

Tablets fuel learning desire in slum kids

50 Tablets Uploaded With Study Materials Given To Kids Under A Literacy Project

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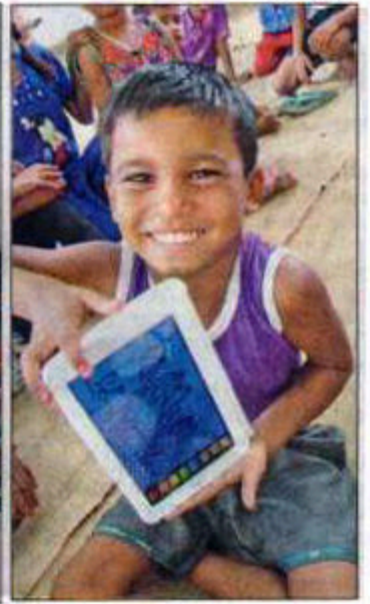
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Varanasi: For Amina, four-year-old daughter of a daily wager, it is a luxury to learn alphabets using a branded tablet. "Bara maza a raha hai padhai mein," a happy Amina said showing the tablet. Similarly, Neha (7), whose father is a tempo driver, had never thought of using any electronic gadget for her studies but now is using one for primary education. Perhaps 'Achhe Din' have come for them.

A group of curious children, all slum dwellers, could be seen busy with tablets under a neem tree in Mawaiya slum in Sarnath area. While some were learning alphabets and numbers, others were trying their hands in drawing. It is their first encounter with the electronic gadget.

A set of 50 tablets uploaded with study materials were provided to these underprivileged children under a literacy project supported by the Dalai Lama Centre for Ethics and Transformative Values at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA), Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Prajnopaya Foundation Charitable Society.

"It is a fun to learn English words and draw sketches on tablet," said another girl Sanya, whose father is also a labourer. About 25 children at the Mawaiya centre run by an NGO Human Welfare Association (HWA) have been given tablets for primary learning



Children learning alphabets, numbers using tablets and (right) a kid showing his drawing made on tablet at Mawaiya slum in Sarnath

purpose.

"Tablet software images were downloaded from a central server maintained by the research team of MIT through WiFi," said HWA president Rajni Kant. According to him, the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at MIT provides technical support in uploading the study material, while the programme known as Global Literacy Project is supported by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Prajnopaya Foundation Charitable Society. Apart from the Mawaiya centre, another such centre is also being run at Bhaisori village in Sar-

In a two-hour session tablets are provided to 25 kids while the others wait for their turn. The study material is meant for the children of 3-8 years age group. But, the kids above this age also want to use the device

nath area. "It is the first project of its kind in the country," he claimed.

"The kids are very happy using the device and are quick in learning," said teacher at Mawaiya centre Sheila Devi. "In a two-hour session we can provide tablets to 25 kids only, while the others wait for their turn," she said adding that the study material is meant for the 3-8 years age group. But, the kids above this age al-

so want to use the device, she added.

"We are responsible for maintaining regular and consistent communication with the research team, and also work with them to test and implement web-based feedback system for sites to provide child tablet-use information to maximize educational value and to monitor tablet use," Rajni Kant told TOI.

The Mawaiya slum, close

to Sarnath, the famous Buddhist site, has a mix population of Muslim, Rajbhar, Maurya (OBC) and Dalit. Maximum people from marginalized community are engaged as wage labourers and nearly 50% women work as domestic worker in the nearby houses. The HWA is facilitating a non-formal education centre in the slum for last 10 years.

Similarly, the Bhaisori situated in Chirgaon block consists of other backward community (OBC) Rajbhar and dalit community like Mushar and Nut. About 70% population is landless and working as wage labourers in the nearby area.