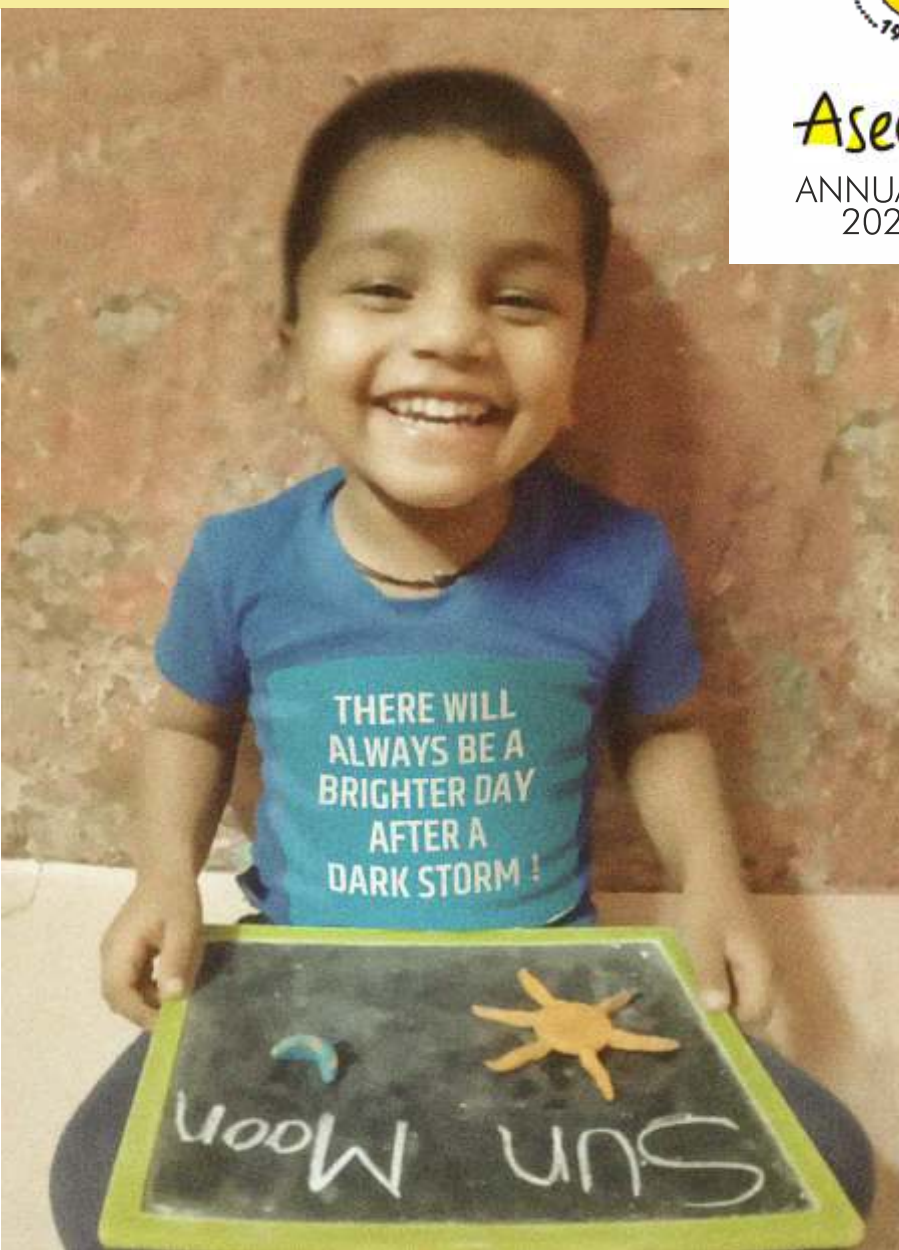




ANNUAL REPORT  
2020-2021



The first batch of Aseema in 1997



...are the ladies and gentlemen of today...

## Our Humble Beginning – Powering Dreams, Changing Lives

Three friends came together in 1997 to build a better world for our future generations. Dilbur Parakh, Neela Kapadia and Snehal Paranjape had a revolutionary vision that they were determined to make a reality. Together, they created a world which acknowledged the limitless potential of children.

Over the years they defined Aseema and created schools where children feel respected, where questions are encouraged, where sports and art are as important as math and where values such as humility and gratitude are instilled at a young age.

