



REPORT ON

# Enhancing School Effectiveness through Inclusive Teaching and Learning

*An Innovative Action Research in Two Rural  
Government Primary Schools in  
Gaya District of Bihar*



## Deshkal Society

We are a non-profit non-governmental organization registered in 1995 under the Society Registration Act, 1860. As an organization, we research, document, advocate, and make grassroots interventions on issues and challenges confronting marginal and subaltern groups and communities, primarily Dalits, minorities, children, women and landless labourers, whether they be issues of social exclusion/inclusion, marginality and diversity in education, land rights and entitlements, or culture and sustainable livelihoods. The core objectives of our interventions are permeated with the perspective of inclusion and equity. Our main thrust is on knowledge-based activism organized in full partnership with the marginalized groups themselves which has potentiality for, on the one hand, policy development in favour of marginalized groups and minorities and, on the other, enhance their own capacity and empowerment.



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205 - 2nd Floor, Indra Vihar, Delhi-110009, India.

Telefax: +91-11-27654895

Email: [deshkal@gmail.com](mailto:deshkal@gmail.com)

Website: [www.deshkalindia.com](http://www.deshkalindia.com)

*Designed & Printed by*

**Systems Vision**

[systemsvision@gmail.com](mailto:systemsvision@gmail.com)

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Report on  
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Primary Schools in Gaya District of Bihar

Project Director

**Sanjay Kumar**

Research Consultant

**P. D. Singh**

Statistical Consultant

**Dr. Sujeet Tripathi**

Research Team

**Dr. Rafiul Ahmad**

**Narayan Kumar**

Learning Support Coordinator

**Ramraj Manjhi**

**Birendra Manjhi**

**Deolal Manjhi**

**Shivnath Manjhi**

Copy editor

**Osamazaid Rahman**



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A. K. Pandey, Director, Research and Training, Elementary Education, Govt. of Bihar

Aashti Hai, Education Advisor, DFID India, New Delhi

Arvind Mishra, Assistant professor, ZHCES, JNU, New Delhi

Geeta Sharma, Former Principal, DIET, Gaya, Bihar

Gyandeo Mani Tripathi, Lead Consultant, UNICEF, Bihar

Hriday Narayan Pandit, BEO, Wazirganj, Gaya

Kaushal Singh, Coordinator, CRC, Sahiya, Wazirganj, Gaya

Michael Ward, Senior Advisor, Education, DFID India, New Delhi

Nirbhay Singh, Coordinator, CRC, Majhauri, Wazirganj, Gaya

P. P. Ghosh, Director, ADRI, Patna

Rajesh Bhushan, SPD, BEP, Patna

Ram Ratan Sharma, Headmaster, Badka Bandh Primary School, Wazirganj, Gaya

Ravindra Sharma, Principal, DIET, Gaya

Sahbir Mandal, Gram Pradhan, Karjara, Wazirganj, gaya

Sanjay Kumar Singh, District Magistrate, Gaya

Sarojini Devi, Gram Pradhan, Sakardas Nawada, Wazirganj, Gaya

Shivshankar Prasad, APO, SSA, Gaya, Bihar

Suman Kumari, Headmaster, Majhauri Primary School, Wazirganj, Gaya

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# Abbreviations

ABL	:	Activity Based Learning
B.A.	:	Bachelor of Arts
BEO	:	Block Education Officer
BEPC	:	Bihar Education Project Council
BPL	:	Below Poverty Line
BRC	:	Block Resource Centre
CRC	:	Cluster Resource Centre
DEO	:	District Education Officer
DIET	:	District Institute of Education and Training
DSE	:	District Superintendent of Education
EVs	:	Education Volunteers
LSC	:	Learning Support Centre
M.A.	:	Master of Arts
MBC	:	Most Backward Classes
NSSO	:	National Sample Survey Organisation
OBC	:	Other Backward Classes
PDS	:	Public Distribution System
PHED	:	Public Health Engineering Department
PSB	:	Primary School Badka Bandh
PSM	:	Primary School Majhauri
PTR	:	Pupil Teacher Ratio
RTE	:	Right To Education
RTI	:	Right To Information
SCs	:	Scheduled Castes
SCERT	:	State council of Educational Research and Training
SDO	:	Sub Divisional Officer
SEC	:	School Education Committee
SSA	:	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
STs	:	Scheduled Tribes
VEC	:	Village Education Committee





## Executive Summary

The report discusses and analyses, experiences, outcomes and critical learning from the project, 'Enhancing School Effectiveness through Inclusive Teaching and Learning: An Innovative Action Research', implemented by the Deshkal Society in two government rural primary schools in the Gaya district of Bihar, over a period of one and a half years. This project emerged out of a pilot study, which sought to develop a contextualised understanding of school based practices and processes that were behind the failure of children, especially of those from socially disadvantaged and historically excluded communities, in getting proper education. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the project was a context specific innovative initiative to address the following key questions:

- ◆ How do we expose teachers to the diverse socio-economic characteristics of children, and sensitise them towards the different learning needs and constraints of children?
- ◆ How do we democratise teacher-child and child-to-child relationships in socially diverse classrooms, and enhance effective classroom participation of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds?
- ◆ How do we build the capacity of teachers to facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes that could enhance learning achievement of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds?

### Methodology

The methodology adopted by the project was an interactive mode of collaborative inquiry, reflection and action. Participatory workshops and focus group discussions with teachers, parents/ community members, and children were organised to discuss and reflect upon issues and problems related to the functioning of schools and the learning performance of children. Collaborative inquiry and observations were undertaken to identify classroom practices and processes that seemed to adversely affect learning experiences and outcomes of children from different socio-economic backgrounds as well as to make an assessment of the education needs of teachers. A household survey was conducted to analyse the socio-economic characteristics of children, and to formulate a detailed insight into their learning needs and constraints. Through a series of focus group discussions and workshops with teachers, parents/communities, children and VECs, an action plan for change was evolved which mainly pertained to ensuring: a) implementation of provisions for basic facilities, b) involvement of parent and community, c) dialogue and engagement with government institutions and officials, d) education of teachers on diversity and

marginality, and e) capacity building of teachers on inclusive classroom practices and processes. The various activities were planned coherently which revolve around these aspects. These activities converged at the school level for improving the quality of teaching and learning, and for enhancing school effectiveness.

## The experiences and key lessons

The report discusses and analyses the experiences, outcomes and critical learning gained from the processes of various activities and interventions, and suggests inputs for informing and enriching policies and practices for the enhancement of school effectiveness. The following major issues and concerns are indicated by the report in this regard.

### a) Ensuring availability of basic facilities in schools as a prerequisite for enhancement of school effectiveness

Effective implementation of government provisions for basic facilities is essential for making schools functional and enhancing school participation of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Lack of basic facilities such as regular mid-day meals, drinking water and sanitation facilities not only adversely affects children's regular attendance and school participation but also creates a serious trust deficit between the schools and communities. For instance, it was a common opinion among the communities as well as the teachers that around 10–20 per cent children left school early due to lack of drinking water. Parents and community members also expressed their anger that if the schools could not provide even drinking water for their children, they will be difficult for them to believe that the schools and teachers were really concerned with educating their children. The experiences from the project reveal that the main factors responsible for non-availability of basic facilities in schools were, lack of effective and regular coordination between different levels of government institutions and officials, and failure of the institutional mechanisms for delivery of service. It was also found that the provisions of an annual school development fund of Rs 6,000 was too low an amount to cover regular expenses on blackboards, dusters, chalks, school registers and other essential stationeries, and maintenance and repair of drinking water and sanitation facilities. In this context, there is a need to take up the following steps:

- ◆ It is found that free textbooks are not distributed to children in time due to lapses on the part of various government agencies, and the teaching-learning activities in schools are hampered as a result. Textbooks should, therefore, be printed on time by the Bihar State Textbook Corporation and supplied to District Education Offices by March so that they can be distributed to children in the beginning of the session in April.
- ◆ A majority of children from poor and marginalised communities are unable to afford sufficient learning materials necessary for effective learning. The government should also make a provision for free distribution of learning materials such as notebooks, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, etc. to children, especially those from Below the Poverty Line (BPL) and other marginalised community households in the beginning of the school session in April.
- ◆ In order to promote Activity Based Learning (ABL), the government should make a provision to ensure that basic resource materials such as charts, cards, pictorials, worksheets, etc needed for ABL are made available to all schools.
- ◆ Though hand pumps for drinking water have been installed in the schools, most often these are found to be non functional due to lack of repair and proper maintenance. Non-availability of drinking water in schools adversely affects the regular attendance of children. The government

needs, therefore, to ensure that proper maintenance and timely repair of hand pumps are carried out and drinking water is regularly available in schools.

- ◆ School attendance, especially of girl children is adversely affected by lack of sanitation facilities. The government should, therefore, ensure that sanitation facilities be constructed in a time bound schedule in all schools.
- ◆ The current provision of an annual school development fund of Rs 6,000 should be enhanced so that it can adequately cover the essential routine expenditures on school management.

#### **b) Engagement with government officials and institutions**

Regular dialogue and engagement with government institutions and officials, especially at the Cluster Resource Centre (CRC), Block Resource Centre (BRC) and district levels, is crucial for ensuring implementation of basic provisions in the schools. During the processes of dialogues and engagement with government officials for resolving the problems of unavailability or partial availability of basic facilities in schools, it was revealed that the failure of the delivery system for the schools was not just the fault of any one person but was closely linked with the inability of the existing institutions. For instance, children were not receiving free textbooks on time because the textbooks were not being printed on time by the Bihar State Textbook Corporation. It is, therefore, necessary that the monitoring and evaluation system of schools are streamlined and strengthened according to the provisions of the Right To Education (RTE) Act. The block and district level educational officials, especially, should constantly monitor the functioning of the schools and assist the schools in resolving the specific problems faced by them from time to time.

#### **c) Engagements with parents and communities**

Engagement between parents/communities and schools is necessary for reducing the trust deficit between the schools and the communities, and for making schools responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of the communities and their children. However, during the project activities it was found that the development of concern and initiative among parents from non-marginalised, and middle and small farmer backgrounds was more visible than among parents from marginalised and labour backgrounds. This may be because parents from marginalised communities were still unable to visualise the larger benefits of education for their children at the same scale as parents from non-marginalised communities. The experiences from the project indicate that various programmatic activities, particularly for ensuring implementation of basic provisions and facilities in schools such as regularisation of mid-day meals, availability of drinking water, distribution of free textbooks, etc. can provide major sources of encouragement for parents and communities, especially from marginalised communities, to actively participate in the school improvement activities. In this regard, the government also needs to urgently initiate the processes of formation of the Primary School Education Committees in order to ensure the participation of parents and communities in the development, governance and management of schools.

#### **d) Developing teachers' understanding of social diversity and differentiation within the classroom**

Working with teachers on their attitudes and behaviour towards children from different socio-economic backgrounds, and enhancing their understanding of the issues of social diversity and differentiation within classrooms is crucial for facilitating inclusive classroom practices and processes, and for enhancing effective classroom participation of children from diverse social backgrounds. The result of the project clearly indicates that child profiles prepared through household survey of children are an effective tool to work with teachers for developing their understanding of social diversity



and differentiation within classrooms. Child profiles can be used to expose the socio economic characteristics of children and sensitise them towards the different learning needs and constraints of children from other socio-economic backgrounds. It also helps teachers in identifying and preparing learning tasks and activities that could be relevant to the life experiences of children from diverse backgrounds.

In the process of working with teachers, the project also developed various lesson plans and exercises in order to facilitate discussion and reflection among teachers on issues of social diversity and differentiation. Some of the key lessons and exercises were:

- ◆ Social mapping of the village to facilitate discussion on the socio-economic characteristics of various sections of village population.
- ◆ Educational mapping of the village for initiating discussion among teachers on reasons behind the low levels of literacy among certain sections of the village population, and its implications for school participation and learning achievement of their children.
- ◆ Work and occupation mapping of the village in order to discuss social relations among people and develop a positive attitude among teachers towards children from households engaged in different types of occupations.
- ◆ Sharing and discussing childhood experiences of teachers to facilitate discussion on social structures and relations, and prejudiced social beliefs and practices.

Exercises were also developed for discussing with teachers the different ways in which activities in the schools and within the classrooms could be refashioned to initiate the processes of making them inclusive of children from diverse and deprived socio-economic backgrounds. Some of the steps that could be taken up by the schools and teachers in this regard are indicated below.

- ◆ Encouraging children from marginalised communities to initiate school prayers.
- ◆ Promoting participation and leadership of children from marginalised communities in various school committees formed to organise cultural and religious functions.
- ◆ Selecting marginalised community children as class monitors.
- ◆ Inviting an elderly Dalit person from the village who may be non-literate as a special guest for prize distribution or on any other special event/celebration in the school.

In the process of engagements with teachers, it was also found that when any external agency, governmental or non-governmental, enters the school premises, it generally generates a sense of fear among teachers, and they adopt a defensive mechanism when asked about matters related to school functioning. In order to dispel this sense of fear, there is a need to give priority and importance to listen to their perceptions and experiences about their problems, experiences, aspirations and expectations, and to evolve a method of learning for them through practical hands-on experience instead of instruction.

#### **e) Capacity building of teachers on inclusive classroom practices and processes**

The major activities conducted during the project that helped in enhancing the professional skills of teachers and in facilitate them to implement inclusive classroom practices and processes were: preparation of child profiles, baseline assessments of learning achievement, interactive and participatory workshops, and classroom demonstrations. The child profiles helped in sensitising teachers towards the different learning needs and constraints of children from diverse and deprived

backgrounds, and in identifying learning tasks and activities relevant to their socio-economic context. The findings of the baseline assessments helped teachers in identifying different learning levels of children from diverse backgrounds, and developing and preparing learning tasks and lesson plans accordingly. They were also able to clearly identify children with very low levels of learning and provide them special attention. Collaborative classroom observations with teachers were organised to identify, discuss and analyze areas for teacher support and development. The information and feedbacks gathered from these processes were discussed and analysed in the workshops with teachers to evolve context specific inclusive classroom practices and processes that could be implemented in the schools. Based on the feedback from the workshops, regular classroom demonstrations were conducted to ensure that teachers not only understood factors and behaviours which facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes, but were also professionally equipped to implement this understanding in actual classroom situations. The classroom support was extended on various aspects such as sitting arrangement of children in small groups, lesson planning according to the learning levels of children, use of examples from the socio-economic context and life experiences of diverse children, such as local games, folk tales, local farming practices, etc. for explaining lessons, use of pictorials and local objects and materials for engaging children in active learning, peer-behaviour among children, and teacher-children relationship, etc. The adoption and implementation of these classroom practices and processes by the teachers were constantly monitored by the project team through classroom observations and focus group discussions with teachers, children and parents, and the problems, issues and feedbacks were again discussed and analysed with teachers in workshops in order to constantly improvise on them. The experiences from the project indicate that the following measures need to be undertaken in order to enhance professional skills of teachers for inclusive classroom practices and processes.

- ◆ Child profiles are an effective tool for enhancing teachers' understanding of the issues of social diversity and differentiation within the classroom, and for promoting inclusive classroom practices and processes. Child profiles can be prepared by teachers through a household survey of children. The survey can collect data and information on various socio-economic indicators such as age, sex, education, occupation, and economic and migration status of all the household members. It can also collect data on school and community based factors that affect learning of children from different socio-economic backgrounds, and on reasons for poor levels of learning and drop outs. Based on the data and information obtained from the household survey, detailed profiles of children can be prepared, and their learning needs and constraints identified. Currently, there is a provision for preparation of Bal Panjika by teachers. The Bal Panjika contains such information on children as age, enrolment, social category, reason for drop out, etc. In place of Bal Panjika, the government should make a provision for preparation of child profiles in schools.
- ◆ CRCs need to be developed into basic centres for regular in-service training and academic support to teachers. In this regard, the government needs to make provisions for necessary resource persons and other facilities to orient and facilitate the monthly meetings at CRCs into becoming participatory sessions for the professional development of teachers.
- ◆ The government should make provision for schools to conduct regular assessments of learning achievement of children. This will help teachers in tracking and monitoring the progress in learning achievement of individual children, and in identifying children lagging behind and giving special attention to them.

The key lessons and suggestions are based on the approach that there was a basic need for adopting a school based approach in order to improve the functioning of government primary schools in rural areas. A crucial aspect of this approach is that the initiatives for improving the learning environment of the schools, and for democratising classroom practices and processes, have to be undertaken at the same level and scale as the initiatives taken up for activating and improving the functional components of the schools. In other words, the elements that make the schools functional and those that make the classrooms child-friendly and inclusive are so closely interlinked that the neglect of any of the two aspects adversely affects the quality of the schools, and, as a result, schools starts to lose its legitimacy among children, parents and the communities.



# Introduction

## The background

Primary education in India has witnessed a steady growth over the years in the enrolment of children from all sections of society. Significantly, a large part of the increase in enrolment has been from the historically marginalised and excluded sections of the society, such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), girls and religious minorities (Government of India 2007). However, the low levels of learning achievement and high dropout rates persisting among children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds have led to a growing concern among education practitioners and policymakers about the quality of teaching and learning in government primary schools. Though there is a lack of socially disaggregated data on learning achievement, data from a few studies indicate very low levels of learning among children, particularly from marginalised communities. A study based on NSSO data shows that the percentage of children between 6–14 years who can read and write, widely varies between SC children (58.2 per cent) and children from other castes (72 per cent) (Barr et al. 2007). Another study of selected primary schools in West Bengal during 2001–2002 also observes a wide difference in learning outcome of children from disadvantaged social categories such as the SCs, STs and Muslims. About 13 per cent of SC children, 25 per cent of Muslim children and 29 per cent of ST children in Standard III and IV could not read. For the rest of the population this proportion is merely 8 per cent. Similarly, compared to the 8 per cent of children in Standard III and IV belonging to the “others” categories who could not write, 13 per cent of SC children, 27 per cent of Muslim children and 43 per cent of ST children could not write (The Pratichi India Trust 2009: 11–16). The dropout rate too, despite some improvement, remains very high, especially among children from the marginalised and excluded communities. The project on Enhancing School Effectiveness through Inclusive Teaching and Learning was a context specific innovative initiative of Deshkal Society to address these concerns of quality of teaching-learning in two government primary schools in the Gaya district of Bihar. The project emerged out of a pilot study conducted by the Deshkal Society in 2009 in the two schools (Singh and Kumar 2010). Based on ethnographic data, the study sought to develop a contextualised understanding of the school based practices and processes behind the education failure of children, especially of those from socially disadvantaged and historically excluded communities. The findings of the pilot study indicated that the following major issues and concerns needed to be addressed in order to enhance school effectiveness, increase effective school participation of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and enhance their learning achievements.

