

WORKSHOP makes futures

Clem Blakemore outlines *WORKSHOP's* recent *Project Nagar*, renovating Chandar Nagar school in Northern India. *WORKSHOP* is a non-profit design + make studio that focuses on participation, learning by doing, and cultivating deep understanding of place. Living temporarily with the communities we are working with, we bring new ideas whilst re-engaging in local building crafts and materials, to bring about an architecture of exchange that is both challenging and pragmatic. *WORKSHOP* is led by Clementine Blakemore, Alexander Furunes and Ivar Tutturén



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WORKSHOP's latest project has been Project Nagar, a collaboration with the Indian charity 'Nanhi Dunya International Movement for Children and their Friends' during the second half of 2012. Nanhi Dunya currently runs twelve schools, primarily for children who come from economically deprived backgrounds, including those with special needs. The schools, which collectively serve over a thousand children, are located in impoverished areas in and around Dehradun in Uttarakhand, Northern India, and families contribute what they can afford in order for children to attend. Whilst this ensures inclusion for all, it means that the organization is financially stretched, and its infrastructure is under pressure.

Having conducted extensive research into the needs of each of the schools during a research trip, we and Nanhi Dunya's Board of Trustees agreed that our project would focus on renovating and improving a single school, Chandar Nagar, with the aim of developing a design strategy that could be applied to others in the future. The ambition was not only to renovate Chandar Nagar physically, but to revive the spirit of the

organisation as a whole, and help ensure its long-term sustainability. The result of the four month project was a lightweight structure known as the Chandar Nagar 'Rangshala' – a hindi term deriving from the words 'rang' (colour) and 'shala' (school). The space is used as a multifunctional classroom, specifically for crafts and other hands-on activities, that is available for the wider community to use after school hours. Enclosed with timber slats, but otherwise open to the surrounding playground, the Rangshala is a well-ventilated space that is cool, shaded and dry during the hot and rainy season; during the winter months, when the interior air temperature of the existing classrooms is very cold, the Rangshala is warm and sunny.

The structure was designed and built collaboratively with the local community, skilled craftsmen, a local contractor, three UK engineers, and a team of students from the NTNU/AA Visiting School.

FURTHER

www.wrksph.org

www.aaschool.ac.uk/STUDY/VISITING/chandernagar