Over the past 25 years, Aseema has been fulfilling dreams and maximising the potential of children from marginalized communities in Bandra, Khar and Santacruz in Mumbai and tribal hamlets of Awalkhed, Igatpuri. What started as a journey with 18 children in 1 classroom in the neighbourhood of Bandra West has today touched the lives of over 6,800 children through our direct and indirect programmes in Mumbai, Igatpuri, Lucknow and Kanpur.

On 15 December 2021, we enter our 25<sup>th</sup> year and we wish to celebrate this occasion with each of our stakeholders- students, parents, teachers, staff, donors, volunteers and well-wishers. Each one of you has contributed immensely and touched the lives of so many! We sincerely urge you to join us as we come together to celebrate stories of Powering Dreams, Changing Lives over the past 25 years. Look out for exciting events in 2022 on our website and social media handles.

We look forward to meeting you soon!





## Introduction: Agility to Keep Moving and Changing

In April 2020, across the world people were reeling under the effects of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The only certainty was the uncertainty on how the situation would play out.

At Aseema, we have demonstrated immense agility, strength and perseverance in dealing with the new teaching, learning, social and emotional needs of our students. This would not have been possible without the incredible support from our staff, alumni, parents, donors and well-wishers. We extend our gratitude to each one of them for their passion and commitment in helping us build lives and fulfill dreams.

Our teachers have adapted to the new normal and have remained committed to making online lessons more accessible to their students and helping them adjust to virtual classrooms.

Despite all the challenges, we continue to provide conducive learning environments and an uninterrupted learning curve.



## YEAR AT A GLANCE

<b>Direct Impact</b>	<b>2,745</b>
<b>Indirect Impact</b>	<b>4,133</b>
<b>Average Attendance</b>	<b>55.33%</b>
<b>Student Retention</b>	<b>99.06%</b>
<b>SSC Results</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Teacher Student Bond

The key pillar on which Aseema's education approach stands is developing a deep respect for the child and building a strong relationship between the teacher and the taught. The pandemic did not deter us from continuing to nurture this bond. In the new academic year, children were unfortunately not greeted in the corridors with colourful charts welcoming them back to school. Rather, they were now greeted by teachers on WhatsApp calls and voice notes. Regular check-ins by the teachers and social workers sent the message across to our students and parents that we were always just a call away!

With the online classes the teachers now had the additional responsibility of providing support and guidance to the parents on how to sustain their child's learning effectively. The Aseema team has gone that extra mile to provide this support.



## Where there's a will, there's a way!

*“ The teachers at Aseema have shown me how to read as well as how to teach my granddaughter. ” - Tarfa's grandmother.*



Tarfa is a student at Pali Chimbai Municipal School. Tarfa's grandmother's eyes light up as she talks about her journey over the past year.

Initially when classes started online, Tarfa was irregular as she had sporadic access to a smartphone and she

required some support to watch the content that her teachers sent her. Tarfa's class teacher learnt that she was staying with her grandmother. It was her class teacher who got in touch with Tarfa's grandmother and guided her grandmother on how Tarfa could access her online classes. At first it took them time to adapt to this method of learning, but with constant guidance and support from the teachers she was able to guide Tarfa with confidence.

Tarfa's grandmother has learned to read and write in English. Even though Hindi is a language that is native to her, she says that Tarfa's Hindi and Marathi classes were an eye opener.

It is heartening to see Tarfa's grandmother's eyes sparkle with happiness as she reads from Tarfa's notes in English. She feels content and satisfied that she can teach her granddaughter even in this time of difficulty within the safe confines of her home.

Tarfa's grandmother is the oldest student in class but she has the same insatiable curiosity as the rest of the six-year olds.





## Building Safe Spaces

At Aseema, we strongly believe in creating safe and stimulating learning environments for our children. Over the last year we had the most daunting task of shifting learning to a virtual space without compromising on our philosophy. Our teachers and staff have quickly worked on harnessing the potential of technology and continue to engage the learners through Google Meet, WhatsApp and Google Classrooms. Simultaneously, our team has ensured the physical premises were maintained and looked after to welcome the children back to school when permitted.

