

THEATRE WORKSHOP REPORT

NAATAK TOLI

SERIES II

A ten-day theatre-making and training workshop
organized by UNICEF Rajasthan and RIHR

Venue

URMUL SEEMANT SAMITI, BAJJU, BIKANER

Date

July 02-11, 2022



ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

A ten-day THEATRE-MAKING and TRAINING WORKSHOP for adolescents from a rural background in their villages.

ORGANIZER and LOCATION

UNICEF Rajasthan and RIHR.

Held at URMUL Seemant Samiti, Bajju (100 km from Bikaner).

PARTICIPANTS

Thirty-Three students of age group 12-19 years from two villages (Bajju Tejpura and Bajju Khalsa) of Kolayat Tehsil about 100 KM from Bikaner. Mostly the participants are children of farmers, weavers and masons. Majorly the participants belong to a mixed group of Raika, Rebari, Meghwal, Sain, Jaat, and Rajput communities.

OBJECTIVE

To hone observation skills and inculcate an ability in participants to witness a situation and express it in theatrical form. So that they can create a self-sustaining NATAK TOLI (Theatre Group) of 10-15 children that can make plays about their own issues, on their own after this training.

PEDAGOGY

As the children were from an extremely rural background and had been exposed to art training through workshops or summer camps the workshop plan was slightly modified after the first day's interactions. Although the children had undergone theatre training that consisted of handing them a script and a set of instructions on how to act, what to wear etc. The children initially took the NATAK TOLI workshop too as a repetition of what they had done earlier. As a result, they expected us also to "deliver lectures" without giving them much chance to express themselves. Their apprehension made them lose interest in resource persons to an extent that they were neither greeting nor conversing or making basic eye contact. So after the group meeting, we decided that our planned theatre training structure must be put on hold and we should move ahead without any structural movement.

We sensed that any work with them could only be done after convincing them of our inherently informal and affectionate approach. We ensured that whenever we call them it's by their name. We would greet them without waiting as the tradition is, for the younger ones to greet first. Seemingly simple and obvious gestures but as the children told much later, surprised and pleased them. And we respectfully incorporated their suggestions of physical sports with matching energy and participation from our side. This also conveyed to them that we were there not to lecture but to listen to them. These two processes became the

cornerstone of our approach. To keep on surprising them with a reversal of roles where the resource persons want to know from them And secondly by letting their physical energy in the field respond to the mental activities done in the workshop hall. It paved the way for an unlearning of their past training experiences.

Another subtle care was taken to not dress in an overtly urban attire or use gadgets during the whole ten days of the workshop. One of the resource persons knowing their dialect also proved to be a great help.

We realized that the children loved expressing themselves whether it was through writing or sports or making scenes. . And they especially longed to talk about their village, markets, temples, sand dunes and dreams. So activities that involved writing were laid emphasis upon. They were enthusiastic in discussions that emanated from their own conversations and experiences so a major activity involving gender sensitization was conducted through writing as well as an informed debate. Unlike their urban counterparts, the adolescents at Bajju readily accepted that girls indeed bear the brunt of household chores. A dialogue ensued between them where although some boys defended the duty of girls to do daily work they relented as the girls narrated how these chores tire them and the boys even reached a point where they wanted to know how to break this cycle and how they can contribute. What really worked was to listen to seemingly unreasonable views of boys and allow them to travel their course without discarding it or disrespecting the speaker.

While the boys voluntarily decided to share some of their sisters' household chores, after the gender sensitization session, praising them the next day upon compliance, they accepted to do work or two more. A few children who were unruly or lacked attention during sessions, changed drastically upon being given small responsibilities like writing names of group participants or pasting charts on notice boards or collecting the colours from kids.

One session emerged entirely from an incident where some children were absent as they had gone to the city to appear for some exam. As they loved expressing about their village we inserted a storytelling session about Sanjoy Ghosh , the founder secretary of URMUL organization, who sacrificed alluring career options in cities and abroad to come and devote his life for the betterment of rural people. The children did not know much about him. His story inspired most of them and it was reflected in their repeated mention of his life, even in an activity where they shared their future dreams.

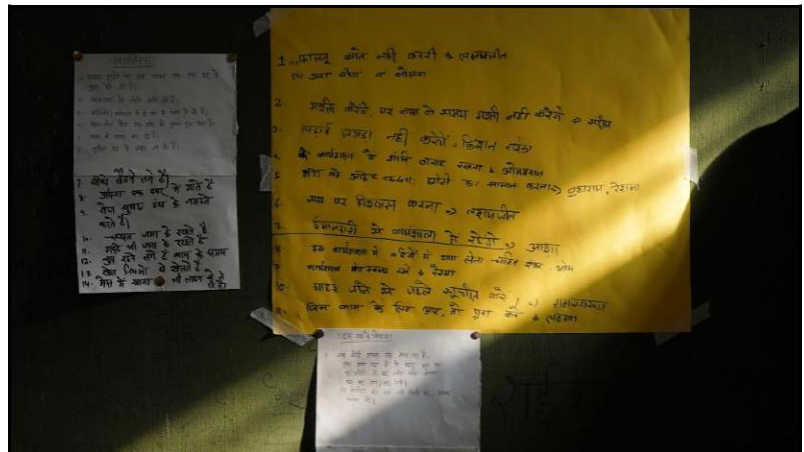
The most important part of the workshop was somewhere in the middle when children were asked to frame some rules for all of us for the workshop to proceed smoothly. These rules were revisited everyday and their compliance was celebrated and posted on a chart adjacent to the rules. And the game changer happened to be on the fifth day when children were repeatedly and uncontrollably gazing towards the window as the monsoon clouds had filled the usual desert sky. So they were given the freedom to sit and gaze out of the window as long as they wanted. And for the concluding activity of the day, four groups were made to discuss scene work for improvisations and just as the activity was to begin, one of the participants **Hemaram mumbled “shall we go out and play?”** And without giving a second thought, resource persons not only postponed the scheduled activity but joined the children for an energetic sporty hour in the rainy sands.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Day 1

The day started with the segregation of children below 12 years of age and then representatives from UNICEF and RIHR briefing about the concept of the workshop which was followed by 'Coin Game' and 'Name remembering game.' After that, We all togetherly created a list of rules for the workshop made by the students. Played an energizing game "Tota kehta hai". And then distributed the stationery material.

