



Gyan Mela - Our Children - Jan 2024

Project Title: **Conflicts & Changing Map of the World**

No. of Children: **5**

Dates: **27 and 28th January, 2024 (Weekend)**

Venue: **Fatima High School, Vidyavihar**

Introduction

Gyan Mela is a project exhibition organized by Our Children every year. This was the first time in the recent past that Dongri Children's Home took part, and it went very well in terms of the project demonstrated and the experience for the children.

Preparation

The preparation started just about 10-12 days before the event weekend. Collectively, our team and the Superintendent liked the topic of "Conflicts & Changing Map of the World" and soon we finalized it. The boys were selected based on their behavior, sincerity and ability to understand and present concepts. From here on, we did everything along with the kids to prepare for the exhibition.

Content Preparation

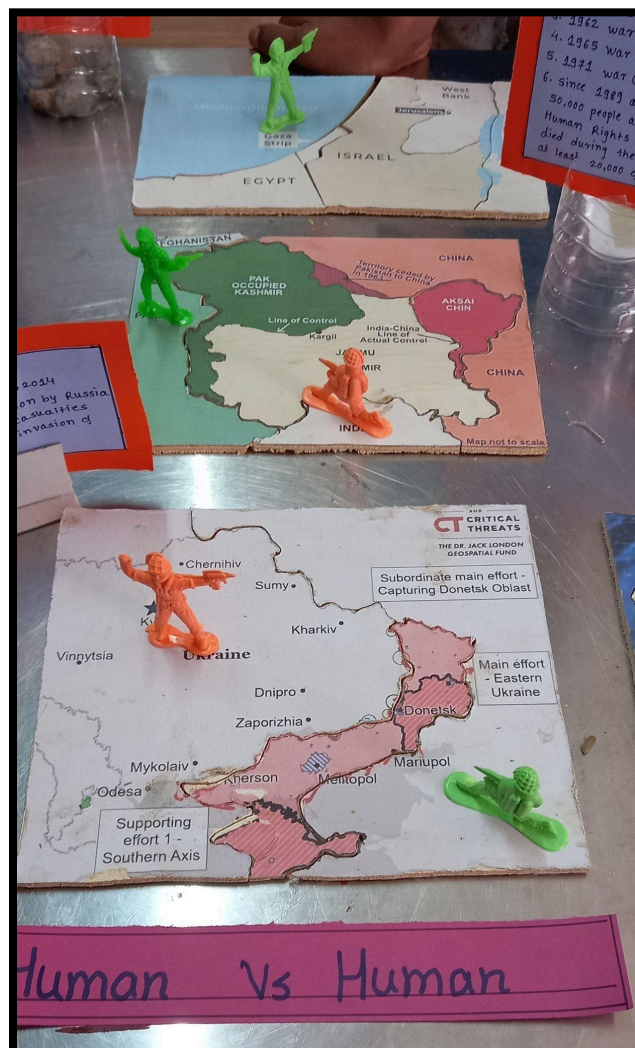
We discussed the topic with the children and gave them some background information. We decided to have two aspects within our project but eventually added a third one as we started collecting information and stories:

1. Conflicts between Humans and Humans
2. Conflicts between Humans and Nature

3. Conflict between Nature and Nature

1. Conflicts between Humans and Humans

Under the first one, we represented the conflict between humans through the examples of ongoing wars between Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine (Gaza), and the high tension zone of Kashmir; between India, Pakistan and China. We saw some news coverage on these conflicts, viewed some images of destruction and gathered some statistics regarding these wars. Naturally, these visuals and numbers were astounding and immediately ignited empathy in the children. We had a discussion on these topics and how conflicts between two groups harms so many other innocent lives. They had some profound reflections!



2. Conflicts between Humans and Nature

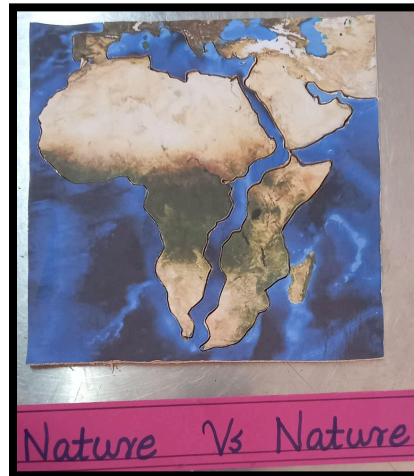
For the second sub-topic, we represented 4 different ways in which humans are destroying the environment, namely; deforestation, forest fires, ocean pollution, and melting of ice near the poles. We saw some staggering videos of 'before and after' images of forest areas across the globe and of ice capped regions, a video describing the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, heartbreaking visuals of various forest fires over the last 5 years and more. We followed these up with some statistics to see the factual numbers. The children were simply awe-struck! They started asking various questions and we had a few discussions on the effects of humans on nature.



3. Conflicts between Nature and Nature

While we were looking at conflicts between Humans and Nature, we came to know about the Continental Rift taking place in Africa and this I knew is an extraordinary event in the larger frame of things! Hence we added the 3rd

category of Nature vs Nature conflict and included this example. In many ways, this addition made our project very unique.