## Teacher belief in heredity-based educability of children

The majority of school teachers were found to believe in the concept of heredity-based 'educability' of children which was articulated by them through their notion of hereditary sanskara. Although the caste factor was not directly referred to, teachers' explanations of hereditary sanskara clearly revealed the caste underpinnings behind this notion. Based on this belief, teachers were found to perceive children from marginalised communities as being 'learning deficient' or 'uneducable'. As a result, they had very low or no expectation of learning achievement from these children; attributed the education failure of these children to their hereditary sanskara, and had developed an attitude of neglect towards them.

## Textbook Centred and Rote Learning Based Teaching Methods

The classroom transaction processes of teaching and learning were characterised by the centrality of the teacher and the textbook whereby rote-learning and memorisation, copying and repetition formed the basis of all teaching activities. The teachers were found to be the sole communicator, and children's voices and experiences were not allowed to be expressed in the classroom. Because knowledge other than those in the textbooks was branded as irrelevant and worthless, children's knowledge and experience from their day-to-day life was never given a space in the teaching-learning process. Teaching meant transmission of facts and knowledge contained in textbooks with emphasis on reproduction of the textual knowledge without any comprehension or understanding the meaning of the text. There appeared little effort by teachers to draw parallels between the content of lessons from textbooks and the experiences of day-to-day life and the socio-economic context of children. These teaching-learning processes appeared to alienate children from the learning process, demotivate them, adversely affect their learning potential and achievement, and gradually push them out of the school.

## Home Support Based Teaching-Learning

The teaching practices were also based on the assumption that children would get academic support from parents in developing reading and writing skills. The so-called homework, therefore, was an important part of the teaching-learning activities. However, as first generation learners from poor and marginalised communities, the majority of children lacked this home support to enable them to navigate the learning practices and processes in the schools. Rather, due to their failure to complete homework given by the teachers, these children were often a target of ire and rebuke from both teachers as well as peers, which adversely affected their perception of self worth.

## Teachers' Lack of Understanding of Social Differentiation and Diversity

Teachers appeared to have little understanding of the socio-economic differentiation and diversity within their classrooms. Teachers informed us during the project fieldwork—with the confidence of presenting themselves as being non-discriminatory towards children from diverse backgrounds—that they treated all children equally. This is different from valuing each child equally and positively. In a situation where there is social differentiation among children, treating each child equally would mean not recognising, and not being sensitive to, the differential learning needs and constraints of children from different socio-economic backgrounds. In such a perspective, teachers lacked the required skills to deal with differentiation within the classroom, and viewed their professional accountability in terms



of only mechanical transmission of knowledge and facts from textbooks, without any concern for the resulting learning achievement of children from different backgrounds.

## Lack of School-Community Engagement

The study revealed a serious trust deficit between the schools and the parents and communities. Teachers tried to put the blame for education failure of children on their hereditary sanskara and lack of interest among parents. On the other hand, parents were found to be aware of the low quality of education that is imparted in schools. They blamed the teachers for their lack of concern towards the learning needs of their children. This had led to an antagonistic relationship between the schools and the communities. The current government provisions for empowering local communities and promoting their active involvement in the planning and management of schools were found to be largely ineffective. Parents, particularly from marginalised communities, felt powerless within the local power structure and relations, and were unable to become active participants in school affairs and influence its functioning.

Based on the findings of the pilot study, the project was conceived as a school improvement programme whereby its multiple strategies and activities aimed at improving various aspects of the school converged together to enhance the effectiveness of the school.

## Objectives

The objectives of the project was to increase school participation and learning achievement of children from diverse backgrounds through enhancing school effectiveness and quality of teaching-learning practices and processes.

## Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the project were:

- ◆ To explore and analyse the socio-economic profile of children, and sensitise teachers towards the differential learning needs and constraints of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.
- ◆ To facilitate effective implementation of the provisions for basic infrastructural facilities like drinking water and sanitation in schools.
- ◆ To ensure that the enabling provisions, such as the mid-day meal scheme and distribution of free textbooks, are effectively implemented.
- ◆ To develop an awareness and understanding of the issues of social differentiation and marginality within the classrooms among school teachers, and prepare a toolkit for teacher education on diversity and marginality.
- ◆ To facilitate child-centred, inclusive classroom practices and processes that could help enhance the effective classroom participation and learning achievement of diverse learners.
- ◆ To develop teachers' professional skills for inclusive teaching-learning practices and processes.
- ◆ To facilitate active involvement and participation of parents and the communities in the overall functioning and management of schools.
- ◆ To document, analyse and synthesise the critical learning and lessons of the project intervention and its impact, and suggest inputs to inform and enrich government policies and practices on primary education with special reference to issues of inclusive classrooms and school effectiveness.

## Approach and Methodology

The project was based on the assumption that there was a basic need to adopt a school-based approach in order to make improvements in the functioning and performance of government primary schools in rural areas. A crucial aspect of this approach is that the initiatives for improving the learning environment of schools, and democratising classroom practices and processes have to be undertaken at the same level and scale as the initiatives taken up for activating and improving the functional components of schools. In other words, the elements that make the schools functional and those that make the classrooms child friendly and inclusive are so closely interlinked with each other that neglecting any one can deeply affect the quality of the school, and, as a result, the school begins to lose its legitimacy among children, parents and the communities.

The methodology adopted by the proposed project was an interactive mode of collaborative inquiry, reflection and action. The project began with disseminating the findings of the pilot study to teachers, headmasters, parents, the communities and children, and getting their feedback on it. The findings were discussed with them through individual and group meetings and workshops. Initially, separate group meetings with teachers, parents, the communities, and children were organised, and later some joint meetings of all these stakeholders were also organised. These discussions were meant to make them aware of the findings of the study and discuss how the problems pointed by the findings were adversely affecting the educational experience and outcome of children from diverse social backgrounds. The purpose was to make them realise that these problems existed, and to facilitate them to come up with creative ideas to tackle the problems. For instance, teachers needed to realise how their attitude and behaviour based on the notion of *sanskara* and hereditary educability as well as the teaching methods based on rote learning formed a large part of the reason behind the educational failure of children, especially those from marginalised communities.

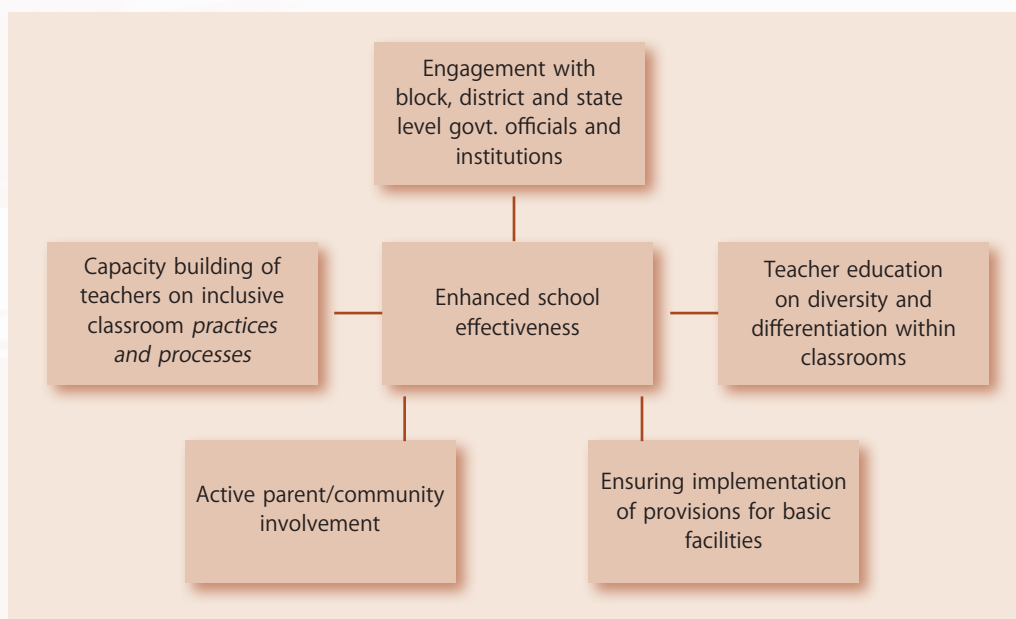
Besides a series of workshops and meetings, joint collaborative inquiry and observation was undertaken to further deepen the understanding of these problems, to develop a detailed insight into the needs, abilities and constraints of children from socially diverse communities, and to make an assessment of the educational needs of the teachers. In the next stage of the project, joint workshops were organised to discuss and reflect upon how things could be changed, how the quality of teaching-learning practices and processes could be improved and school effectiveness enhanced. Teachers, headmasters, parents, the communities, VECs, and children were active collaborators and participants in this exercise to explore and discuss various kinds of interventions that could be undertaken to improve the situation. The need for setting up Learning Support Centres for providing initial learning support to children, particularly from the marginalised communities, who are generally first generation learners, was also explored and discussed. Another issue for intervention that was discussed was how to strengthen VECs and make them more responsive to the needs and aspirations of children from the marginalised communities. A baseline assessment of learning achievement of children in Standard II and III in reading skills and arithmetic was also conducted in order to be able to measure the impact of the project on learning enhancement of children at the end. Options for intervention on these various issues were explored and discussed, and a consensus on options and possibilities for intervention was arrived at, and an action plan was developed through joint fortnightly workshops with the key stakeholders. The action plan for change, thus evolved, mainly pertained to a) ensuring implementation of provisions for basic facilities; b) parent and community involvement; c) dialogue and engagement with government officials and institutions; d) teacher education on diversity and marginality; and e) capacity building of teachers on inclusive classroom practices and processes. The various activities pertaining to these aspects formed a coherent whole,

and converged at the schools around improving the quality of teaching and learning, and enhancing school effectiveness. The approach can be represented by the diagram below:

The various activities, although multiple in nature, formed an integrated and coherent whole, and its implementation was constantly monitored, evaluated and improvised through collaborative analysis, inquiry and reflection.

## Structure of the Report

The report presents a discussion and analysis of the processes and activities of interventions carried out for enhancing school effectiveness and improving school participation and learning achievement of children in two government rural primary schools. It analyses the experiences, outcomes and critical learning gained from the interventions, and suggests inputs for informing and enriching policies and practices in the primary education sector. The report is organised into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides a description of the basic features of the two schools in which the project was undertaken, including their geographical and social location, and the availability of basic infrastructure. The chapter also presents a detailed discussion and analysis of the findings of a household survey on the socio-economic characteristics of children enrolled in the two schools. The socio-economic background of the children is analysed in terms of the social category/caste, educational status of the parents, land ownership and the primary occupation of the father. It further discusses implications of the findings of the survey on different learning needs and constraints of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, teaching-learning practices and processes, and school-community engagements. Chapter 2 describes the processes and practices undertaken to develop a dialogue with government officials and institutions at various levels as well as with the parents and communities, and to ensure that the basic facilities provided to schools under the provisions of the government were effectively implemented. This chapter focuses on the hurdles faced by the schools in terms of basic facilities and the critical role of government officials, and the parents and communities in ensuring that basic facilities in schools are provided. Chapter 3 describes and discusses the pupil-teacher ratio, student-classroom ratio and the class sizes in the schools, their adverse implications for teaching-learning practices and



processes, and the activities undertaken to address them. The reasons behind low and fluctuating attendance of children, as well as the factors behind very high dropout rates, especially after Standard I, are also discussed in detail. This chapter also evaluates the findings of the baseline assessment of learning achievement of children in Standards II and III, and analyses its implication for facilitating improvement of teaching-learning practices and processes. Chapter 4 focuses on the processes and activities undertaken for improvement of the learning environment in the schools and for evolving and facilitating inclusive classroom practices and processes. The processes, outcomes, and critical learning and experiences from the activities and interventions are also discussed and analysed in detail. The chapter evaluates the role played by the Learning Support Centres in facilitating improvement of classroom practices and processes, and the learning achievement of children in schools. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents concrete inputs and suggestions that can be taken up for transforming the existing teaching-learning practices and processes, enhancing school effectiveness and improving learning achievement of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

# Social Location of Schools and the Context of Children

A description of the geographical and social location of the schools, and the communities they serve, will be the best possible way to contextualise this report on enhancing school effectiveness. This chapter investigates the availability of basic infrastructural facilities in schools such as number of classrooms, playgrounds, and facilities for drinking water and sanitation. The findings of the household survey of children enrolled in the schools have also been discussed in the chapter. The socio-economic characteristics of children have been analysed in terms of various indicators such as caste, parents' educational status and occupation, land ownership, etc, and their implications for effective school participation and learning performance of children from different backgrounds. It is argued that about half of the children enrolled in the schools are first generation learners, and the current teaching-learning practices and processes in the schools are not conducive for their effective school participation and learning performance.

## 1.1. Geographical and social location of the schools

The project was located in two government primary schools at Badka Bandh and Majhauri. The schools at Majhauri and Badka Bandh are respectively at a distance of 6 and 4 kilometres from the Gaya-Nawada main road. The villages where these schools are situated are known in popular parlance as 'remote villages'. Generally, the absence of minimum development in the village is a sign of remoteness. For example, a village is considered remote if there is no electricity, pucca road and post office; agriculture is dependent upon monsoon; and the local administrative office of the government is located at a distance of 10–12 kilometers. However, the presence of primary schools, hand pumps for drinking water and motorised pumping sets are signs of modern development in these villages. Other signs of development that are visible in the region are the stone crushers and small government-approved liquor shops. Both the schools, situated 500 metres away from the villages, are definite signs of development.

The primary school at Badka Bandh caters to children from two villages, Badka Bandh and Kauakhhol. While Badka Bandh village is inhabited primarily by the most marginalised Musahar community, Kauakhhol village is predominantly inhabited by the Other backward Classes (OBCs) and Most Backward Classes (MBCs) along with a few Scheduled Castes (SC) and one upper caste Brahmin household. The primary school at Majhauri caters to children only from that village. It is a multi-caste village where the Musahar community alone constitutes more than half of the population, and the Musahar community together with other SC communities constitutes more than three-fourth of the population. However, the upper caste Rajput community, which constitutes only



around 11 per cent of the population, is socially and economically the most dominant community in the village.

## 1.2. Infrastructural facilities

The Badka Bandh school has two classrooms and a verandah which is used for teaching children from Standards I to V. The size of the classrooms is 10 x 12 feet. There is a blackboard fixed on the wall in both the classrooms, and dusters and chalk are also available. There are seven chairs for the use of teachers and there is a metal trunk for keeping the school records. Besides these, the basic instruments and utensils required for cooking mid-day meals are also available. There is an open space in front of the school which is generally used by children as a playground. During winter it is also used for teaching. There is a hand pump in the open space which provides drinking water to the children.

The basic facilities in the school at Majhauri are slightly better than the one at Badka Bandh. Although this school too has only two classrooms and a verandah, but there are wooden benches for children to sit on, and sufficient number of chairs and two tables for the teachers. Both classrooms have blackboards fixed on the wall, and dusters and chalks are available. There is an almirah for safe keeping of school records. This school also has a playground and a slider for children. There are two hand pumps for drinking water. One of the hand pumps is managed by the school and the other by the village community. The school also has sanitation facilities like toilets. Last year, the Bihar Education Project decided to upgrade some selected primary schools into upper primary schools. The Majhauri school was one of the schools selected by the project, and, therefore, a new building comprising two classrooms has been constructed on the school premises.



Newly constructed classrooms in Majhauri School

### 1.3. Socio-Economic Context of the Children: The Child Profile Survey

The total number of children enrolled in Majghauli School was 317 at the time of the project, and in the Badka Bandh school, it was 189. Standard wise enrolment data in both schools (Table 1.1) is very significant. The data reveals very high dropout rate in both the project schools as we move from Standard I to V. The big difference in the number of children in Standard I and II in both the schools, showing that a large number of children drop



A slide for children, Majghauli School

#### Box-1: Comparing the Two Project Schools

In the process of reforms and improvement in the schools, it was found that both the schools lacked even the basic infrastructure facilities the functioning of the school at Majghauli was much better than that of the Badka Bandh school. The school at Badka Bandh was established in 1995. The District Magistrate of Gaya, Ms Rajbala Verma, had issued a directive in 1995 that a primary school should be set up in all those villages that do not have a school within a radius of 2 kilometres, and the villages inhabited by marginalised communities, particularly Dalits and Musahars should be given priority in this regard. In accordance with this directive of the District Magistrate, a primary school was set up at Badka Bandh village. The primary school at Majghauli was established in 1978 under the auspices of the Department of Education, Government of Bihar. The background of establishment of this school was closely linked with the fact that the inhabitants of Majghauli village, especially belonging to the middle and upper middle level farmers had taken active interest and initiative for it at the block and district levels. Children from the village had to commute a distance of 5–6 kms to go to a school, and, therefore, the villagers considered it essential to have a primary school in the village for their children. If we compare the past of both the schools, the first noticeable difference is that while the Badka Bandh school was set up to fulfil the directive of the District Magistrate, the Majghauli school had been set up due to the initiative taken by parents from the non-marginalised communities. This difference in their background is manifested in the fact that parents from Majghauli consider the school as an integral part of their village whereas parents from Badka Bandh do not feel such a close association with the school. As a result, the participation of community members in the problems and development of the school which is noticeable in the Majghauli village is found to be absent in Badka Bandh. Not only this, the difference in their past is also manifested in the quality of teaching-learning in the schools. For instance, although the pupil-teacher ratio in Majghauli school is higher than in Badka Bandh school, the quality of teaching-learning is better in Majghauli school. In this context, it is noticed that there is a community pressure on teachers in the Majghauli school for better performance, because a section of the parents whose children are enrolled in the school can understand the quality of teaching, and are concerned about the school's performance. On the other hand, teachers at Badka Bandh think that children in their school come from illiterate families, and it is impossible to provide them even a minimum level of education. There is a need to understand

another factor in this regard. The Majhauri school has land to provide for a playground, sanitation and drinking water facilities, and further expansion of the school building, whereas the land legally available with the Badka Bandh school is sufficient for only two classrooms that have been constructed. As a result, children's participation in school environment which is observed in the Majhauri school is found to be absent in the Badka Bandh school due to lack of sufficient space. In summing up, it needs to be always kept in mind that even when two schools are geographically located at a distance of two kms only, there may be a lot of difference in their quality. The differences in the two schools thus indicate, that there is a need for taking up a school based approach in the evaluation of schools as well as in the school effectiveness programmes and strategies.

out after Standard I itself. Even if we consider that the large number of children in Standard I is due to the government's drive for enrolment during the last year, the big difference in the number of children in Standard IV and Standard-V shows that there has been a very high incidence of dropout. Only half of the children in Standard IV are able to reach Standard V. The data also indicates that while there is a consistent decline in the number of students between Standards II and IV, the decline is abruptly very high between Standards I and II, and again between Standards IV and V.