In the end, we went out to see the exhibition curated by the students' group under 12 years of age and ended the day with a group photo.



Day 2

Started with the Prayer ' Tumhi ho Mata Pita tumhi ho'. Played a game called "Rumal Jhappata". Next was an image-making activity with four different groups to carry out "Images from their surroundings" and present it through some visuals. Group 1 came up with a theatrical image of majisa jagran samaroh. Group 2 came up with a theatrical image of the chat and sweet shops in the market of Bajju.



Group 3 came up with a theatrical image of the Bajju market with collective shops having specific names. Group 4 came up with a presentation of a historical point in Bajju, the Ramdevji temple. And ended the day with a

discussion about all the things covered by the four groups.

Day 3

The day started with a recap of the rules and then the prayer. After that, an 'observation game' was played between two groups to focus for a while and work with their minds without any physical movement. After the game, there was inspiring storytelling and remembering session on Sanjoy Ghosh, the founding secretary of URMUL that connected the students with the next activity





'Mere Sapne' in which they wrote about two questions, one "वो क्या बनना चाहतेहै?" (what do they want to be?) And the other "वो कैसा जीवन जीना चाहतेहै?" (what kind of life do they want to live?). Ended the day without doing much of a discussion about the activity.

Day 4

Started with acknowledging all the improvements visible in children and celebrating the achievements regarding the rules and some new rules were added. Prayer with small instruction on singing at a common volume followed by a 'walk activity' in the hall covering the entire area and greet each other with a smile by saying namaste on having eye contact.



Then they walked at different speeds and were introduced to 'Character Walk' where they were asked to walk like a cat, cow, the village sarpanch, teacher, female village sarpanch, their facilitators, a city girl etc. And then we sang

and did small dance steps with the 'Bajra' energizer. Then a three-day recap was done. After this recap, two groups were created for a scene work activity to prepare a small 4- 5

minute play on what they wrote a day before - their dreams and the type of life they want to live. One group presented their scene work "Sheher- Gaanv" while the other group was not able to present their scene work that day due to lack of time.

Day 5

Prayer along with the meaning of one of its lines. An energizer "Malti ke bache ko sardi lag gayi" was sung by all. Then we did an analytical review of yesterday's "Sheher- Gaanv" Scene work. After this session, Ms Mumal led an Academic Session on the Process of making a play and the students were introduced to different elements of theatre like their subject, story, visuals,



characters, actor, actress, dialogue, props and costumes. Scene work presentation led by Aaina which they prepared yesterday but were not able to present. After that two groups were made for the final play and the performance. The desire of children to play a game was respected and it was decided to go out and play the game "Ghoda Jamal Khae" and then "Tota Kehta hai".



Day 6

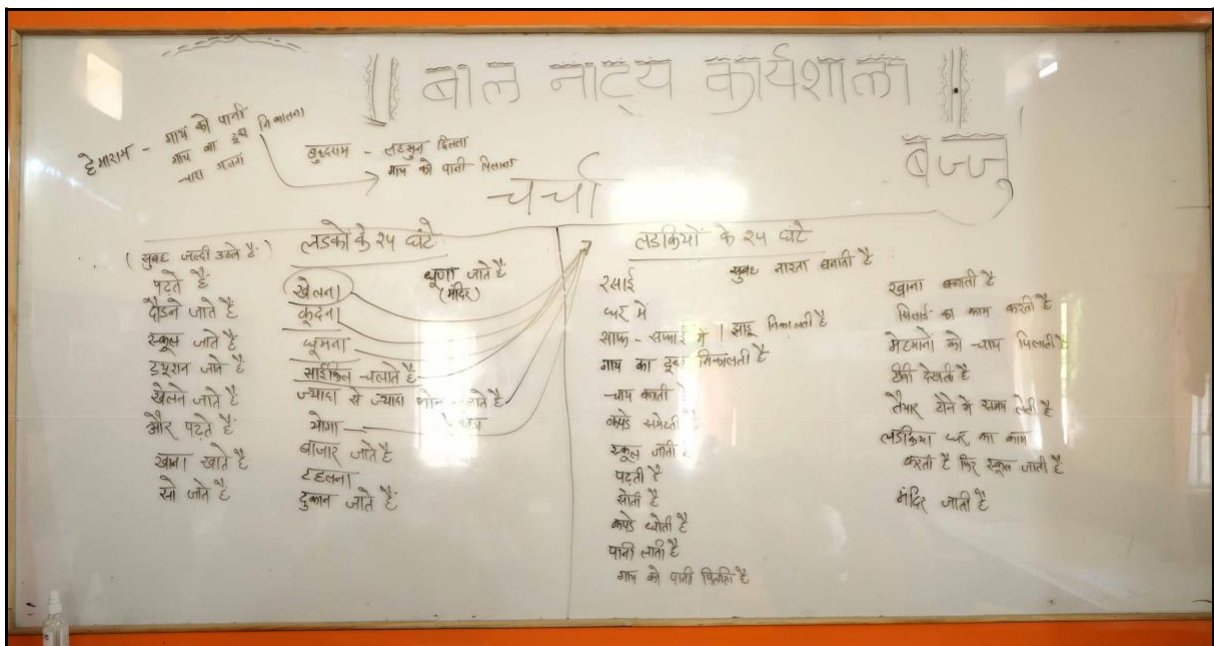
Started the day by appreciating the children for all the rules they have started following diligently. After the prayer, everyone enthusiastically participated in the song and dance energizer "Ek din ek ungli naach rahi thi". 'Mere 24 ghante' (my 24 hours)





activity was conducted which involved children drawing clocks and penning down their daily routine. Their pages were exhibited and the students read each other's routines. Later they sat in two groups - boys and girls - facing each other and a healthy discussion was held about the differences in the 24 hours of the boys and girls.

