

Transformation of Schools in Raidih and Shikaripara blocks, Jharkhand



PROJECT REPORT 2016-17 TO 2020

IN COLLABORATION WITH PRADAN AND TRI

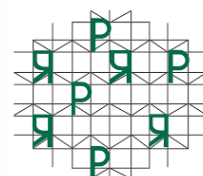
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Project Overview

Problem

The current system of learning is based on the premise that knowledge can be transferred. This knowledge is encased in text books, the reproduction of which through tests and examinations is an acknowledgment of an individual's understanding. The existing educational governance system, established to legitimize this transfer of knowledge is characterised by centrally-set, predefined standards for defining learning. This mistaken idea of what education is and how it can be achieved seems to be the root problem in mainstream education today. The question staring at us is whether what we want from education is for our children to learn by rote and pass their examinations or is there a need of equipping them to be able to build their capabilities in order to be able to lead a meaningful life. In an increasingly complex scenario which is constantly changing, from being agrarian to industrial to the present information age, it becomes important that the children are able to adapt themselves to the changes around them and acquire the knowledge required to function effectively. This not only calls for better livelihood opportunities but rather for them to develop as individuals in themselves and of use to the society around which in turn will build a better village and a better world.

The kind of quality education required for this kind of a learning system for the children is very dependent on the demographics of the child. In the world today, this further perpetuates inequality. This can be especially seen in the public schooling system which is no longer attended by all but only by the most marginalised communities

which has led to its steady systemic decline. The lack of investment and the constant neglect of these schools and the communities have led to a widening gap and mistrust between the school and the community.

Education situation in Jharkhand

Government schools in India account for 63 % of enrolment in elementary education. The challenge for universalisation of elementary education is most severe in the educationally backward states, especially among the tribal populations. The relatively new and small state of Jharkhand was created by bifurcation of the southern part of erstwhile Bihar in 2000. Rich in minerals and natural resources, the state is largely rural.

The impetus on education reinforced with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has influenced enrolment to a substantial extent and is also reflected in lowering child labour across the country over time.

Jharkhand is also moving in the same direction. Nevertheless, it continues to be among the worst states along with Bihar in terms of the educational development index (EDI) calculated by NUEPA (DISE, 2011-12).



Historically, India's education policy focused primarily on school-based inputs. Between 2000 and 2011, the Government of India increased its financial allocation to elementary education by six times, yet student learning levels did not improve commensurately. Notwithstanding their scale and importance in developing the human resources of the nation, these schools are overwhelmed by myriad problems resulting in various issues. Some of the leading issues are:

- High level of dropouts and poor attendance in schools
- Poor student learning levels
- Poor and mediocre infrastructure
- Lack of teachers
- Low teacher motivation and dedication
- Skewed teacher pupil ratio
- Unfriendly learning environments that isn't inclusive
- Deficient trust among communities whose children attend these schools

At present, with more and more children attending educational institutions and the centralization of its governance, the role of community in the education system has been increasingly restricted. The management of such a vast system has resulted in standardization of every aspect from uniform budget allocation, standardized classroom infrastructure, same mid day meals across the state and in some cases across the country. This has further completely alienated the community from the decision making process and the gap widens even more when it comes to what children need to learn. Communities, largely seen as being illiterate, are perceived as being incapable of contributing to the learning of the children.

However, looking at education and learning from a broader perspective, makes it obvious that a rich source of local traditions, values, experiences, perspectives and ideas gets excluded from the schooling system by not involving local communities in the learning process. The role of the community is being increasingly recognised around the world where it is being understood that a conducive environment is essential for the wellbeing of the child and for them to learn.

Recognising the importance of communities in general and specifically that of the women who as mothers, the project to improve the Primary education was conceived in the backdrop of the work that had gone into the economic empowerment of the rural women, mainly through the formation of self help groups and engagement with economic activities to enhance their earnings. It was felt that the development of the capacities of the women through the community collectives; the impact of which could be seen in the context of their livelihood, could be leveraged to improve and impact other components of development such as education which would then ultimately translate into true empowerment for them. It was against this backdrop that TRIF initiated this project. They sought to create a platform where the Field NGOs (FNGO¹) could partner with well-established Thematic NGOs (TNGO²) to leverage their presence in the area and their work with the women, to enable their children access to quality education

Implementation of the project

The project was implemented as part of the pilot initiative of PRADAN-TRI mission in 12 pilot blocks across 6 states to bring about a transformative impact in the lives of women and children around multiple well being dimensions of which education was one. This would be done in partnership with thematic resource organisations in the various

¹FNGO- Field NGOs working and mobilizing communities into collectives/Self-help groups at the grassroot level

²TNGO - Thematic NGOs working in the specific thematic area and having knowledge of the domain such as education

sectors. The thematic NGOs formed the Education Sector Council, a platform created for cross learning among the organisations. This council was responsible for creating the framework for the implementation of the project by setting the agenda, defining the outcomes, carving out strategies etc. It was understood that there would be a common framework based on which every organization would implement according to their own experiences and plan. The issues and challenges would be shared and solutions found together.

Recognizing the potential of a collaboration that takes advantage of PRADAN's (FNGO) extensive work with federation of SHGs in rural areas and Prajayatna's (TNGO) experiences of working with community based structures towards bringing about systemic impact on public education (in rural areas); the two organizations came together in a joint initiative. A need was felt to leverage the development of the capacities of the women in the context of their livelihood to take charge and be drivers of the change that they desired to see in the education that their children received. The project was implemented in the two blocks of Raidih and Shikaripara blocks in Gumla and Dumka districts of Jharkhand State.

The objective of the intervention was to ensure the transformation of the government schools through the involvement of the community in the schools and thereby achieve the goal of ensuring quality education for an inclusive and equitable society

In order to achieve the goal and objective, Prajayatna focused on building an ecosystem for a systemic change through the engagement of the communities with the school and support the development of education. The following strategies and pathways were developed jointly in the Education Sector Council:

- **Enhance Parent-Child Interactions**
- **Strengthen Parent-School Engagement**

- **Strengthen local communities' engagement with School**
- **Building and sustaining local ecosystem for supporting education**
- **Enhancing Teacher motivation and Capacities**
- **Strengthen Education System (Academic, Governance, Administration)**

Success criteria

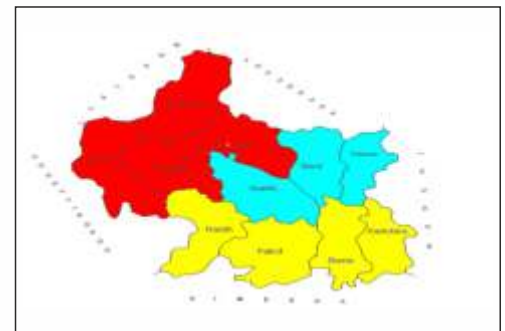
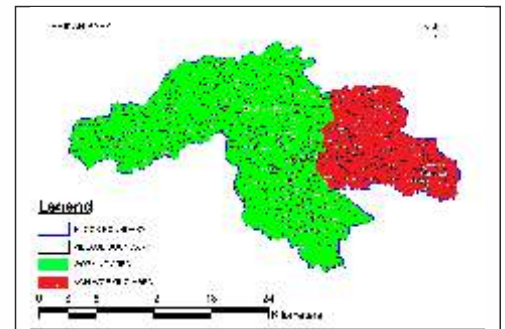
- **The community takes ownership for the development of school by taking responsibility and ensuring accountability.**
- **Community champions developed who are willing to engage and ensure the wellbeing of the children**
- **There is a normative behaviour change among the community brought about by impacting the perspective of the women's collectives.**
- **Shared responsibility and accountability of community**

The project was implemented by keeping the lack of ownership and governance in government schools in mind. The idea was to address the issue of lack of quality in the public schooling system by ensuring community involvement through a decentralized approach to educational governance. For this, the project worked with the community structures, here represented by the women SHGs, Block Level Federations and Village Organizations, being the drivers of the change, alongwith the other major stakeholders being the parents, the school structures such as the School Management Committee and the elected representatives of the community – the Gram Panchayat, ensuring that there is better delivery of services and children are learning in the schools. Simultaneously efforts would be made to ensure that the capacities of teachers were built in order to enable them to be able to engage the children in effective classroom processes. Through these processes, a suitable environment that will support in developing schools in a holistic manner would be created.

Implementation of the processes and activities

Reach of the project

The MoU was made for the project to be implemented in Raidih block of Gumla district, Jharkhand State and Deosar block of Singrauli district, Madhya Pradesh State, mid 2016 and processes effectively began in late 2016. The design of the project was such that Prajayatna would work with the structures that had already been prepared by PRADAN. In Deosar, it was seen that the women collectives were not active nor prepared for this kind of an intervention. Deosar was replaced with Shikaripara of Dumka towards the end of 2017 through a joint decision of Prajayatna and PRADAN. Work started in Shikaripara from January 2018. Due to the pandemic and the following lockdown, the planned processes and capacity building was stopped from March 2020. Hence the work has effectively been implemented for 4.5 years in Raidih block and 3 years in Shikaripara block.



Sl.No.	Block and district	No. of clusters	GP Covered	Schools Covered	No. of children reached (5-11 yrs)	VO Covered	No of ECV
1	Raidih, Gumla	3 Clusters – Birkera, Tudurma, Raidih		104	6231	52	77
2	Shikaripara, Dumka	3 Clusters – Adhikar, Asha Kiran, Ekjut	13	103	5925	35	62
	Total		26	207	12156	87	139

Five pathways were identified to reach the outcomes. They were :

1. Enhance parent-child interactions
2. Enhance parent-teacher, Parent-school interactions
3. Strengthen local communities' engagement with School and building and sustaining local ecosystem for supporting education
4. Enhance teacher capacities
5. Strengthen Education System

The processes were designed along these pathways further, to bring about engagement between the various stakeholders. With the aim of building the capacities of the community structures such as the Village Organisations of the women and the institutional structures of the School Management

Committees, in order to create a systemic change, the VOs and the Education Change vectors along with the School Management Committees have been strengthened through different activities in order to create an ecosystem which has created a demand for better delivery of services from the schools with enhanced accountability and transparency. Focus has been also on creating an environment for the parents to engage with their children within the framework of the school. This has enhanced the understanding of the parents with regard to the children in the context of their education. The collaboration among the various stakeholders including the teachers has supported the development of the school with education becoming a priority in the community. This would have a far-reaching impact on the quality of the

school and thereby the learning of the children.