*“ The classroom environment on the screen was a whole new experience for all of us. We now had to connect and communicate with our students on a device through WhatsApp. Initially I struggled and was unable to tell if the students understood the concepts. Now I feel very proud that many students are all set 10 minutes before time. Their eagerness to study and acceptance of the situation motivates me to work even harder. ”*

– Teacher

## Virtual classes

These were conducted through:

A : **Synchronous Approach** – Accessing live classes using apps such as Google Meet, WhatsApp and Google Classroom

B : **Asynchronous Approach** – Accessing classes anytime through WhatsApp



## Curriculum

We reviewed and restructured our curriculum and the goal was to ensure children mastered core concepts and skills, so that future learning is not compromised. Some changes to sequencing were also made to ensure that topics that are most amenable to online learning were covered at the start of the year.

“The first few days of the new academic year moved slowly as parents were trying to comprehend and assist with this new process. Parents have responded positively and have tried to do their best to support their children on this new journey. They follow what is being taught closely and how their child responds. They have been very supportive, sacrificing their own usage of the mobile phone for their children, helping them with their craft if they get stuck, taking videos of their child completing an assignment. It is heartening to watch many parents being patient and supportive of their child's education.”

—Teacher



Given that our students have very limited access to smartphones during the day, it was necessary for us to adopt an asynchronous learning model. Lessons were shared in the morning;

children had the flexibility to work through them at any time during the day. Assignments were submitted privately to teachers, and children could also reach out to teachers privately if they had queries. In this way, we ensured that children could access lessons without too much difficulty; and that they had opportunities for individualised support and interaction with teachers.

Lessons included a mix of audio, video content, reading material, and quizzes or assignments. Each lesson included at least one assignment so that children had the opportunity to apply new content and teachers got regular feedback on children's progress. In addition to academics, children also engaged in regular co-curricular lessons during the week.

“I have now learnt not to take things for granted and to value the small things in life. Most of us teachers would never have dreamt we would be conducting remote teaching classes. Our jobs and the way we conducted our classes, interacting with our students face to face were all taken for granted. I miss seeing my students' faces light up when a concept is grasped, or when they know the answer to my question. My dream to have all the students attend the online classes may be difficult to realise but at Aseema, every effort is being made to fulfil this dream by giving most of the students a mobile so that they can continue with their studies. Remote teaching has helped us enhance our computer skills to a great extent, something which might not have happened in normal times, more so as we were very comfortable with the normal way of teaching. The positive part of this pandemic is that it has made us take stock of our priorities, forced us to get creative. We have realised what is important for us and appreciate what we have. Things might not go the way we have planned but we can recreate plans to fulfil our dreams.”

—Assistant Teacher

## Back to School

Our schools shut down by mid-March on account of the pandemic and children did not return for the entire academic year. Our education team and other teams at Aseema quickly joined forces to ensure that the necessary training and infrastructure to implement online learning was in place. By mid-June 2020 everyone was ready to get “Back to School”, albeit online.

*Vaibhav Singh, a student of Standard VII from Kherwadi Municipal School was very sad when the online classes commenced in June 2020. His father was the sole earning member in the family and on account of the lockdown the family's income was nil. Since his father was unable to afford a smartphone Vaibhav had no access to his classes.*

*Initially, Vaibhav's parents thought that the lockdown would be temporary and school would begin soon. Vaibhav is a hardworking and diligent student. Not being able to attend classes online was very difficult for him. He was often very impatient with his parents and would also get very angry as he could not bear to miss out on studies. In desperation he would walk to a friend's house and check their phone. He felt very isolated and alone. The social workers who were in touch with his family knew his situation and in the coming months Vaibhav's name was on the list to receive a smartphone.*

*Subsequently when his parents received a call to collect his phone from school, Vaibhav was overjoyed. At first everything was very new to him, however, his teachers and the social workers helped him understand the use of the phone and the applications that would help him*



**Total No. of  
Smartphones Distributed**

**787**

**Total No. of  
Laptops Distributed**

**81**

**Total No. of  
Tablets Distributed**

**25**

*participate in the online classes.*

*In no time Vaibhav grasped ways to learn online and to submit his assignments on time. He was delighted to be able to interact with his classmates and teachers.*

*His mother rationed the time he is allowed to spend on the phone. She does not allow him to play games or watch movies on the phone. She says it is only for studying!*

*Over the past year we have been working to provide devices to students like Vaibhav, enabling them to access their online classes. The determination of students like him encouraged the teams to come together to make this task a possibility!*



## Community Work Centre

When the lockdown was announced our families in Mumbai and Igatpuri were staring ahead at 21 days of no jobs, no income and meagre savings to pull them through. Over the next couple of days our social workers reached out to our families to get a sense of their emotional and financial condition. The need of the hour was to keep them healthy and safe. In order to do this, we launched the 'Together We Can' campaign on 25th March 2020 to raise funds to provide ration kits to our families in Mumbai and Igatpuri.