After the discussion, the boys came up with one household chore and they promised to do that from today.



Day 7

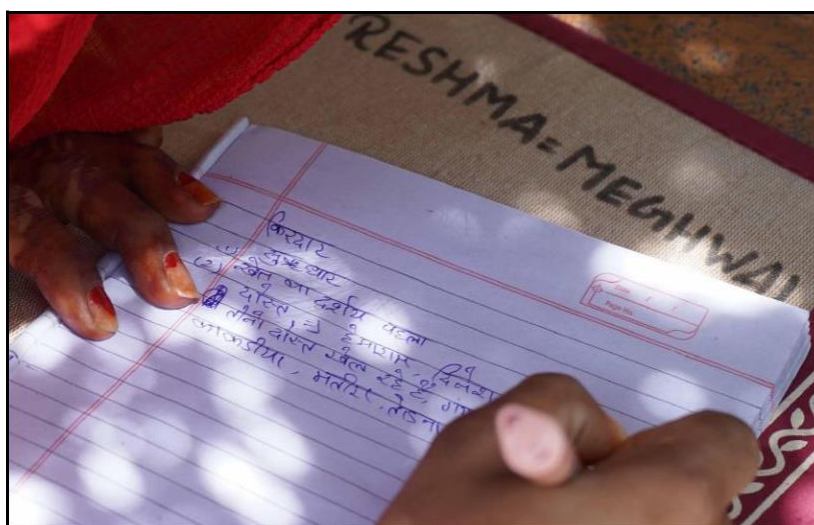
Started the day with the Prayer followed by a 'walk and action' activity. After this energizing activity, we did a quick follow-up session and asked them about their feedback on yesterday's activity. The promises they had made a day before were also followed up. And then the three groups that were created were taken to different spaces by their facilitators to discuss the final plays they were going to make.





Day 8

Started by celebrating the promises made and followed by the boys and they were enthusiastic for doing their promised household chore. Then did our everyday Prayer and now they were much more in sync with Mr. Himanshu. After that all sang and did little steps on the energizer "Ek koi teela tha".



Next, we all went with our assigned groups to different spaces and worked with them to carve scenework out of the discussions held a day ago and move towards the final plays and did some rehearsals. Ms. Mumal also talked to Aaina personally as she came up to her seeking guidance for her further education and career.

First two groups worked on building the structure of the play and decided on the scenes. Seeing other children making a play, children in group three also decided to make a play on a story.





It was raining and on children's demand the day ended with the energetic game "Kho - Kho".

Day 9

Started with the prayer "Tumhi Ho Mata Pita Tumhi Ho". Ms. Mumal oriented everyone about the day. Everyone went into their respective groups to work on their play. After preparing our plays, we came back to the workshop Hall at 4:30. We all saw each other's play one by one. Ms. Mumal noted every play's duration. Then everyone was briefed about the



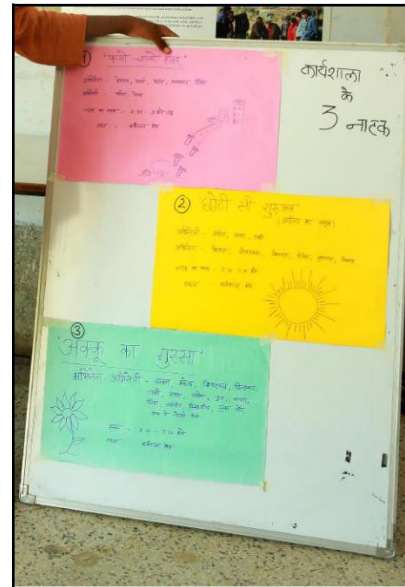
final day culmination. We ended the day by playing Kho-Kho on Children's demand.

Day 10

We started by making our workshop hall ready for the day.

Audience seating space and performance area was marked and arranged. We also put up an exhibition where the photographs of the workshop process, poster of the three plays, some of our participant's quotes and some charts of the process were exhibited. Everyone got ready with their costumes and props.

Bajju's SDM Mr. Hari Singh, Sushila Ojha Ma'am along



with Mr. Sunil Lehri and Urmul's other staff members arrived as our chief guests. Mr. Lehri gave an opening speech.

Next, Mr Himanshu introduced the first play, "Papyo Chalyo Shehar" and then the play was performed. This way he also introduced the second play "Akku ka gussa" and "Chhoti Si Shuruwat" followed by performances respectively.



Mr. Himanshu invited our chief guests to say a few words. Mr. Hari Singh and Sushila ma'am generously appreciated all the children and their work.

Mr Vijay from RIHR addressed everyone regarding this initiative and Dr.Tabeenah Anjum from UNICEF joined the concluding ceremony online and interacted .



In the end Ms. Mumal addressed the gathering with a few words about the workshop process and vision. We all sang the spirited song "Tum Humko Vishwas do" led by Mr. Kanwar Singh, Urmul's staff member.



After most of the children left, we sat with the participants selected for the NATAK TOLI and had a conversation with them regarding the idea and importance of it. The Natak Toli consisted of-

Aaina, Yashoda, Asha, Rakhi, Sawai, Hemaram, Budhram, Ramswaroop, Dinesh, Sandeep, Khiaram

Learning Outcome

1. A sense of wonder about knowing returned to their minds.
2. They for the first time saw their social issues not as instructed but as introspected.
3. A sense of trust in resource persons is visible in their sharing of extremely original perspectives on almost every point.
4. Ownership of their space.
5. Functional Gender sensitization.
6. Joy and importance of meeting and greeting strangers courteously.
7. Steps of making a play without a written or given script.
8. Travel from a populist notion of an issue to a personal one.
9. Joyful learning.