**Table 1.1: School and Std. Wise Enrolment**

Std.	School				Total	
	Majhauri		Badka Bandh		No	Per cent
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent
Standard I	153	48.26	69	36.51	222	43.87
Standard II	52	16.40	43	22.75	95	18.77
Standard III	46	14.51	40	21.16	86	17.00
Standard IV	46	14.51	23	12.17	69	13.64
Standard V	20	6.31	14	7.41	34	6.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 1.2 below gives the social category/caste wise breakdown of children enrolled in both the schools. There were a total 250 households from where the children came to the school. Majhauri village is a multi-caste village with a large population of Scheduled Castes including Musahars. All the children from this village are enrolled in the Majhauri School except 6 children from upper caste Rajput households who are enrolled in private schools in the district town of Gaya because the parents of these children are working and residing in Gaya town. However, these 6 children are also enrolled in the Majhauri School because the private schools in Gaya in which they are studying are not officially recognised schools, and therefore, the children cannot appear in the 10th board examinations from those private schools. Badka Bandh village is a predominantly Musahar community village, but has one brahmin household whose four children are enrolled in the school and are included in the upper caste category in Table 1.2. The Kauakhol village, on the other hand, is a predominantly OBC/ MBC village. Now, keeping these points in mind, if we compare tables 1.2

& 1.3, we find that the caste wise breakdown largely corresponds in both the tables. Thus, we can say that the caste wise break up of enrolled children largely represents the caste-wise breakdown in the communities that the schools serve.

**Table 1.2: Social Category/Caste Wise Distribution of Children**

Caste	School				Total	
	Majhali		Badka Bandh		No.	Per cent
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent		
Upper Caste	35	11.04	4	2.12	39	7.71
OBC	4	1.26	79	41.80	83	16.40
MBC	18	5.68	46	24.34	64	12.65
SC (excluding Musahar)	78	24.61	5	2.65	83	16.40
Musahar	182	57.41	55	29.10	237	46.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 1.3: Distribution of Households according to Social Category**

Social Category	Households	
	No.	Per cent
Upper Castes	21	8.4
Other Backward Castes (OBCs)	42	16.8
Most Backward Castes (MBCs)	32	12.8
SCs (excluding Musahar)	38	15.2
Musahar	117	46.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The majority of the children (63.24 per cent) studying in the two project schools are from the SC communities, particularly the Musahar communities (46.84 per cent). Only 7.71 per cent children belong to upper-castes (Table 1.2). In case of 41.11 per cent children, their fathers have never been to a school, while the mothers of 81.03 per cent children have never been to school (see Tables 1.4 and 1.5 below). If we add the next category of education level, i.e., those who have been enrolled in a school but have dropped out before reaching Standard V, these percentages are 49.61 and 87.35 respectively. Thus, at least around half of the children are first generation learners. These children are not able to get any academic support from their parents. In the prevalent schooling system such support is considered a prerequisite for success. Further, if we take into account the popular belief that it is the mother's education level that more crucially affects the educational performance of a child in early stages, we can say that most of the children in the project schools lack this crucial cultural capital to succeed in the current schooling system.

**Table 1.4: Distribution of Children by Father's Education Level**

Father's Education Level	School					
	Primary School Majhauri		Primary School Badka Bandh		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Never Enrolled in School	120	37.85	88	46.56	208	41.11
Semi Literate (Standards 1–4)	20	6.31	23	12.17	43	8.50
Primary	36	11.36	20	10.58	56	11.07
Upper Primary	43	13.56	31	16.40	74	14.62
Matric	63	19.87	13	6.88	76	15.02
Intermediate	24	7.57	11	5.82	35	6.92
B.A.	8	2.52	3	1.59	11	2.17
M.A.	3	0.95	00	0.00	3	0.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 1.5: Distribution of Children by Mother's Education Level**

Mother's Education Level	School					
	Primary School Majhauri		Primary School Badka Bandh		Total	
	No	Per cent	N	Per cent	N	Per cent
Never Enrolled in School	257	81.07	153	80.95	410	81.03
Semi Literate (std1-4)	19	5.99	13	6.88	32	6.32
Primary	14	4.42	4	2.12	18	3.56
Upper Primary	7	2.21	1	0.53	8	1.58
Matric	17	5.36	11	5.82	28	5.53
Intermediate	3	0.95	7	3.70	10	1.98
B.A.	00	0.00	00	0.00	00	00
M.A.	00	0.00	00	0.00	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Since parents do not themselves have the requisite educational level in order to be able to provide academic support to their children, some try to engage private tutors for this. But, as the data on land ownership and occupation in Tables 1.6 and 1.7 show, not many parents can afford to bear the cost of engaging a private tutor for their children. The data reveal that 62.65 per cent children are from landless households. Another 16.80 per cent are from near-landless households owning less than one bigha (local unit of measurement of land). Only 3.16 per cent children belong to households which own more than 5 bighas of land, and can be expected to be able to bear the cost of engaging a private tutor. If we compare this data with the percentage of children belonging to upper caste households (7.71 per cent), we can say that even many of the upper caste households cannot afford to engage private tutors.



**Table 1.6: Distribution of Children by Household Land Ownership**

Land Ownership	School					
	Primary School Majhauri		Primary School Badka Bandh		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Landless	249	78.55	68	35.98	317	62.65
Blow 1.00 Bigha	32	10.09	53	28.04	85	16.80
1.00 - 2.50 Bigha	16	5.05	22	11.64	38	7.51
2.51 - 5.00 Bigha	9	2.84	41	21.69	50	9.88
More than 5.00 Bigha	11	3.47	5	2.65	16	3.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 1.7: Distribution of Children by Father's Main Occupation**

Father's Main Occupation	School					
	Primary School Majhauri		Primary School Badka Bandh		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Casual Labourer	173	54.57	47	24.87	220	43.48
Cultivator	51	16.09	102	53.97	153	30.24
Govt. Job	9	2.84	1	0.53	10	1.98
Private Sector Job	58	18.30	13	6.88	71	14.03
Petty Business	10	3.15	7	3.70	17	3.36
Artisan/Skilled Labour	4	1.26	90	4.76	13	2.57
Self Employed	9	2.84	00	0.00	9	1.78
Unemployed	3	0.95	10	5.29	13	2.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>100.00</b>

In terms of the occupational background of the father, two major categories are casual labourers and cultivators. Out of the total, 43.48 per cent of the children belong to the category where the father is casual labourer, involved mainly in agricultural, brick kiln, local construction, etc. In the case of another 30.24 per cent children, their fathers are engaged in cultivation. But, not all of them are owner-cultivator. A large number of them are very small tenant cultivators whose economic status cannot be said to be significantly better than casual labourers. The next large category of occupation is grouped as private jobs. Most of these private jobs are low paying jobs, such as helper in a shop or with local tractor driver. Even the category of petty business includes very low paying local endeavours such as selling milk in the village, local tea and sweets shops, small grocery or paan shop. The category of self employment includes such work as a tailoring shop or a cycle repair shop.

The data thus reveals that majority of children in the project schools are from households which have a very low social, educational as well as economic status. Children are unable to get academic support from their parents. Due to lack of home support, the teachers tend to put the blame of the

educational failure of these children on their parents. They have developed an attitude of neglect towards the education of these children. Due to their low social, educational and economic status, the parents also find themselves unable to exert any pressure on the school system to improve its functioning. The government mechanism of VECs has also not been able to ensure active involvement of these parents in the functioning and management of these schools.

In view of the facts described above, the project team gave emphasis on two aspects. One was to mobilise the community for their active interest and involvement in the functioning of the schools. The project was successful in forming new VECs and mobilising them to take an active interest in various aspects of school functioning. They were also involved in creating pressure on the local educational officials for improving the schools. Another major emphasis of the project was to expose and sensitise the teachers to the socio-economic background of the children, and discuss with them the learning needs of these children, and the need for teaching-learning practices relevant to them. Through discussion with teachers, the project team identified the elements and aspects of the day-to-day life experiences of children from different socio-economic backgrounds as well as locally available objects and materials which could be used to engage children in active learning. The project team worked with teachers on how to use in their teaching transactions, examples from the local socio-economic contexts as well as activities based on materials which are part of the day-to-day life experience of children. Folktales and folklores associated with different communities were also identified for use by teachers in the teaching-learning processes.

## 1.4 Conclusion

The two project schools are located in villages which can be called 'remote villages' in popular parlance. The schools cannot be said to have even the minimum infrastructural facilities required for their proper functioning. Both the schools have only two classrooms and a verandah which are used for teaching children from Standards I to V. The classrooms are also used for purposes of storing utensils and other materials required for preparing mid-day meals. Due to lack of sufficient number of classrooms, children were made to sit in the verandahs and the open space also. Though the schools have blackboards, these cannot be used for teaching children seated outside the classrooms because the blackboards are fixed on the walls of the classrooms. While one of the schools has space for a playground, the other does not have even a bare open space where the children can play.

Children from all the communities in the villages are enrolled in the schools. Caste-wise breakdown of children enrolled largely corresponds to the caste-wise breakdown of the communities in the villages, and the majority of children belong to SCs and OBCs. Dropout rates have been very high in both the schools, especially after Standards I and IV. Only half of children enrolled in Standard IV reach Standard V. Around half of the children are first generation learners as their parents were never enrolled in a school. Four-fifth (79.45 per cent) of the children are from landless or near-landless households. In case of 43.8 per cent children, father's main occupation is casual labour, mainly in agriculture, brick kilns and local construction activities. Around 15 per cent of the children are from households engaged in small tenant cultivation along with casual labour. The economic status of these households cannot be said to be better than those engaged in casual labour. Majority of children enrolled in the project schools, thus, belong to households which have a very low socio-economic and educational status. These children are not able to get any academic support from home. Though some of the parents try to engage private tutors for their children, a majority of them are unable to bear the cost of a private tutor.

# Making Schools Functional

Effective implementation of government provisions for basic facilities is an essential prerequisite for making schools functional at a certain minimum level and enhancing the participation of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This chapter provides a detailed account of the project intervention activities and processes undertaken at various levels to ensure the availability of basic facilities such as regularisation of mid-day meals, drinking water and sanitation, distribution of free textbooks, etc. The processes of developing a dialogue and engaging with government officials at various levels, as well as with parents and communities, the nature and type of hurdles faced at different stages, and the experiences and lessons learned have been discussed and analysed here. On the basis of the experiences, the chapter identifies the institutional factors and mechanisms responsible for poor service delivery to the schools and lacklustre implementation of basic facilities. The chapter finally argues why active interest and participation of parents and communities is necessary for improvement in the functioning and management of schools.

## 2.1. Dialogue and Engagement with Government Officials

Institutional arrangements with the schools and government educational institutions since the very beginning of the project and maintaining a system of mutual sharing and learning with concerned government officials during the course of the project formed a crucial part of the strategy. In the first stage, an institutional arrangement was formulated with the District Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). They were pleased to give us permission to conduct our regular activities in the schools. It is notable that when the activities were started in the schools, in the early stages itself, we had to not only initiate a dialogue with the CRC Coordinator, the Block Education Officer (BEO) and the representatives of the District SSA, but also get their support and strategic advice at every stage for resolving the problems faced in the process of conducting the activities in the schools. For instance, for regularisation of mid-day meals in the schools, we approached the CRC Coordinator and the BEO many times, and created pressure on them to issue strict instructions to school headmasters in this regard. Many times, we were able to exert pressure through the District SSA on the BEO and the school headmasters. Similarly, when it was found that children had not received textbooks even after two months of the beginning of the new session, the issue was discussed with the CRC Coordinator and the BEO, and District SSA also created favourable conditions whereby free textbooks were finally distributed to all the children. The issue of timely disbursement of scholarships to children, particularly from the SC, was also discussed with the BEO and the District Welfare Officer, and bottlenecks in the processes were identified and resolved.

It is notable that during dialogues with government officials for resolving the problems of unavailability or partial availability of basic facilities in schools, it was revealed again and again that the failure of the delivery system for the schools was not just the fault of any one individual, but was closely linked to the inability of the existing institutions. For instance, both the schools used to send requisitions for funds for mid-day meals to the SDO (mid-day meal) through the BEO. But the SDO was unable to release funds to the schools because the State SSA had not allocated and disbursed the funds on time. Similarly, children were not receiving free textbooks on time because the textbooks were not being printed on time by the Bihar State Textbook Corporation. There is also a provision for an annual school development fund of Rs 6,000 for essential expenditure on stationery, maintenance of basic facilities like drinking water and sanitation, and for the general up-keep of the school. But, considering the number of children enrolled in the schools, it is difficult to ensure a minimum level of maintenance in the schools with this fund. It is, therefore, not only necessary that the block and district level educational officials maintain a regular dialogue with the schools, but they are also expected to constantly monitor the functioning of the schools and assist the schools in resolving the specific problems faced by them from time to time.

## 2.2. Dialogue and Engagement with Parents and the Communities

Since the beginning of the project, the project team made efforts through workshops, informal discussions and focus group discussions to ensure active participation of parents and the communities in discussing the problems associated with the schools and in taking initiatives to resolve them. In this process, the team first focused on those issues that directly affected the participation of children. These issues included facilities for drinking water and sanitation, regularisation of mid-day meals, regular attendance of teachers, etc. The team always made efforts towards making parents, community members and teachers participate in the workshops, and to make them realise that the problems in the schools could only be resolved through collective initiatives. It was the result of this approach that a collective initiative was undertaken by the communities and teachers for regularisation of mid-day meals and for providing drinking water to children. This generated a self-confidence among parents and the communities for improvement of schools through collective action. It was realised, in this process, that the active interest and initiative thus generated should be given an institutional form. Village Education Committees (VECs) were, therefore, constituted for both the schools, with the consensus of both parents and the community members. The VECs were given the responsibilities to convene workshops, and prepare their agenda, orient the workshops and get the decisions of the workshops implemented. The formation of new VECs was necessitated because the previously constituted VECs had become totally defunct, and the School Education Committees (SECs) under the new SEC Act of the government of Bihar had not yet been formed.

The participation of parents and the communities in school activities further increased when, after three months of the initiation of the project, the VECs announced the decision to set up Learning Support Centres (LSCs) for children enrolled in the schools. Parents were very happy when this agenda was discussed in the workshop by the secretary of the VEC. Interestingly, a strong voice emerged from within the parents and the community members with regard to the appointment of the Education Volunteers (EVs) of the LSCs. When the secretary of the VEC asked for the opinion of parents and the community members on this issue, there was a consensus of opinion among them, listing the names of four people who were considered to be the best teachers (private tutors) in the area for mathematics and English. Though the community members might not have been aware of their formal educational qualification and the teaching methods, they were confident that these people

were the best teachers in the area. It is worth mentioning here that these four EVs primarily provide private tuition to children in primary and upper primary grades. The formal academic achievements of these tutors at secondary (Standard 10) and higher secondary (Standard 12) levels might not have been very good. But the most important thing noticed about them was their deep commitment to teaching children, their awareness about different learning levels and needs of children from diverse backgrounds, and their ability to encourage and motivate these children. Thus, through the participation of parents, the communities, and the VECs an initiative started on issues of regularisation of basic facilities in the schools. The setting up of LSCs created their deep engagement with the school reform programme, and they gradually realised that the school was an integral part of their collective life.

## 2.3. Ensuring implementation of provisions for basic facilities

### 2.3.1 Mid-day Meal Scheme

In the Badka Bandh school, the mid-day meal scheme was not functional for the last two years. The headmaster of the school said that one of the signatories of the bank account for the mid-day meal funds was the chairman of the VEC, and because the VEC was defunct, the school had not been able to withdraw money from the bank for meeting the expenditure of the mid-day meals. The project team contacted the District SSA in this regard, and was told by Mr Shiv Shankar Prasad that the SSA had already issued a circular that in such cases where VECs are not functioning, a bank account for mid-day meal funds can be opened in the name of the headmaster and a senior teacher of the school. At the initiative of the project team a bank account was subsequently opened. A cook was also appointed by the school and the mid-day meal since became functional from 30 April 2010.