Manisha Sakhale, a mother of two and a member of the School Management Committee at Aseema's Kherwadi Municipal School always has a smile on her face and confronts every challenge with a positive attitude. When the plan of distributing grocery kits to all our families was discussed along with our social workers, Manisha promised to support in any way possible. Her fellow community dwellers were battling twin burdens of surviving the deadly Covid-19 virus as well as battling hunger on a daily basis. She did not think twice before offering a section of her house for grocery distribution to the other families in Kherwadi, Bandra East. In the midst of the lockdown, the procurement, transportation and distribution of grocery kits was a nightmare and she offered to take delivery of packed hampers from the vendors and distribute them to families daily. She experienced an immense sense of joy



and happiness in helping her fellow parents receive the grocery kits in a timely and safe manner. She has offered her premises for easy distribution of kits on 2-3 occasions over the past year and with a smile she says that this was the least she could do for her fellow parents and for Aseema!

Over the past year, our social workers have been engaging with our communities through regular phone calls, video calls and interacting with them at the time of distributing grocery kits, stationery kits and devices. Through these engagements the social workers ensured the families were safe and healthy at all times.

**4 rounds of  
Hamper Distribution  
till March 2021**

**1,771 number of students  
impacted in each round**

**9,899 Number of people  
impacted in each round**





### Highlights of our Community Work Centre (CWC) team over the past year

- Conducted online admissions across our schools for the academic year 2020-21
- Undertook multiple surveys to understand the on ground situation of our families
- Undertook studies at various intervals to finalise number of devices required
- Tracked the distribution of groceries and devices to every family
- Monitored attendance for online classes using a new two-fold approach
- Conducted virtual meetings with parents and followed up on irregular attendance
- Conducted health camps for our students at Aseema's Bal Shaikshanik Kendra



“ It was very sad to see my children's education being affected during the lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak. The Aseema teachers and social workers did call us to understand about our children and they informed us about online classes. Three of my children go to the Kherwadi School and we had only one smartphone. When my husband started working the children could not use the phone. As a result, the social workers would call to find out why the children were not participating in their online classes. Realising our situation, the school provided us with a smartphone which they all use at different intervals now. Thank you to Aseema for helping my children continue their education even when schools are closed. I feel happy to see them learn from home. ”

—Ashita Yadav, Parent of 3 at Kherwadi Municipal School.





## Counselling

The counsellors, social workers and teachers came together to give students and parents the assurance that they were available for them to share their challenges and offer support during these incredibly challenging times. Through the WhatsApp groups created for each class, the counsellors spread the word to the children that they were now conducting tele-counselling on account of the closure of schools.

In the initial days, the students had a difficult time sharing their emotions and issues with the counsellor over a phone since their family was just around them. Through awareness sessions with parents, the counsellors helped them understand that in the absence of face-to-face sessions these calls were vital for their child's emotional wellbeing. Further, the counsellors requested them to give the children some privacy so that they could confidently express themselves during these calls.

During the course of the year our counsellors have seen that the children were eager to share information. Most of the sessions were check-ins to see how the students are coping, their overall well-being as well as the well-being of their family. Through these sessions, the counsellors helped the children work through family conflicts, loss, other emotional and behavioural concerns related to lack of being able to attend remote learning classes. Maintaining this constant connection with our students, we strived to give them the much-needed platform to voice their fears and also to understand their conflicting emotions and most importantly, to know that help was just a phone call away.

During the course of the year, the counsellors also conducted sessions for the Aseema staff as well as parents to help them cope with the stress and other emotional challenges arising as a result of the pandemic.