Final theatre performance by participants

On the final day, three plays were made by the children, All of them were performed inside the workshop hall.

Play 1 - 'Papyo Chalyo Shehar'



Description:

The play "PAPYO CHALYO SHEHAR" took shape from the observation of children that how a village boy, who leaves for Bangalore for higher studies and job, returns entirely unmindful of his rural environment. Told through the story of a village native boy, Pappu Prasad whose demeanor is entirely changed after his return from a metropolitan city. His way of behavior towards family and friends, dressing style, language nothing shows any glimpse of the village he had left Behind. And this becomes so captivating for his mates in the village that now they start seeing the dreams of similar transformation, a city brings in.

Characters:

Pappu Prasad- Hemaram

Mother- Yashoda

Father- Sandeep

Sister- Reshma

Frien-Sawai and Dinesh

Narrator- Ramswaroop

Play 2 - 'Akku Ka Gussa'



Description:

The play "Akku ka gussa", based on a children's story "Angry akku" written by Vinayak Verma was about a little girl Akku who gets very angry due to an unpleasant incident in the school. Her father takes care of her anger very gently and gets her to draw and colour to express what all is going on in her mind and this helps Akku to get free of her anger.

Characters:

Akku- Sawan.

Mother- Laxmi.

Laughing Boy- Chindrapal.

Teacher- Bindrapal

Narrator- Vishwajeet

Chorus- Mamta,Puja, Manisha, Sharda, Somraj, Lakshyajit, Mahendra,Suman.

Play 3 - 'Chhoti Si Shuruat'



Description:

The play "Choti Si shuruwat" showed the gender disparity that exists in our homes through the 24 hours of a brother and a sister. In the play, the realisation of this discrimination troubles the brother and he goes to the NGO teacher nearby him to know about the reasons behind this discrimination and what can be done to bring a change and to fill this gap. On hearing the story from the time of evolution, how gender and its disparity came in, he goes back to his home and convinces his family to allow his sister to pursue her further education. He himself bridges this gap by helping her in the household chores. This "Choti Si shuruat" done by him helps her sister to achieve her dream of becoming a teacher and inspiring other children to begin with a "Chhoti Si shuruat" to bring a significant change.

Characters:

Girl and Ngo teacher- Aaina,
Brother- Budhram
Friend- Rakhi,
Grand father- Kishan,
Grand mother- Khiyaram
Father and P.T teacher- Om prakash.
Mother- Asha.
Student- Dinesh.

FINDINGS

1. Twelve to Fifteen is a fruitful age group to work with to forge new ideas.
2. Their opinions are not rigid and with rational conversation, they not only effortlessly but happily see the wiser perspective of an issue.
3. Children learn better and more naturally in an affectionate workshop environment than in instruction and performance-based school environments.
4. These children have an almost absolute and original understanding of the complex social fabric. More than being taught, they merely need their ways to be cleared of obstacles.
5. They have beautiful improvisational skills and make a character with props, costumes and behavioral gestures.
6. Rural Children are free of commonly observed group reactions like jealousy, competitiveness etc. They readily rejoice when a fellow participant is praised by resource persons or given important roles.
7. They are hard-working and are aware of their responsibilities toward family and society. This keeps them from pandering to personal psychological issues.

CHALLENGES

BARRIERS	INTERVENTION	CHANGE / RESULT
Most girls avoid conversation with resource persons or teachers despite them attending computer classes regularly. It is surprising that education is not making them expressive.	Created a separate and smaller group of these girls. A resource person who did not have much speaking responsibilities and was visibly less active was assigned to the group of these girls. So that they kind of 'identify' with her.	The girls immediately opened up to the resource person in a separate space. They even participated in a small play - AKKU KA GUSSA.
The group was an extremely varied mixture of gender, age and communities/ caste. This requires an elaborate balancing of issues that are hardly visible	We had a detailed activity 'MERE CHAUBEES GHANTE' followed by informed discussion on gender sensitivity. The 'Nowness' of the issue was highlighted that the issue	Boys not only became more careful in reacting to girls' views they even started motivating them. This paved the way for a cohesive approach towards play-making. On the last day

<p>on the surface or routine running of the class.</p>	<p>was not somewhere else but in this very space and needs to be addressed. Outdoor sports were played in which girls and boys played together</p>	<p>Kishan, a participant told us that it was for the first time boys and girls have played together in village and they all liked that initiative of resource persons.</p>
<p>Their initial disinterest in resource persons due to familiarity with patterns and psychological contraptions used in most workshops.</p>	<p>We decided to employ two methods to tackle this. Firstly to leave aside our schedules and surprise them with a spontaneous way of conducting a workshop. Secondly, devote good part of day's session to physical outdoor sports with our participation.</p>	<p>The children appeared excited during sessions. Participation was more mindful and few participants said, "We even wonder at home what exercises /activities you will do with us today."</p>
<p>Their unstructured and uncontrollable energy resulted in constant noise and comments, especially from boys.</p>	<p>The resource persons extended their role outside the workshop space and into the canteen, ground and till the participants left in vehicles. They were constantly interacted with and greeted outside the expected space. Rules were made by participants themselves, pasted on the wall and revisited daily.</p>	<p>The participants felt the presence of resource persons throughout and learnt every moment. This gave them a small value system for themselves and introduced an unspoken self-governed atmosphere in the workshop.</p>
<p>The organizations need to take a constantly updated and energetic view of children's issues and how they are getting trained/educated.</p>	<p>Resource persons informed the organisers that one of their representatives must observe the workshop and the organisation must also present their report of the whole process.</p>	<p>UNICEF representatives communicated with the organisers to prepare a report of the workshops.</p>

WAY AHEAD/ SUGGESTIONS

- **The** organizations need to have a detailed report of past workshops that the children have participated in and their learning outcomes and influences. It can prove to be a great help for the child, every next resource person and the organization itself.
- The organizations, resource persons and all the concerned entities may have in-depth dialogue before and after the workshops to ensure that everyone sees a broader picture of what we want to achieve which is lasting.
- The learning and training sessions need not culminate into grand events that appear like a closure of activity. Rather the concluding event must give a sign of the way ahead.
- The organizations may have their representative assigned to witness the whole process and be a part of the discussion to carry the work forward.
- To keep the learning growing Continuous periodic interaction with Natak Toli at the same venue at least once or twice a month is essential.
- Partner organizations must Create space and opportunity for Natak Toli to practice and perform their plays in villages as well as cities.
- Organizing partners may ensure these children have some role/responsibilities with them so that the impact of the workshop doesn't fade away.