The mid-day meal scheme started functioning in Badka Bandh school in this way, and it functioned regularly till the summer vacations started (21 May 2010). However, when the school reopened after the summer vacations, the mid-day meals were closed down. The headmaster told that the school had received the money for mid-day meals, but it had not yet received rice from the concerned Public Distribution System (PDS) Centre. On being contacted by the project team, the person in charge of the PDS Centre said that he had not received the monthly requisition from the school for supply of rice. Later, when the project team and the VEC members discussed this issue with the CRC Coordinator, the PDS Centre sent the rice to the school. A horrible face of this whole problem was



Children taking mid-day meals in Majhauhi School

revealed in this process when the community members gave the information that the PDS Centre staff had brought the rice to the school when it was closed. The community members had requested the PDS staff to leave the rice there and come back next day to get its receipt from the headmaster. But the PDS staff did not agree and took back the rice with them. When the project team received this information, it initiated the whole process again, and only



then the school was supplied with the quota of rice for the mid-day meals scheme. In this whole process mid-day meals could not be served to children for about a month when the school reopened after summer vacations. In a similar way, mid-day meals were not served to children when the school reopened after Dussehra vacations. This time the headmaster said that he had sent requisitions for the fund as well as the rice for the mid-day meal scheme, but neither received any. When the project team contacted the BEO in this regard it was told that the headmaster had not sent any requisition for funds. After a detailed inquiry by the project team it was revealed that the headmaster had actually not sent any requisition to the BEO. Faced with this situation, the project team together with the VEC members pressurised the headmaster to send requisitions for funds and rice as early as possible. As a result of the pressure, the headmaster sent the requisition to the BEO who forwarded it to the SDO (mid-day meals). This whole process took up about a month of efforts by the project team and the VEC members. A similar situation arose again in December–January when the different stake holders associated with the functioning and management of mid-day meals started blaming each other for the problems.

Interestingly, the situation in Majhauri school regarding the mismanagement of mid-day meals and the level of efforts required for its regularisation was not as horrible as in the Badka Bandh school. But this does not mean that the mid-day meal scheme is functioning properly in the Majhauri school without any interruptions. Whenever the mid-day meals were discontinued in the Majhauri school, reasons were put forward that appeared to be the same as in the case of the Badka Bandh school. However, the basic difference between the two schools was that at Majhauri parents or VEC members never pointed out that the school or the headmaster was a factor behind the improper functioning of the mid-day meal scheme. In contrast, detailed enquiries by the project team in the Badka Bandh school revealed the irresponsible behaviour of the headmaster towards mid-day meals, was the main reason why parents and the community members generally used to think that the headmaster was the main factor behind the discontinuation of the scheme. It is important to realise in this context that the headmaster is the key agency in the day-to-day functioning of a school and its development programmes, and even a little indifference in his approach vitally affects the performance of the school.

The basic point that emerges from the discussion above is that the mid-day meal scheme is not functioning as a regular system in the schools, and whenever it is discontinued the various stakeholders involved in its operation start the personal blame game against each other. The stakeholders associated with the mid-day meal scheme and the schools do not generally understand that discontinuation of mid-day meals is not only a failure on the part of one or the other person involved, but also a failure of the institutional mechanisms and governance. A critical learning in this process was that public action was crucially needed for running the mid-day meal scheme in a systematic manner in the schools. It was also learnt that the stakeholders involved do not understand the concept behind the mid-day meal scheme. They think that it is a government programme for providing free food to poor children, particularly from SC communities. They do not understand that the scheme is based on the concept of ensuring a minimum level of regular nutrition to poor children which is necessary not only for their physical health but also for increasing their school participation and making education accessible to them in the real sense.

### 2.3.2 Drinking Water

The issue of drinking water in the schools was raised by children and parents in the initial stages of the project. Both the schools had installed hand pumps for drinking water, but the hand pumps were not operational and needed repairs. The headmaster of the Majhauri school said



Menu for mid-day meals

mukhia of the village panchayat had to be submitted to the executive engineer at the district office of the PHED. The executive engineer conducts a preliminary inquiry after receiving the application, and then sends the PHED team for installation of the boring in the school. This whole procedure took around two months to be completed. Faced with this situation, the project team and the VEC decided for immediate repair of the other had pump which had been installed in the school by the village community. The repair cost of Rs 3,000 was provided by the village community. At the same time, to avail the benefits of government provisions from the PHED, the VEC also managed to get an application from the school forwarded by the BEO to the executive engineer of the PHED. In the Badka Bandh school, the headmaster got the hand pump repaired from the school development fund, and, therefore, drinking water was made available in the school within two to three days.

In the process of facilitating the availability of drinking water facilities in both the schools, the project team realised that it was the most essential facility that all the schools need to have. It was

that the hand pump was not working because the ground water level had gone down substantially. In order to make it operational, it needed extra deep boring (locally known as Heera boring) which would cost around Rs 60,000–70,000. The school was unable to bear this cost from its annual development fund of Rs 6,000. In this context, the headmaster also provided the information about the government provision for installation of this type of boring by the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) for a drinking water facility in schools where it was needed. But to avail the benefits of this provision, an application with joint signatures of the headmaster and the

### Box-2: School Funds

Obtaining data from the schools, mainly on monthly amount of money and grains received for the mid-day meal scheme and expenditure of school development fund was an important step in the process of building and strengthening the project. The project team first approached the headmasters of the schools since they are the prime financial authority at school level for mid-day meals and school development fund. The headmasters of both the schools said that they could provide these data only after receiving a direction from the Block Education Officer in this regard. In the meantime, the District Superintendent of Education was approached, and he issued a directive to the schools to provide these data to the project team. Due to pressure from the authorities, the headmaster of the Majhauri school provided details of school development fund as well as the mid-day meal scheme. However, the headmaster of the Badka Bandh school did not provide the data even then. Finally, the project team was able to obtain data from the Badka Bandh school after filing an RTI application for it with the concerned authority.

An important aspect revealed by the process of obtaining data from the schools was that parents and the communities, whether Dalit or non-Dalit, and even the school teachers were generally ignorant about the amount of school development fund received every year, and the

monthly amount of grains and funds requisitioned and received by the schools for mid-day meals. They were also ignorant about how the schools spent the funds. When the data received from the schools were shared with parents, the communities members and school teachers in fortnightly workshops. It generated an active discussion among them. Parents and especially the community members realised that in order to improve and develop the schools they need to be aware of the concrete facts and understand the real financial condition of the schools. The interest and discussion among them based on concrete facts also made the school teachers, and especially headmasters, realise that the schools needed to maintain transparency in its records, especially with regard to financial matters. Thus, obtaining data from the schools on their funds and expenditures, sharing it with parents and communities members, and making it an issue of public discussion emerged as an effective factor in the process of making the schools transparent and accountable.

a common opinion among the communities as well as the teachers that around 10–20 per cent children leave the school daily in the middle of the day due to lack of drinking water. As told by the teachers, children ask for leave to go home to drink water, and say that they will come back to the school. But the majority of the children generally do not come back. Parents and the community members also expressed the most anger and outrage at the lack of drinking water facility in the schools. The basic logic behind this anger was that if the schools could not provide even drinking water to their children, how they could believe that the schools and teachers were really concerned with educating their children? It is worth mentioning in this context that after the drinking water facilities were made operational in both the schools at the initiative of the VECs and the school teachers, the project team realised that this small achievement had generated a process of positive dialogue between school teachers and the community members which proved to be very helpful later in increasing the active participation of parents and the communities in the implementation of further activities in the schools.

### 2.3.3 Sanitation

The Badka Bandh school does not have any sanitation facility. In the Majhauri school the toilets were still under construction. The headmaster of the Badka Bandh school said that the school did not legally have any land where sanitation facilities could be constructed. And the Majhauri school headmaster said that the construction of toilets had not been completed due to non-payment of dues to the contractor. The most important fact noticed in this context was that unlike the issue of drinking water, neither parents nor teachers raised the issue of lack of toilets as they did not consider it to be a problem. However, the project team realised after a few months that although the issue of sanitation was not raised the girls enrolled in the schools told with much hesitation how they had to often leave school in the middle of the day due to the lack of toilets. It was surprising to find that the community members as well as teachers were completely unaware of this fact. Whenever the girls need to use toilets, they have to go home. Moreover, in discussions with the girls, it was revealed that they could not tell teachers about such a need due to social inhibitions associated with it, and, therefore, they use other pretexts to take leave to go home. Thus, if we look at the schools from the perspective of gender, the availability of sanitation facilities in schools is one of the most important factors for ensuring school participation and retention of girl children.

### 2.3.4 Provision of Free Textbooks

During classroom observations in the Badka Bandh School, it was startling to find that very few children had prescribed textbooks or sufficient basic writing materials such as note books, pencils, pens, eraser, sharpener, etc. During discussions children and parents revealed that although the SSA has a provision to distribute free textbooks to all children in primary classes in the beginning of the session in April, children in the Badka Bandh School had not received textbooks even by the first week of May. A few children (about 15 per cent) were able to get textbooks from their seniors, but the majority of children came to the school without any textbooks. When the project team contacted the headmaster in this regard, he told that the responsibility of ensuring distribution of textbooks lies with the CRC coordinator. The CRC coordinator said that all the textbooks made available to him by the District SSA had already been distributed in the schools. Faced with this situation the project team discussed this matter with the newly formed VEC and decided to mobilise parents to take initiative to create pressure at the CRC and district levels. The project team and the VEC, together with representatives of parents undertook a week-long campaign on this issue and created pressure on the CRC and the BEO, which had a desirable impact on the District SSA. Finally, at the initiative and direction of a senior officer of the District SSA, Mr Shiv Shankar Prasad, books were made available to all children in the school.



Hand Pump in Badka bandh School

Fortunately, in the other project school at Majhauri, textbooks had already been distributed to children. It is interesting to note the difference in the two schools in the same region. While the Badka Bandh school is located in a Dalit village, the Majhauri School is located in an upper caste village. On reflection, it would appear that, to some extent, an attitude of neglect towards schools in Dalit villages prevails among the education officials.

In the process of classroom observations, it was also revealed that children from middle or small farmer families or from families with regular monthly income from a private job or petty business were able to have the necessary writing materials such as notebooks, but children whose parents were landless labourers, mainly from Dalit communities, lacked these necessities. In a classroom, the difference was clearly visible between children who had notebooks and those who did not. The project team identified all such children who did not have necessary writing materials and distributed notebooks, pencils, erasers and sharpeners among them. This experience indicates that in order to promote effective classroom participation of all children, the SSA should also make a provision for free distribution of writing materials to children in primary classes.



## 2.4 Conclusion

Effective implementation of government provisions for basic facilities is essential for making schools functional and in enhancing school participation of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Lack of basic facilities such as regular mid-day meals, and facilities for drinking water and sanitation not only adversely affects children's regular attendance but also creates a serious trust deficit between schools and the communities. It was a common opinion among the communities as well as the teachers that around 10–20 per cent children left the school daily in the middle of the day due to lack of drinking water. Parents and the community members also expressed their anger and outrage that if the schools could not provide even drinking water for their children, they could not believe that the schools and teachers were really concerned with educating their children. The processes and activities undertaken by the project for ensuring availability of basic facilities in schools, therefore, provided vital avenues for facilitating active interest and participation of parents and communities in the improvement of the schools. However, it was surprising to find that, unlike the issue of drinking water, neither parents nor teachers raised the issue of lack of sanitation facility as they did not consider it to be a problem. But the girls enrolled in the schools told with much hesitation and usual social inhibitions that they had to often leave school in the middle of the day due to lack of any toilets.



Toilet at Majhauri School

Similarly, free textbooks could not be distributed to children on time because the Bihar State Textbook Corporation had not printed sufficient number of books on time. However, it is important to realise that the headmaster is the key agency in the day-to-day functioning and development of a school, and even a little indifference in his approach vitally affects the performance of the school. In this context, active participation of parents and the communities' members in the functioning, management and monitoring of schools through effective institutional structures and mechanisms is necessary to ensure accountability of the headmasters and the schools.

The experiences from the project reveal that lack of effective and regular coordination between different levels of government institutions and officials, and the failure of the institutional mechanisms for service delivery to schools were the main factors responsible for non-availability of basic facilities in schools. For instance, both the schools used to send requisitions for funds for the mid-day meal scheme to the SDO (mid-day meal) through the BEO. But the SDO was unable to release funds to the schools because the State SSA had not allocated and disbursed the funds on time.



# Classrooms, Attendance, Dropouts and Learning Levels

Teacher-pupil ratio, student-classroom ratio and class sizes have crucial effects on teaching-learning practices and effective classroom participation of children. This chapter discusses these factors in the context of the two schools under the project, and provides an account of the strategies and activities that were carried out by the project team in order to minimize the adverse impact of these factors and improve classroom practices and processes. The chapter also discusses trends in children's attendance as well as dropout rates. Reasons behind low and fluctuating attendance despite various efforts made by the project team are discussed in detail. Factors responsible for high dropout rates, especially after Standards I and IV are also discussed. The chapter further focuses on the findings of the baseline assessment of learning achievement in Standards II and III which had indicated very low levels of learning among children in both schools. The findings of the baseline assessment helped in sensitising teachers towards different learning needs and constraints of children from diverse backgrounds and in planning and preparing lesson plans and learning activities relevant to their learning level and needs. The chapter finally presents the findings of the end line assessment of learning achievement of children, and discusses the impact of the project in making significant improvements in learning levels.

## 3.1. Teacher-pupil Ratio, Student-classroom Ratio and Class Sizes: Implications for Teaching-learning Practices

There are three teachers in Majhauri school and seven teachers in Badka Bandh school. Thus, the teacher-pupil ratio in Majhauri School is 1:105, and in Badka Bandh School it is 1:27. Both the schools have only two classrooms each, though in the Majhauri school two more classrooms were being constructed.

As Table 3.1 below shows, the class sizes are very large in Standard I in both the schools. The size of Standards II and III can be considered to be normal and manageable in both schools, whereas the size of Standard V in the Majhauri school and Standards IV and V in the Badka Bandh school are significantly small.

**Table 3.1: School and Standard Wise Enrolment**

Standard	School				Total	
	Majhauhi		Badka Bandh		No	Per cent
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent		
I	153.00	48.26	69.00	36.51	222.00	43.87
II	52.00	16.40	43.00	22.75	95.00	18.77
III	46.00	14.51	40.00	21.16	86.00	17.00
IV	46.00	14.51	23.00	12.17	69.00	13.64
V	20.00	6.31	14.00	7.41	34.00	6.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>317.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>189.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>506.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Since both the schools have only two classrooms, the general practice followed by teachers is to have some classes seated in the classrooms and others in the verandahs. Due to its large size, Standard I is seated in verandahs along with some other classes in both the schools. Inside the classrooms, two Classes (Standards II and II or Standards IV and V) are often seated together, especially in the Majhauhi school where the number of teachers is less than the number of classes. These seating arrangements also vary according to seasons. For instance, in winter, all the classes are generally seated in the open space in front of the schools as well as in the verandahs.

The project team observed that the prevalent seating arrangements had blurred the learning space and boundaries between different classes. When two different classes were seated side by side, the teachers were also sitting side by side. In such a situation, it is difficult for both the teachers to teach at the same time. When they did, the teaching transaction was an utter failure in attracting the attention of the children, because children from both classes as well as the teachers themselves were distracted. However, the project team found that teachers were not overly concerned about these distractions because they were interested in merely one-way transaction of the lessons with no concern for the learning outcome of the children.

In this situation, the project team first suggested to utilise, whenever possible, the open space in front of the schools for separate seating arrangements of different standards. Further, the project



Two classes being taught together, Majhauhi School

team also introduced the idea of children sitting in small groups. This was particularly helpful for the teachers in giving more attention to the children and in identifying academically weak students. For instance, in mathematics, after explaining addition with examples on the blackboard, the teacher divided the class into small groups, and each group was given a different set of addition sums to solve. The teacher spent some time

with each group to observe and guide students in solving the sums. Thus, all the children were able to receive individual attention and guidance from the teacher. Finally, when the teacher assembled the whole class again to explain all the sums from different sets given to groups, all the students also got to practice a larger number of sums which could enhance their learning processes and outcome.

### 3.2. Children's attendance

The project team regularly collected data on attendance of children in both the schools by physically counting the students present in the schools once in a week. The data thus collected is given in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. This data reveals that there has been a consistent improvement in attendance of students in both the schools. However, there have been wide fluctuations in the rate of attendance.

