

CBPS engagement with school teachers, Government of Bihar and other stakeholders in January 2021: Main emerging points for sustainability

A. Teachers Orientation Workshop

We organised a one-full day teacher orientation workshop for our nodal teachers and Head Teachers on 19th January 2021. It was facilitated by BMP team and Mr. GVS Prasad, the external Resource Person and attended by 17 teachers from nine schools in Patna and Muzaffarpur along with our mentors from both the districts. We had taken permission from the Government of Bihar (GoB) for teachers to attend this workshop. The workshop was designed keeping two objectives in mind: i) To understand the challenges faced by teachers during the lockdown/school closure and the anticipated challenges that they foresee once the school re-open, and ii) To provide flexible and contextual tools and pedagogical practices that can be adopted in their classrooms, using the methods that we have used in our mentoring modules. We also wanted teachers to develop a plan for respective schools for post-Covid anticipated school opening.

Session 1 (Pre-lunch)- To understand the challenges faced by teachers during the lockdown and the anticipated challenges that they foresee once the school re-opens.

The discussions focused on the economic fallout, livelihood insecurity and increased burden of work, likelihood of increased dropout, diversion of cash received to buy textbooks and uniforms for survival and similar challenges. The need for a more sensitive and flexible approach taking the child's needs into account emerged strongly. The teachers also reviewed posters based on the study that we had conducted as well as a few others developed by one UNICEF project, and reflect on those issues.

Session 2 (post lunch)– To provide flexible and contextual tools and pedagogical practices to the teachers that can be adopted in their classrooms.

The teachers worked in groups to address the contextual school-based challenges. A quick re-cap of the ERAC (Experience, Reflection, Action and Consolidation – focus of our February 2019 training of teachers) approach was done in order to facilitate a structured thinking process to address the concerns. In the previous session, some of the teachers had spoken with examples of practising the ERAC model in their classrooms. Each school developed a plan for post-Covid approach that included addressing both physical space and pedagogical issues. For example, they spoke about *regular sanitisation* of the schools in partnership with the school management committee. The teachers also told that they would devise a more participatory approach towards learning of the children. The *participatory will incorporate activities* like nature walk, gardening, visiting the local bank, group work and so on. Teachers also said that they would negotiate for more time that would be dedicated for bridge courses. They also emphasised on *non-punitive measures* with greater emphasis on *relationship building*. Revival and strengthening of Bal Sansad (children parliament) and Meena Manch (Girls' Collective) for girls after the re-opening of schools were emphasised.

B. Dissemination cum Advocacy Workshop (20th January)

The workshop was organised with the prime objective of reaching the teachers and officials from the Department of Education, Government of Bihar, and selected civil society partners for sharing the findings of the study conducted to assess the impact of Covid on education as well as the experiences of our *Learning through Letters (LtL)* approach to continue education during the school closure. The purpose of the workshop was to start engaging in building ideas and blueprints that can help create a pathway by which children from the most marginalised backgrounds are able to be reintegrated into schooling systems. It had the following agenda:

Timings	Sessions
9:30 am to 10.00 am	Registration
10:00 a.m to 10:10 a.m	Introduction and welcome (Dr. Jyotsna Jha, Director, CBPS)
10:10 a.m to 10:20 a.m	Inaugural talk by the Chief Guest (Mrs. Neelam Choudhary, IAS)
10:20 a.m to 11:00 a.m	Learning through Letters: Presentation by CBPS team
11:00 a.m to 11:30 a.m	Open Discussion
11:30a.m to 11:50 a.m	Tea break and snacks
11:50 p.m to 12:30 p.m	Presentation of the global study titled 'Life in the time of Covid' by CBPS team
12:30 p.m to 1:00 p.m	Open Discussion
1:00 p.m to 1:30 p.m	Wrap up and vote of thanks
1:30 p.m. onwards	Lunch and informal discussions

The workshop was attended by officials from the Government of Bihar and UNICEF Patna who showed deep appreciation and interest in the study as well as in the Learning through Letters (LtL) approach. A number of ideas came for collaboration and to take the approach forward. Mr. Sanjay Kumar, State Programme Officer for Teacher Training and also in-charge for Quality of Learning at Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC) welcomed the initiative and expressed his desire to start writing postcards to teachers following the same approach. He also committed himself to future support in taking the model forward. Mr Syed Moin, currently UNICEF consultant and former faculty of State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and former principal of what was considered a model District Institute of Education and Training (DIET)¹ welcomed the initiative and stated that the Resource Persons of DIETS, Block Resource Centres (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRC) who act as trainers for teachers should be trained by CBPS team on this approach and mentoring model.² The teachers from the action project schools who had attended the full-day orientation workshop organised by CBPS were also present. Some teachers shared their experiences of their role in facilitating the distribution of cards during Covid.

¹ He is also a member of the Advisory Committee formed for this project.

² This conversation is being taken forward.