Experience of students

Aaina Sain -

“Sabse pehle mai Mumal didi, Chelcy didi, Himanshu sir or Vipin bhaiya ka dhanyawad karna chahti hun ki mujhe inse itna kuch sikhne ko mila. Mujhe pata hi nahi chala ki ye 10 din mere kaise nikal gaye. Mujhe URMUL me aana bahut pasand hai, bahut hi acha lagta hai, mai yaha par bahut hi swatantra mehsoos karti hu isliye. Or Mumal didi ne to bahut kuch sikhaya hai ki tumhe aage kya karna chahiye, rasta bana diya hai mera ki tum uspe chalna, isliye thank you Mumal didi. Or mujhe Mumal didi ki bahut yad aayegi, Vipin bhaiya ki to maine kabhi aawaz hi nahi suni hai or vo bhi bahut acche hai, Himanshu sir, Chelcy didi bhii bahut acche hain. Mai aapko bahut yad karungi.”

Yashoda -

“First of all I thank you all that I got to learn so much from you. I didn't even know when these 10 days passed. I love coming to Urmul because I feel free here and Mumal didi even guided me and made a path for me which I should follow. I'll miss you all”.

"We've attended so many workshops but here for the first time we found an atmosphere in which we could say what is in our hearts".

Ramswaroop –

"It's my first workshop at URMUL and I'm glad that I came. You all made us understand everything like a friend. Never scolded us and gave so much affection to us".

Sandeep -

"Mujhe bahut accha laga. Aap sabne hame laad pyar se bhai behno ki tarah se rakha or sab kuch hamare ko accha laga, accha naatak sikhaya. Hum bana sakte hain aisa natak sikhaya. Pehle din hum khush the or ab last din hamare ko rona bhi aa raha hai ye ja rahe hai to. Maine abhi Lahri ji se baat ki ki inse aapko hame har mahine milaana hai to unhone keh diya ki milayenge. Bahut accha sikhaya or hamare ko dukh bhi ho raha hai or sukh bhi ho raha hai".

"I liked it very much. You all pampered us like brothers and sisters and taught us good theatre so that we could make plays ourselves. On the first day we were happy and now on the last day, we feel sad that these people are leaving. I spoke to Lahiri ji to promise that he would arrange a meeting with you all at least one day in a month or two".

Dinesh -

"Mujhe bahut dukh ho raha hai ki aap ja rahe ho. Aap wapas kab aaoge mujhe batana, mai jarur aaunga. Maine aaj tak URMUL me aisi karyashala kabhi nahi dekhi. Aapne hame bahut kuch sikhaya isliye aapko dhanyawad. Pichli karyashala me mai aaya to mujhe accha nahi laga, or ye 10 din ki thi to bhi mujhe bahut accha laga".

"I'm feeling sad that you all are leaving. I've never seen such a workshop at URMUL till date. You taught us a lot so thank you. I did not like the last workshop that I attended here, but this was 10 days and still, I liked it very much".

Experience of the workshop penned by a participant in copy

मुझे इन दो दिनों में बहुत अच्छा लगा और
~~सिखा~~ ~~सिखा~~ मुझे पता नहीं चला की ये
 ने दिना कैसे निकल गए मुझे मुमल ही ही
 चलनी ही ही पिपिन अया दिनअर अर
 बहुत अच्छे लगे क्योंकि ये मुझे अपने
 से लगने लगे थे इनसे मुझे बहुत
 फुल सिखने को मिला मुमल ही ही न
 मुझे अगे का अत बताया विरिये में
 आरगनी के अपना जीवन की मर और
 अपने लिए और अपने के लिए फुल का
 मर मेने गुदा कहे नये खेल भी खिये
 जो बहुत ही अच्छे थे मुझे इनका सब
 अया ही ही मर को देखकर प्रेता मिलनी
 है में चांदनी दुर्ग की में खोले कभी -
 कभी मिली रक्ष मेने कई बार नाटक किया
 लेकिन अरमें तो नाटक की कदनी बनके
 जते थे और नाटक का कजा सिखा
 देने के लिकेन अरमें मेने नाटक बनाना
 सिखा अरकी कदनी बननी सिखी (मुझे
 लगता है इनका अया, ही ही को देखकर अगे
 भी उनकी तरह और भी लोग बनना
 चाँही अरमें में चांदनी है

पहले के दो-तीन दिनों में देखा की कुछ
 बच्चे बहुत बड़ा अरतानी अरत नये लेकिन
 मर तो बच्चे सुखर गये है यह बात
 मुझे बहुत अच्छी लगी पहले के कार्यक्रमों
 में अरके यह नहीं मानते थे की लड़कों
 की अर का काम करना सीखना नहीं देता
 लड़कीयों को ही करना चाहिए अर अरके मात्र
 अपने घर पे अरके अपनी लड़कों की मदद
 करते है यह मुझे बहुत अच्छा लगा में
 चाँही है की ऐसी डेनिंग कभी - चाँही
 समय वाद होती रहे । मगर मुझे
 इन नौ दिनों में कौन गवसी दुख होती
 मुझे मरक करना ।

Experience of resource persons

Mumal Tanwar | Lead trainer

For me the experience of Bajju was entirely different. I got to know a lot about teaching and myself. I learnt to unlearn a lot that I had learnt. When children were not becoming friendly to us at all, the first thing which I unlearned was that the young ones must greet the elders first. If children are comfortable, it's we who started greeting them first with a Namaste.