The main activities under the various pathways are as follows:

1. Enhance parent-child interactions

- **Perspective and capacity building of Women's Collectives (VOs and Federation members)**

Gram Sangathan or Village Organization (VO) is a second level tier of Self help groups (SHGs) and is comprised of 8 to 10 SHGs within one or two villages consisting of the households existing in that particular revenue village. Three members – *Adhyaksh*, *Koshadhyaksh* and *Sachiv* – of all the SHGs that together form the VO, are its members and represent the interests of the *didis (sisters)* in this body. Since the women were core to the reform of education in their villages, it was necessary to orient them and enable them to develop a perspective on education and realize the need for them to take responsibility for

bringing about a change. Prajayatna facilitated workshops and trainings in Gumla and Shikaripara blocks for the VO members to enable them to understand education and its various nuances in the context of their children getting quality education. In order to engage with the issue, there was a need for them to delve deep into the issue and understand the various dimensions in their context. **This has resulted in education being an agenda of discussion in their regular meetings in all the tiers of their structure ranging from the SHG at the hamlet level to the VOs at the village level to the Cluster level Federation (CLF) and Block level Federations (BLF) as well.**

142 such organized processes have been facilitated apart from the discussions facilitated by the ECV in their SHG and VO meetings in a more informal manner. This has resulted in activating 62 VOs out of 80 VOs (60%) being active in the context of education



● Education Change Vectors

The Village Organizations meet once a month to discuss the status of their SHGs. Apart from the status of the structures, the main agenda of the VOs is also to ensure development of their village. In the course of the work with the VOs, it was decided that there was a need for a champion from one amongst them who would work and advocate for education on their behalf as their representative known as the **Education Change Vector**. These representatives were selected by the members of the VOs. These ECVs would be able to share and discuss school related issues and come out with a common vision for their school and children.

Training of ECV

The ECVs were selected by the VOs mainly though at times by the CLF/BLF in some instances. These ECV were in need of training in order to be able to support the cause of education in their areas. Prajayatna facilitated a number of residential trainings for Education Change Vectors in Dumka and Gumla districts respectively. The training was basically designed to build the capacities of the ECV and equip them with content and skills in the context of education, that were required for them to play their role more effectively and efficiently in the community. This supported in creating a conducive ecosystem for the children. The training consisted of various aspects of education ranging from the need and use of education to the structure of the education department and the need for community structures like SMC and GP, etc.

ECVs and VOs: The VOs have ensured that every village has an 'education change didi' (ECV) to advocate on their behalf on education. Since the role does not provide any direct monetary benefit, preparing the ECVs needed a number of trainings and

hand holding support. Eventually, VOs and ECVs have extended the scope of education and have made it a part of the discussion in their meetings with SHGs, VOs or CLFs. These institutions visit the schools regularly and support the schools if there is any need. They have ensured that every child is in school and thereby worked on the enrolment of children and their retention and that they complete schooling. Additionally, by regular discussions in their meetings, they have contributed towards changing the behaviour of parents who did not pay much attention to their children and now being seen to be more conscious about what and how their children are doing in school and at home. The parents are visiting the schools more often to enquire about the child. **There is more interest being evinced in the children which has made a difference both in the child and in the school.**

These processes have seen the development of ECV as a confident person who has developed her own identity. She is aware of the issues in the school, the role the different structures in the development of the school and her role in the community to ensure a better future for the children. Yet this needs to be further embedded in the existing community structure of the women in order to make the role a more sustainable one.

There are 139 ECVs who have been selected by the women to represent them of which 86 are active to represent them of which 86 are active



Shobha didi, ECV, raises awareness and attempts to save school from merger

Lakda kona Tola of Kobja Panchayat is situated approximately 25 km from Raidih block of Gumla district in Jharkhand. The Panchayat has a total of 13 schools and anganwadis. It is these educational institutions where most of the children in the panchayat study. Almost all of these schools lack some of the basic facilities such as toilets and boundary walls. The teachers in many schools are not punctual in the schools and the community, which is poor and dependent on agriculture and daily wage labor work for its livelihood, is mostly unaware of their right to quality education.

When Prajayatna started working in the area, it held an orientation for the members of the village organisations (women's groups) - the Kobja Gram Sangathan and there was a lot of discussion around education and their role in it. Shobha didi, who is a

member of this Gram Sangathan and whose children study in the local schools, was chosen to become the Education Change Vector didi from her Gram Sangathan. She was excited to hear about the possibilities of improving the educational situation of her area through community participation and wanted to play an active role in this.

She participated in the three day long residential ECV training in which she came to know in detail the structure of the education department, concept of School Management Committees (including its roles and responsibilities) and the idea of community led school development. After this training, Shobha didi has regularly raised issues related to education and schools in the weekly meetings of her SHG and also in monthly meetings of her Gram Sangathan. Through these meetings,



she has been instrumental in raising the awareness regarding education in her community and has started meeting teachers of the schools, requesting them to teach properly. She has also been instrumental in getting the SMC meetings organized in the schools.

After she raised school issues in her Gram Sangathan meetings, it was decided that a few chart papers depicting the rights and responsibilities of the community in schools will be permanently displayed in the Sangathan's local office.

One of the problems in Jharkhand with the scattered population, is that many of the schools do not have adequate number of children because of which a number of them were merged with the neighbouring bigger school. PS Lakda kona is one such school. It has only 17 children enrolled in it and has a single teacher Anita Kujur who teaches these children. The school is located right in the middle of the forest and is highly inaccessible. If this school got merged, the children would have to cross forests and hills to reach the next nearest school. Shobha didi held meetings with the local community members and made them aware of the problem and got them to come together and write an application to the Block Education Officer, requesting him not to merge this school.

She also organized a Sikho Sikhao process in this school with the help of Prajayatna. The idea was not only to make community members interested in the education of their children but also to draw their attention to the problem of the school getting merged. There were a total of 32 participants in the activity.



Though a lot of efforts were made to stall the merger, the department went ahead and merged the school with the neighbouring school which was located 1.5 - 2 km away. Initially the children were very irregular to school as they found it difficult to walk all the way. Shobha didi then called for a meeting of all the SHG women and spoke to them about the issue and the need to send the children regularly to school despite the hardship. The women then made sure that the children attended the school regularly.

Shobha didi sees her role as an ECV as extremely important for changing the educational conditions of her Panchayat and says that she is going to give it her all for improving the conditions of these schools.

Sukhmati Devi: Journey from a social outcast to an inspiring ECV

50-year-old Sukhmati Devi was branded as a witch by people of Khursuta Gaon, a village which is 26 km from the Raidih block head-quarter of Gumla district, Jharkhand. The violence and accusations against Sukhmati began in 2014 and it continued for almost 3 years. Villagers started keeping a distance from her. Even bringing water from the well was never easy to her. If somebody saw her coming to the well, they ran away without taking water and went back to the well once Sukhmati finished her work. Similarly, while going to the market for purchasing vegetables etc, people used to change their direction once they saw her coming in their path.

Notwithstanding that, one person along with a priest provoked the villagers and members of SHGs to remove her from the group. Few members of SHG left the group in protest and the group became inactive for some time. Her problem did not end here. A person from the same village attacked her on the suspicion that she is a dayan or witch and threatened her to kick her out of the village. The attack on the Sukhmati was one of thousands of witch hunts that take place in India. More than 2,500 persons have been chased, tortured and killed in such hunts between 2000 and 2016, according to India's National Crime Records Bureau.

Sukhmati's husband along with her brother-in-law took revenge by beating up the person in retaliation. Consequently, they filed a case against Sukhmati's husband. However, the case was closed on their mutual agreement. Thereafter, the community had a number of meetings to solve this issue and finally one fine day decided that she would no longer be called a witch.

Sukhmathi then rejoined the SHG and started work as an accountant there. Though not called a witch, many people still had a suspicious look for her. Sukhmati, was then chosen as the Education Change Vector (ECV) in her village to ensure enrolment, attendance and quality education in the school. She participated in meetings and trainings from Prajayatna and department and encouraged the women in her SHG, VO meetings to enroll their children and complete their schooling for a better future.

It is now seen that women listen to her and follow her suggestions on various issues including education of their children. She commands more respect and recognition after becoming ECV. She feels good and happy with the change in this short period of time. Her continuous visits and meetings with community and schools resulted in repairing of toilet and windows at P.S. Khursuta. There has been an increase in the attendance of children in the school. Earlier the average attendance was 20-22 (66%) out of 32 enrolled children. Now, 30-31 (96%) children can be seen at any time learning in the school. This has been largely due to the efforts of Sukhmati that this has been achieved.

In 2001, the Jharkhand government passed the Dayan Pratha (Prevention of Witch Practices) Act to protect women from inhumane treatment and give victims legal recourse to abuse. Still, witch-hunting is a blot on Jharkhand, which ranks 26th out of 29 states, in terms of literacy, and has consistently ranked first in the number of witch-hunting cases. Communities have to take charge and begin a community-led action, aimed at educating people and changing their beliefs and attitudes.



● Seekho Sikhao

Seekho Sikhao consisted of activities which the parents and children could do together and support the school in terms of creation of learning materials and at the same time enhance the creativity in children and their parents through various art and other activities.

The objective of the Seekho Sikhao process was to get the parents involved in the learning activities of the children and in this context interact with their children. In marginalised regions like Gumla and Dumka where the parents find it difficult to spend quality time with their children in their struggle of living and life, the involvement of the parents in such activities becomes important as it helps them understand the role the school plays in the lives of their children. The specific objective behind the workshop was to also enable the parents by giving them an opportunity to showcase their skills as well. With least importance given to native knowledge/ skills and priority given to textbook knowledge only, thereby creating a sense of ignorance among them, it was seen as important to create a space for the parents to participate in the learning process of the children.

The initial meetings brought the parents and teachers together to engage with each other and create some materials together with the children. These sessions have made the teachers appreciate the community and children and vice versa. It was a good experience which brought them together and work and play together. The parents were able to see what their children were doing in school. This gave the parents confidence to visit the school and talk with the teachers. That in itself was an achievement as the community always feel inferior to the teachers, especially if the teachers are not from their communities (the regular teachers and not the para teachers) as they feel that education gives the teachers a respectability which they lack. Here the objective was also to ensure that the





community is able to engage and contribute to the learning of the school and the children. It was a forum for the teachers to share about the learning progress of the children and for the parents to understand their children within the framework of the school. In the process, teaching learning materials were created alongwith other activities needed to engage both the community and the teachers and last but not least the children.

These activities were then converted to sessions where the parents were given information about the things that they could do with the children in a concerted manner. More than what they could do, just the discussion about the children and what was important for the children made them to do some things for their children more consciously. Charts were given to the parents to remind them of the possibilities in a pictorial manner in order to enhance the parent – child engagement. The charts were designed with various tasks and activities that the parents could do with their children such as setting up of a learning corner, teaching a new traditional skill, discussion about the history of the family, etc. This was given to every family in all the schools in Raidih and Shikaripara.

The ECVs have conducted many of these events and conducted these meetings in the community. They have been trained and given flip charts to be able to conduct these meetings in the school. For eg, 15 ECV in Shikaripara have facilitated these processes in the school. They also conduct these meetings in the VOs during their meetings as well. They also participate in some of the SHG members and do the same. They have also been trained to participate in the SMC meetings and enable them to discuss pertinent issues for the development of the school. This also has been done through capacity building

workshops and by equipping them with information and materials (in the form of flip charts) to participate meaningfully in the SMC meetings.

These kinds of activities have helped them to cross the bridge (for both community and teachers). It also has made the teachers go beyond preaching at them to send their children to school to actually considering them as partners and engaging in a constructive manner with them.

All these processes were held in all the 207 schools in Raidih and Shikaripara.