After creating a deeper understanding, developing a genuine feeling and gathering information on these aspects, we moved onto the presentation part. We asked ourselves questions like, “How do we convey what we have understood to the people who come to see our project? How do we express our feelings and thoughts to them in a way that touches them? What thought, question or insight do we leave them with?” With these questions, we prepared on how to present the project. The children came up with their ideas and started preparing what to say. Soon, they divided various aspects between themselves and worked on developing expertise on their subject.



Material Preparation

Simultaneously, we worked on building relevant material to showcase during the exhibition. We decided to try to make things in 3D as far as possible. The boys used their carpentry skills to design things on a ply board. The creative ones used their creativity to make other designs like the forest fires. In fact, they actually burned some of the paper trees and added actual ash to give the feel of a burnt forest! .



Practice in front of JJB Magistrates

Their first test came when they had to present the project to the JJB Magistrates at the Children's Home itself. While the project material was ready, they weren't completely ready with practicing what they had to say yet, but they were overconfident at this stage. We set up the project on the Superintendent's table and eagerly waited for the JJB Magistrates to come. As we were waiting, their nervousness and anxiety was going up. When they finally came, some of the boys felt butterflies in their stomachs and felt a little scared to present. As they presented to the Magistrates, they started making mistakes, using wrong words and missed certain parts of the explanation. The Magistrates were very supportive though and started encouraging the boys and shared

some feedback. They appreciated the material created and the effort put to learn about these topics and present them.



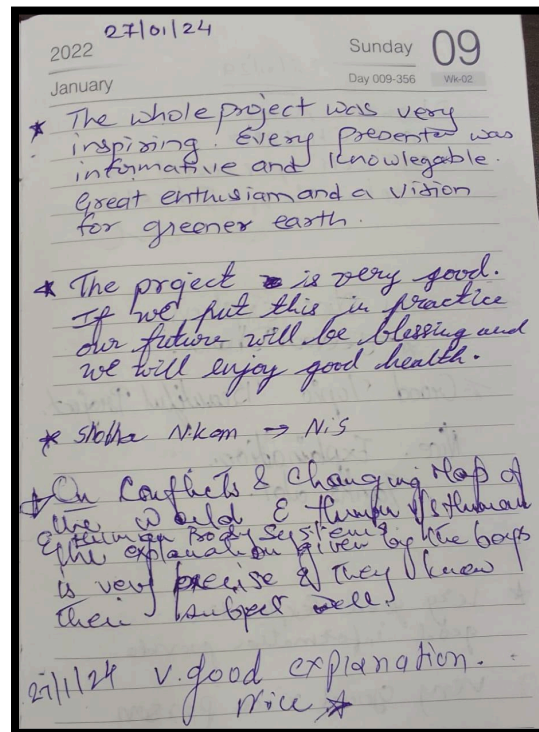
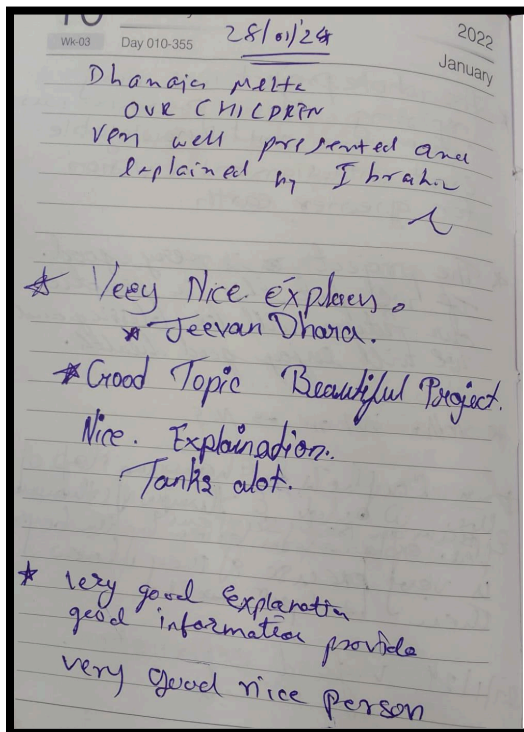
It was a good eye-opener for the boys that they still needed to prepare further, which they did in the one remaining day. This was an important step backward for them which they used to leap ahead during the actual exhibition!