I learned to understand children that by becoming a friend one may know what's in a child's mind.

One thing I understood is that villages are already prosperous, happy in themselves and complete. All that a city can do for a village is to make ways for them where they are unable to find an opportunity. The children there are full of life. Far removed from the feelings of envy. We can help search for the possibilities in them and help those possibilities to move ahead on a way.. The first few days I found it difficult wondering whether anything worthwhile would happen here. The children weren't taking interest. Then the first thing, at the cost of everything else, I told myself was to be a kid with these kids. And actually its effect showed. They saw brothers, sisters and friends in us. In the past five years there have been numerous experiences while teaching theatre but the most beautiful experience while teaching the kids here to make a play was that making a play became a game for the kids. .. they were in joy, making their scene, becoming its character. There was no trace of competition. Staying amid these children it felt that we are still in a world where phones and internet aren't. Where there is only a swing, a football with insufficient air, and a slate and a chalk... but everyone is happy.

Himanshu Vyas | Mentor

As we were heading for URMUL Seemant Samiti, Bajju, for this ten-day theatre-making workshop, on both sides of the highway farmers along with their family were busy in the fields. Monsoon clouds were hanging low. Occasionally they would pour. And the farmers were busy now not in tilling or sowing but strengthening a breezy fence. The seeds can be taken care of by the rain, winds, sunlight and the soil but a fence needs to be built. Fence as such has no role in the growth of a crop but it creates that trusted space for the sprouts to come out. And soon they outgrow the fence.

This workshop was no different than a ready field.

I knew that we were there not to teach or train but create that space. A space for Trustful Expression. As a resource person with pedagogical inclination, on the very first day I

sensed a saturation in the children. Saturation with the jute folders most NGO's give. Saturation with the big training halls. Saturation with issues. Saturation with articulate urbans talking about their issues. And above all a saturation with the way workshops proceed. But saturation also assured that there was space. And interestingly the saturation they displayed seemed just an external tool to escape another round of key-word rich training.

While within, they craved for teachers who would say less and listen more. For elders who haven't forgotten childhood.

That's where I sensed that the beauty of a workshop as compared to a school stands out. Even while the ship moves on, one can shift the sails according to the direction of winds. My experience only grew deeper in URMUL workshop that a curriculum has been the least suspected enemy of learning. Curriculum, syllabi or PPT's often are pillows for comfort of teachers.

Even in the most spacious training halls, syllabus has no room for a sudden curiosity that has been triggered in a child by the lesson. A room full of forty children may have twenty different reactions to an information. What best can a teacher do? Take an impractical decision to address the twenty views? Or to shift his/her sails and for a while let the children have a dialogue/discussion or debate? Children liked the second method. For the children not only have questions, they have answers too.

And children do not beat about the bush. On 3rd or 4th day of the workshop, a girl presented a scene-work she made about girls wanting to go to college but were harassed by ruffians. But when asked to talk about the presentation in the same session, she replied that whatever she had to say she has said through the play itself. During the gender sensitization discussion resource persons merely did what the farmers do- just make an airy fence, create a trustful space to speak and let the views sprout.

One interesting thing I learnt was that once convinced of their freedom to express, rural children quickly see a situation or a thing apart from their cliched form and from an entirely contrasting perspective. It was witnessed numerous times while making play with them. How abruptly they pick up a thing and put it to an entirely different but convincing use as a prop. Change the venue of their play and they adapt to new space without slightest unease. They loved the same boring jute folder when they were allowed to use it as a harmonium or a laptop in a play. For a jute folder is strictly a folder for grownups; for children it can be a hundred wonderful things if they are not forced to accept that it is just a folder.

I felt that a sincere disconnect from our personal urban / social callings during the ten days directly resulted in a deeper grasping of children's mind.

It was not a project or office work. I was dealing with little lives. No real work emerges without keeping one's personal life aside at least for such short duration workshops. And that too with children. I sensed that children speak more with actions. Postures. Walk. Glance. To communicate with them, one needs to change one's word-full language to that of actions. Do not use gifts and things as words either. Play with them. Fall with them. Run and roll in the sand and soil one's best trousers with them. Mimic them. Become a laughing stock in the eyes of grownups watching you play with them. Only then will a child trust you.

And above everything else – pleasantly surprise them. For grownups have made themselves frighteningly predictable in the eyes of a child.

Chelcy Pathak | Workshop Assistant

I feel very grateful to be a part of this ten day workshop. Each day of this workshop has been a pleasant surprise for me. I got this opportunity to know and understand the life and world of these children. Witnessing this process unfold, where I saw in front of me how the seeds sown with love and thoughtfulness bring out the lush green leaves in the form of children's growth has been one of my major learnings from this workshop.

From the very third day of meeting these children, we started seeing small changes in their behavior and personality. Some kids who barely talked began to pass a smile when coming face to face, they started greeting everyone. They learnt to discipline themselves on their own and began reminding each other about the rules they had themselves set for the workshop. Slowly, they began sharing their personal feelings and thoughts with us. This made me realize that personally engaging with warmth and becoming one with children can really bring the best in them. I saw that these children were very truthful in their sharings and I felt that they can do wonders if they continue to approach life with this honesty ahead. The world seemed to be a beautiful place with them being present in it and I felt, I have been on a beautiful venture.

Vipin Jangir | Workshop Assistant

This was my first visit to a village on the border in the desert of Rajasthan, where there is a canal too. So coming here was a wonderful experience in itself. Then when I met the children here, hearing their Bikaneri accent it felt like they were talking in a melodious tone, a beautiful accent of rajasthani language.