कड़वी और नील सुनाना और सुनना, ज्ञानिय एवं पारिवाहिक सम्बन्धों में

सुख भी सिखा हुआ पीयाद पर विपन्न जन्मे हैं

पियाद के नाम और उम

सीखो सिखाओ प्रजायतन We Learn, We Live
 नाम : _____
 पता : _____
 फोन : _____

विद्यालयों का संरक्ष

बच्चों के सीखने का सामान एक जगह होना

विद्यार्थियों पर बात-चित करना (विद्यालय, घरेलू, खेल)

अपने विद्यालयों की देख-रेख

बच्चों को समय, दिन और तारीख बताना

विद्यालय जाकर बच्चों की शिक्षा बताने का देखना

साफ-उपजाऊँ

बड़े बच्चों को विद्यालय की छोटे का आदर करने और प्यार दे

बूढ़-कर्मियों को सुनिश्चित करना

विद्यार्थियों और समय के विद्यालय मेकना

बच्चों को अपने साथ बाजार, मेला, सामाजिक जमावड़े, इत्यादि जगह पर ले जाना और उनसे परिचित कराना

बच्चों की बात और उनकी अभिव्यक्ति को ध्यान पूर्वक सुनना और उनके पूर्वक अपनी बात करना

विद्यालय में जो चीजा हैं उनको अपने आस पास से जोड़ना जैसे, आवाज, रंग, संख्या इत्यादि

लक्ष्य लक्ष्यी दोनों को बराबर नीला

अपने पारिवाहिक हुनर को बच्चों को सिखाना जैसे - धरिय, पंजा, लक्ष्मी के काम

2. Enhance parent-teacher, Parent-school interactions

- **Collection of the Local Education Governance Data (LEGD)**

This involved a block wide collection of school data aimed at giving actual status of each school with respect to infrastructure, enrolment, teacher availability and issues affecting the school adversely, which at a later stage becomes the tool for Prajayatna to engage with the communities on a dialogue to start improving schools and in interacting with functionaries of the Gram Panchayats and the Department of Education on the school situation.

LEGD was collected from all the 207 schools across both the blocks.



- **Shikshan Gram Sabhas**

The **Shikshan Gram Sabha** has helped in identifying issues that the school is facing and engage the communities like the parents, SMCs and the members of the SHGs. This has led to information dissemination about the various aspects of the school alongwith the utilization of fund in developmental activities of the school and the formation of the School Development Plan. The VO members played a major role in the organising and mobilising the communities for these meetings. Through the meetings they also understood the role that they had to play in the development of the schools.

Impact has been seen in the form of demand of by community for teachers and other facilities in schools like availability of basic amenities and better quality of education for the children. Parents, community and SMC together have got community members to volunteer as teachers in their schools through their own collective efforts. Some have got teachers deputed to their schools whereas some has even transferred the non-performing teachers out of their schools as well.

For instance, parents, ECV and members of SMC in PS Sarangsore sent several application demanding for a change in the head teacher who always came drunk to school, thus affecting the lives of the children. After receiving no response from the department, the parents, ECV, and members of SMC alongwith the children visited the Block Education Officer in Raidih and requested him to change the



teacher without further delay. The teacher was transferred in one month's notice and a new teacher given to the school. Similarly, parents, ECV and members of SMC at PS Mahuatoli visited the District and block offices to get a teacher deputed and succeeded. 15 such schools in Raidih has got teachers due to the efforts of the community. In a State, where there is huge vacancy in terms of teachers, these are not small feats.

These has contributed towards the development of basic infrastructure in terms of making water available by digging of wells, making available drinking water for the children in their school. The community has contributed in the form for money and labour in fencing schools with barbed wire, bamboos for the safety of their children, etc.

For eg., Parents alongwith members of SMC at PS Bakaspur collected INR 100/- each for fencing

school with barbed wire as there was no fund available in the Panchayat. Besides, parents have realised the need for the children to learn in an environment which is more child friendly and attractive. Gardens have been planted in many of the schools and they have made the schools look more inviting for the children. The parents make sure that the schools are maintained well. The teachers are more accountable to the schools. Their timings have improved and there are less complaints now when it comes to the timings of the teachers, quality of MDM etc.

This has made the community develop a vision for their school together which may not be as holistic as one would think but it has made the community rethink about what they expect from the school and has made them engage in a manner which contributes to the larger vision.

The Shikshan Gram Sabha has been followed up at the school. The Shikshan Gram Sabha should be institutionalised as the Parents meeting to be held at the beginning of every school year to form the annual SDP.

The Shikshan Gram Sabhas have been conducted in all the 207 schools and followed up through Parents meetings at the school level.



Shikshana Gram Sabha - Community meeting in Khirakhand village

This village is situated near the block headquarters and belongs to Raidih Gram Panchayat. The school has an enrollment of 120 children with 2 teachers. The meeting was organised by the team members of Prajayatna in consultation with the Headteacher and the SMC members. The other stakeholders were then invited for the meeting by the Headteacher / teachers, SMC and Prajayatna as well. There were 36 participants in all.

In this meeting, the discussion was initiated with a question on the condition of their schools and what their expectation was from the school. In this context, the relevant data from the LEGD was presented in the form of a fact sheet which is pictorial as well. Many issues such as the attendance, lack of infrastructure, the status of the school management committee, lack of teachers etc were discussed. With the school being located on the main road which connected Raidih and Bansdih, one of the main issues which came to the fore was the need for a compound. The headmaster who had been there for the past 25 years had taken initiative to get it sanctioned from the Department of Education/Panchayat Raj but had remained unsuccessful in his efforts. Attendance of the children was another issue he had not been able to resolve.

In the meeting, these issues were facilitated and kept before the community by Prajayatna. Everyone felt the need for a compound and decided to go ahead and do something on their own. A decision was taken to raise money from the community and make a fence around the school till a compound was sanctioned from the Department. The SMC members took the responsibility to raise resources in the community. The fund was initiated with some of the participants contributing on the spot. The headteacher pledged to contribute some amount if

the community contributed as well. Seeing this the remaining teachers said that they would also contribute depending on the shortfall in the collection. One of the members from the community offered to complete the fencing along with the Headmaster.

After the meeting, the parents of every enrolled child contributed Rs. 100 each. Approx Rs. 5000 was collected with the shortfall of Rs. 5000 being contributed by the headteacher. The community then got together and did shramadhan and made the fence for the school.

With regard to the issue of attendance of the children, the VO members present in the meeting took responsibility to take these discussions to their SHG and VO meetings and there was a marked improvement in the school attendance.



A community well in the true spirit!

Mrs. Airen Lakda has her home in Katararu and is an active member of the local Self Help Group created by PRADAN in the village. After Prajayatna did meetings with the local Village Organization, she was selected to work as Education Change Vector in the village for the betterment of the school. She had attended the trainings organized by Prajayatna for ECVs after which she started visiting the school on a regular basis and started interacting with the teachers and the community in order to find out the issues faced by the school and how to solve them.

When Prajayatna organized a Shikshan Gram Sabha in March 2018 in the school, she played an important role in bringing different stakeholders to the meeting. During the meeting, one of the issues that was raised was the lack of accessible drinking water facilities in the school's vicinity. The school was dependent on a well approximately 400 meters away for all its water needs – both in the kitchen and for drinking. Fetching the water from such a distance was a difficult task and the students had also to be involved in it on a daily basis. This resulted in the wastage of a lot of learning time for the children.

In the meeting, it was decided that the community members would work together and dig a well at a nearby place through voluntary labor. A piece of land was identified nearby for digging the well. However, there was another problem as the identified land belonged to another lady Savitri Devi, who was initially reluctant in letting a public well be dug on her private land. However, during the meeting she was convinced by other people that the well would benefit the school immensely to which she and her husband agreed.

The Completed Well

The work on digging the well started within three days of the meeting and it was completed within 4 days of it being started. During this season, the villagers are occupied with the collection of the Mahua flowers, which helps them earn their livelihood, for which they go to the nearby forests. Since the collection happens during the first part of the day, the work on the well was done mostly during the second half of the day. Around 25 male and 30 female members of the village contributed their time and labor for this work which involved not only digging the well, but also bringing stones and cement from other places to fence it.

Sri Dilip Minj, head teacher of the school, spent Rs. 3100 from his own pocket for procuring stones and cement in this work. The new well is just 50 meters away from the school and is located near a small rivulet. This has not just decreased the distance of availability of water for the school, but has also ensured a perennial, round-the-year supply of pure, drinking water.



Construction of school boundary through Panchayat Fund

Salkaya is a small village in Raidih Block in Gumla District of Jharkhand State. It comes under Kondra Panchayat and is located 41 km towards the south of the district headquarters of Gumla. A New Upgraded Middle School is established in Salkaya village which is situated adjacent to the main road. A total of 136 children are enrolled in this school.

The school has no boundary and with it being situated on the main road, is rife with danger of the possibilities of any of the school teachers or children having an accident. In lieu of this, a Shikshan Gram Sabha (SGS) meeting was organised by Prajayatna in the village to bring all stakeholders including the parents, teachers, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), members of SMC together and discuss the various issues being faced by the school alongwith that of the lack of the boundary wall. A total of 35 participants gathered to discuss the issues in the school.

The Prajayatna facilitator discussed the issue of the boundary wall for the safety of the school children. Parents too were seen to be concerned about their wards' safety. One of the parent said, "Government school is the only option for poor people like us. We are worried about our children's safety as the heavy traffic poses a serious threat to our children. Hopefully the department will do something for the safety of our children in the school". The teacher further mentioned the issue of the damaged hand-pump due to which there was a problem of drinking water. It was decided in the meeting that the teachers and the members of School Management Committee (SMC) would sit together and draft an application for the construction of boundary wall and get the hand-pump repaired without further delay.

It is in that context, the Prajayatna facilitator explained the importance and roles and responsibilities of SMC members in the meeting. The SMC members resolved to sit for regular monthly meetings and make the School Development Plan and ensure its implementation.

Accordingly, the teachers and the SMC members drafted an application and submitted it to the concerned Mukhiya and requested the Gram Panchayat to do the needful on a priority basis. The construction of boundary wall was done using the Panchayat fund which took six months to complete. The total cost of the work was INR 2,39,000/- only.

The school fencing has created a safe learning environment for the children and enables them to play peacefully in the compound of the school without any disturbance. The efforts of all the stakeholders helped in creating a safe and peaceful environment for the children.

3. Strengthen local communities' engagement with School and building and sustaining local ecosystem for supporting education

- **Children's Learning and Cultural Centres (CLCC)**

The concept of the CLCC lies in the fact that the parents in regions like Shikaripara and Raidih spend most of their time in managing their livelihood. As a result, it becomes difficult for them to spend quality time in the education of their children leading to increase in children dropping out of school. It is also seen that there is a lack of a learning environment for the children in the village. Hence at times, in the evenings after school, the children are left to their own devices. Many of the children do not have opportunities or exposure for any activity apart from what is done at school.

The need for the CLCC had been articulated by the members of the VO as it was felt that there was a need of a space for the children to be at which would support their learning needs which at times was not being met with at their homes. It is in this context, the need of CLCC arises which gives an opportunity to the children to engage in various



learning processes including games after schools.