Through the social worker, the counsellors were informed of a boy who had left home after an unpleasant interaction in his community. The child felt humiliated during an interaction in the presence of his friends and as a knee-jerk reaction did not return home that

evening. An otherwise well-mannered, diligent and hardworking student, he wandered away from home and spent a couple of hours alone at a construction site in the vicinity. After finding him, his parents brought the incident to the notice of the social workers and teachers. They, in turn, referred him for counselling. The counsellors immediately assessed the risk factor and wellbeing in his case on account of the incident. After several sessions on a regular basis, the child slowly opened up. An otherwise good student, he felt demotivated and humiliated in front of his peers in that interaction and he wanted some time to himself to process the incident. However, during the counselling sessions, he mentioned that he was conscious of his actions at the time and was also careful about his safety. He realised, in hindsight, that his behaviour had made his parents worry.

As the counsellors progressed, the child began to share more freely. It was found that he is not only a sincere student but is also a responsible sibling and a diligent son. He cares greatly about his family and has a desire to work hard and succeed in life. Counselling exercises such as journaling were encouraged. Added responsibilities given by the class teachers also made him feel appreciated and kept him focused.





## Training

Over the past year, teachers have had to get accustomed to

“Can you hear me?”

“Am I audible?”

“Please keep yourself on mute.”

the newest additions to their usual classroom lingo.



“ I had never used the computer very much in my life, but thanks to Aseema now I have learned a lot about the different apps like Google Meet, how to download it and even google classroom. I enjoy making short videos for the students to help them learn concepts better.”  
— Marathi Teacher

The year 2020 will go down in history as the year of an Educational Revolution for teachers across the world. For our teachers, the pandemic acted as a catalyst to grow, reinvent and learn.

In order to assist and guide the teachers to adapt to the new structure of teaching, the IT teachers conducted trainings and workshops around the year. Teachers were taught how to edit videos, access Google Drive, share and edit documents on the drive, convert files to formats such as PDF, Word, Excel etc. Teachers had to juggle these sessions along with their daily lesson planning and classes during the day. Feedback was taken regularly from teachers on these sessions which further enabled the IT team to streamline the topics and improve their methods of teaching, thereby making the exercise fruitful for all.

## Beauty without Boundaries 2020 – Aseema's Online Art Auction

An online global art auction of our children's work, Beauty without Boundaries 2020, was held from October 12 – October 25. It was held in collaboration with Friends of Aseema, a USA based non-profit, dedicated to raise awareness and funds for Aseema. The art was hosted by Artrepreneur, an online membership platform for visual artists and creatives.

Some of the artwork that was auctioned was created by children during the pandemic, sitting in their little homes with assistance from their teachers on the phone. Eminent professionals, celebrities and business icons each donated 15-minute online conversations with the highest bidders.

**Number of original Aseema paintings auctioned – 21**

**Works of children aged between 10 – 17 years were also auctioned**

**The collection included watercolor landscapes, pen and ink drawings, mixed media and an assortment of brush paintings.**

**The auction raised substantial funds despite a Covid-19 depressed economy. It reached over 5 million people in 40 countries.**





#### Examinations results: School wise Toppers

Kherwadi Municipal School, Mumbai  
**Poornima Gupta secured 92.6%**

Santacruz (W) Municipal School, Mumbai  
**Gauri Thakur secured 89.6%**

Aseema Bal Shaikshanik Kendra, Igatpuri  
**Sagar Ughade secured 83.8%**

*“ I prepared really hard for my exam. Although in lockdown, I was able to understand online lectures as I always had the support of my teachers. I was surprised to see my results. I didn't expect to be the class topper. It's a very nice feeling and my mother's happiness is my reward. I will always cherish the memories of my school friends, the good times and the time when I attended the IPL match. ”*

*– Sagar Ughade, SSC Topper at Aseema Bal Shaikshanik Kendra, Igatpuri*

We are delighted to see our first batch of Standard XII students from Aseema's Bal Shaikshanik Kendra, Igatpuri successfully complete this milestone. They have paved the way for a better and brighter future for themselves and their families and have become an inspiration for our younger batches. Their achievement is a ray of hope for the villagers of the tiny wadis of Awalkhed, Igatpuri.

## SSC Results 2020-21

**Distinctions – 24**

**First Class – 46**

**Second Class – 49**

**100% results  
across 3 Aseema Schools**

## HSC Results 2020-21

**Distinctions – 24**

**First Class – 28**

**Second Class – 11**



## Volunteering & HR

We aspire to empower our teachers, social workers, staff and volunteers to provide holistic education. Over the past year, every member of every team has come together to lead change across our four schools. The work we do is challenging, gratifying, complex and essential. It keeps us grounded in the pursuit of building dreams and aspirations.