But after three-four days it was surprising to know that even these beautiful children of such a beautiful place have so many problems, so many thoughts and issues in their minds which they can't say to anyone. Even in such small children, society has filled a lot of information from which they want to come out but there is hardly anyone to support them.

They are aware of every issue around there locality like child marriage should not take place, casteism should not be there or there is a 1098 helpline for children and even dowry, but no one is giving solution on how we can put an end to all these things. These children are like the soft clay in which society and the education system is mixing water without knowing their holding capacity and if this will happen continuously, then cracks will start to appear in them after some time when they will be molded into any form.

But these children were wonderful, some were going to the milk dairy till 3 o'clock in the night, some were working in the fields when it rains, but as soon as they comes to the workshop, their childhood returns, they play, they learn, they laugh, share their experience

and do some mischief too.

As the workshop was progressing, the faith of these children was increasing in us and when they started sharing their stories, we came to know that how much they are observing the environment around them, understanding the difference between city and village, understanding caste and gender discrimination. I got to learn from them how closely we should observe the environment around us.

And also because of having this workshop in URMUL, I came to know about that wonderful person who did so much work for his people in his life and selflessly went away forever Mr. Sanjoy Ghosh.

What struck me deeply after this workshop was how careful we should be when conversing with the children of this age, because they are very delicate and we can mold them in any form we want or turn them in whatever direction we want. If there is a need for a little hard work, to understand them and react accordingly. We should not mix so much water without knowing anything about them that this delicate clay becomes highly drenched and turned to mud. So we should try to teach them in some gentle ways, at their speed.

And the kind of change we have seen in these ten days in these kids, I think if we pay attention, listen to them, then we all can together build a thoughtful generation.

CHANGE STORIES

Aaina-

Aaina is a 15 years old girl presently in 12th standard. She is studying humanities.

Initially in the workshop she appeared lost in her own thoughts. She was replying to questions, she was participating but there was no smile on her face. Over the days, as the workshop progressed we gradually started knowing her thoughts. That how deeply she thinks about the gender discrimination in her village and how she wants to stay in her village and change so many things.

One day when we asked her to design a scene about gender discrimination and talk about it within her group, we started seeing a change in her. She



was more attentive, in command and implementing her ideas with confidence. She was asking questions to the boys.

When she was running freely in the playground she was an entirely different Aaina . She shared that she wished to have a room of her own where she can read without any disturbance.

For the concluding day of the workshop we divided all the participants in 3 groups to make small plays. Aaina was asked to lead one of the group and all the participants of that group were asked to imagine a girl who is changing the village and all of them mentioned Aaina as that girl.

Aaina was very happy to see her name in everyone's imagination. She directed a scene which was about 24 hours of a boy and a girl and the dream of a girl. She felt as if she was being heard. She could share her feelings. By the final days of the workshops she was brimming with creative inputs and hope.

One of our team members talked to her in detail about her career and dreams. We even recommended her case to the organisation whose officials responded with enthusiasm and support upon hearing about her talent and determination. She said that now she can see a way.

Kishan-

Kishan, in the earlier days of the workshop, was not engaging at all with the sessions. He seemed to have his attention somewhere else and appeared abrupt when asked anything.

In one instance, during the **MY 24 HOUR** activity when the girls were asked what activities mentioned by the boys would they like to incorporate in their daily routine too, the girls replied "Yoga...Cycling... Running..." but they don't get time from

household chores. Hearing this, Kishan replied that the girls better get up at 4 am to fulfill their dream of Yoga or better still take less time to bathe and get ready.



To this Yashoda replied that if girls did go for running in morning, by the time they return it will be 6 am and if they finish the homely duties they will miss the school. And since they work continuously the whole day they need some rest too. Kishan replied that it is good that girls do household chores. They look after the house. The girls answered that he too then must do these works. To this Kishan replied that he can, after all it is work of home.

Reshma suggested that he must start with making tea at least. Aaina asked him to experience the heat that emanates from the gas stove while making tea.

And in this way girls responded to Kishan's every statement, even with personal experiences. Now Kishan confessed that it is for the first time that these issues have crossed his mind. All these talks he had only heard but it is for the first time that his own friends have made him understand the reality.

And he promised that henceforth he will fill water in their cooler at home and help his sisters.

Sawan -

When we reached the URMUL organization, for the first few days Sawan didn't even look up to see or greet us. He'd always be busy, bent over his mobile phone the whole day. Watching videos...singing songs of the grown-ups. He'd lose his interest in the middle of any activity. But by constantly appreciating his little achievements, one



change occurred that he started participating more. And the biggest change happened once we sat with him and started drawing with him. For the remaining days, he'd sit the whole day drawing so many colorful things on drawing sheets.

Participants list

GIRLS	BOYS
Rakhi Meghwal	Sawan Meghwal
Manisha Dewasi	Lakshyajeet Singh
Reshma Meghwal	Budhram Raika
Amrita Godara	Ramswaroop Dewasi
Pooja Godara	Bhagirath Raika
Suman Dudi	Omprakash Raika
Bhanwari Godara	Shankar Raika
Aaina Sain	Omprakash Raika
Sharda Godara	Narayan Raika
Yashoda Godara	Kishan Raika
Asha Bhambhu	Sandeep Raika
Chindrapal Solanki	Dinesh Raika
Lakshmi Chauhan	Sawai Sain
Bindrapal Solanki	Khiaram Godara
	Vishwajeet Singh