The VO/ECVs manage the centres and the local youth volunteers have been trained to run the centre on a daily basis. They have engaged with the children after school hours, with various activities which has increased the children's interest in learning. Though the centres have seen a good response from the children and the community, it is seen that these centres are difficult to be sustained by the community without monetary and technical support for the youth to enable them to engage with the centre on a long term basis.





● Youth training

Youth from the villages were selected by the SHGs and VO members to run the CLCC. Trainings have been conducted for these youth volunteers to enable them to run these centres effectively. These workshops consisted of activities like story-telling, story writing, video show, puppet making, mask making, art and craft etc. It enhanced their skills of managing and working with children. The aim of these trainings were to prepare them to become facilitators in the Community Learning and Cultural Centre (CLCC) and engage the children effectively. Apart from the training, regular planning is done with them to plan the schedule and activities in the Centre,

6 such centres in Raidih and 4 centres in Shikaripara has thus been initiated. Each centre has 3-4 youth volunteers managing the Centres with the women supporting them, though the ultimate responsibility of the CLCC would be that of the respective VOs and ECV.

● School Community events

Many parents failing to enrol their children at the appropriate time due to lack of knowledge on the timing of the academic session of the school, teachers get ready to enrol each and every child in the village to achieve the goal of universal education for all by the government.

Numerous enrolment campaigns with the help of parents, teachers, members of SMC and VO have been conducted where the enrolment campaign is designed to sensitize parents on the enrolment of their children, various services including education provided in the government school and the need of education for the growth and development of their children. It also aimed to encourage and engage the key stakeholders including parents and SMC members to be part of the efforts to ensure quality education to the children in their own villages.

Besides, Prajayatna facilitated summer camps both in Shikaripara and Raidih blocks. The venue for the summer camps was where the CLCCs were located. The entire camp was planned with the VOs and the ECV of the respective CLCC. The entire management of the children to the snacks to be organized for the children was planned with them. The volunteers of the CLCC were trained to conduct activities for the children.

45 such events have been conducted by the women collectives across Shikaripara and Raidih



- **School Management Committee training and mentoring**

Work with the School Management Committees have led to the capacity building of these structures. SMCs did not have the requisite knowledge of their roles and responsibilities due to lack of information among the community and inadequate capacity building which is what Prajayatna has focused on by equipping the local community with the necessary knowledge and tools to hold service providers accountable and improve the quality of schooling.

Now agendas are fixed in the SMC meetings with tentative deadlines to accomplish the same. They have now developed an understanding of their role and the accountability they need to display towards the community. They now work with the teachers to ensure proper administration of the schools and ensure that the School Development Plan is being implemented and see to the proper utilisation of the funds that come to the school.

For eg, SMC at PS Khursutta were actively involved in repairing and construction work at schools. They have repaired the floor, windows, toilet and kitchen at this school. They have worked with the Gram

Panchayat members to ensure that they play their role of providing support for the school. They have repaired toilets and constructed compounds for the schools. Thus they monitor and track the functioning of the school.

The ECV and VOs have played a major role in improving the functioning of the SMC. They have made sure that they conduct their monthly meetings by calling for meetings. They have assisted the teachers in mobilising the members for the meetings. They have made sure that they attend the trainings as well. **This has made the SMC conduct their meetings on a more regular basis.**

The SMC requires capacity building and this needs to be institutionalised to bring about a systemic change. This does not only mean an annual training but also regular input and support from other stakeholders such as the CRP, GP etc.

1445 SMC members were trained through the SMC training which covered 88 schools in Raidih and 209 schools in Shikaripara. It was seen that around 5 members from each school attended the training. All the CRPs were part of the training. Teachers from 50% of the schools were present for the training.



- **Gram Panchayat level network meetings**

The network meetings at the Gram Panchayat provides space to bring a range of key stakeholders in the education space namely, teachers, SMC members, SHG, Panchayat representatives - Mukhiya, ward members etc. together and discuss the issues of the schools, with the Gram Panchayat, the local self-government taking the responsibility to ensure that the issues are resolved and enable quality education for all children in their purview. It also enables the Gram Panchayat to review and monitor the functioning of the schools. The SMCs coming together at the Panchayat level enables them to share and learn from the good practices exhibited by the schools giving them an opportunity to share and learn from each other.

7 such meetings have been conducted in Raidih block reaching out to 184 persons

4. Enhance teacher capacities

- **Capacity building of teachers**

Workshops have been held with all the head teachers on learning and trying to get them to understand how children learn and what they need to change in the classrooms to ensure that the children are learning. The role of a teacher as a



facilitator in the process of learning of the children has been the main area of discussion. These meetings have seen many advantages. It has seen the improvement of relationship between teachers and children and teachers and the community as well. The need for them to understand learning beyond the text books have made them realise the importance of community knowledge. The various processes has also helped in developing a good relationship and that of trust between the teachers and the community and specially the VO's and ECV. They approach them if there is a problem or any issue per se.

Three rounds of workshops were conducted with the head teachers at the block level of Shikaripara and Raidih. The Cluster Resource Persons and the Block Resource Persons were part of the workshops as well. A virtual training was conducted as well during this pandemic.



Basic amenities ensured at NPS Sirwadih after SGS Meeting

Background- Sirwadih is a village in Mudayam Gram Panchayat of Shikaripara block of Dumka district. Comprising of 148 households, people in this village are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. It has a primary school with 47 enrolled children mostly from Scheduled Tribe (80.85%).

Issues- Although there were 47 enrolled children in NPS Sirwadih, the attendance of children was only 35 (74.46%). The school lacks boundary and no electricity connection in the school. There is no library in the school and the door of the toilet required minor repairs. Furthermore, the children in the school had drinking water problem due to the malfunctioning of the hand-pump.

Intervention- Prajayatna facilitated a parent teacher meeting to strengthen the relationship between the school and the parents. It was observed in the meeting that the school lacked certain basic facilities like boundary, electricity and library. The children were found to be irregular to the school as well which maybe due to the lack of a learning environment in the school.

The participants in the meeting decided to share the issues in the SMC meeting. Meanwhile, Prajayatna organised a follow-up meeting with the Village Organisation (VO) to discuss their engagement with the community along with the School Management Committee. Although some of the VO members were also members in the SMC, they hardly had any involvement in the school.

Prajayatna finally held a Shikshan gram Sabha with all the parents, teacher, members of SMC, VO members and other elders in the village to discuss the various issues faced by the school. In the meeting, the parents decided to send their children regularly and planned to encourage parents of irregular children as well. Besides, the teacher planned to repair the door of the toilet and the tube well. The community also decided to white-wash the school premises.

Result- The painting of the school has been completed by the teacher and the school looks more attractive to the children and the parents as well. Similarly, the tube-well and door of the toilet has been repaired and is being used by the children. Parents on seeing these changes after the meeting has been motivated and ensure that the children attend the school regularly.



Playing-learning materials ensured at NPS Leduakend after SGS Meeting

Background- Leduakend is located in Gandhrakpur Gram Panchayat of Shikaripara block, Dumka district is a small village with 44 households only. Agriculture is the main occupation of this village. However, some are engaged in small business as well. The school has an upgraded primary school with 63 enrolled children.

Issue- It was observed in the visit to school that out of 63 enrolled children, only 45 (71.42%) children were present in the class. Moreover, the school did not have any boundary which can restrict the entry of animals for uninterrupted learning of the children and secure the school property as well. There was no electricity and hence, no fans in the school.

Intervention- Prajayatna conducted a shikshan gram sabha to discuss the above mentioned issues. A range of key stakeholders comprising of parents, teachers, members of SMC and the representative of the women – the ECV, gathered to attend the meeting. The teacher informed the participants that the attendance of children in the class was poor. The parents discussed the issues that they were having with the children where they did not seem interested in coming to school even after the parents forcing them to do so. The school did not seem to be child friendly. The school also lacked basic amenities which was also a concern for the parents. In responding to this, the participants decided to give an application to the Gram Panchayat for the construction of boundary wall in UPS Leduakend. The participants also decided to set up a library and provide some playing materials which would not only attract the children but also help in enhancing their learning levels.

Result- The Head Teacher at UPS Leduakend white-washed the school building to give a new look to the school building and to attract more children towards it. Moreover, he purchased some games for the children. The parents are also paying attention and ensuring that the children attend school regularly. The attendance of children has improved and more than 50 (79%) children can be seen at any given time in the school.



5. Strengthen Education System

Regular interactions with the block level officials of the Dept. of education alongwith the CRPs have made them realise the importance of the community in ensuring quality education. They requested Prajayatna to conduct SMC trainings in Raidih and Shikaripara. Responsibility was taken by the CRPs in organising them. In the village, the ECVs also ensured that information was given to all the members. This ensured a good turn out in the training which was facilitated by Prajayatna.

Sharing with the Block Education Officer and the Block Programme Officer - Sharing of processes were held with the BEO and BPO on a regular basis alongwith the sharing of reports. One of these interactions led to the training of all the SMC members across the blocks of both Shikaripara and Raidih. Processes were also held with the Cluster Resource Persons and Block Resource Persons as well.



Response to COVID

After the pandemic hit the world and everything changed overnight, Prajayatna then pivoted the work that was being done in order to ensure that children continue to learn.

Remote learning is a challenge for children in India especially in rural India given the vast differences in access to basic digital infrastructure, including electricity, smartphones, computers and internet connectivity as well. The lockdown had hit the poor children very hard in rural India, with a recent study indicating that more than 80 per cent of government school students (in Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh) hadn't received any educational materials during the lockdown.

Though the government quickly shifted to online modes of teaching, government portals, Direct-to-Home (DTH) channels and others, without realising the immense gaps in digital accessibility in the country. In view of that, Prajayatna team did an



informal survey to understand the accessibility, use of smart phones and internet connectivity before reaching out to school children in both Raidih and Shikaripara. It was found that the accessibility to smart phones was around 10% among the rural community. It was also seen that most of the android phones were with the male figures of the household, hence giving less scope for the children. Besides, the internet connectivity was also seen as a major challenge in the region.



Engaging children in learning - After a month of the lockdown, when it was realised that the schools were not going to reopen too quickly, the need to engage the children in a constructive learning process was realised. With the teachers unable to reach the children, there was a need for the community to step up and take the onus of ensuring a safe and healthy environment for the children which required for them to be engaged in a stimulating and engaging manner. For which it was realised that the existing social capital consisting of the ECVs, VO members, youth volunteers of CLCC, SMC members etc needed to be garnered. Consequently, an online initiative **“Ghar Par Sikho Sikhao”** was developed by Prajayatna to facilitate learning of class 1-5 children. The content was based on themes that were relevant to the children and this was integrated with Math and Language (Hindi) subjects along with various activities for the holistic development of the children. It was also developed considering the level of knowledge of parents as well who are the only source of facilitation for the children amidst this lockdown. The knowledge of the parents was incorporated as well so that they also understand that learning happens when children are constructively engaged in a learning process which need not have to

happen within the textbooks or the school only.

