

Release of the Report on **Social Diversity and Learning Achievement:** The Status of Primary Education in Rural Bihar

13th October, 2014

Lumbini Hall, Hotel Maurya, Patna

Proceedings of the Release

Deshkal Society convened a gathering for the presentation of our report on *Social Diversity and Learning Achievement: The Status of Primary Education in Rural Bihar* on 13th October, 2014 at Hotel Maurya in Patna, Bihar. This event was organized in association with PACS (a DFID programme).

This report, compiled over an intensive study of 2 years in Gaya and Katihar districts of Bihar, seeks to comprehensively understand the correlation between learning achievement amongst primary school children in publicly funded schools and their socio-economic background including factors such as



caste, land ownership, level of parental education, parental attitude towards education, economic background of parent, issues faced by first generation learners, challenges faced by migrant workers' children, etc.

Hon'ble Sri Brishin Patelji, Education Minister of Bihar graciously released the report. Dr. Shaibal Gupta, Member Secretary, ADRI graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Ms. Arti Verma, State Manager, Bihar, PACS who was an invaluable part of the panel discussion spoke about the nuances of the current state of public education in Bihar and policies pertaining to education. Mr. Manoj Kumar Tiwary presented the objectives, findings and recommendations of the report to the participants.

Deshkal Society has been actively working towards the promotion of social inclusion and inclusive education within the diverse social fabric of our country for more than a decade. In our research, policy advocacy and grassroots interventions, we seek to harmonize theory and practice such that our dream of an inclusive democracy and equitable development is realized.

Using a randomized sampling of schools in Gaya and Katihar districts of Bihar, we identified key social factors which impact learning in primary school children. Gaya and Katihar districts have a high proportion of marginalized communities such as SCs, STs and Muslims as part of its population. We went to great lengths

to include every stakeholder involved in the process of primary education—the schoolchildren, their parents, their teachers, private tuition providers and private school owners.

Chief Guest Dr. Shaibal Gupta pointed out that inclusive education is an important step in the national agenda towards social justice. Moreover, in order to reach the economic success enjoyed by developed nations India must strive to create a knowledge based economy. This requires focus on teaching and learning at the primary level, not just university level education. It is important to ensure that students develop basic comprehension of reading and arithmetic. This creates a strong foundation for future learning at higher level of education and innovation in research. Dr. Gupta said that Deshkal Society's focus on the nuts and bolts of primary level education especially amongst the marginalized section of society is important for turning Bihar into a knowledge based economy. Dr. Gupta further said that while demand for private tuitions by school children and their parents signals a lacunae in the quality of education provided by public schools, the high percentage of children enrolled in private tuitions even in the marginalized communities reflects an aspiration for education which is laudable. The report shows that children from marginalized sections of society and those who are first generation learners face significant challenges in educa-

tion. To this end, Chatra Pragati Patrak used for identifying learning achievement of schoolchildren should consider their grades in context of their socio economic background and level of parental education.

Speaker Ms. Arti Verma pointed out that the diversity cherished by our country has a detrimental aspect- it creates differences between communities and challenges in terms of development. The report aims towards the ideal of maintaining diversity without inequities by pushing forward the agenda of inclusive education. She elaborated on the role of Tolasevaks and Madarsas in primary education. She maintained that the concept of Tolasevaks who motivate children from marginalized communities such as Musahars and Mahadalits to attend school and not dropout into child labour fills an important gap in the educational system. However, the role of Tolasevaks needs to be delineated clearly and they should not be saddled with extraneous administrative and teaching responsibilities which interfere with their primary objective. Ms. Verma also pointed out that most Madarsas are not complying with providing 25% of their seats to children from Economically Weaker Sections of society despite a policy to that effect. She maintained that Madarsas must be rigorously reviewed and monitored to ensure quality of teaching and learning achievement amongst students. Also, Madarsas must be provided equitable

treatment by the Government in terms of resources such as Urdu language textbooks, infrastructure, etc.

Teachers must be well trained in using CCT appropriately and the language of the guidelines should be easily understandable. Government programmes which have been conceptualized and agreed upon such as Computer Aided Learning and Education Innovation Fund must be implemented. NCERT developed quality monitoring rules which take into account enrollment, attendance, and classroom practices, etc. must be properly implemented across the state. Coordination across different departments involved in pushing the agenda of Universal Primary Education will speed up development and ensure a coherent roadmap for reaching the goal of inclusive education. A special taskforce can be constituted which reviews development across the state in terms of education and identifies focus districts including areas where learning achievement is especially low or population of marginalized communities is very high. These recommendations can be easily put into practice and do not require much capital.

Hon'ble Sri Brishin Patelji, the Education Minister of Bihar congratulated Deshkal Society on bringing out a comprehensive report on the state of primary education across different communities in the state. He spoke at length

iterating his commitment towards promoting inclusivity in primary education and spreading the reach of Government programmes. He said that since 2005, the Government of Bihar has made great strides in improving education in the state- the number of primary schools in Bihar has increased from 52 Thousand to 73 Thousand, the number of teachers has increased from 2 Lakhs to 4 Lakh 17 Thousand and the dropout rate has fallen down to 3% from the earlier rate of 11%. He spoke about improving teacher's training and further improving

the teacher-student ratio in schools by inducting another 2 Lakh teachers in the near future. He concluded by exhorting the participants of the programme in particular and members of civil society in general to motivate children to attend school.

The event was organized to be interactive and stimulating conversation took place during the Panel Discussion and a Question and Answer Session afterwards. The programme ended with vote of thanks from Satya Narayan Madan, Deshkal Society.

The Summary and Key Recommendations of the Report is available on <http://www.deshkalindia.com/pdf/English%20Flyer-final.pdf>.
The full Report is available at **www.deshkalindia.com**



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