**Table 3.2: Attendance of Students in Primary School Majhali**

Date	Standard I	Standard II	Standard III	Standard IV	Standard V
10 April 2010	56	27	24	22	15
19 April 2010	52	31	29	25	14
23 April 2010	45	32	26	24	16
29 April 2010	50	32	12	33	9
3 May 2010	61	11	22	26	12
11 May 2010	42	8	11	20	12
15 May 2010	55	17	17	12	14
18 June 2010	61	24	18	17	8
23 June 2010	71	19	10	19	7
29 June 2010	92	24	14	18	15
1 July 2010	42	25	10	16	11
10 July 2010	36	11	9	15	9
20 July 2010	105	34	12	21	9
29 July 2010	110	47	15	20	10
2 August 2010	36	30	19	18	11
10 August 2010	74	30	14	22	12
14 August 2010	79	18	19	25	8
30 August 2010	50	20	24	35	11
3 September 2010	45	28	21	34	14
8 September 2010	44	18	28	26	16
16 September 2010	61	28	30	30	12
Date	Standard I	Standard II	Standard III	Standard IV	Standard V
24 September 2010	65	38	26	30	13
4 October 2010	71	36	20	35	16
21 October 2010	75	38	32	40	17
30 October 2010	90	40	31	42	14
1 November 2010	55	46	27	34	13

19 November 2010	90	35	30	37	13
26 November 2010	84	41	28	37	15
1 December 2010	65	40	38	30	13
13 December 2010	68	38	36	33	13
19 December 2010	60	32	28	28	11
17 January 2011	61	33	27	29	10
25 January 2011	70	45	37	41	17
01 February 2011	80	46	35	40	16
09 February 2011	75	43	36	42	15
17 February 2011	77	42	35	41	17
28 February 2011	76	40	34	38	16
07 March 2011	73	39	32	36	15
17 March 2011	75	38	36	37	17
25 March 2011	68	32	33	34	15

**Table 3.3: Attendance of Students in Primary School Badka Bandh**

Date	Standard I	Standard II	Standard III	Standard IV	Standard V
21 June 2010	42	34	26	16	10
30 June 2010	40	17	23	16	8
8 July 2010	29	30	25	15	8
22 July 2010	24	27	20	13	6
31 July 2010	30	7	22	9	7
10 August 2010	17	17	11	10	7
14 August 2010	53	17	18	14	5
18 August 2010	30	28	13	10	8
26 August 2010	23	18	22	15	7
2 September 2010	11	19	18	11	5
8 September 2010	22	30	27	20	8
16 September 2010	24	22	24	14	9
20 September 2010	27	11	26	9	9
4 October 2010	64	26	31	14	6
Date	Standard I	Standard II	Standard III	Standard IV	Standard V
7 October 2010	45	23	25	15	11
20 October 2010	33	22	28	13	8
26 October 2010	38	28	30	10	9
1 November 2010	50	32	22	19	8
15 November 2010	42	40	35	22	10
22 November 2010	47	33	36	20	7
29 November 2010	41	27	32	18	8

2 December 2010	67	36	30	22	11
8 December 2010	49	34	32	20	10
19 December 2010	45	32	30	18	9
18 January 2011	47	34	33	19	10
28 January 2011	60	35	34	22	11
04 February 2011	62	34	33	21	11
15 February 2011	63	35	34	23	10
22 February 2011	62	34	33	22	10
03 March 2011	63	33	30	23	9
10 March 2011	65	34	31	23	11
22 March 2011	64	35	32	22	10
30 March 2011	68	33	31	23	11

### 3.3. Reasons for Low and Fluctuating Attendance in Schools

The LSCs helped in motivating children and parents, which had a positive impact on enhancing the regular attendance of children. However, this increase in attendance was not very significant, and the daily attendance also significantly fluctuated. There was a variety of reasons behind this. The parents had developed a sense of trust in the LSCs, and were confident that the learning level of children attending LSCs was certainly improving. Their trust was based on various factors like the regularity of classes, interest and commitment shown by the EVs, and the popularity of the EVs as good teachers. But, the parents had not developed the same level of trust in the teachers of the government schools. They were, therefore, more interested in sending their children to LSCs rather than to regular schools. Since a large number of children were from labourer households, on the days when parents left early for work, children were prone to bunk school as there was no one in the house to supervise them. Sometimes when parents found work 3–5 kms away from their village, it was seen that they took their younger children with them since they did not want to leave them alone at home. In such cases, the older children were required to bring lunch for their parents at the work sites. Thus, the younger as well as the older children had to skip school. Moreover, the labourer parents were always in a dilemma whether it was meaningful and useful to send their children to school or to take them along with them to their work sites to help them earn a few more rupees.

### 3.4. Factors Affecting Large Scale Drop-outs after Standard I

The data reveals very high dropout rates in both the project schools as we move from Standard I to V. The big difference in the number of children in Standard I and II, in both schools, shows that a large number of children dropped out after Standard I itself. Even if we consider that the large number of children in Std I is due to the government's drive for enrolment during the last year, the big difference between the numbers of children in Standard IV and V shows that there has been a very high incidence of dropout. Only half of the children in Standard IV are able to reach Standard V. The data also indicates that while there is a consistent decline in the number of students between Standards II and IV, the decline is abrupt between Standards I and II, and again between Standards IV and V.

The major factors behind the very high dropout rate of after Standard I can be identified as low quality of instruction in schools, fear-based conventional teaching-learning practices, lack of academic support from parents, children being engaged by parents in gainful work, and migration of parents



to nearby areas in search of work. These factors work in combination to push children out of school early. When a child is enrolled in Standard I, a poor labourer parent may think him to be too young to engage him in gainful work. But by the time the child finishes Standard I and is also older by one year, and the parents find that he has learnt nothing still even after going to school for a year, they lose all hope about the value of sending him to school, and start thinking about engaging him in some gainful work for contributing economically to the family. Due to the conventional teaching-learning practices in the schools, which are fear-based, and teacher and text book centred, the child himself does not find the classroom and the school environment motivating and interesting. If the child is a first generation learner he is also unable to get any academic support from parents, and may not be able to complete homework given in the school. If a child does not complete homework given to her by the class teacher, she is rebuked in front of all the other children. In the case of a child from a socially marginalised community, there may also be socially/culturally derogatory comments on his background and learning ability. All this develops a fear of the school in the mind of the child and alienates her from the learning processes and the school. Finding little interest of the child in learning, the poor labourer parents also are more likely to think of engaging him in some gainful work instead. Long distance migration of parents for work is yet another factor affecting dropout rate. During the period of such migration parents take their young children along with them. At the place of migration these children do not get any learning facilities. When they come back to the village after a few months, they find themselves unable to adjust to the school environment, and lose all interest in going to school.

### 3.5 Baseline Assessment of Learning Achievement

A baseline assessment of learning achievement of children in Standards II and III in arithmetic and reading skills was conducted in order to be able to measure the impact of the project on the learning levels. The baseline data revealed some broad trends. In arithmetic as well as in reading, children in the Badka Bandh school showed lower levels of performance compared to children in the Majhauri school. The difference in performance of children from the two schools was even more pronounced in the case of reading levels. If we look at data on father's educational level given in Table 1.4 (see Chapter 1), we find that a higher percentage of children from the Badka Bandh school (46.56 per cent) compared to the Majhauri school (37.84 per cent) were from households where father had never been enrolled in a school. Thus, we can say that the educational level of the father might be linked to a child's learning achievement. As Table 3.4 shows, 35 per cent of the children from the Badka Bandh school could not even recognise numbers 1 to 9, while the children in the Majhauri school were able to recognise the numbers. However, gender-wise data on learning levels did not reveal any significant trends.

**Table 3.4: Standard and School Wise Baseline Learning Level of Children in Arithmetic**

Standard	School	Percentage Giving the Learning Levels of Children in Arithmetic						
		Do Nothing	Recognise Numbers		Add	Add with Carry Over	Subtract	Subtract with Borrowing
			1-9	10-99				
II N=76	Badka Bandh N=40	35.0	65.0	42.5	55.0	27.5	22.5	15.0
	Majhauri N=36	0.0	100.0	72.2	83.3	25.0	61.1	13.8
	Total N=76	18.4	81.6	56.6	68.4	26.3	40.8	14.5

III N=47	Badka Bandh N=23	0.0	100.0	78.3	78.3	43.5	91.4	43.5
	Majhauri N=24	0.0	100.0	83.3	91.6	58.3	70.8	45.8
	Total N=47	0.0	100.0	80.8	85.1	51.8	80.8	44.6
Total N=123	Badka Bandh N=63	22.2	77.8	55.5	63.5	33.3	47.6	25.4
	Majhauri N=60	0.0	100.0	76.7	86.7	38.33	65.0	26.7
	Total N=123	11.4	88.6	65.8	74.8	35.8	56.1	26.0

**Table 3.5: Standard and Gender-wise Baseline Learning Level of Children in Arithmetic**

Standard	Gender	Percentage Giving the Learning Levels of Children in Arithmetic (Gender-wise)						
		Do Nothing	Recognize Numbers		Add	Add with Carry Over	Subtract	Subtract with Borrowing
			1-9	10-99				
II N=76	Girls N= 42	14.3	85.7	52.8	76.2	30.9	35.7	14.3
	Boys N=34	23.5	76.5	61.8	58.8	20.6	47.1	14.7
	Total N=76	18.4	81.6	56.6	68.4	26.3	40.8	14.5
III N=47	Girls N=22	0.0	100.0	72.7	95.4	40.9	90.9	45.4
	Boys N=25	0.0	100.0	88.0	76.0	60.0	72.0	44.0
	Total N=47	0.0	100.0	80.8	97.9	51.1	80.8	44.7
Total N=123	Girls N=64	9.4	90.6	59.4	82.8	34.4	54.7	25.0
	Boys N=59	13.6	86.4	72.9	66.1	37.3	57.6	27.1
	Total N=123	11.4	88.6	65.8	74.8	35.8	56.1	26.0

**Table 3.6: Standard and School-wise Baseline Learning Level of Children in Reading**

Std.	School	Percentage of Children Who Can Read					
		Nothing	Letters	Two Letter Words	Three Letter Words	Std. 1 Text	Std. 2 Text
II N=79	Badka Bandh N=40	57.5	42.5	5.0	5.0	5.0	2.5
	Majhauri N=39	41.0	59.0	30.8	28.2	25.6	7.7
	Total N=79	49.4	50.6	17.7	16.4	15.2	5.1
III N=46	Badka Bandh N=22	13.6	86.4	54.5	45.4	36.4	18.2
	Majhauri N=24	12.5	87.5	58.3	54.2	37.5	16.7
	Total N=46	13.0	87.0	56.5	50.0	36.9	17.4
Total N=125	Badka Bandh N=62	41.9	58.1	22.6	19.3	16.1	8.1
	Majhauri N=63	32.2	69.8	41.3	38.1	30.2	11.1
	Total N=125	36.0	64.0	32.0	28.8	23.2	9.6

**Table 3.7: Standard and Gender-wise Baseline Learning Level of Children in Reading**

Std.	Gender	Percentage of Children Who Can Read (Gender-wise)					
		Nothing	Letters	Two Letter Words	Three Letter Words	Standard 1 Text	Standard 2 Text
II N=79	Girls N=43	48.8	51.2	16.3	14.0	14.0	4.6
	Boys N=36	50.0	50.0	19.4	19.4	16.7	5.6
	Total N=79	49.4	50.6	17.7	16.4	15.2	5.1
III N=46	Girls N=21	9.5	90.5	42.8	38.1	23.8	9.5
	Boys N=25	16.0	84.0	68.0	60.0	48.0	24.0
	Total N=46	13.0	87.0	56.5	50.0	36.9	17.4
Total N=125	Girls N=64	35.9	64.1	25.0	21.9	17.2	6.2
	Boys N=61	36.1	63.9	39.3	36.1	29.5	13.1
	Total N=125	36.0	64.0	32.0	28.8	23.2	9.6

### 3.6. Implications of Baseline Assessment for Improving Learning Achievement in Schools

The findings of the baseline assessment clearly indicates a very low level of learning among children in the project schools. For instance, 35 per cent of the children in the Badka Bandh school could not even recognise numbers between 1 to 9, and 57 per cent of the children in the Badka Bandh school and 41 per cent of the children in the Majhauhi school could not read Hindi alphabets. Based on these data, the project team and the teachers started paying more attention to the learning of basics like recognition of numbers, alphabets and words. The baseline assessment helped the project team and the teachers in identifying children's individual learning needs and grouping them according to their learning levels in order to provide them with individualised attention. It also helped to clearly identify the children who had lowest levels of learning. Separate lesson plans for number recognition, counting, letters and words were prepared for these children, and they were given special attention by the teachers. Context specific objects were used for letters and words like names of crops, grains, trees, flowers, animals, etc that are available locally. For enhancing the reading ability of the children, games, local poetry, songs or even popular lullabies, as well as short paragraphs and stories based on themes from socio-economic context were used. Hand-made pictorials and drawings of locally found objects as well as popular children's games were used for number recognition and counting. Even themes like prices of objects and materials of daily use in the villages were used for learning additions and subtractions.

### 3.7. Endline Assessment of Learning Achievement: Improvements in Learning Levels

An end line assessment of learning achievement of children studying in Standards II and III was conducted in March 2011 in order to measure the impact of the project on the learning level of children. The findings of the end line assessment are given below in Tables 3.8 to 3.11. The findings indicate significant improvements in the learning level of children in both the schools in arithmetic as well as in their ability to read. As the data shows, the learning level in Standards II and III in both the schools has increased in almost all the indicators. However, we can still find that five out of forty children in

Standard II in the Badka Bandh school cannot even recognise numbers 1 to 9 (see Table 3.8); or nine out of thirty-seven children in Standard II cannot read Hindi alphabets. Most of these children are found to have been away from their villages for a long period of time because their parents had migrated to other places in search of work. Thus, these children did not get the opportunity to benefit to learn from the activities of the Learning Support Centres or the improvement in the schools.

**Table 3.8: Standard and School-wise Endline Learning Level of Children in Arithmetic**

Std.	School	Percentage Giving the Learning Level of Children in Arithmetic						
		Do Nothing	Recognise Numbers		Add	Add with Carry Over	Subtract	Subtract with Borrowing
			1-9	10-99				
II N=75	Badka Bandh N=40	12.5	87.5	72.5	72.5	42.5	52.5	15.0
	Majhauri N=35	0.0	100.0	85.7	91.4	74.3	80.0	62.9
	Total N=75	6.7	93.3	78.7	81.3	57.3	65.3	37.3
III N=56	Badka Bandh N=28	0.0	100.0	82.9	82.9	57.1	85.7	50.0
	Majhauri N=28	0.0	100.0	89.3	96.4	78.6	82.1	64.3
	Total N=56	0.0	100.0	85.7	89.3	67.9	83.9	57.1
Total N=131	Badka Bandh N=68	7.4	92.6	76.4	76.4	48.5	66.2	29.4
	Majhauri N=63	0.0	100.0	87.3	93.7	76.2	81.0	63.5
	Total N=131	3.8	96.2	81.7	84.7	61.8	73.3	45.8

**Table 3.9: Standard and Gender-wise Endline Learning Level of Children in Arithmetic**

Std.	Gender	Percentage Giving the Learning Level of Children in Arithmetic (Gender-wise)						
		Do Nothing	Recognise Numbers		Add	Add with Carry Over	Subtract	Subtract with Borrowing
			1-9	10-99				
II N=75	Girls N=43	9.3	90.7	74.4	76.7	46.5	65.1	25.6
	Boys N=32	3.1	96.9	84.4	87.5	71.1	65.6	53.1
	Total N=75	6.7	93.3	78.7	81.3	57.2	65.3	37.3
III N=56	Girls N=21	0.0	100.0	81.0	81.0	76.2	81.0	52.4
	Boys N=35	0.0	100.0	88.6	94.3	68.6	85.7	60.0
	Total N=56	0.0	100.0	85.7	89.3	67.9	83.9	57.1
Total N=131	Girls N=64	6.2	93.8	76.6	78.2	53.1	70.3	34.4
	Boys N=67	1.5	98.5	86.6	91.0	70.1	76.1	56.7
	Total N=131	3.8	96.2	81.7	84.7	61.8	73.3	48.8

**Table 3.10: Standard and School-wise Endline Learning Level of Children in Reading**

Std.	School	Percentage of Children Who Can Read					
		Nothing	Letters	Two Letter Words	Three Letter Words	Std. 1 Text	Std. 2 Text
II N=69	Badka Bandh N=37	24.3	75.7	54.1	48.6	2.7	0.0
	Majhauri N=32	0.0	100.0	93.8	75.7	62.5	46.9
	Total N=69	13.0	86.9	72.5	66.7	30.4	21.7
III N=59	Badka Bandh N=28	10.7	89.3	75.0	64.3	28.6	14.3
	Majhauri N=31	3.2	96.8	93.5	93.5	67.7	51.6
	Total N=59	6.8	93.2	84.7	79.7	49.2	33.9
Total N=128	Badka Bandh N=65	18.5	81.5	63.1	38.5	13.8	6.2
	Majhauri N=63	1.6	98.4	93.7	90.5	65.1	49.2
	Total N=128	10.2	89.8	78.1	72.7	39.1	27.3

**Table 3.11: Standard and Gender-wise Endline Learning Level of Children in Reading**

Std.	Gender	Percentage of Children Who Can Read (Gender-wise)					
		Nothing	Letters	Two Letter Words	Three Letter Words	Std. 1 Text	Std. 2 Text
II N=69	Girls N=37	13.5	86.5	67.6	64.9	29.7	18.9
	Boys N=32	12.5	87.5	78.1	68.8	31.3	25.0
	Total N=69	13.0	86.9	72.5	66.7	30.4	21.7
III N=59	Girls N=23	13.0	87.0	78.3	69.6	43.5	26.1
	Boys N=36	2.8	97.2	88.9	86.1	52.8	38.9
	Total N=59	6.8	93.2	84.7	79.7	49.2	33.9
Total N=128	Girls N=60	13.3	86.7	71.7	66.7	35.0	21.7
	Boys N=68	7.4	92.6	83.8	77.9	42.6	32.4
	Total N=128	10.2	89.8	78.1	72.7	39.1	27.3

A comparison between the two schools shows that there still persists a gap in learning levels between them. However, when we compare the findings of the endline assessment with those of the baseline assessment, we find that the gap has become much narrower. While discussing the results of the baseline assessment above, it was hypothesised that the difference in learning levels in the two schools could be related to the comparative difference in the educational status of the father. However, during the project implementation process it was clearly revealed that the learning level of children was also critically affected by the overall management and functioning of the schools. In this regard, it was observed that the role of the headmaster was crucial. The headmaster of the Majhauri school took responsibilities towards the school more seriously, and this also had a very positive impact on other teachers. In contrast, the headmaster of the Badka Bandh school did not have any active interest



in the functioning of the school and neglected his duties and responsibilities. Therefore, in spite of having only three teachers in the school, the overall management and functioning of the Majhali school was better as compared to the Badka Bandh school which had seven teachers.

The baseline assessment had not indicated any significant gender-wise trend in the learning level of children. However, it is interesting to note that the findings of the endline assessment reveal that there is a consistent trend of boys achieving higher levels of learning than girls on most of the indicators. The prevalence of biased attitudes among communities towards the education of girls appear to be mainly responsible for this. In order to explain this we have to keep in mind that the role of the LSCs was very important in contributing towards enhancement of learning level of children. But only a limited number of children could be enrolled in the LSCs, and it was observed that parents generally preferred to enrol boys instead of girls. The parents argued that girls needed to help in the household chores in the evenings when the LSCs functioned, and therefore, they would be unable to attend the LSCs. Although the project team made efforts to achieve a gender balance, more boys than girls were enrolled in the LSCs. Thus, the gender bias of the communities prevented many girls from availing the benefits of the LSCs.