Initially, the e-content was sent to the children using the whatsapp platform to the smart phones of the parents. They were also sent through SMS on the regular phones. After a while, the worksheets were provided to the children physically when it was seen that many children were not able to have access to



Worksheets at the door step

Pakartoli is a small village in Sikoi Gram Panchayat, Raidih block of Gumla district. Most of the people in the village are illiterate and they work in the surrounding industries as unskilled labour for their living. The children of this village are enrolled in PS Pakhartoli school. Although basic facilities like water, electricity are available in the school, the attendance of the children in the school is poor.

To that end, Prajayatna shaped the concept of Community Learning cum Cultural Centre (CLCC) to support quality education of children after schooling. Consequently, volunteers were required to ensure the active functioning of the CLCC. A Gram Sabha was organised where Ms Kusum Kispotta was selected as a youth volunteer to serve the purpose. She has been providing her services for the last two years as a teacher in the centre.

Ever since the onset of COVID-19 and the shutting down of all schools, the learning of the children came to a grinding halt. And the government quickly recommended online learning across the country without any proper planning and resources like availability of mobile phones, training of teachers, access to internet etc. Consequently, the rural children have been the most affected due to the digital divide that has been exposed during the pandemic.

In this context, Prajayatna opted for a blended form of learning which involved both online and offline modes of learning for the children in the rural schools in Jharkhand. This included sending voice messages, WhatsApp messages and printed copies of the worksheets to reach the children.

With the movement of people being restricted and fear of the coronavirus among people during the lockdown, the distribution of worksheets in the villages was a challenging task for the team. In the meantime, Ms Kusum, the youth volunteer came forward to help us in reaching the children. She had seen children playing most of the time in the village

while others were engaged in grazing their cattle etc. The parents also were not very concerned about the lack of school or learning.

She further stated that no other individual or institution came forward to support the education of these children during the pandemic. All these issues encouraged her to get involved in the children's learning which was initiated by Prajayatna so that the children could continue their learning at home amidst the lockdown and further closure of schools.

During the distribution of worksheets, she had followed all protocols required to protect herself such as wearing the face mask, keeping two meter distance, hand washing to contain the spread of virus among the children and the parents.

According to her, the content of the worksheets had attracted many children in the village. Most of the children kept also enquiring about the next set of the worksheets once they had finished their work. The parents of the children also found the worksheets the best option for facilitating learning of the children at home. Since the concepts were based on the local context, the involvement of parents in the learning of their children was quite admirable. 22 children got the worksheets every week through Ms Kusum, out of which 19 children regularly returned them after completing the work.



Reaching children during COVID-19

Ms Katrina has been contributing to the education of the children in her village for the last three years in the capacity of the Education Change Volunteer (ECV). Her three children along with other children in the village are enrolled in PS Bakaspur, Raidih block of Gumla district. As in the rest of the country, the COVID-19 crisis had also affected the learning of the children in her village. Although, online learning through youtube was happening from the State government for all children, only 5-7 children including her three children were part of the WhatsApp group created by the Head Teacher. She helped her children in their online learning at home. However, the economic condition of the parents of other children did not allow them to afford such phones for the online learning of their children. Hence, a maximum number of children were deprived of learning due to the digital divide in the village. As a result, most of the children were found to be playing and assisting their parents in the field and at home.

Furthermore, the children had been promoted to the next class but the school had not yet provided them with the new books due to the onset of the pandemic. This was also demotivating the children in learning as they were not interested in their old books. The initiative of Prajayatna to reach all the children through worksheets and other content was found to be quite favourable to them who did not have smartphones. Besides, the content of the worksheet was simple enough for the parents as well to facilitate learning of their children and help them to connect learning beyond the textbooks. They were able to use their knowledge to support their children.

Since schools have been closed and there was no clarity about their reopening, it was essential to engage children in their learning and sustain their interest as there was a danger of the years of work

that they had put in to improve the educational status of the village would come unravelled with the children dropping out due to prolonged closure of the schools due to the pandemic. For her, distribution of worksheets to the children in her village was an opportunity to engage with them and their parents together at home without much effort and contribute to their learning. She has been the part of the learning process of 24 children through worksheets designed by Prajayatna.

The parents of the children are able to assist at night only since they all are engaged in agricultural work in the morning. She used to engage four other children at home along with her own three children to solve the worksheets provided by Prajayatna. While explaining her experience of facilitating learning of the children, she mentioned that children learn better through examples.

While distributing and collecting worksheets, she has been following the protocols set by the government during COVID-19. She has also been sensitizing people about the precautions to prevent the spread of coronavirus in her village.

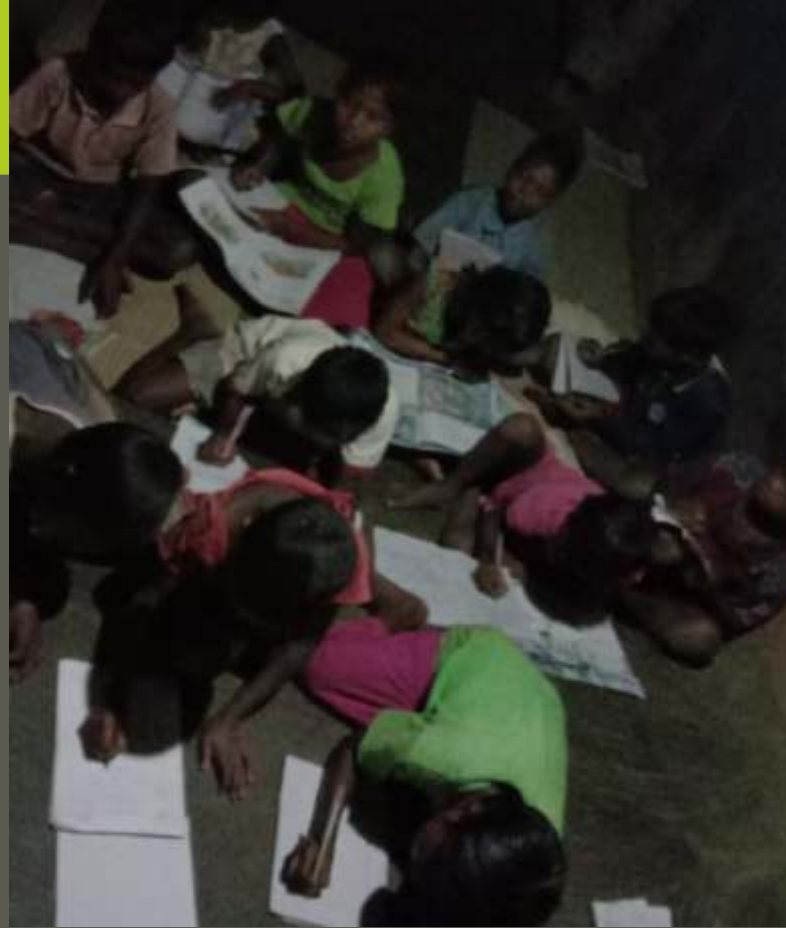


Parents and children learning together at home

Youth volunteers like Benedita Tigga at Kanchora village of Kemte Gram Panchayat had a similar experience amidst COVID-19 pandemic. She had observed the children of her village playing most of the time in the village and very few children were seen studying at home. The children were found engaged in grazing of cattle during the closure of schools. Although parents tried involving children in their learning on some occasions, they were not very successful as they did not have the resources and tools to support their children's learning.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, she had encouraged parents to send their children regularly to the CLCC. Parents and children were seen coming together often to the centre for learning, listening to stories and playing. Parents too motivated their children to play and learn at the centre. However, the closure of schools due to the pandemic had led to the disruption of education for all children in the region. Although, the schools had started online learning for the children but due to lack of infrastructure such as the availability of android phones and internet connectivity, most of the children were not able to access the content during the lockdown.

The intervention of Prajayatna in the blended mode of learning - in the form of text messages, voice messages, and distribution of copies of worksheets, a large number of children were reached in the village. She further cited that her own interest for the education of children in the villages had motivated her to get engaged in the distribution of worksheets prepared by Prajayatna.



According to Ms Tigga, the worksheets were designed considering the level of knowledge of rural parents who are the only source of facilitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was important that they did not feel overwhelmed by the whole experience but rather be inspired to utilise their knowledge and support their children in learning. She mentioned that the children were found consulting their teachers by phone with regard to the questions difficult for them.

Engaging parents and children together through worksheets during the pandemic was not easy for her. During the initial stages, some parents were conscious about the safety of their children due to the crisis. However, all concerns of the parents were taken into account by following prescribed guidelines by the youth volunteer and the Prajayatna team during distribution.

Now, the children spend time at home time engaged in the various activities put down in the worksheets, provided by Prajayatna. Besides, the parents can be seen assisting their children with their knowledge as well. Thus, the new initiative of Prajayatna has been able to engage both the parents and the children in learning together at home.

Worksheets as an assessment tool for children's learning

School closures in response to the coronavirus pandemic have shed a light on numerous issues affecting education of the children, their learning, assessment etc. The schools have been shut down from the month of March 2020. Endeavouring to reach the maximum number of children in the villages, Prajayatna designed offline mode of learning for these children in the form of worksheets apart from sending text messages, audio messages and links for stories etc via online mode to the children. Since the schools were closed and movement of people restricted during the lockdown period, Mr Navin (the Head Teacher at GUMS Kansir) came forward to support the initiative of Prajayatna and decided to go door to door to distribute the worksheets, by adhering to the prescribed guidelines of COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Navin and other teachers in Raidih block have been engaged in framing the questions for the children upto class 5. **He was the first teacher in the Raidih block to support this initiative and went house to house to make sure that the worksheets reached all the children in the village.** His dedication and commitment boosted our mission

due to which around 3000 children have been covered in the two districts in Jharkhand.

While visiting the parents and children in the concerned schools, general information regarding COVID-19 was also shared among the members of the community. He further informed that the children had been promoted to their new class for the academic year 2020 - 2021, but had not yet received books from the government. The children were not motivated in learning and spent most of their time in playing and grazing cattle in the field. **As a result, he found that many children had forgotten to even write their names amidst the lockdown.**

Therefore, he felt that the children should be engaged in the learning process to continue their interest and motivation towards learning and the school. He further felt that the worksheets designed by Prajayatna gave an opportunity to the children and parents to learn together at home. Besides, the worksheets are being used as an assessment tool by the teachers for assessing the learning of their children.



“Worksheets created interest among children once lost due to school closure”

Phoolkumaru Devi, an Education Change Volunteer in Siruadih village of Mudayam Gram Panchayat has been engaged in the education of the children of her village for last two years. Her activities included sensitizing the community, specially the parents to ensure the education of their children. Besides, she involved the PRI members, SMC members, teachers in ensuring quality delivery of services in the school through regular parent teacher meetings and SMC meetings apart from ensuring that education was discussed in their Village Organisation meetings (women's groups) and other similar activities.

Her involvement in the education of the children supported Prajayatna's initiative of delivering online and offline learning in her concerned school. When the whole world was at home to keep away from COVID-19, she came with more commitment to reach every child in her village through the worksheets designed by Prajayatna.

She had observed children losing their interest in learning. She further realized that the online learning started by the school was not reaching all the children. According to her, out of around 80 children in the village, only 10-12 children had access to smartphones while the majority of children (88%) lack such facilities to continue their learning. Under these circumstances, it creates discrimination in the access to education.

