

**Building resilient school systems for
comprehensive response to education in
emergencies**

A Comprehensive Toolkit

**Based on an Action Research and Innovative
Covid19 Response in Bihar**



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Response in Bihar

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore, India

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Toolkit Writing Team

Jyotsna Jha

Geeta Menon

Neha Ghatak

Niveditha Menon

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Copy Edited by Sarita Ramamoorthy

Designed by Kamal and Neha

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'Maitri Bhavan' 1st Floor

(Above United Lodge of Theosophists)

No.4, M.N Krishna Rao Road, Basavanagudi, Bangalore-04

Ph: Off+91-80-65907402,26560735 Fax: +91-80-26560734

Or by writing to

Director@cbps.in

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The idea of a toolkit slowly emerged in the course of our Covid19-response work undertaken as part of the action-research study named as Bihar Mentorship Project that we had been doing in Bihar. As detailed out in the toolkit content, we adopted a letter-based approach for continuation of learning during the long school closures caused by pandemic, and complemented it with training of teachers on education in emergency. During the course of these interactions with school teachers and the officials from the Government of Bihar, the need for a toolkit on school resilience especially from the perspective of education in emergency emerged, and we decided to act on it.

We, therefore, start by thanking the senior officials of the Government of Bihar, especially from the Department of Education and the Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC). This includes Shri Tripurari Sharan (Former Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar), Shri Sanjay Kumar (Principal Secretary, Education) Dr. Binodanand Jha (Director, Research and Training), Shri Sanjay Kumar (former State Programme Officer for Teacher Training and in-charge for Quality of Learning, BEPC) and Smt. Kiran Kumari (State Programme Officer, Quality, BEPC). Mr. Syed Moin (UNICEF consultant and former faculty of State Council of Educational Research and Training and former principal of District Institute of Education and Training) and GVSR Prasad (UNICEF consultant and former principal of District Institute of Education and Training) were immensely supportive of our work and welcomed every opportunity to work with us in training resource persons and teachers. We especially want to thank Subir Shukla who trained us and the teachers on the primary principles of activity-based teaching and learning processes and opened our eyes to new ways of engaging with children.

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Jyotsna Jha

Neha Ghatak

Niveditha Menon

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About the Toolkit

As the title makes it clear, the toolkit is aimed at helping the process of making a school more resilient and responsive. Although aimed at better preparedness for education in emergencies, the toolkit has been prepared with the basic premise that only if a school or school-system is resilient in its functioning during 'normal' times will it become capable of responding quickly and comprehensively in an emergency. An average school serving children coming from marginalised communities, families, and locations faces challenges that it needs to respond to, on a fairly regular basis. Quite often, these challenges remain unrecognised and unaddressed, affecting the functioning of the school and children's learning. For instance, if certain children have very irregular school attendance, then their schoolteachers need to act on various fronts. They would have to make efforts to understand the reasons for irregular attendance and what they could do to reduce it; they should also think about the impact of this on students' learning and if existing measures such as spiralling are enough or if other specific actions might be needed. If a school is capable of acting in such situations, it means the school has signs of resilience.

We define a resilient school as '**a school that has the tools and capacities to adapt and identify resources, respond and act with focus on inclusion, and ensure justice and equity for continuing critical-thinking based learning in a meaningful and responsive manner in changed circumstances, including different forms of emergencies**'.

How to use this Toolkit

A toolkit is a collection of adaptable practices to inform and facilitate strategy development and its implementation, usually based on evidence-based interventions. Toolkits provide resources about the intervention and also guidance for adaptation to different contexts or strategies to support implementation. The tools in this toolkit can be used either independently or in combination.

This toolkit is primarily based on the experiences of Bihar Mentorship Project (BMP) but also draws heavily from other experiences of Education in Emergency (EiE). As explained below, it can be used for diverse objectives and in diverse forms. Each chapter can be used independently, or the entire set of chapters can be used together.

Potential for Use for Diverse Objectives

We have designed the toolkit in a manner that it can be used for the following:

- i. Self-learning on resilient schools and EiE
- ii. Developing training modules for teachers/teacher trainers on resilient school and EiE
- iii. Planning for school reforms for resilience and EiE
- iv. Planning for community-school linkages related to resilience and EiE
- v. Integrating EiE preparedness in regular school or school-system activities / functioning

Designed for Multiple Forms of Usage

The toolkit contains activities and questions for reflection that are tools that can be used/adapted for either self-learning or for conducting training workshops. In case of self-learning, it can be used both by individuals groups. For instance, if a school with seven teachers want to use this toolkit for their own capacity building, it is possible to do so.

Certain activities are more amenable for individual reflection, while others are more suitable for group work. However, most activities/questions can be easily adapted for either individual or group use depending on the objective it is being used for:

Let us look at the following sets of questions, for example –

1. What is active learning? How do I/we define and understand it?
2. To what extent my classroom is an 'active' class? Why/why not?

Or

1. What can a community do immediately if a disaster is to occur?
2. Can you cite any personal examples where a community played a critical role?
3. Who amongst the community are most likely to come forward to help?

