc. are a continuous process. The scheme also envisages only 10 days training for the teachers, which is less considering the capacity required to be a responsible and efficient teacher. Though MPSHY has provisions for supervision costs, it is not allocated to the Sakhar Shalas. Therefore, Sakhar Shalas do not get any supervision or administrative support. Delayed grant affects functioning of the schools too.
- The MPSHY expects NGOs to submit proposals well before the children arrive at factory sites along with names of teachers. It is difficult to decide the appointment of teachers because the number of students cannot be estimated beforehand.
- The education department is yet to provide clear instructions to all schools from where these children migrate and to schools where they migrate about details of their migration certificate and admissions.
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme initiated by the Government of India (10th 5-year plan) threatens to further dilute the

Quality of Education by highlighting the principle of one teacher per primary school (instead of one teacher per class)

- Tracing children and reaching out to their respective schools in a relatively short period i.e. around 30 days during June – July is an arduous task. That is the time when the academic year begins and students get enrolled. Students are from various places which makes the work difficult.
- Since teachers are poorly paid and employed for six months only, it is obvious that teachers, will look for stable employment elsewhere. This increases expenses on teachers training.
- The state lacks either the ability or commitment necessary to raise sufficient revenues to fund universal basic education programs. The Maharashtra government has spent only 20% of its education budget. Within the education sector, the distribution of spending rarely reflects rights-based principles. As a right, basic education holds a prior claim over public resources in a way that tertiary education does not. Yet in many cases, a tiny minority of privileged students of the education system receive disproportionate public funding at the expense of a majority of poor students at the bottom.

A SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The model itself is unique as it makes an effort to cover migrant children who would lose out on educational opportunities due to lack of facilities at the worksite / settlements.• The model aims to provide quality education to children and has made efforts to fulfil the parameters of quality education in the Sakhar Shalas.• Acceptance of the Sakhar Shala model by the migrant community.• Recognition of the need for such a program / model by the Government and the factory management.• Support of factory management and government in implementing the model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of trained/experienced teachers to run the program.• Since the program is for six months, difficulty in sustaining the same teachers for the following academic years resulting in need for same training programs each year for different set of teachers.• Financial constraints due to delayed or partial funding from the MPSHY.• Time is lost after the migration takes place because time is spent each year on survey's and convincing sugar factories to provide space and infrastructure for the Sakhar shalas.

Opportunities	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janarth has got a place in the state level committee for education of migrant laborers' children, and are also a part of Child Rights committee. This can be used for representation in different capacities to influence appropriate policies to be drawn up from state to village level to translate this right in to reality. • Good relationship with the commissioner of sugar and the state education department has been built. This relationship can be positively influenced to make the model replicable in all sugar factories in Maharashtra and gradually in the whole country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High turnover of teachers may affect quality of the education • Fluctuation in production of sugarcane is decisive in the duration of stay of migrants which affects education of children.

Future Strategies

Ensuring entitlement of children to primary education, especially of migrant children and a decentralised education system that is child-oriented poses a huge challenge.

- To intensify its effort for the universalisation of primary education, Janarth intends to reach out to all factories. Its prime motive is to ensure that no children in the school going age be missed out from the educational process and that there is no dropout because of migration.
- Since it is not physically possible for Janarth to cater to migrant children in all factory areas, it proposes to collaborate with other NGOs to reach out effectively. It also intends to provide support in terms of capacity development to agencies or community based organizations to undertake such activities.
- Janarth is also gearing up its advocacy efforts to regularise and institutionalise the Sakhar Shalas. Janarth is liaising

with the education department in the state and national levels to institutionalise the model and provide scope to reach out to all migrant children to provide them their basic right to education.

· It recognises health and nutritional needs of children and its impact on their education as well as on overall development. The health of migrant children is neglected. Therefore, along with education, it intends to focus on school-based nutrition and immunisation and other health related programs to improve children's health.

Conclusion

Seasonal migration is an integral part of the livelihood strategy of the poor in rural areas. It is not a one-time factor. People are migrating since ages and will continue to do so in future too. The Government should take note of the quantum of migration. It is huge. It will not stop. And the education of migrant children will continue to remain a challenge. Accordingly, the government and civil society bodies need to turn their attention to address these problems in a systemic way to help deprived children to develop into productive individuals.

Sakhar Shalas, which have proved to be an excellent system for ensuring quality education for migrant children should be institutionalised and the government needs to accord primary status to them. More encouragement from the government is needed in terms of simplifying various processes and providing bodies with the required support. Unspent budgets, for example, are simply unacceptable.

Innovations can be introduced to ensure that the children continue to secure quality education and grow up to be worthy citizens. For example, children should be given educational cards, which will enable them to study anywhere during the migration period.

The Sakhar Shala model is one effort to reach out to lakhs of children who are presently deprived of their fundamental right to education. The model gives scope to the NGOs and the government to fulfil the dream of 'every child in school and every child learning', which is at the core of the fundamental right to education for children.