She found Prajayatna's initiative to reach children at home through the worksheet very much the need of the hour. Now the children are busy with their worksheets and spend most of their time learning at home. According to her, this initiative has created an open space of learning for the children where the children are learning with the help of their parents. Thus, both the parents and the children are learning together at home. Out of 35 children reached through worksheets, 32 children are regular in submitting their worksheets.

The worksheets suddenly changed the environment at the village where children can be seen waiting for the worksheets once submitted to her. It has created interest among the children. She further requested to continue this process even after reopening of schools.

SMC president at NPS Saraibindha, Shikaripara engage in education of the children in her school

Ms Kaushilya Devis, the SMC president observed that the shutdown of schools was adversely affecting the education of the children in her village. According to her, children do not get an environment at home which enables them to learn, with the parents busy working and in most part illiterate as well. As a result, these children were busy playing and grazing their cattle in the fields during the lockdown.

She was very conscious about the education of the children in her village and wondered how the children would progress in this scenario. She further felt that no one seemed very bothered about what was happening to the children of the schools till Prajayatna initiated the blended learning process with the children through concept based activity worksheets.

The entry of worksheets designed by Prajayatna in the village gave an opportunity for the children to continue their learning. The content of the worksheets including pictures, drawings attracted the children and got them to engage with the worksheets. Many children have done various activities such as making models of their home with the help of waste paper and materials available at their homes. All these have highly motivated the children and the parents. Out of 32 children in the village, 28 children continuously submitted their worksheets.

The parents are equally excited about the worksheets and help the children in completing the worksheets based on their knowledge and capacity. It is hoped that the engagement of the children and parents continue even when the schools do reopen in the future as it has had a positive effect on the children.



“Education is key for the development of children”, Sheetal Devi, an ECV

Sheetal Devi has been working as an ECV in Jamkandar village in Shikaripara block of Dumka district. She has involved parents, youth, and representatives of Panchayat Raj Institutions in ensuring delivery of quality services in schools for the children. Amidst the lockdown, when people were locked at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she came forward to help in continuing learning of the children in the region.

She has observed children in her village playing all the time during the initial period of lockdown due to the closure of the schools. Some children were helping their parents at household work while others were engaged in taking care of cattle in the field, agricultural work, sibling care when it came to girls, etc. As a result, the children were not learning especially in the first month of the lockdown.

The introduction of worksheets by Prajayatna was a novel feature for the children which made it attractive for them. As SMC President, she also got involved in the distribution and engagement of the children in the learning process through the activity sheets. According to her, education can play an important role in the development of the children and the village henceforth. This helps in building the future of the children and the worksheets were a way of keeping the children engaged in the learning process.

She provided the worksheets to the children at their door step as she knew the classes of every child. The worksheets which were based on local concepts aimed to engage parents and children together in their learning at home. With most of the parents being illiterate, they initially did not understand the purpose of worksheets and hence did not give sufficient time to the children in completing the same. However, she sensitized the parents about the education of children at home and suggested taking help of neighbours to understand the concepts.

The children in her village are enjoying their learning with the worksheets and are spending more time at home. Children liked the worksheets as these are full of pictures and based on local concepts. It also gave them an opportunity to show off their creative activities. She has reached around 100 children in the village through the worksheets to engage children in their education.

Community meetings - processes were done with the different stakeholders in the community to encourage and enable them to create a conducive environment for learning for the children who do not have the school as a space. Hence the home had now become their places of learning and education as well and there was a need for the community to understand and support that. There was also the need to ensure that the schools were protected during this protracted time of closure so that the school continued to be clean and healthy spaces when the children do go back to school when they reopen. There were concerns among the community as to how the schools would manage in this new normal where the need for cleanliness and hygiene would be greater than ever before and if the schools would be able to manage. The need for the community to support in the readiness of the school was discussed and a plan made for the same. It was in these meetings that the need to initiate Mohalla classes was discussed and decided upon.



Mohalla Schools

To mitigate the effects of the closure of schools, the community decided to start mohalla schools for their children. Small groups of children gathered together near their homes and other common spaces to study and learn together. Adults like the CLCC youth volunteers, ECV didi, SMC member, etc took time to mentor the children in their studies. **In this way 13 mohalla classes have been initiated in 13 villages reaching out to 1125 children in the classes of 1 to 5.**

Table 1. Details of villages and responsible person for Mohalla School

S.No.	Village Name	Responsible Person
1	Parsa Mauatoli	Rujo Devi, Sushma
2	Bakaspur	Kaitrina Tirki, Nighi Ekka
3	Pakartoli, Silam	Varsha Devi, Poornima Devi
4	Tetardih	Sampati Devi, Ravi Gope
5	Bamalkera	Kamla Devi, Lalmuni Devi
6	Karanjtoli	Vimla Kujur, Niranjana Khalkho
7	Tukutoli	Mahadevi Devi, Hatra Minj
8	Mahuatoli (Jarjatta)	Akhtari Khatoon, Najima Bibi
9	Kanchora	Swati Kujur, Jeetram Minj
10	Lasra, Bairtoli	Jasinta Devi, Vishwanath Singh
11	Sikoi, Pakartoli	Kusum Kispotta, Susheela Kujur
12	Pibo	Susheela Khes, Jospha Khes, Sangeeta Kumari, Malti Kumari
13	Silam Bairtoli	Lalita Devi, Sita Devi

8000 children were reached through this initiative during COVID-19, in which 780 community persons consisting of teachers, VOs, ECV, parents, women, SMC and youth were involved.

Mohalla class in Bokta (Parsa Mahuwatoli) village

Bokta is a small village with 27 families residing in it, located in Raidih Block of Gumla district, Jharkhand. In Bokta village, most of the village population belong to the Schedule Tribes, which consists of 88.97 % of the total Population. Bokta village is administrated by the Parsa Gram Panchayat The village has lower literacy rate compared to Jharkhand. According to census 2011, the literacy rate of Bokta was 59.63 % compared to 66.41% of Jharkhand. Agriculture is the main source of occupation for the locals. To cater to the educational need of the village, there were two schools here, Government Upgraded Middle school, Parsa Mahuwatoli and New Primary School, Bokta. Unfortunately the School of Bokta village was merged in GUMS Mahuwatoli by the Government because the number of

enrolled students were not enough (Primary schools with the number of students less than 30 were closed in year 2019).

Parsa Mahuwatoli was one of the villages among the 25 villages where Prajayatna started distributing worksheets and held a community planning meeting. E- contents were sent during the lockdown when the school was closed here, but with time it was realized that as the access of smart phones and mobile networks being very low, there was a need to improvise on the strategy. With the suggestion and active participation of the Head teacher Mr. Santosh Kumar, hardcopies of the work sheets were distributed instead of soft copies. Further, a community planning meeting was held where members of the Self help groups and villagers who were members of the School Management Committee along with the head teacher. The meeting started with the discussion of the situation of education of children in the current scenario. Everyone in the meeting was worried about the situation. The teacher was helpless as the instruction from the Government was very clear

that the children were not allowed near the school. With many of the parents being illiterate, they were finding it difficult to help their children and were finding alternative ways.

In the meeting it was then decided that the children would meet in small groups and study together with the help of a facilitator from the community. This lead the participants to decide and plan for a mohalla class.

Bhuaneshwari Devi and Vimala Oraon took the responsibility to support the classes as facilitators. Bhuaneshwari Devi, who had been helping the children in the village ever since she came there as a bride after her marriage was very happy to play her part and teach the children. Both the didies take turns in attending the class with each of them coming on alternate days. About 30 children attend the class every day. The class is running in the building of the merged school - New Primary school, Bokta. Both the didies feels really happy about their voluntary contribution for the development of their village. They are supported and appreciated by the head teacher Mr. Santosh Kumar alongwith the parents and villagers.



Outcomes of the project

Process details: 2017- 2020										
Activity	Total	Participants								
		Children	Teachers	Parents	SMC	ECV	SHGs members	Youth	Others	Total
Seekho Sikhao	207	3304	351	4279	653	128	832	0	37	9584
VO Meetings	142	0	19	76	0	106	3657	4	48	3910
ECV Training	11	30	0	0	0	334	0	0	15	379
ECV Review Meeting	7	0	0	0	0	89	0	0	4	93
CLCC Opened	10	854	7	660	39	20	625	37	692	2934
Enrolment Campaign	22	1348	53	367	58	21	506	0	0	2353
Children's events	17	783	21	105	0	2	3	23	0	937
SGS	252	0	359	6552	2143	139	2419	2	252	11866
Summer Camp	8	717	0	162	5	3	75	12	0	974
Teachers Workshop	6	0	241	0	0	0	0	0	27	268
Youth Workshop	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	8	76
SMC Training	20	0	162	365	832	20	0	0	66	1445
CLF/BLF Workshop	72	0	20	0	0	0	1905	0	45	1970
Dept Workshop	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	45
GP Network Meeting	72	0	0	0	0	0	1855	0	0	1855
Community meetings during COVID	47	0	16	508	153	23	325	7	21	1053
Total	916	7036	1249	13074	3883	885	12202	153	1260	39742

S.No.	Key Performance Indicators	Proposed Result	Outcomes		Remarks
			Shikaripara	Raidih	
1	100% enrolment at the primary level	All children between 5-11 are enrolled in school (govt or private).	103 schools	104 schools	It was seen that all children in the village have been enrolled to school and are attending. The situation post COVID-19 needs to be analysed once the schools reopen
2	Retention	Retention will be double or there will be 80% retention rate after 5 years (defined as 50% Attendance of total working days) whichever may be higher.	15% increase (From 55% to 70%)	10% increase (From 70% to 80%)	There has been an increase of 10% in terms of retention in both the blocks.
3	Better classroom process (in 50% over the baseline)	Regular presence of teachers in class	75%	70%	All the schools have been found to be running full time and regularly. It has been one of the strongest feedback from the community
		School will run for full-time in a working day	100%	100%	None of the schools remain shut without any reason or the knowledge of the community
		Active participation of all children in the classroom.	70%	70%	With enhanced attendance it is seen that the children are actively engaged in the schools as well. The inclination of the children to leave school midway has decreased. Children are coming on time to school.
		Teacher is accepting and appreciates students speaking in local language	70%	80%	In Shikaripara, there was an issue where there are Bengali speaking teachers as they generally have a low opinion of the santhali speaking children In Raidih, this is not an issue as many of the teachers are natives.
4	Learning indicators would have been enhanced	Learning levels of the children in Std 3 and Std 5 would have been enhanced in language and maths	Std 3 Lang – 52% Maths- 85% Std 5 Lang- 50% Maths- 80%	Std 3 Lang – 38% Maths- 53% Std 5 Lang- 43% Maths- 62%	It is seen that in terms of learning levels the children in Shikaripara seems to be having higher levels of learning. This needs to be examined further. Assessment done during COVID -19 shows higher level of learning in Shikaripara as well.
5	An active and empowered community that has strong linkages	SMC has been formed as per the mandate of RTE 2009	90%	90% with reformation of SMC. In 13 schools, SMC was reformed by PY	All the SMC have been formed according to the norms but at the formation time in 2017. Since we had initiated the work in Raidih many SHG members became part of the SMC with around 50% being SHG members.