### 3.8 Conclusion

Student-classroom ratios in both the schools had adverse implications for classroom management and teaching-learning practices. Since both the schools had only two classrooms, children of different Standards had to be seated side by side, often blurring the boundaries between different Standards. As a result, it was difficult for teachers as well children to focus on the teaching-learning transactions. The teacher- and text-centred transaction methods further exacerbated the problem. In order to address this issue, teachers were encouraged to utilise the open spaces as far as possible, and introduce seating arrangements in small groups. Small group seating arrangements also helped in grouping children according to their level of learning. The findings of the baseline assessment of learning achievement of children further helped in identifying children's individual learning levels and needs, and in preparing lesson plans and learning activities accordingly. The small group sitting arrangements together with separate lesson plans and learning tasks for children with different learning needs proved to be very helpful in improving classroom management and teaching-learning practices.

Attendance of children in the LSCs was very regular—at least for boys. There was also an improvement in the overall attendance of children in schools, but it was not very significant, and the daily attendance fluctuated significantly. A major factor behind this was the trust parents had in the positive impact of the LSCs in improving the educational level of their children. Parents did not have the same level of trust in the schools. The working condition of parents, particularly from the labourer households, was another factor that adversely affected school attendance. On days when parents left early for work, or when they found work 3–5 kms away from their village, their children were most likely to miss school. A combination of school and household based factors are also responsible for very high dropout rate, especially after Standard I. These factors work in combinations to push children out of school early. Children do not find the classroom and the school environment motivating and interesting, or the teaching-learning practices relevant to their interests. As first generation learners, they are also unable to get any academic support from parents, and may not be able to complete their homework. If they are unable to complete homework they are more likely to get derogatory remarks from the teacher. All this develops a sense of fear of the school in the minds of children and alienated them from the learning processes and the school itself. Finding little progress in the learning level of their children, the poor labourer parents are more prone to feel the futility of continuing to send their children to school. They start thinking of engaging them in some gainful work instead.

# Developing Inclusive Classrooms for Diverse Children

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the various processes and activities that were undertaken for developing inclusive classroom practices and processes. It first discusses the activities that were undertaken with teachers on their attitudes and beliefs about children from different socio-economic backgrounds, to enhance their understanding of social differentiation within the classroom, and to sensitise them to the different learning needs and constraints of children from diverse backgrounds. Various practical exercises that were developed and conducted with teachers in this regard are also discussed. The exercises also provide practical inputs for teachers to facilitate an inclusive environment in the school and the classroom. The chapter then proceeds to discuss various activities conducted to improve the learning environment in the schools to make it child friendly and inclusive for children especially from the marginalised communities. The next section discusses the concrete activities that were undertaken to enhance teachers' professional skills and facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes. Various activities such as lesson planning and preparation of different learning tasks and activities relevant to different learning needs of children as well as the socio-economic context of children are discussed and their implications are analysed. Lastly, the chapter describes the processes and activities of the LSCs and discusses their role, relevance and impact on improvement of the schools and enhancement of learning achievement of children.

## 4.1. Enhancing Teachers' Understanding of Social Differentiation within the Classroom and the Learning Needs and Constraints of Children from Diverse Socio-economic Backgrounds

As discussed earlier, the pilot study in the two schools had revealed that a majority of school teachers believed in the concept of heredity-based 'educability' of children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Although the caste factor was not directly referred to, the explanation of the teachers of hereditary 'educability' had clear caste underpinnings. Based on this belief, teachers perceived children from marginalised communities as being 'learning deficient' or 'uneducable'. Thus, teachers did not recognise the reality of socio-economic differentiation and marginalisation within the classroom, and, therefore, the different learning needs and constraints of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. As a result, teachers viewed their professional accountability in terms of mechanical transmission of facts and knowledge from the textbooks, without any concern for

the resulting learning achievement of all children. Teachers' education and sensitisation on issues of social differentiation and processes of marginalisation of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds inside the schools and the classrooms was, therefore, an important issue that the project sought to address.

In this process, data and information obtained from various sources and methods were utilised for initiating and facilitating discussions and reflections in fortnightly workshops with teachers. Initially, the findings of the pilot study were discussed to get feedback of the teachers. Information from classroom observations was discussed to reflect upon practices and processes that seemed to reflect social prejudices towards certain sections of children based on their gender, caste or social, cultural and economic position in the local society. The findings of the child profile survey, which was conducted with the active involvement of teachers, provided concrete empirical evidences to expose teachers to the different socio-economic backgrounds. The results of the baseline assessments of learning achievements of children together with the findings of the child profile survey proved to be especially important in making teachers realise that children from different socio-economic backgrounds had different learning needs and constraints, and therefore, teachers are required to orient their teaching-learning methods in accordance with the diverse requirements of children. Experiences of the LSCs in enhancing learning achievement of children from marginalised communities were also discussed and reflected upon with teachers in order to work on their negative attitudes towards the learning potential of these children.

In order to work on teachers' attitude and beliefs, a process for developing and preparing a toolkit on various dimensions of diversity and marginality was also initiated and carried out through the major part of the project period. Data and information, obtained from various activities and processes conducted during the project, were regularly documented, processed and analysed in order to develop materials for the toolkit. In this process, different lesson plans and exercises on various aspects of diversity and marginality were prepared and discussed with teachers in interactive and participatory workshops. Some of the major exercises conducted in this process are described below.

#### **4.1.1 Exercise 1**

Teachers were asked to make a social map of the villages where the schools were located.

Making of a social map of a place can be an interesting way of 'knowing' the details, the not-so-obvious layers of the social reality. Teachers were asked to begin with a general map of the villages with various landmarks. The idea was to know what teachers thought were the landmarks of the village. Some of these landmarks through which they would want the village to be identified could have a deeper social meaning. There could be geographical landmarks, like a river, hills, a dam, a road or a bridge. Then there could be temples, mosques, gurudwaras or any other places of worship. They could also include school, panchayat bhavan, playground, pond or market. Teachers could also think of significant trees, some important buildings or houses of some individuals as some of the landmarks of the village. The effort during the exercise was to help them think from the 'obvious' to 'not-so-obvious'. As teachers suggested different landmarks, there was a discussion among them about what should be and what should not be a landmark of the village, and it provided with entry points to discuss the social values and beliefs unconsciously subscribed by them.

The next step was to prepare an educational map of the villages. Teachers were asked to colour the village segments, with green and finally yellow, on the scale of most literacy to least literacy. The mapping of education provided issues for initiating discussion among teachers for low levels of literacy among certain sections of the village population, and its implications for school participation and learning achievement of children from these sections.

### 4.1.2 Exercise 2

There are many ways of understanding society and social relations. To understand them through different work that different people perform is significant at least for two reasons. One, it can explain how a range of activities go into making the society functional. Two, it can help introduce the concept of 'dignity of labour', which is pivotal for developing a meaningful understanding of caste. This can also be an effective method to develop a positive attitude among teachers towards children from households engaged in different types of occupations/work.

Teachers were asked to:

- ◆ List as many activities as they could in the village, which together completed its typical 24-hour routine.
- ◆ List activities/works whose practitioners did not or could not send their children to school.
- ◆ Identify people by their occupation whose children had very low learning levels.

They were then asked to compare their lists with each other, and identify (a) the difference in their lists in relation to caste, gender and religion; (b) the nature of work missing from their list; and (c) the types of work that came easily to their minds or were difficult for them to register. Teachers were asked to put all the work in their lists in order of their 'importance' from the 'most' to the 'least' important. An open discussion was initiated on why they thought of a particular occupation as more or less important than the other, how an occupation affects the social status and position of different people, and how it relates to the educational possibilities of their children.

### 4.1.3 Exercise 3

We all can recall a few instances from our childhood that always seem to stay with us. Family and friends, school and teachers, do leave an everlasting impression on our minds, some stronger than others. These impressions could be beautiful or unpleasant, empowering or debilitating, joyous or sorrowful. But, they are there with us, affecting us in a silent way throughout our lives. Seldom do we think about them, let alone analyse them. Revisiting some of those moments and experiences could provide an entry point for a riveting discussion on social structures and relations, and prejudiced social beliefs and practices.

Under this exercise, teachers were asked to narrate, share and discuss their experiences on the following:

- ◆ An experience when they felt proud on account of their caste.
- ◆ An experience when they felt they were insulted because of their caste.
- ◆ An instance from their childhood school where they experienced or observed a caste-based behaviour such that they will not approve today.
- ◆ Any incident of caste-based discrimination where they felt they should have intervened but did not or could not.
- ◆ An incident where their school teacher did something remarkable in terms of preventing/correcting a caste-based discrimination or bad behaviour?

### 4.1.4 Exercise 4

These exercises were focused on discussing with teachers the different ways in which activities in the schools and within the classrooms could be refashioned to initiate the processes of making them inclusive of children from diverse and deprived socio-economic backgrounds.

#### 4.1.4.1 *School Prayers*

This activity focused on how school prayers could be turned into an inclusive activity that facilitates a positive attitude towards children from marginalised communities, and promote their active participation. Teachers were asked to share their experiences and discuss the following issues in this regard.

- ◆ Examine the nature of the school prayers. Are they conforming to caste norms?
- ◆ Who often initiates/leads the prayers from the stage? What is the caste composition of those students?
- ◆ Do children from marginalised communities ever initiate the prayers from the stage? Does it come instinctively to them?
- ◆ Have they ever noticed resistance from the upper caste children to lower caste children saying prayers from the stage?
- ◆ Have they ever felt diffidence in lower caste children to take the stage for this purpose?
- ◆ Have they ever encouraged lower caste children to be part of prayer initiators?
- ◆ Do they know all the students of their school/class who sing well?
- ◆ How many of lower caste students sing well?

#### 4.1.4.2 *Cultural Functions and Festivals in the School*

Like school prayers, other cultural functions and festivals celebrated in schools can also be made into important activities through which an inclusive school environment can be promoted. Many of the questions raised in the above section can be applied. The following indicative issues were discussed with teachers in this regard.

- ◆ Do they form committees of students to organise cultural functions and festivals in school? How are these committees constituted? What role do the students play in allocating responsibilities to each other?
- ◆ Do they often/ever find marginalised community students in these committees?
- ◆ Do they often/ever find marginalised community students in the lead role in these committees?
- ◆ What are the religious (or, religion-based) festivals celebrated at the school? How many religions are represented in such celebrations? Do religious festivals encourage or discourage participation of students from all sections/castes/classes?
- ◆ Have they ever seen a Dalit student distributing prasad (sweets offered after prayers) during Saraswati puja or any other religious festival?
- ◆ Have they ever encouraged Dalit students to take active part in any festival/function that they have organised?

#### 4.1.4.3 *Within the Classroom*

Social prejudices and practices can be manifested in our behaviour in overt as well as in many subtle ways. These prejudices may also be reflected in our behaviour without our realisation. We may also be perpetuating these practices because we choose to remain indifferent by allowing these prejudiced behaviours to go unchallenged. In this context, teachers were asked to discuss, share their opinion and reflect upon the following questions/issues.



- ◆ In their entire teaching career how many Dalit students have been their class monitors?
- ◆ In their entire teaching career how many Dalit students do they know who were good students, singers, players, debaters, painters, etc?
- ◆ Do they recall any incident when an upper caste teacher might have asked a Dalit student to get a glass of water for him?
- ◆ Do you recall any incident when their colleague, or they, might have asked an upper caste student to clean the classroom?
- ◆ Can they name all the students who often sit in the front row? And those who are invariably on the back benches? Do they notice any caste character in this seemingly 'voluntary' activity within their classroom?
- ◆ When they ask a question in the class more often than not in what direction do they look at? Have they ever paid any attention to this?
- ◆ Do they feel any discriminatory tone in their voice when they speak with students from the lowered castes?
- ◆ Have they ever heard students using casteist slurs against each other? What about caste-based derogatory jokes?

This check-list was not designed to judge teachers. Rather, its purpose was just to remind them of several subtle ways in which prejudice and discrimination may continue.

#### **4.1.4.4 *Doing Something New***

In this exercise, the need and possibilities were discussed of taking up some new and innovative activities which could help create an inclusive school environment and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect towards each other. A suggested activity of inviting an elderly Dalit man or woman from the village, who may be non-literate, as a special guest for prize distribution or on any other special event/celebration in the school was discussed as an example in this regard. Such an initiative by the school will:

- ◆ Boost the morale of Dalit children
- ◆ Teach students respect for elderly people
- ◆ Particularly be instructive to non-Dalit students
- ◆ Inspire and enthuse Dalit children to come to school
- ◆ Inspire and enthuse Dalit parents to send their wards to school
- ◆ Create an atmosphere of mutual respect within and outside the classroom

Unlearning social prejudices and practices, particularly those related to caste, cannot be easy, as it constitutes our cultural-subconscious and involves changing of deeply rooted attitudes, cultural prejudices and behaviours. The way the caste system and caste-based prejudices sneak into the school and classrooms might surprise us, if only we were a bit more alert and open to perceive and change. Teachers need to constantly discuss, share and reflect upon their beliefs and practices, and how these affect classroom practices and processes in order to take the first step towards changing the existing biased social norms, prejudices and practices.



## 4.2. Developing a Child Friendly and Inclusive Learning Environment

As discussed in Chapter 3, children's attendance in the project schools showed a fluctuating trend, and improvements in attendance were not very significant due to various reasons. In order to address this issue and improve attendance, the project team made efforts to improve the school environment and make it attractive and enjoyable so that all children irrespective of their socio-economic and cultural background felt comfortable, valued and capable. In this regard, the schools were assisted to undertake a variety of activities. Schools were facilitated to organise regular extracurricular activities like local games, sports and cultural activities with which children from diverse and deprived backgrounds were familiar. Active participation of teachers and children in these activities had the potential to facilitate the process of breaking the usual inhibitions between teachers and children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and promote an environment where children were without fear and felt free to interact, discuss and collaborate with teachers and peers. These activities could also generate a sense of being capable among the children who had low learning level or who were from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, in a local sport like kabaddi, these children may show good performance because kabaddi has been a regular part of their day-to-day life. If their performance in kabaddi is valued and appreciated by the school, it will help these children in constructing a positive self-image and self-worth. Similarly, if the school organises a cultural function to celebrate the birth anniversary of the Saint-Poet Ravidas who belonged to a Dalit community, it will be able to create a positive feeling among children from Dalit communities about their cultural background and worth, and they will be able to relate themselves with the school more closely.

The school environment was also made attractive and conducive for learning by making it print rich. Attractive and informative picture charts and posters, and various types of maps of Bihar, India and the world were put up in the schools. The project team also made efforts to facilitate teachers and children to develop and follow common norms of conduct and discipline. Teachers were facilitated to prepare annual calendars and daily routines for different standards, keeping in view that all the standards get a certain number of periods daily. Efforts were also made to involve parents in jointly evolving a common norm for teacher as well as student attendance. It was expected that these activities aimed at improvement of school environment and organisation would have a positive impact on both teacher and student attendance, and create a learning environment conducive for increasing the participation of children from diverse and, especially, marginalised communities.

## 4.3. Improvement of Classroom Practices and Processes

Consistent efforts were made by the project team to facilitate the improvement of classroom practices and processes, and the teaching-learning methods. One of the major challenges in this process was classroom management through appropriate grouping and seating arrangement of children with different learning levels. The project team assisted teachers to group children according to their learning level and plan learning tasks and activities accordingly. However, the project team also facilitated teachers at other times to group children of different learning levels together in order to promote peer-learning. In such a grouping, children with a higher learning level assisted children with a lower learning level to learn and complete the assigned learning tasks. These seating arrangements helped teachers to find more time to concentrate on groups of children experiencing very low levels of achievement. A major hurdle that was faced in effective classroom management with seating arrangement in small groups was lack of sufficient number of classrooms. When children from more than one standard were sitting together in verandahs or in the open space outside, it became difficult for a teacher to manage the groups in the available space.

Another major challenge for the project team was to facilitate teachers in appropriate lesson planning and identification and preparation of learning tasks and activities for children with different levels of learning. Efforts were made to evolve context specific practices and processes which were child-centred, inclusive and relevant to the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of children. In this regard, the project team first assisted teachers in developing their understanding of the children's life experiences and knowledge of their socio-economic and cultural context and environment. In this process, instead of testing their knowledge and competencies through textbooks, children were asked by the teachers to write about their knowledge and experience on various issues related to their daily life and surroundings. For instance, children were asked to write on issues such as what they did in the school apart from studying; what is good or bad



A child with learning material distributed by Deshkal Society

in your village; the different castes in their village and their occupations; different crops grown in their village and the implements used for cultivation; how paddy cultivation was carried out in their village; who worked on the farms; the musical instruments played during marriages in the village and who played them; the different games and sports they played and the children they played with. Children's experiences and knowledge from these exercises were documented, discussed and analysed by the teachers and the project team to identify issues for evolving context specific teaching-learning methods in different subjects such as mathematics and language to further build their knowledge and enhance their competencies. For instance, on the basis of games and sports that children played, an innovative activity based method of learning counting, addition and subtraction was evolved.

For children with different levels of learning, different types of lesson plans, and learning tasks and activities had to be prepared. Ideally, this would require work by the teachers even after school hours, which was not easy to persuade. The project team, therefore, together with the EVs of the LSCs, made efforts to prepare different types of lesson plans and learning activities, and motivate teachers to implement them in the schools. The project team assisted teachers to plan and experiment with a variety of teaching-learning methods, which could facilitate active engagement of children in learning activities. Local stories and folk tales were used for improving listening and oral comprehension abilities of children. For instance, in a grouping of children with different levels of learning, a child with higher learning or reading level was given a popular local folk tale or a small story based on local socio-economic contexts to read. Other children were then asked to respond to a few questions based on the story. The teacher assisted children in the process to discuss and find answers to the questions. Children in this process were engaged in collective learning. Similarly, picture reading was used for improving reading skills. For instance, cards with pictures of different animals were kept together. Each child was given the name of an animal and was asked to identify that animal in the



A child learning shapes in Majhauri School

organisation of schools such as preparing and following an annual curriculum calendar and daily time-table, evolving common norms for teacher and student attendance also provided opportunities for active interest and involvement of parents. Parents had a keen interest in these processes because they looked at school improvement mainly in terms of improvement in these aspects.