We are a team with a lot to say and keen ears to listen. We strongly believe in providing a mutual space for sharing, learning and consensual decision making.

### ***Disclosures as per the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013***

*Aseema has zero tolerance for sexual harassment at the workplace. We have adopted a policy of ensuring prevention, prohibition and redressal as per the provisions under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013. Further, we have not received any complaint of sexual harassment from January 2020 to December 2021.*



## Pen Pal project

*"It's nice to talk to someone  
through a letter again, Covid-19 is weird."*

– snippet from a letter from Ethan in  
USA to Arpita at Aseema, India.

We piloted a Pen Pal project  
between 8 Aseema students and 8  
students from USA wherein students  
exchanged letters with one another.  
It gave the students a platform not only  
to build on their language and writing  
skills but also to be able to engage,  
exchange and explore new ideas  
and perspectives.

We look forward to  
your continued support.

Together we can  
continue providing our children  
with high quality,  
value based education.



## Donations

### Monetary Donations

Almighty Auto Ancillary Pvt. Ltd.  
 Ariez Kothavala Memorial Trust  
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 United Way of Mumbai  
 Wipro Cares

### Donations in Kind

Artrepneur  
 BNP Paribas India  
 Nivea India Pvt. Ltd.  
 Societe Generale  
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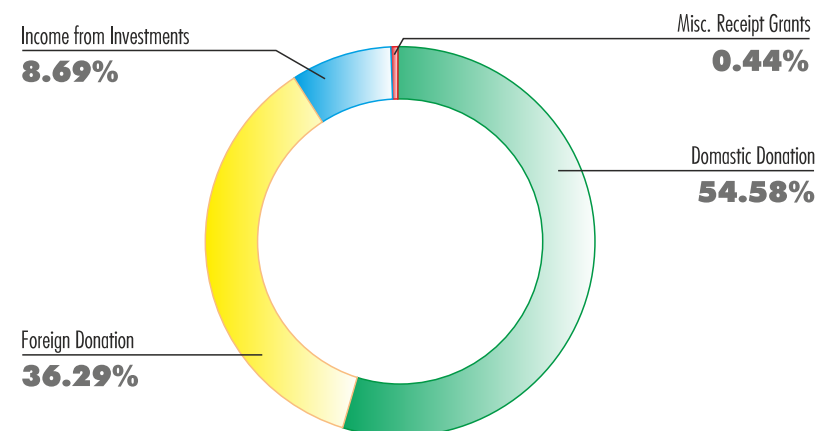
### Exhibition Hosts

Cipla Foundation  
 Futuristic Expo  
 International Justice Mission  
 Spark by Archana Foundation

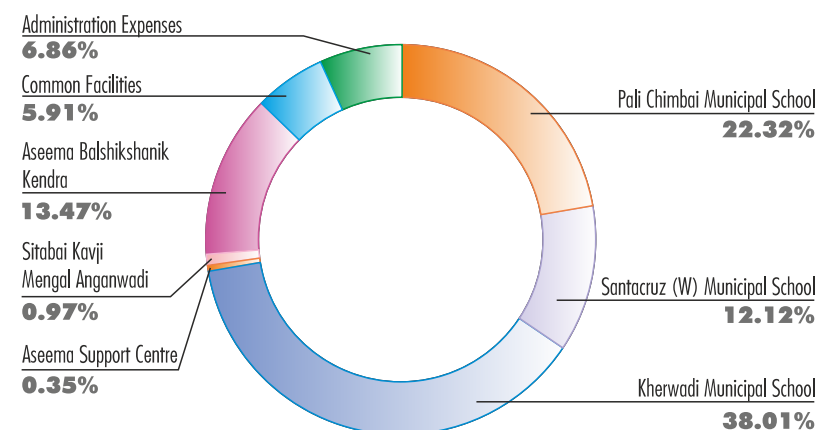
### Others

Aspire Designs  
 Friends of Aseema  
 Mehli Mehta Music Foundation  
 Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai  
 Room 13 International  
 Sri Aurobindo Society  
 The New Work Centre for Women

## Donation in %



## Fund Utilisation in %



We also extend our sincere gratitude to all our individual donors and well-wishers who have contributed so generously to Aseema over the past year.



Realise human potential through quality education

**Aseema Charitable Trust**

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