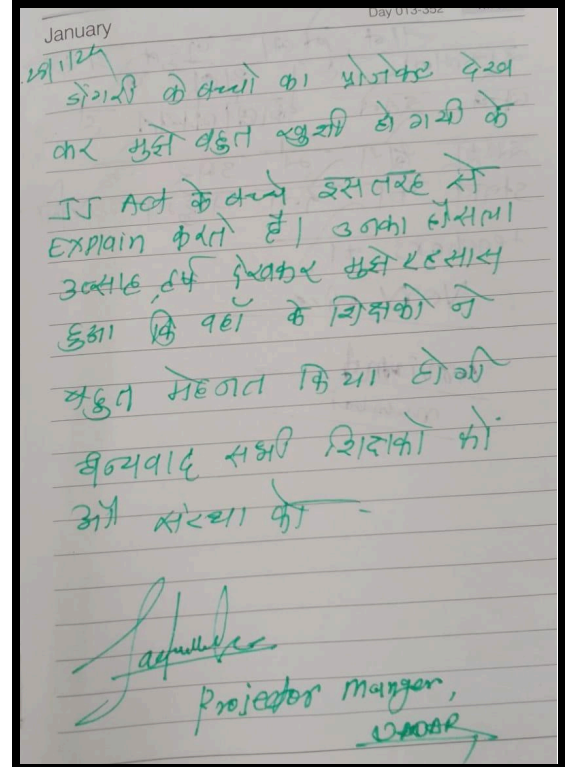
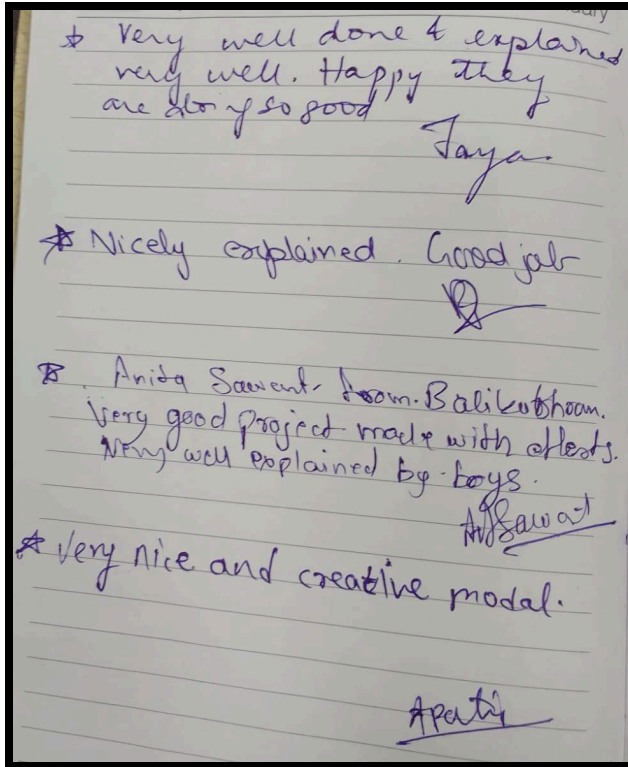
Actual Exhibition

Finally the exhibition weekend came. These boys had prepared well, but were a little nervous and scared about 'how it would be?', 'What would it be like to present the project to various people coming from outside?', etc. However, they went and took that bold step of trying; and in the process, they overcame their fear. Soon enough, they were confidently explaining and enjoying the process. They got into the groove and this was reflected in the atmosphere around their table. There was always a crowd around the table, people would also stay there longer than on other tables listening to the explanations, and would even ask questions to learn more. The teamwork among the boys was also great and it showed through their mannerisms and behavior.



They received a lot of praise from the guests and even the organizers. Some of them also gave their compliments in writing in our diary (sharing some images below). Some members of the Our Children organization not only praised them, but also said that Dongri Children's Home should participate every year from here on. These boys had now set a high benchmark!





Overall, they had a wonderful experience, enjoyed themselves, learnt a lot from their project as well as others', grew in their confidence, and felt very proud of themselves (for the right reasons!). And so were we proud of our boys!

Reflections of the Children

After the exhibition, we sat with the children the next day to hear their reflections. We also video recorded them sharing their experience. (We will link the recorded video here soon!)

Some of the things that stood out for us:

1. They were proud of themselves for doing something good.
2. They overcame their fears of facing the world or of society which seemed different to them than their own.
3. They understood the value of learning and education.

4. They themselves had deeply absorbed what they presented. Hence, it led to a lot of behavior change in them as well. For example, soon after the exhibition, we started a plantation project with the kids to plant more trees in the Children's Home campus.
5. They received a lot of praise from strangers and this led to a change of their self image. Suddenly, being knowledgeable became 'cool'.
6. For many of them, this was their first experience of going to such an exhibition. Since they enjoyed the process, they are now keen to participate more often whenever they get a chance.
7. The boys also received a certificate of participation which was a proud moment for them. The certificate was very special for two boys, one who has studied only till 3rd std and another who has completed 10th. It was his 1st certificate ever, and he was overjoyed to share about it.



8. We observed amazing teamwork within them, even though all of them were not very close before the project.
9. While sharing their experience, they did not complain about anything at all, which is unusual with them generally, even though there were a few things that surely would have bothered them. They were very focused and excited to share the positive things from the exhibition.
10. Lastly, this project has created a strong bond between us and these children and we are seeing many ripple effects of this (like the plantation project).



Conclusion

All in all, this was a wonderful experience for the children and for us. The children learnt a lot about the world outside and about themselves on the inside and in the process have transformed in small yet meaningful ways.

Love Joy Peace