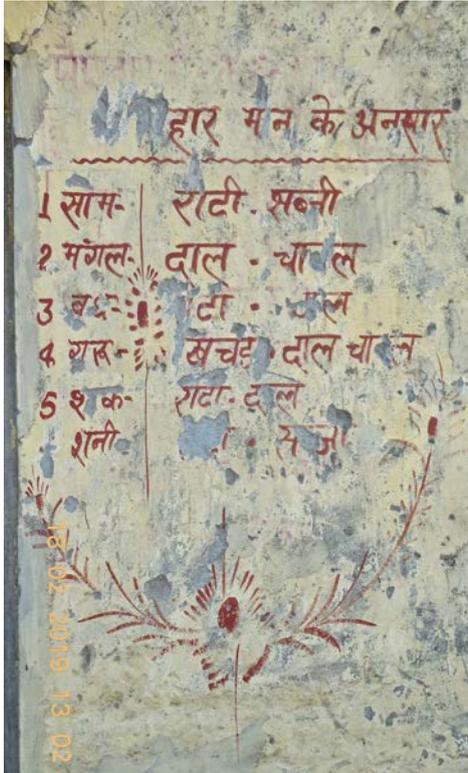


INCREDIBLE INDIA 2019: Health, Empowerment, Education



Here is the weekly menu! All children at government schools in Rajasthan receive milk and a hot meal from Monday to Saturday. So, let me translate the menu so that you know what you would be eating if you attended school there.

Mondays: Chapati & Vegetables

Tuesdays: Rice & Dahl*

Wednesdays: Chapati & Dahl

Thursdays: Rice & Dahl cooked together (Kicheri)

Fridays: Chapati & Dahl

Saturdays: Chapati & Vegetables

*Dahl the signature dish of India is made of lentils and various dried beans cooked with spices and vegetables.

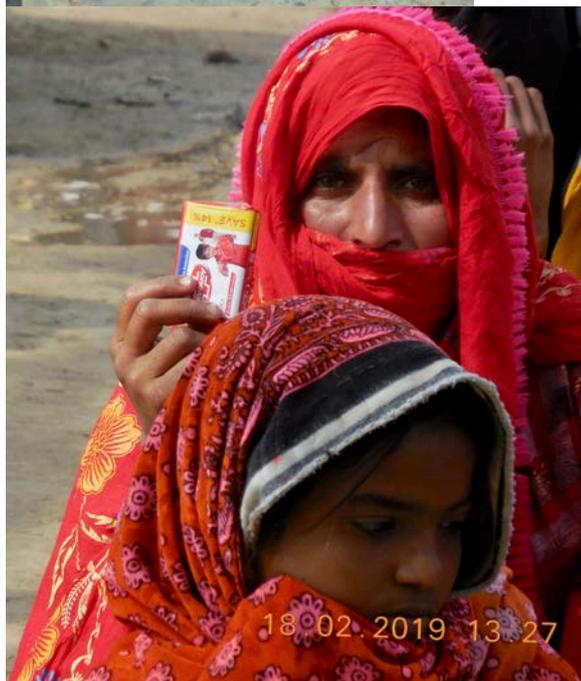
We visited on a Tuesday and I tasted the food: it was good!!!!

So why were we there? It was for a women's meeting to spur them on in our overall effort towards hygiene and so better health as well as empowering them by letting them know their rights. Linked to this is the huge effort to stop open defecation which, as you will know, is probably India's biggest problem. But there is hope!

Already in one year, there is a big change as more and more people build toilets and find out that open defecation leads to ill health and the rather horrific fact that people are actually eating their own shit! (They defecate and it goes into the water which they use for various things and so on — you can work it out!)

Then there are the big hand washing campaigns — efforts to get people to use soap and wash after using toilets and before preparing food and eating. The region is mainly inhabited by a group of about two million people called Meo who converted to Islam between 12th and 17th centuries. After that they mixed Islam and Hinduism and so ended up being neither and so ostracised. Recently they have tended towards a more Muslim way.

The project aims at monitoring and inspiring the government programs in place to actually work. So White Lotus Trust (the Indian part of Lotus Outreach (lotusoutreach.org) is making sure that babies are



weighed, vaccinated; that children receive the grains allotted to them; that pregnant women have their check-ups; that lactating women and adolescent girls get iron tablets; that hygiene improves; and above all that the people know their rights and what to ask for. What a list, eh?

Not only this but Lotus Outreach is also providing transport to about



Boys and girls drinking hot milk



320 girls to and from school so that they stay in school. The dangers of harassment and rape lead to the families insisting on the girls staying home after puberty. The Blossom Bus program started in 2010 with 30 girls and now 40 girls are in college and 7 are doing MAs!!!!



We all know that education is the key to solving most of the world's poverty problems.... We all know



governments are not doing enough.... We all feel that we should be doing more...

So Lotus Outreach started STEP: Skill Training 4 Employment Program. The successful class, so far, is the tailoring. The girls in Mewat district cannot go out to work, buying clothes depletes the family resources SO let's teach them to sew for themselves and their families, for the expensive outfits for weddings,

and even, maybe, to start a small business at home.

It is cramped, so, yes, we have asked for more space and even, eventually, embroidery classes!

These girls will not only save family resources but gain respect in their communities as their skill is essential to daily life. This respect leads to their



Even this handicapped girl is learning!!

having a bigger voice (or maybe just a voice, where they had none before) which leads to asking, which leads to change, which leads to a better life.

So BRAVO Lotus Outreach for identifying real problems and remedying them!

Interested? Just ask anything at lotusoutreach.org (or me) and you will receive answers that might change your life!!!!

May you all be well and happy, mujin.



Usually get them to laugh eventually!