Copy of attendance sheet:-

बच्चों के साथ नाटक व शिक्षा पर दस दिवसीय कार्यशाला

दिनांक- 02/07/2022 से 11/07/2022

स्थान- उरमूल सीमान्त समिति बज्जू बीकानेर

क्रम.स.	बच्चे का नाम	पिता का नाम	गाँव	पहला दिन	दूसरा दिन	तीसरा दिन	चौथा दिन	पांचवा दिन	छटा दिन
1.	सावन मैघवाल			P	P	P	.	P	P
2.	लक्ष्मी सिंहा			P	P	P	P	P	P
3.	राखी मैघवाल			P	P	P	P	P	P
4.	मनीषा देवासी			P	P	P	P	P	P
5.	लक्ष्मी राईका			P	P	P	P	P	P
6.	सुदय्या राईका			P	P	P	P	.	P
7.	ओमप्रकाश राईका			P	P	P	.	P	P
8.	शंकर राईका			P	.	.	P	P	.
9.	नारायण राईका			P	P	.	P	P	.
10.	किरण राईका			P	P	P	P	P	P
11.	सदीय राईका			P	P	.	P	P	P
12.	दिनेश राईका			P	P	P	P	P	.।
13.	रेशमा मेघवाल			P	P	P	.	.	.
14.	अमृता गोदारा			P	.	P	.	.	P
15.	पुन गोदारा			P	P	P	.	.	P
16.	सुमन डुडी			P	P	P	.	P	P
17.	मंवंरी गोदारा			P	.	P	.	.	.

क्रम.स.	बच्चे का नाम	पिता का नाम	गाँव	पहला दिन	दूसरा दिन	तीसरा दिन	चौथा दिन	पांचवा दिन	छटा दिन
18.	आहुना सेन			P	P	P	P	P	P
19.	सवाई सेन			P	P	P	P	P	P
20.	शारदा गोदारा			P	P	P	.	P	P
21.	पारोदा गोदारा			P	P	.	.	P	P
22.	खिशाराम गोदारा			P	P	P	P	P	P
23.	विश्वजीत सिंह			P	P	P	.	.	P.
24.	आशा माकनू			P	P	P	P	P	P
25.	किरणपाल सोलंकी			P	.	.	P	P	P
26.	लक्ष्मी चौहान			P	.	.	P	P	P
27.	किरणपाल सोलंकी			P	P	P	P	P	P
28.	रामेश्वर देवासी			P	P	P	P.	P.	.
29.	आशीराम राईका			P	P	P	P	P	P
30.	मनीषा देवासी			P	P	P	P	P	P
31.	हेमाशम खेरी			P	P	P	.	P	P
32.	ममता डुडी			P	P	P	P	P	P
33.	गहनू राईका			P	P	P	.	.	.
34.									
35.									
36.									
37.									

क्रम. सं.	बच्चे का नाम	आतवां दिन	आठवां दिन	नवां दिन	दसवां दिन
1.	आवन मेधवाल	P	P	P	P
2.	लक्ष्मजीत सिंह	.	P	P	P
3.	शरवी मेधवाल	P	P	P	P
4.	मनीषा देवासी	.	P	P	P
5.	बुद्धराम राईका	.	P	P	P
6.	आमिष्काश राईका	P	P	P	P
7.	शंकर राईका	.	.	.	P
8.	नशाधण राईका	.	.	.	.
9.	किरण राईका	P	P	P	P
10.	संदिप राईका	P	P	P	P
11.	दिनेश राईका	P	P	.	P
12.	रेशमा मेधवाल	P	P	P	P
13.	अमृता गौदरा	.	.	.	.
14.	पुजा गौदरा	P	P	P	P
15.	सुमन कुडी	.	.	P	P
16.	भवशी गौदरा	.	.	.	.
17.	अर्द्धिना सेन	P	P	P	P
18.	सवाई सेन	P	P	P	P
19.	निकास राईका	.	.	P	P
20.	शरदा गौदरा	P	.	P	P

क्रम. सं.	बच्चे का नाम	आतवां दिन	आठवां दिन	नवां दिन	दसवां दिन
21.	पशावा गौदरा	P	.	P	P
22.	विधाराम गौदरा	P	P	P	P
23.	विश्वजीत सिंह	.	P	P	P
24.	आशा माम्जू	.	P	P	P
25.	विन्तपाल सोलंकी	P	P	P	P
26.	शमश्वरूप देवासी	६.	P	P	P
27.	भागीरथ राईका	.	P	P	P
28.	दिनेश राईका	.	P	P	P
29.	हंसाराम रेवारी	P	P	P	P
30.	समता कुडी	P	P	P	P
31.	महेन्द्र राईका	P.	P	P	P
32.	६ लक्ष्मी चौहान	P	P	P	P
33.	विन्तपाल सोलंकी	P	P.	P	P

Team members & Roles

Ms. Mumal Tanwar

Resource person, theatre direction, production, curriculum design, conceptual pedagogical insights (Lead trainer)

Mr. Himanshu Vyas

Resource person, Daily photos, a documentary on workshops, play guidance, conceptual pedagogical insights (Mentor)

Ms. Chelcy Pathak

Assistant play direction, Daily report compilation, Logistics manager (Assistant)

Mr. Vipin Jangir

Observer, Photo and Video Documentation, Assistant play direction, Daily group overview compilation (Assistant)

Mr. Vijay Goyal (RIHR)

Workshop coordination and Co-organiser.

Mr. Ankush Singh (UNICEF Rajasthan)

Organizing, Facilitation & Guidance

Dr. Tabeenah Anjum

Conceptualisation, Planning and supervision of workshop

Mr. Sunil Lehari (URMUL Seemant Samiti)

Logistic support

NATAK TOLI



Sr. No.	NAME	VILLAGE	PHONE NO.
1	Hemaram	Bajju	9929553423
2	Khiamram	Bajju	7728029750
3	Yashoda	Bajju	7728029750
4	Asha	Bajju	9602784348
5	Rakhi	Bikaner	8000859409
6	Reshma	Bikaner	8000859409
7	Aaina	Bajju	9929320669
8	Dinesh	Bajju	9950014547
9	Sawai	Bajju	9929320669
10	Ramswaroop	Bajju	9649173425
11	Sandeep	Bajju	9829300710
12	Budhram	Bajju	8619091751

More visuals from the workshop sessions









