

## Increasing school enrolment



Photo: Our child tracking system in the CRC for children not attending school, Kalihardia village.

Traditionally children from four socially excluded castes don't attend school; often no one in entire families has been formally educated. There is also a fear that if children reach 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they won't work in bonded labour. Throughout many castes children stop going to school for different reasons- perhaps they are involved in child labour, or find teachers abusive, or are discriminated against.

Using micro level efforts we work with families of non-attenders to find out the reasons behind their behaviour and how we can encourage them to gain an education. For children from socially excluded castes who don't want to go to school, we take them to the Cluster Resource Centre, full of games, books and recreational equipment, for a few days so that they view school as a place where they will be entertained and learn in a fun way.

Cluster Resource Mobilisers and GVNML Staff create a map in each village showing all the houses and out of those which children are attending school, so that their approach is targeted. Families whose children are absent can be served notices from the Panchayat Raj Institution threatening to withdraw government services if families ignore the order.

In 2009, 250 children from socially excluded castes in 8 villages started attending school thanks to GVNML efforts and there was a 70% retention rate. Our success is down to collaboration with community groups, Village Development Committees, Children's Groups, Youth Groups and individual support to each family. We also work hard to ensure schools are more child friendly and appealing to students. Also in 2009, 65 children were taken out of child labour, some in bonded labour and others caring for animals or cleaning cups in tea shops. Most are now in school after a cultural programme raised awareness of the issue and family meetings built community pressure.