S.No.	Key Performance Indicators	Proposed Result	Outcomes		Remarks
			Shikaripara	Raidih	
	with school in 75% of the schools	Atleast 2/3rd of the members will participate in the process of preparing SDP.	88 schools	78 schools	
		Atleast 2/3rd of the members will attend the monthly SMC meetings.	42 schools	45 schools	The regularity of the SMC meetings have increased with most of them meeting n a monthly basis. Around 20% of the schools are inactive.
		Participation of SHG members in most of the school celebrations/events.	80 schools	80 schools	The initiation to conduct a programme is in many cases taken by the ECV and the SHG women.
		SHG members will discuss absence/ drop out issues with mothers/parents and facilitate in students going to school.	80 schools	80 schools	With education gaining importance and the women realising the importance of education, it is discussed in their meetings and it is ensured that all children in their village go to school regularly. All the children have been enrolled and it is also seen that 10-15% increase is there in the attendance.
		SHGs and Parents etc will form a strong advocacy group within the community	28 VO's	40 VO's	In 28 VO's in Shikaripara and 40 VO's in Raidih, the women are actively engaged in the activities of the schools. They ensure that all the issues are resolved locally and that the school functions in a smooth manner. It is also seen that the issues are addressed at the right forums. For eg., if there is an issue with the teacher, it is seen that BEO is approached and the problem resolved.

All the above outcomes have been achieved from the processes described in the report above.

Stakeholder satisfaction

A study was conducted to understand the status of the various stakeholders such as the VOs and the SMC members in the beginning of 2020. Since COVID struck soon after that, we can safely consider that to be the status which can be extrapolated to the whole block. The sample schools of 10 each in one block were selected randomly across both the blocks in order to cover the different dynamics geographically. A questionnaire alongwith FGDs were conducted. The overall findings are as follows:

Raidih

Status of SMC

- ❖ Knowledge about SMC : All the SMC members were found to have knowledge about the number of members constituting the SMC, criteria of the members for selection, tenure, etc. All SMCs are constituted as per the standard norms of the RTE.
- ❖ Above 65% of the schools were having monthly SMC meetings and the remaining 35% have bimonthly meetings
- ❖ 72% of the schools have more than 16 members participating in the SMC meetings.
- ❖ Though 85% of the SMC are not aware of the exact funds available, they were all available in the issues of the school.
- ❖ Teachers understand the importance of the SMC and involve them to the extent possible in all the schools
- ❖ 36% of the SMC have called for parents meeting and discussed issues with the parents ranging from maintenance of the school, behaviour of the children and learning of the children

- ❖ Impact was seen on the SDMC after their training with all of them getting involved in the activities of the school
- ❖ It was seen that all the schools operated full day and with proper timings with the SMC ensuring the functioning.
- ❖ The SMC are capable of coordinating with the Education Department officials in 50% of the schools.
- ❖ All the SMC acknowledged the efforts of the Village Organisations
- ❖ Thus, almost all SMC were involved in the issues concerned to their schools.
- ❖ All the SMCs mention that the functioning of schools and learning of children has improved.

Status of Village Organisations

- ❖ 63% of the VOs were active in terms of ensuring basic requirements at schools for quality education to the children.
- ❖ 63% of the VOs have visited their school on regular basis and participated in its various activities

Status of ECV

- ❖ ECVs have understanding on the concept of ECV
- ❖ The study shows that all 9 ECVs have been engaged with the teachers to support in rendering quality education in the schools.
- ❖ In the interview with the ECVs, we learned that all ECVs have better understanding of their roles as an ECV. The study shows that the majority of ECVs consider sensitizing parents towards education, ensuring regular and quality education to the children, and

coordinating with teachers and the community as their major responsibilities as an ECV.

- ❖ The study also revealed that Prajayatna and PRADAN altogether has organised seven capacity building trainings for the ECVs. Besides, the ECVs have attended two trainings held by PRADAN
- ❖ In the study, we observed that the ECVs being members in SHGs have shared their learning and experience with these groups. However, some ECVs even got chance to share these information in their CLF and VO meetings as well.

Shikaripara

Status of SMC

- ❖ Knowledge about SMC : 70% SMC members were found to have knowledge about the number of members constituting the SMC, criteria of the members for selection, tenure, etc. All SMCs are constituted as per the standard norms of the RTE.
- ❖ All the schools were having monthly SMC meetings
- ❖ 70% of the schools have 8-12 members participating in the SMC meetings.
- ❖ Though 70% of the SMC are not aware of the exact funds available, they were all available in the issues of the school.
- ❖ 50% of the teachers understand the importance of the SMC and involve them to the extent possible in all the schools
- ❖ 60% of the SMC have called for parents meeting and discussed issues with the parents ranging from maintenance of the

school, behaviour of the children and learning of the children

- ❖ Impact was seen on the SDMC after their training with all of them getting involved in the activities of the school
- ❖ It was seen that all the schools operated full day and with proper timings with the SMC ensuring the functioning.
- ❖ The SMC does not seem to be able to coordinate with the Education Department officials.
- ❖ 50% of the SMC acknowledged the efforts of the Village Organisations
- ❖ Thus, almost all SMC were involved in the issues concerned to their schools.
- ❖ All the SMCs mention that the functioning of schools and learning of children has improved.

Status of Village Organisations

- ❖ 60% of the VOs were active in terms of ensuring basic requirements at schools for quality education to the children.
- ❖ 63% of the VOs have visited their school on regular basis and participated in its various activities



Status of ECV

- ❖ ECVs have understanding on the concept of ECV
- ❖ The study shows that all 9 ECVs have been engaged with the teachers to support in rendering quality education in the schools.
- ❖ In the interview with the ECVs, we learned that all ECVs have better understanding of their roles as an ECV. The study shows that the majority of ECVs consider sensitizing parents towards education, ensuring regular and quality education to the children, and coordinating with teachers and the community as their major responsibilities as an ECV.

- ❖ The study also revealed that Prajayatna and PRADAN altogether has organised seven capacity building trainings for the ECVs. Besides, the ECVs have attended two trainings held by PRADAN

In the study, we observed that the ECVs being members in SHGs have shared their learning and experience with these groups. However, some ECVs even got chance to share these information in their CLF and VO meetings as well.



Project Performance Analysis

With the main goal being to enable the community to ensure quality education for an inclusive and equitable society with the objective being to ensure the transformation of government schools through the involvement of the community.

The outcomes were to

- ❖ Building the women's collective to build ownership for the school
- ❖ Bridge the school-community disconnect
- ❖ Build capacities of the School Management Committees and the local structures
- ❖ Empowerment of teachers and local education system to improve the classroom process
- ❖ Build the capacities of the community to engage with the government system

It can be seen that the various activities have been implemented in the two blocks.

This has resulted in an environment which is more conducive for the children. The schools which were at one time an unwelcoming edifice for the community had now a grudging respect for them. The disconnect between the teachers and the parents, community and the school have been narrowed to a certain degree with the women taking the initiative to engage with the schools and develop a good relationship to support the school. The support and the impact from the work of the community has made a difference.

The women have been able to shake the school and activate the School Management Committees by getting them to conduct their meetings regularly. With trainings and capacity building processes, there is an increased understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The plans that are made for the

development of the school is being implemented by using the responses of the community and proper utilisation of the schools funds as well. There is an improvement in the functioning of the SMC in 75% of the schools in Raidih and 40% in Shikaripara. This has also brought about a certain level of accountability of the teachers to the community. There is better functioning of the schools where teachers come on time, schools are open as per the timings, etc. This has also made the children come on time to school.

Due to the regular discussions in the VOs and different forums, there is a heightened sensitivity in the community when it comes to children and school. The attendance of the children on a daily basis have increased by 10% in Raidih and 15% in Shikaripara. The sensitivity of the community could be seen when during the time of the pandemic and the schools had shut down, the community was worried about the children and what this would mean for them.

There is a trust and camaraderie between the teachers and the community with the SHG and VOs visiting the school on a regular basis. The teachers feel that they have a support system that they can turn to when required. It is often seen that if there is an issue in the school in terms of irregular children, infrastructure issue, the ECV is approached. In this whole milieu, it is to be noted that the ECV has gained a place of prominence with both the community and the teachers considering her to be a valuable support system. With her training and information base, she has been able to gain the confidence of the people. 75% of the VOs in Raidih and 60% of the VOs in Shikaripara are actively engaged. Of the ECV, 66% of the ECV that were trained in Raidih has been retained and 55% of the ECV in Shikaripara is actively engaged.

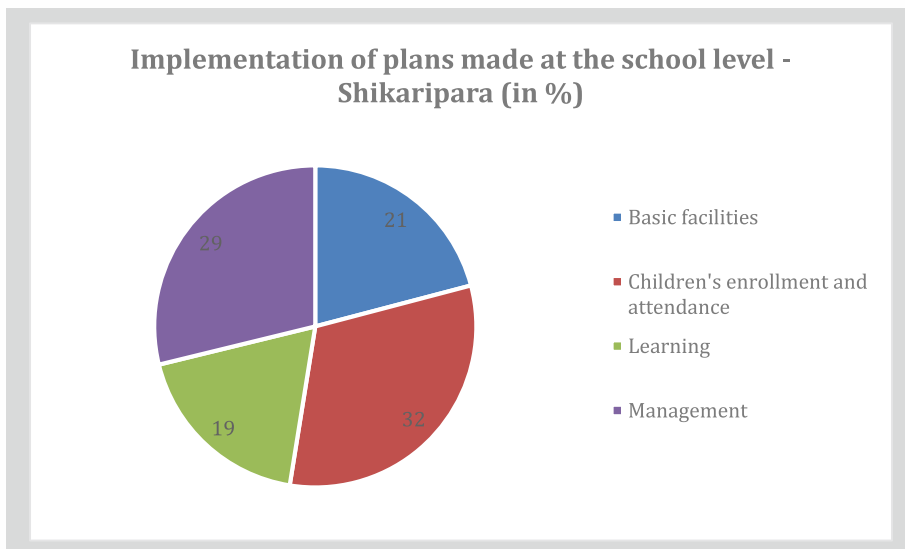
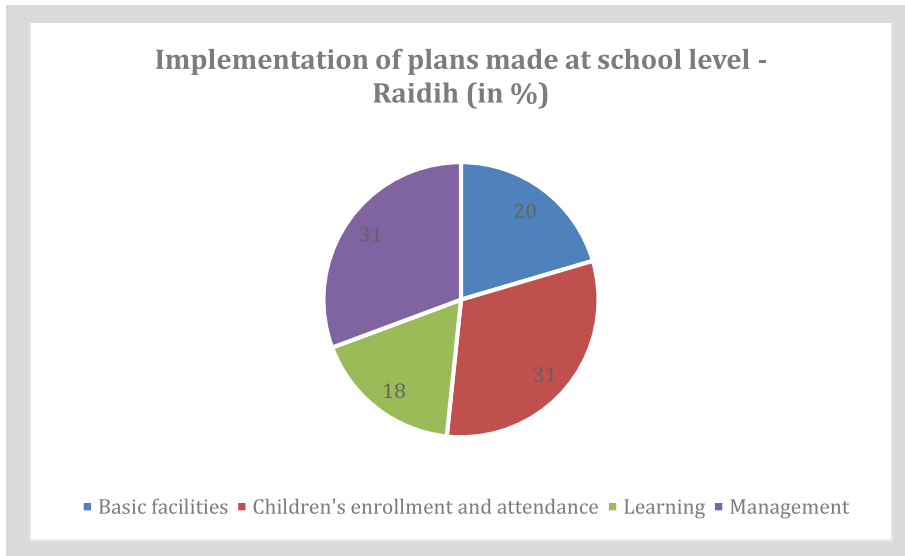
There is work required to be done on the learning front. There has not been much of an improvement on the learning levels of the children and that needs to be addressed on a war footing. It is often seen that when communities do engage with the school and then when there is no improvement in the services, there is a certain level of fatigue and disillusionment setting in. We should ensure that this is not the case here. Work has happened with the teachers on many fronts including building capacities through camps, SMC trainings, content based trainings, more attention has to be paid attention to enabling the teachers to become

facilitators who enable children to become self learners. With the initial lack of a state level permission which delayed the implementation of classroom interventions, the good relationship with the department led to conducting workshops with the teachers. Yet there is work required to be continued in this aspect.