#### 4.4. Learning Support Centres

Four LSCs—two each in Badka Bandh and Majhauri villages—were set up with the active support from parents and the communities. The issue of setting up LSCs was initially discussed and planned in the workshops. Four LSCs were identified and finalised with the help of parents, community members, village panchayat representatives and teachers. An EV for each of the LSCs was appointed after they were identified and selected by the parents and community members. These EVs were Shivnath Manjhi, Ramraj Manjhi, Virendra Manjhi and Deolal Kumar. All the EVs belonged to Dalit communities and three of them were from the most marginalised Musahar community. They had been providing private tuition in and around the villages to children from both marginalised and non-marginalised communities, and were considered best teachers in the area for mathematics and English. Interestingly, parents from both communities insisted on appointment of these private tutors as EVs.

Each LSC had 40 children enrolled. It was decided to limit the number of children in an LSC to 40 because each LSC was looked after by only one EV. Since children in the LSCs were from different standards (I–V) and of different age groups, it would not have been possible for a single EV to manage multi-grade and multi-age teaching for more than 40 children. The children for enrolment in LSCs were, therefore, selected on the basis of the low social and economic status of their parents. In two LSCs located in Badka Bandh, out of the total 80 children, 55 belonged to the Musahar community, 5 to other SC communities and 20 to OBCs and MBCs (Most Backward Classes). In the two Majhauri based LSCs, 50 children belonged to the Musahar community, 15 to other SC communities, 10 to OBCs/MBCs and 5 to the upper castes.

The LSCs focused on enhancing learning competencies of children mainly in language and mathematics. The project team was in regular dialogue and discussion with the EVs to develop

card. In the next stage, names of the animals were written on another set of cards and children were asked to match the cards with the picture of an animal with the cards on which its name was written.

The project team, thus, worked with teachers to improve the learning environment in schools in various ways as well as to identify, plan and prepare a variety of teaching-learning activities relevant to children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The processes involved in improvement of management and



child centred and activity based teaching-learning methods. The social background of the EVs helped them better understand the socio-economic contexts and learning needs of children from marginalised communities. The activities of the LSCs were focused on three aspects: developing and experimenting with inclusive teaching-learning practices and processes relevant to the learning needs and interests of children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds; identifying children lagging in performance and giving them special attention; and identifying children not attending schools regularly, and motivating their parents for sending them to schools.

The LSCs had a crucial role in changing the attitude and perception of parents towards the value of education for their children. The LSCs generated a hope among parents, especially from the marginalised communities, that if sincere teaching efforts were made, their children could also have better educational performance which would help them in availing opportunities for better livelihood later in life. Parents, especially from the marginalised communities, started thinking that it was 'possible' for their children also to have the required level of education for moving upward in life. Earlier, even after sending their children to schools, parents did not find any satisfactory level of improvement in learning of their children, and therefore, they were very sceptical about the usefulness of such schooling.

The LSCs had a visible impact on children's attendance in the schools. Children, particularly from the most marginalised Musahar community became not only more regular in coming to the schools, but they had also become more lively, active and attentive inside the classroom. They also started mixing freely and interacting with children from other communities. In fact, the LSCs facilitated peer friendships between children from different communities and backgrounds.

There was a continuous system of regular feedback of experiences and learning from the LSCs to the schools. Each EVs was given an opportunity to teach children for one hour every week in both the schools. For this demonstration, the EVs prepared a lesson plan jointly with a particular school teacher for the particular day in advance, and the EV and the teacher jointly taught the children. This activity helped EVs and school teachers learn from each other's experiences. Further, the EVs and the teachers regularly shared their experiences regarding issues and problems in teaching-learning practices during fortnightly workshops, and discussed, reflected upon and identified what worked well and what did not.

It was noticeable in this context that parents generally looked at the LSCs as an alternative to private tuition for their children. Parents believe that their children's actual learning takes place in private tuition centres instead of government schools. In response to such thinking and belief among parents, private tuition practices have emerged as an important phenomenon in the area. About 15



Learning material distributed by Deshkal Society being used in Badka Bandh School



Learning Support Centre at Panchayat Bhawan, Majhauhi

per cent of the children from both the schools—about 30 children from the Badaka Bandh school and 50 children from the Majhauhi school—were attending private tuition. The cost of private tuition per child varied from Rs 50 to 200 per month, depending on the standard in which the child was studying and the quality of the tutor. The majority (80 per cent) of these children were from non-SC background, whose parents owned around 1–3 acres of agricultural land, were in regular employment in towns or had petty businesses. The parents of children from SC communities availing private tuitions were either tenant cultivators or skilled workers such as masons, carpenters or drivers. Due to these reasons, the LSCs were concretely one of the most important activities of the project that most attracted the attention and interest of parents, particularly those who were unable to bear the cost of private tuition for their children.

## 4.5 Conclusion

Data and information obtained from various sources and methods were utilised for initiating and facilitating discussions and reflections in fortnightly workshops with teachers. Initially the findings of the pilot study were discussed with the teachers to get their feedback. Information from classroom observations were thoroughly discussed to reflect upon practices and processes that seemed to portray social prejudices, based on gender, caste or social, cultural and economic position. . The findings of the child profile survey, which was conducted with active involvement of teachers, provided concrete empirical evidences to expose teachers to different socio-economic backgrounds. The results of the baseline assessments of learning achievements of children together with the findings of the child

profile survey proved to be especially important in making teachers realise that children from different socio-economic backgrounds had different learning needs and constraints, and therefore, teachers needed to orient their teaching-learning practices in a way that could be relevant to children from diverse backgrounds. Experiences of the LSCs in enhancing learning achievement of children from the marginalised communities were also discussed and reflected upon with teachers in order to work on their negative attitudes towards the learning potential of these children.

In order to address this issue and improve children's school participation, the project team made efforts to improve the school environment and make it attractive and enjoyable so that all children, irrespective of their socio-economic and cultural background, felt comfortable, valued and capable. In this regard, the schools were assisted to undertake a variety of activities. Schools were facilitated to organise regular extracurricular activities like local games, sports and cultural activities with which children from diverse and deprived backgrounds were familiar. Active participation of teachers and children in these activities had the potential to facilitate the process of breaking the usual inhibitions between teachers and children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and promote an environment where the children were without fear and felt free to interact, discuss and collaborate with teachers and peers. These activities could also generate a sense of being capable among children who had low learning level or who were from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds.

The school environment was also made attractive and conducive for learning by making it print rich. Attractive and informative picture charts and posters, and various types of maps of Bihar, India and the world were put up in the classrooms.

One of the major challenges in this process was classroom management through appropriate grouping and sitting arrangement of children with different learning levels. Another major challenge for the project team was to facilitate teachers in appropriate lesson planning and identification, and in preparation of learning tasks and activities for children with different levels of learning. Different types of lesson plans, and learning tasks and activities were prepared.

The LSCs had a crucial role in changing the attitude and perception of parents towards the value of education to their children. The LSCs generated a hope among parents, especially from the marginalised communities, that if sincere teaching efforts were made, their children could also have better educational performance, which would help them in availing opportunities for better livelihood in the future. Parents, especially from marginalised communities, started thinking that it was 'possible' for their children to have the required level of education for moving upward in life.



## Possible Next Steps

The situational analysis of the two schools under the project, and the experiences, lessons and critical questions emerging from the project intervention processes and activities discussed in earlier chapters provide us with a strong foundation for formulating urgent and concrete measures that need to be undertaken for improvement of schools and enhancement of their effectiveness. In this regard, there is a need for effective implementation of school improvement programmes at three levels. First, there is a need to ensure effective delivery of basic facilities and improvement programmes provided by the government. Second, in order to make classroom practices and processes child friendly, dynamic and inclusive, there is a need to provide additional teaching-learning aids and resource materials to schools. Third, official provisions for improvement of school management and functioning under the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 such as the School Education Committee (SEC) need to be urgently implemented. The inputs for school improvement suggested below pertain mainly to these aspects.

### 5.1. Regularisation, Improvement and Strengthening of Existing Basic Provisions and Facilities in Schools

#### 5.1.1. Timely Distribution of Free Textbooks and Other Essential Learning Materials

The government should ensure timely distribution of free textbooks to children in the beginning of the month of April when the new session starts so that teaching-learning activities do not suffer due to unavailability of textbooks. This will be possible only when the required number of textbooks are printed on time by the Bihar State Textbook Corporation and supplied to District Education Offices in March itself. The three stakeholders, BEOs, CRC Coordinators and headmasters of schools, who are instrumental in distribution of textbooks, should be made accountable.

The majority of children in government primary schools in rural areas are from households which cannot afford to provide sufficient learning materials like notebooks, pencils, pens, erasers or sharpeners for their children. The government should, therefore, also make a provision for free distribution of these learning materials to children, especially those from BPL and marginalised community households in the beginning of the school session in April. Funds can be allocated in this regard at the block level and the BEOs can be given responsibility for distribution of the learning materials to schools.

### **5.1.2. Ensuring Availability of Basic Teaching Materials**

The government should ensure that basic teaching materials like blackboard, duster chalk are available in all schools in sufficient quantity.

### **5.1.3. Provision for Essential Resource Materials for Activity Based Learning in Schools**

It is a generally accepted fact that Activity Based Learning (ABL) method is essential for democratising teaching-learning practices and making them participatory. However, there is no government provision at present for providing basic resource materials required for ABL in schools. The government therefore needs to make a provision in this regard to ensure that the basic resource materials such as charts, cards, pictorials, worksheets, etc. needed for ABL are made available .

### **5.1.4. Regularisation of Drinking Water Facilities**

Though the government had made a provision for providing drinking water to children in schools, it is often found that hand pumps installed for this purpose are not functional due to lack of proper maintenance and repair. The government needs to ensure proper maintenance and timely repair of hand pumps so that drinking water is regularly available to children in schools. Due to low ground-water level many schools should have extra deep boring for hand pumps. In this regard, there is a need for a regular joint committee of the representatives of District SSA and PHED which should be entrusted with the task of facilitating timely installation of deep boring in schools where it is required.

### **5.1.5. Regularisation of Sanitation Facilities**

Sanitation facilities in schools, wherever available, lack regular maintenance. Teachers and students in schools need to plan and implement a regular system of proper cleaning and maintenance of sanitation facilities.

Many schools do not have any toilets at all despite government provision for it. The government needs to ensure that construction of sanitation facilities are completed in a time bound schedule in all schools. The schools also need to be provided funds to bear the cost of regular and proper maintenance of sanitation facilities.

### **5.1.6. Enhancement of Annual School Development Fund**

There is a current provision of an annual school development fund of Rs 6,000. It is supposed to cover expenses regarding blackboards, dusters, chalks, school registers and other essential stationeries, and maintenance and repair of drinking water and sanitation facilities. The amount of Rs 6,000 in a year is too low to cover these expenses. The BEPC, therefore, should make an assessment of the average annual expenses in schools through a study of a sample of schools, and enhance the amount of the annual school development fund accordingly.

## **5.2. Implementation of the Provision of School Education Committees**

The Government of Bihar has passed a new bill called Bihar Primary School Education Committee Bill 2011. The purpose of this bill is to provide a legal basis for implementation of the provisions under the Right to Education Act 2009 for ensuring participation of parents and communities in development, governance and monitoring of schools. The bill provides for direct participation of parents and communities in the elections of members and office bearers of the school education

committees. It is matter of concern that even after the passage of this bill, Bihar Education Project Council which is responsible for the implementation of the provisions of the bill has not taken any steps in this direction for facilitating the formation of primary school education committees. As a result, primary schools in Bihar do not have school education committees that can ensure participation of parents and communities in the management and monitoring of schools. On the other hand, the village education committees that had been formed in primary schools under the provisions of SSA have become defunct for about two years. The most crucial step for BEPC, therefore, would be to initiate the processes of formation of primary school education committees in order to ensure the participation of parents and communities in the development, governance and management of schools.

### **5.3. Government Monitoring and Evaluation System**

The monitoring and evaluation system of schools should be streamlined and strengthened according to the provisions of the RTE Act 2009, and the check-list (quantitative and qualitative) provided under the Act should be strictly followed in this regard. The monitoring and evaluation framework should also include the quality of teaching-learning as an essential component. Block Education Officers and CRC Coordinators should make fortnightly visits to schools and submit their fortnightly reports to the DSE. This report should focus on non-implementation of basic provisions in schools. Based on the reports, the DSE should take immediate and needful action to ensure availability of basic provisions and facilities in schools as well as improvement of the quality of teaching-learning practices.

### **5.4. Capacity Building of Teachers and Improvement of the Quality of Classroom Practices and Processes**

#### **5.4.1. Preparation of Child Profiles**

Child profiles are an effective tool for enhancing teachers' understanding of the issues of social diversity and differentiation within the classroom and for promoting inclusive classroom practices and processes. Currently, there is a provision for preparation of Bal Panjika by teachers. The Bal Panjika contains such information on children as age, enrolment, social category, reason for drop out etc. In place of the Bal Panjika, the government should make a provision for preparation of child profiles in schools. The child profiles can be prepared by teachers through a household survey of children. The survey can collect data and information on various socio-economic indicators such as age, sex, education, occupation, and economic and migration status of all the household members. It can also collect data on school and community based factors that affect learning of children from different socio-economic backgrounds, and on reasons for poor levels of learning and dropouts. Based on the data and information obtained from the household survey, detailed profiles of children can be prepared. The child profiles, thus prepared, will introduce teachers to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of children from different backgrounds, and of the various school and community/family based factors that act as barriers to their school participation and learning. It will also sensitise teachers to the different learning needs and constraints of children from different backgrounds, and help them in orienting their teaching-learning practices and processes accordingly.

#### **5.4.2. In-service Training of Teachers**

There is a need to develop Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) into basic centres for regular in-service training and academic support to teachers. Currently, there is a provision for fortnightly meeting of

teachers at the CRCs, which are aimed to promote peer discussion and learning. But these meetings have become mere rituals. In order to make CRCs effective, there is a need for outside academic support to orient and facilitate the fortnightly meetings into becoming participatory sessions for professional development of teachers. In this regard, the government needs to make provisions for necessary resource persons and other facilities. The child profiles discussed above can be a used tool during these participatory sessions to sensitise teachers to the different learning needs and constraints of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and enhance their professional skill and motivation to experiment with and adopt context specific inclusive classroom practices and processes responsive to the different learning needs of these children.

#### **5.4.3. Regular Assessment of Children's Learning Achievement**

The government needs to make a provision for schools to conduct regular assessments of learning achievement of children. The regular assessments will help teachers in tracking and monitoring the progress in learning achievement of individual children, and in identifying children lagging behind and giving special attention to them.

The suggestions above are based on the approach that there was a basic need for adopting a school based approach in order to make improvements in the functioning and performance of government primary schools in rural areas. A crucial aspect of this approach is that the initiatives for improving the learning environment of the schools, and democratising the classroom practices and processes have to be undertaken at the same level and scale as the initiatives taken up for activating and improving the functional components of schools. In other words, the elements that make the schools functional and those that make the classrooms child friendly and inclusive are so closely interlinked that the neglect of any of the two will severely affect the quality of the school, and, as a result, the school begins to lose its legitimacy among children, parents and the communities.



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# Annexure - A1

Members of the Advisory Committee for the project

1. Shivshankar Prasad, APO, BEPC Gaya
2. Shahveer Mandal, Mukhiya, Village Panchayat Head, Karjara
3. Nirbhay Singh, CRC Coordinator, Majhauri
4. Kaushal Singh, CRC Coordinator, Shahiya
5. Hriday Narain Pandit, BEO, Wazirganj
6. Gendu Manjhi, Former Chairman, VEC
7. Ashok Singh, Former Chairman, VEC
8. Lakshmi Devi, Panchayat Head, Sakadas Nawada
9. Suman Devi, Head Teacher, Majhauri School
10. Ram Ratan Singh, Head Teacher, Badka Bandh School
11. Dr Geeta Singh, DIET, Gaya.