The outcome with regard to the education department has resulted in their perspective and understanding about the community undergoing a change. It has resulted in the department working in partnership with Prajayatna. Yet there is a need for the changes to impact at the policy level.

Aspect	Changes in the blocks
No. of SMC activated	45 schools in Raidih and 42 schools in Shikaripara
No of ECV/VOs activated	86 ECVs (51 in Raidih+35 Shikaripara; 62 VO (40 in Raidih and 22 in Shikaripara)
No. of ECV/VOs as SMC	38 VO members are SMC members in Raidih . 213 VO members are SMC members
No of off classroom support centres started (CLCC) and regularised	10
No of children connected and regularised in schools	233
Increased attendance in schools	10% in Raidih and 15% in Shikaripara
Access to water facility	55 schools (7 in Raidih and 48 in Shikaripara)
Functional toilets	53 schools (11 in Raidih and 42 in Shikaripara)
Fencing	33 schools (19 in Raidih and 14 in Shikaripara)
Set up of library	7 in Shikaripara
Allocation of teachers	15 in Raidih
Electricity	60 schools in Raidih
Provision of TLM	30 schools

Data in terms of changes in the schools through the efforts of the various stakeholders



Community Institutions: Engagement of VO/CLF/BLF

VO/CLF/BLF engaged	Shikaripara	Raidih
No. of VO meeting conducted	97	45
No. of VO/CLF/BLF meeting where education is discussed	35	40
No. of VO/CLF/BLF members trained	2316	1594
No. of training modules prepared and piloted in the field	11	11
No. of training/orientation conducted with VO/CLF/BLC/ECV/Youth	11	11
Change in roles of VO/CLF/BLF over the period in engagement with education system	28	40
Community meeting - COVID	22	25

Government system support and collaboration in the field

Support and collaboration with government system	Shikaripara	Raidih
No. of government education functionaries-relations established	2	4
No. of training given to government education functionaries	1	1
No. of planning and review process organised by education department	20	22
No. of government education functionaries trained/oriented	18	15
No. of orientation/training modules prepared and piloted	2	2
No. of whatsapp /other groups formed for government education functionaries	4	4

Project cost

Here it can be seen that around 38000 members of the community has participated in the various processes conducted with the community. The impact of the process will be experienced by 12000 children. Around 75% of the children (9000 children approx.) have been directly impacted through the various processes such as the school events, CLCC, learning initiative during COVID-19 etc. A direct analysis shows that there the project has incurred a cost of Rs. 1967 per child for a period of 4.5 years which amounts to Rs. 490/ child/year and Rs. 9/child/month.

Here it is to be noted that a direct corelation cannot be made to the budget and the cost benefit in a project like this as there are many intangible factors contributing to the effectiveness of the project. Normative behavioural change is also a process which takes time and mentorship.

Challenges, Learnings and Recommendations

Challenges

● Implementation glitches

There was a **change in the geography** in the beginning of the project itself. The implementation was to be in Deosar of Singrauli district in Madhya Pradesh. A year later, due to the lack of maturity of the women's collectives, it was decided that the location would be shifted to Shikaripara of Dumka district. The project was implemented from January 2018 in Dumka, which was comparatively late when compared to the other projects. In Dumka, the implementation was not very smooth. With the women's collectives being not very active nor strong, it was a challenge in Dumka as well to initiate the project. There were a number of changes in the scope of the project in the block with changes being made due to the inactive structures, change in PRADAN area of work etc. Yet, both the partners were able to work out a strategy to implement the project in the areas where it was felt that the community would be able to take leadership and ownership.

● Designing processes to strengthen pathways

The Education Sector Council consisting of all the partners evolved to become a platform for reflection and sharing. During these sessions, a common framework to reach the outcomes and impact was designed. It was based on this framework that the strategies and processes were decided upon. It was during such discussions that the need for more concrete processes to promote parent – child relationship was discussed. Following this with internal discussions within the team led to the process of '**Seekho Seekhao**' – a process to bring the parents and the teachers together and engage in a learning process.

The concept of the **Education Change Vectors** also evolved out of such a consultation. The need for creating champions within the community was felt who would intercede between the community and the school. This led to the VOs being informed after which the ECV were selected across both the block.

These women played a very crucial role in the outcome of the project.

The initiation of the **Children's Learning and Cultural Centre (CLCC)** was a strategy which was not originally part of the proposal. The plan to initiate these centres was made when we realised the lack of a space for the children to create and learn new things alongwith the need for a conducive environment in the village after school was behind the thought.

- The most recent change was due to the onset of the pandemic **COVID-19** which made the organisation to pivot and think of new and innovative ways of reaching the children and the community with the sole aim of ensuring that children continue to engage in a constructive process of learning. A **blended learning approach** was put in place where activity worksheets were given to the children through whatsapp and other social media tools. Finally, worksheets were physically given out to the children. All this was possible and got done due to a community which was prepared and mature enough to deal with the situation. The SHG members alongwith the youth rallied around to ensure that the worksheets reached the children at first in the virtual mode and then in the physical mode.
- The new normal brought about many changes in the way interaction took place in the community leading to many virtual calls. Trainings for the teachers were conducted online alongwith that of the youth volunteers as well.

Learnings

- For the team, working with other organisations like the FNGO has been an interesting experience and helped to build their capacities in a different and more holistic manner. It gave them a dimensional understanding of the problem which in turn helped them to understand the community

better. This has helped them to be more empathetic and develop new skills to work with the different sets of stakeholders.

- Planning has been a challenge as it involves many partners and stakeholders and it causes a clash of priorities. At times other trainings would have been fixed with one of the other thematic partners due to which one's own work will need to be changed. This calls for efficient and advanced planning which needed to be shared with all the concerned partners. The PRIDE meeting was of great help to the team as it helped in clarifying strategies and plans. It was also a great platform for shared experiences and learning. It has helped the team to plan and execute within and according to the time available in the community.
- With the expectation that the work would be with groups who are already prepared and are ready to work for the cause of education, it is very dependent on the situation and the nature of the structures on the ground. There is also a mindset that has been established already. Hence at times it is a challenge for the new organisation who might have a different philosophy to get work done. For e.g., in the case of the ECV, since there is a culture of paying the CRPs in PRADAN, which led to a certain expectation from the ECV for payment. This caused some challenges in retaining them. At the same time, the prepared community was a definite advantage in areas where they were functioning well.
- The experiences of the different partners helped in creating new strategies to tackle a problem. For eg., it was realised that by getting the Gram Panchayat Mukhiya to inform about Shikshana Gram Sabha would get more participation was something that was learnt and used in the future.

- The discussions held in the Education Sector Council and the PRIDE forum helped in understanding other issues and develop strategies accordingly. For e.g., electricity was an issue that was being tackled by PRADAN and Prajayatna used the forum to get electricity for the schools. It also helped the team to understand issues in its complexity and multi-dimensionally.
- When working with other partners, at times the challenges faced by them in the field affects the implementation as well.
- For the women to be able to engage and act, it was realised that there was a need for creation of tools and communication materials which was easy. Tools such as flip charts, audio – visual, planners etc helped them to understand and take it into the field themselves.
- Understood the need for modules and tools to ensure that the training and building of capacities of the women and the other stakeholders were given the required content, skills and attitudes that is required for them to take the mantle of leadership to bring about change in the education of the children. This has helped us in streamlining our processes through documentation

Recommendations

- Various processes have been planned with the PRADAN team to ensure that the community is supported to take the processes forward. A calendar of activities and events has been developed which will enable the women's groups to plan their engagement with the schools on a regular basis. It is hoped that this will enable them to continue their engagement with the schools till it is further institutionalised.
- There is a need for change agents such as ECV,

VO, SMC etc. to focus and push the community. They also require support / training and continuous handholding as well.

- The VOs and ECVs are slowly going beyond attendance and regularity after seeing the impact of their work. It requires for their understanding to be built further to enable them to ensure better learning.
- CLCC was initiated by VOs but required sustained effort. Initiated processes with youth. These Centres need to be maintained further till it becomes self sustainable.
- Seekho Sikhao and other community events for the children gets a lot of positive response from the community and brings in some energy. This needs to become a systemic part of the school and community.
- Meetings with the SMC and GP have shown good indicators. Regularity in activities will develop the GPs in such way that a sense of collaboration, accountability and ownership will emerge in them which will ensure that education becomes a part of the development agenda of the Panchayat
- There is a need for community including teachers, VOs etc to go beyond the traditional framework of education
- For the sustainability of the ECV there needs to be an accountability mechanism between the CLF, VO and the ECV.
- The Education Sector Council should continue to play a role in working towards bringing about a change in education by bringing like minded people/groups together as there is a need for a larger discussion around the kind of education this country needs for which a larger platform is required.

Conclusion

This has been an exciting journey for Prajayatna. Working with the women's collectives was a new experience for Prajayatna. We were used to working with structures which had a certain role and defined responsibilities which we could use as a base. In this case, the mobilisation of the community through the women was a completely new experience where the team had to learn to talk to the women and motivate them. Yet, it was an enriching experience which has made Prajayatna understand the importance and significance of mobilising the larger community for a sustainable change. It has helped us to understand the community in a better manner even after all these years of experience.

Though it has been 4.5 years since the initiative began, in reality around 3 years has been spent in implementation with the pandemic taking away nearly a year. There has been a lot of positive changes and accomplishment by the community which strengthens one's belief in the community. Yet, for it to be sustained further, the community structures need to be further strengthened and grounded on the need for quality education and for them to take ownership. Ownership by the community takes time and a lot of effort. This needs to be internalised further and for this there is a need for further support and mentoring in some form.

It is with the fervent hope that all the work that has gone into the community for the past these many years is not washed away by the impact of the pandemic. The resilience of the community in Raidih and Shikaripara is to be admired in the middle of this chaos and it needs to be made sure that their spirit is harnessed to make sure that the children's future is not spoilt





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