## Annexure - A2

Members of Village Education Committees (VECs) constituted by the project

### A. Members of VEC for Badka Bandh School

- |    |                   |           |
|----|-------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Bindeshwar Manjhi | Chairman  |
| 2. | Suresh Manjhi     | Secretary |
| 3. | Kedar manjhi      | Member    |
| 4. | Gendu Manjhi      | Member    |
| 5. | Kanhaiya Manjhi   | Member    |
| 6. | Basant Manjhi     | Member    |
| 7. | Chandrika Manjhi  | Member    |

### B. Members of VEC for Majhauri School

- |    |                 |           |
|----|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. | Ramraj Manjhi   | Chairman  |
| 2. | Shanker Singh   | Secretary |
| 3. | Akhilesh Kumar  | Member    |
| 4. | Jagruk ji       | Member    |
| 5. | Manoj Kumar     | Member    |
| 6. | Mundrika Paswan | Member    |
| 7. | Ramanuj Singh   | Member    |

# Annexure - A3

## Distribution of Children by Caste and Father's Education Level

Father's Education Level	School wise and Total	Caste																	
		Upper Caste			OBC			MBC			SC			Musahar			Total		
		No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent
Never Enrolled	PSM	2	5.13	0.40	1	1.20	0.20	9	14.06	1.78	23	27.71	4.55	85	35.86	16.80	120	23.72	
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	28	33.73	5.53	19	29.69	3.75	0	0.00	0.00	41	17.30	8.10	88	17.39	
	Total	2	5.13	0.40	29	34.94	5.73	28	43.75	5.53	23	27.71	4.55	126	53.16	24.90	208	41.11	
Semi Literate	PSM	0	0.00	0.00	1	1.20	0.20	0	0.00	0.00	6	7.23	1.19	13	5.49	2.57	20	3.95	
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	7	8.43	1.38	6	9.38	1.19	0	0.00	0.00	10	4.22	1.98	23	4.55	
	Total	0	0.00	0.00	8	9.64	1.58	6	9.38	1.19	6	7.23	1.19	23	9.70	4.55	43	8.50	
Primary	PSM	1	2.56	0.20	1	1.20	0.20	0	0.00	0.00	10	12.05	1.98	24	10.13	4.74	36	7.11	
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	5	6.02	0.99	11	17.19	2.17	0	0.00	0.00	4	1.69	0.79	20	3.95	
	Total	1	2.56	0.20	6	7.23	1.19	11	17.19	2.17	10	12.05	1.98	28	11.81	5.53	56	11.07	
Upper Primary	PSM	8	20.51	1.58	0	0.00	0.00	4	6.25	0.79	6	7.23	1.19	25	10.55	4.94	43	8.50	
	PSB	4	10.26	0.79	21	25.30	4.15	6	9.38	1.19	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	31	6.13	
	Total	12	30.77	2.37	21	25.30	4.15	10	15.63	1.98	6	7.23	1.19	25	10.55	4.94	74	14.62	
Matric	PSM	15	38.46	2.96	0	0.00	0.00	5	7.81	0.99	20	24.10	3.95	23	9.70	4.55	63	12.45	
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	10	12.05	1.98	3	4.69	0.59	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	13	2.57	
	Total	15	38.46	2.96	10	12.05	1.98	8	12.50	1.58	20	24.10	3.95	23	9.70	4.55	76	15.02	
Intermediate	PSM	3	7.69	0.59	1	1.20	0.20	0	0.00	0.00	8	9.64	1.58	12	5.06	2.37	24	4.74	
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	8	9.64	1.58	1	1.56	0.20	2	2.41	0.40	0	0.00	0.00	11	2.17	
	Total	3	7.69	0.59	9	10.84	1.78	1	1.56	0.20	10	12.05	1.98	12	5.06	2.37	35	6.92	
BA	PSM	6	15.38	1.19	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	2	2.41	0.40	0	0.00	0.00	8	1.58	
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	3	3.61	0.59	0	0.00	0.00	3	0.59	
	Total	6	15.38	1.19	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	5	6.02	0.99	0	0.00	0.00	11	2.17	
MA	PSM	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	3	3.61	0.59	0	0.00	0.00	3	0.59	
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	
	Total	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	3	3.61	0.59	0	0.00	0.00	3	0.59	
Total	Total PSM	35	89.74	6.92	4	4.82	0.79	18	28.13	3.56	78	93.98	15.42	182	76.79	35.97	317	62.65	
	Total PSB	4	10.26	0.79	79	95.18	15.61	46	71.88	9.09	5	6.02	0.99	55	23.21	10.87	189	37.35	
	Total	39	100.00	7.71	83	100.00	16.40	64	100.00	12.65	83	100.00	16.40	237	100.00	46.84	506	100.00	

# Annexure - A4

## Distribution of Children by Caste and Mother's Education Level

Mother's Education Level	School wise and Total	CASTE																
		Upper Caste			OBC			MBC			SC			Musahar			Total	
		No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent	Total Per cent	No.	Per cent
Never Enrolled	PSM	12	30.77	2.37	3	3.61	0.59	14	21.88	2.77	69	83.13	13.64	159	67.09	31.42	257	12.00
	PSB	4	10.26	0.79	59	71.08	11.66	34	53.13	6.72	2	2.41	0.40	54	22.78	10.67	153	4.00
	Total	16	41.03	3.16	62	74.70	12.25	48	75.00	9.49	71	85.54	14.03	213	89.87	42.09	410	16.00
Semi Literate	PSM	4	10.26	0.79	1	1.20	0.20	3	4.69	0.59	5	6.02	0.99	6	2.53	1.19	19	4.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	6	7.23	1.19	7	10.94	1.38	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	13	0.00
	Total	4	10.26	0.79	7	8.43	1.38	10	15.63	1.98	5	6.02	0.99	6	2.53	1.19	32	4.00
Primary	PSM	6	15.38	1.19	0	0.00	0.00	1	1.56	0.20	1	1.20	0.20	6	2.53	1.19	14	6.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	4	6.25	0.79	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	4	0.00
	Total	6	15.38	1.19	0	0.00	0.00	5	7.81	0.99	1	1.20	0.20	6	2.53	1.19	18	6.00
Upper Primary	PSM	4	10.26	0.79	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	2	2.41	0.40	1	0.42	0.20	7	4.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	1	0.42	0.20	1	0.00
	Total	4	10.26	0.79	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	2	2.41	0.40	2	0.84	0.40	8	4.00
Mitrlic	PSM	6	15.38	1.19	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	1	1.20	0.20	10	4.22	1.98	17	6.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	10	12.05	1.98	1	1.56	0.20	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	11	0.00
	Total	6	15.38	1.19	10	12.05	1.98	1	1.56	0.20	1	1.20	0.20	10	4.22	1.98	28	6.00
Intermediate	PSM	3	7.69	0.59	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	3	3.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	4	4.82	0.79	0	0.00	0.00	3	3.61	0.59	0	0.00	0.00	7	0.00
	Total	3	7.69	0.59	4	4.82	0.79	0	0.00	0.00	3	3.61	0.59	0	0.00	0.00	10	3.00
BA	PSM	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
	Total	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
MA	PSM	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
	Total	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
Total	PSM	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
	PSB	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
	Total	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
Total	PSM	35	89.74	6.92	4	4.82	0.79	18	28.13	3.56	78	93.98	15.42	182	76.79	35.97	317	35.00
Total	PSB	4	10.26	0.79	79	95.18	15.61	46	71.88	9.09	5	6.02	0.99	55	23.21	10.87	189	4.00
Total	Total	39	100.00	7.71	83.00	100.00	16.40	64.00	100.00	12.65	83.00	100.00	16.40	237.00	100.00	46.84	506	39.00

## Annexure - A5

**Number of Days When the Project Schools were Open  
during April 2010 – March 2011**

Month	No. of days when schools were open	No. of holidays		Reasons for other holidays
		Sundays	Other holidays	
April 2010	25	4	1	Good Friday-1
May 2010	19	4	8	Summer Vacation-8
June 2010	11	2	17	Summer Vacation-17
July 2010	26	4	1	Sabebarat-1
August 2010	23	5	3	Akshar Anchal Mela-1 Raksha Bandhan-1 CRC Meeting-1
September 2010	22	4	4	Krishna Janamastmi-1 Haritalika Brat-1 CRC Meeting-1 Anant chaturdashi-1
October 2010	14	3	14	Durga Puja -11 Jitiya-1 Gandhi Jayanti-1 Gurugosthi-1
November 2010	16	3	11	Bakarid-1 Dipawali and Chhath-10
December 2010	24	4	3	Muharam-1 Christamus-1 CRC Meeting-1
January 2011	12	4	15	Winter Vacation-12 New year-1 Gopal Diwas-1 Chahalum-1
February 2011	22	3	3	IGNOU Training-2 Saraswati Puja -1
March 2011	24	3	4	Mahashivaratri-1 Holi-3
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>84</b>	

# Annexure - A6

## Official Duties Other Than Teaching Given to Teachers by the Government

1. Population Census
2. Training for election duties
3. Election Duties
4. Below Poverty Line (BPL) Survey
5. PDS coupon distribution
6. Ward delimitation work
7. DEP



## Annexure - A7

**List of schools in the Wazirganj Block where Hand Pumps were installed in year 2010 Due to the Catalyst Impact of our Work in Two Project Schools**

Sl.	Name of School	Village /Tola	Panchayat
1.	Upper Primary School, Pated	Pated	Pated Mangrawan
2.	Primary School, Kanaudi	Kanaudi	Pated Mangrawan
3.	Primary School, Kanaudi	Kanaudi	Pated Mangrawan
4.	Primary School, Lauria	Lauria	Pated Mangrawan
5.	Primary School, Lauria	Lauria	Pated Mangrawan
6.	SC Primary School, Nawada	Nawada	Sakardaha Nawada
7.	Primary School School, Pipra	Pipra	Sakardaha Nawada
8.	Primary School, Lohjara	Lohjara	Sakardaha Nawada
9.	Primary School, Vihiyain	Vihiyain	Sakardaha Nawada
10.	Primary School, Dhareya	Dhareya	Sakardaha Nawada
11.	Primary School, Bairia	Bairia	Sahiya
12.	Primary School, Singathia	Singathia	Sahiya
13.	Primary School, Kadharia	Kadharia	Sahiya
14.	Primary School, Sahiya	Sahiya	Sahiya
15.	Upper Primary School Sahiya	Sahiya	Sahiya
16.	Primary School, Goraiya	Goraiya	Sahiya
17.	Primary School, Lakhaua	Lakhaua	Sahiya
18.	Primary School, Khiriyawan	Khiriyawan	Sahiya
19.	SC Primary School Indira, Nagar	Indira Nagar	Sahiya
20.	Upper Primary School, Bhikhampur	Bhikhampur	Karjara
21.	Upper Primary School, Shankar Bigha	Shankar Bigha	Mahuet
22.	Upper Primary School, Pale	Pale	Mahuet
23.	Primary School, Ekamma	Ekamma	Mahuet
24.	Primary School, Thudrahi	Thudrahi	Mahuet
25.	Primary School, Mahuait	Mahuait	Mahuet
26.	Primary School, Khiri	Khiri	Mahuet
27.	Primary School, Budh Dhareya	Budh Dhareya	Mahuet
28.	Primary School, Murgiya Chak	Murgiya Chak	Pura
29.	SC Primary School, Bilaud	Bilaud	Tarma
30.	Primary School, Bajaul	Bajaul	Tarma
31.	Primary School, Bajaul	Bajaul	Tarma
32.	Upper Primary School, Karauna	Karauna	Dhuriyawan
33.	SC Primary School, Kolhana	Kolhana	Dhuriyawan
34.	Upper Primary School, Kolhana	Kolhana	Dhuriyawan
35.	Primary School, Beldari	Beldari	Dhuriyawan

## Annexure - A8

### Details of Expenditure on Mid-day Meals, Annual Development Fund and TLM during April 2010 – March 2011 for the Project Schools

#### A. Badka Bandh School

##### 1. Amount of Rice Received and Utilised for Mid-day Meals

###### i) Amount of Rice Received

Previous Balance	78 Kg
April 2010	200 Kg
June 2010	300 KG
August 2010	500 Kg
November 2010	600 Kg
December 2010	200 Kg
February 2011	300 Kg
March 2011	200 Kg

Total 2378 Kg

###### ii) Amount of Rice Utilised

2224 Kg

###### iii) Balance

154 Kg

##### 2. Amount of Money Received and Utilised for Mid-day Meals

###### i) Previous Balance

Rs. 932.58

###### ii) Money Received

Rs. 77568

Total

Rs. 78500.58

###### iii) Money Utilised

Rs. 77244

###### iv) Balance

Rs. 1256.58

##### 3. Annual Development Fund

###### i) Fund Received

Rs. 10,000

###### ii) Fund Utilised

Rs. 10,000

##### 4. Fund for TLM Received

Rs. 2,000

#### B. Majhauri School

##### 1. Amount of Rice Received and Utilised for Mid-day Meals

###### i) Amount of Rice Received

Previous Balance	192.7 Kg
April 2010	400 Kg
June 2010	300 KG
September 2010	600 Kg
November 2010	400 Kg

December 2010	800 Kg
February 2011	400 Kg
	-----
Total	3092.7 Kg
	-----
ii) Amount of Rice Utilised	2821.2 Kg
iii) Balance	271.5 Kg
2. Amount of Money Received and Utilised for Mid-day Meals	
i) Money Received	Rs. 91,092.56
ii) Money Utilised	Rs. 88,942.71
iii) Balance	Rs. 2,149.85
3. Annual Development Fund	
i) Fund Received	Rs. 10,000
ii) Fund Utilised	
a) Sement-3 packets, Jute, Brush-3, and Paint-2	Rs. 2,700
b) Fevicol, Neel-2 Kg, Lime-13 Kg, and Labour cost for whitewashing	Rs. 1,300
c) Pink colour sement-6 bags	Rs. 4,500
d) Lime	Rs. 1,500
	-----
Total	Rs. 10,000
	-----
4. Fund for TLM Received	Rs. 2.000

# Annexure - A9

## Questionnaire for Household Survey of Children

### A. Information to be obtained from school

Name of the Child: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Class/Std.: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Category/Caste: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### B. Information to be obtained from households

#### 1. Education of parents

Parents	Education	
	Never enrolled in school	Class/std completed
Father		
Mother		

#### 2. Education of siblings (of 5-14 years age)

Sl. No.	Name of Child	Age	Sex	Whether currently enrolled in school	If currently enrolled, which class/std)	If currently not enrolled in school	
						Class.std. completed	Reason for drop out
				Yes	No		
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							

#### 3. Land ownership

Land owned	Land leased in	Land leased out

#### 4. Occupation and income of parents

Parents	Occupation during last one year		Income during last one year	
	Main	Other	Source	Income (in Rs.)
Father		1.	1.	
		2.	2.	
		3.	3.	
			Total	
Mother		1.	1.	
		2.	2.	
		3.	3.	
			Total	

#### 5. Migration status of parents and children

- 5.1. Did any of the parents migrate for work during the last one year: 1. Yes  
2. No
- 5.2. If yes, please give details of household members who migrated.
1. Father
  2. Mother
  3. Father and mother
  4. Father, mother and child
- 5.3. What was the place of migration? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.4. What was the duration of migration during the last one year? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.5. What was the work you did at the place of migration? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.6. What was the total income during the last one year from work at the place of migration? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.7. If the school going child also migrated with parents, did he attend school at the place of migration? 1. Yes  
2. No
- 5.8. If no, what was the reason? Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## Programmes in Education

- Diversity, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Inclusive Classrooms: An Innovative Programme for Improving Learning Achievement of Diverse Learners in Rural Govt. Primary Schools in Gaya District of Bihar, supported by MHRD, Govt. of India, 2011.
- Enhancing School Effectiveness through Inclusive Teaching and Learning: An Innovative Action Research in Two Rural Government Primary Schools in Gaya District of Bihar, Supported by DFID India, 2010.
- Risk Reduction for Vulnerable Groups in Education in Emergencies in South Asia, in collaboration with CIER, University of Birmingham, U.K, 2008.
- Short Term Support to Facilitate Further Work for Quality Education of Children of Marginalised Communities in India, supported by DFID, India, 2008.
- Providing Functional Literacy for Empowerment of Marginalised Community Women, supported by PACS 1- DFID, India, 2007.
- Development of Content Material for Dalit Studies in Higher Education, supported by Ford Foundation, New Delhi, 2004.
- Reconstructing Contents and Methods of Teaching for Dalit Children, supported by ICSSR, India, 2003.
- Language and Style of Education in Science & Mathematics of NCERT textbooks, supported by Ministry of HRD, Government of India, New Delhi, 2002.
- Consultation and network building on Classroom Curriculum, Pluralism and Social Inclusion, in collaboration with UNICEF, India, 2009.
- International Conference on School Education, Pluralism and Marginality, in association with UNICEF, DFID, NUEPA and ADRI, India, 2007.
- National Conference on Pluralism, Education and Dalit Children in India, supported by IDPAD, ICSSR, India, 2006.
- National Conference on Dalit Studies and Higher Education: Exploring Content Material for a New Discipline, supported by Ford Foundation, India, 2004.

## Publications

- ◆ Dalit Studies in Higher Education: Vision and Challenges, edited by Arun Kumar and Sanjay Kumar, Deshkal Publication, New Delhi, 2005.
- ◆ Teacher Training Manual on Language and Style of Education in Science & Mathematics, Deshkal Publication, New Delhi, 2004.
- ◆ Social Hierarchy and Notion of Educability: Experiences of Teacher and Children from Marginalised and Non-Marginalised Communities, P.D. Singh and Sanjay Kumar, Deshkal Publication, New Delhi, 2010.
- ◆ National Report on Inclusive Classrooms, Social Inclusion/ Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices. Deshkal Publication, New Delhi, 2010.
- ◆ School Education, Pluralism and Marginality: Comparative Perspectives. Edited by Christine Sleeter, S.B. Upadhyay, Arvind Mishra and Sanjay Kumar. Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2012.



**T**he report discusses and analyses experiences, outcomes and critical learning from the project, 'Enhancing School Effectiveness through Inclusive Teaching and Learning: An Innovative Action Research', implemented by the Deshkal Society in two government rural primary schools in the Gaya district of Bihar, over a period of one and a half years. The project emerged out of a pilot study, which sought to develop a contextualised understanding of school based practices and processes that were behind the failure of children, especially of those from socially disadvantaged and historically excluded communities, in getting proper education. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the project was a context specific innovative initiative to address the following key questions:

- How do we sensitise teachers to the diverse socio-economic characteristics of children, and sensitise them towards the different learning needs and constraints of children?
- How do we democratise teacher-child and child-to-child relationships in socially diverse classrooms, and enhance effective classroom participation of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds?
- How do we build the capacity of teachers to facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes that could enhance learning achievement of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds?

The report suggests that there is a basic need for adopting a school based approach in order to improve the functioning of government primary schools in rural areas. A crucial aspect of this approach is that the initiatives for improving the learning environment of the schools, and for democratising classroom practices and processes, have to be undertaken at the same level as the neglect of any of the two aspects adversely affects the quality of the schools. Based on the critical lessons from the project, the report suggests the following key inputs for enhancement of school effectiveness and improvement of learning achievement of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds.

- Improvement of basic infrastructural facilities such as sufficient teaching-learning aids, drinking water and toilet facilities, playgrounds and sports/games, etc.
- Effective implementation of the enabling provisions like mid-day meals, free textbooks, and scholarships to SC/ST and girl children.
- Engagement between parents/communities and schools through effective implementation of the provisions of School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Committees.
- Streamlining and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system of schools according to the provisions of the RTE Act, 2009.
- Enhancing teachers' understanding of the issues of social diversity and differentiation within the classrooms, and sensitising them to diverse learning needs and constraints of children from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Capacity Building of teachers for facilitating inclusive classroom practices and processes.