It is clear that either an individual or a small group can use these on their own, or these can be used for either individual or small group activity in a workshop mode.

Adapting the toolkit to suit your context

The toolkit has mainly emanated from the BMP, project operational in the state of Bihar, India both before and during Covid-19. However, it uses various other examples from other parts of India, other countries and also from different kinds of emergencies in addition to calamities such as earthquake, tsunamis, and floods. We hope the toolkit would be especially suitable for developing countries because the questions/activities are open-ended, allowing one to build one's own experiences and reflect on those. Users can also add more examples and experiences in the process of adaptation.

The toolkit lays special emphasis on including and responding to the needs to children coming from marginalised communities or locations—this makes it especially relevant for those contexts.

We hope the toolkit would be especially suitable for developing countries because the questions/activities are open-ended, allowing one to build one's own experiences and reflect on those. Users can also add more examples and experiences in the process of adaptation.

Where to start from?

The toolkit has been written in the following sequence.

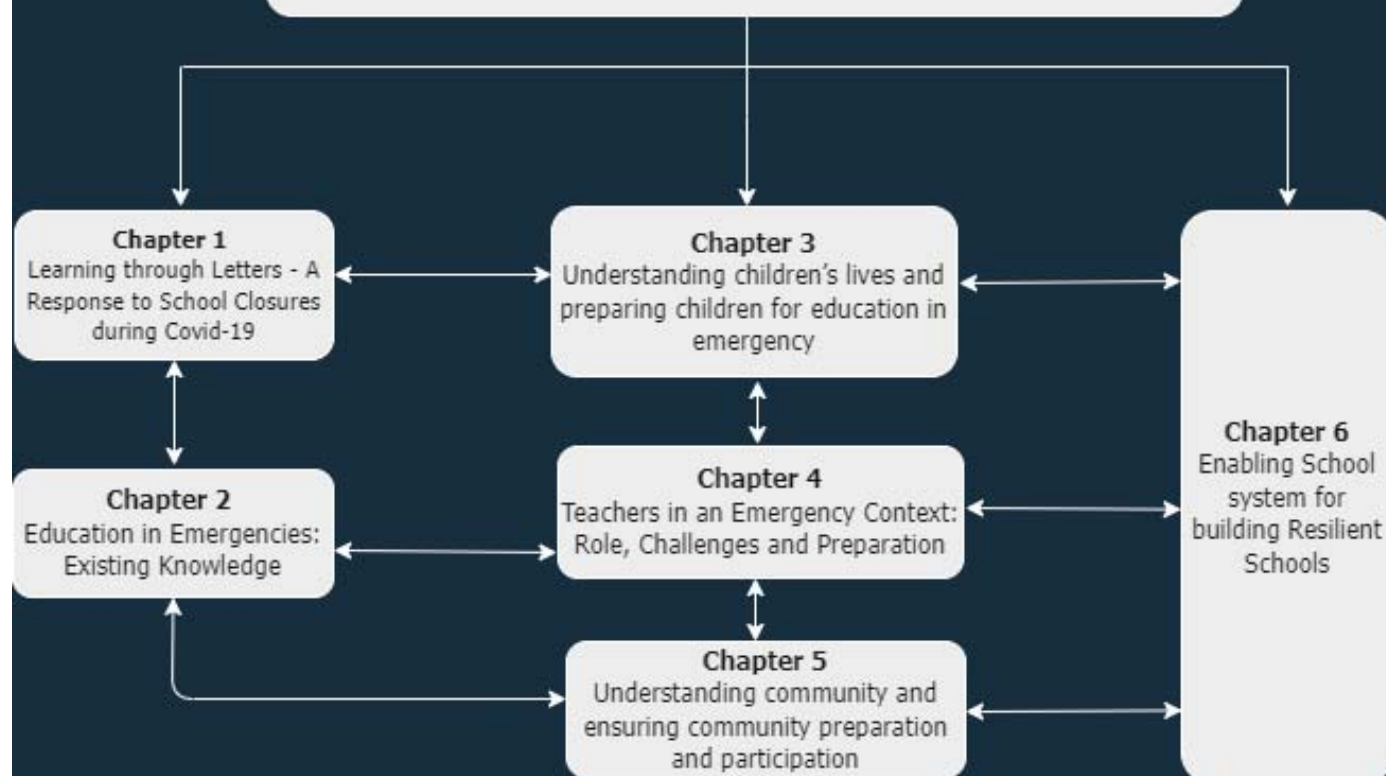
The first chapter describes the BMP experience and refers to all the associated resources, which can also be used and adapted by those interested with due acknowledgements and credits.

The second chapter introduces the concept of EiE with varied and diverse examples that bring together different kinds of emergencies and responses. These first two chapters share examples and illustrations from available literature.

The next four chapters on children, teachers, communities, and school systems help in designing one's own approach and response while continuing to draw illustrations from both BMP and other experiences. Chapter 6 also contains a simple tool in the form of a matrix that helps a school system plan an approach for making the schools resilient.

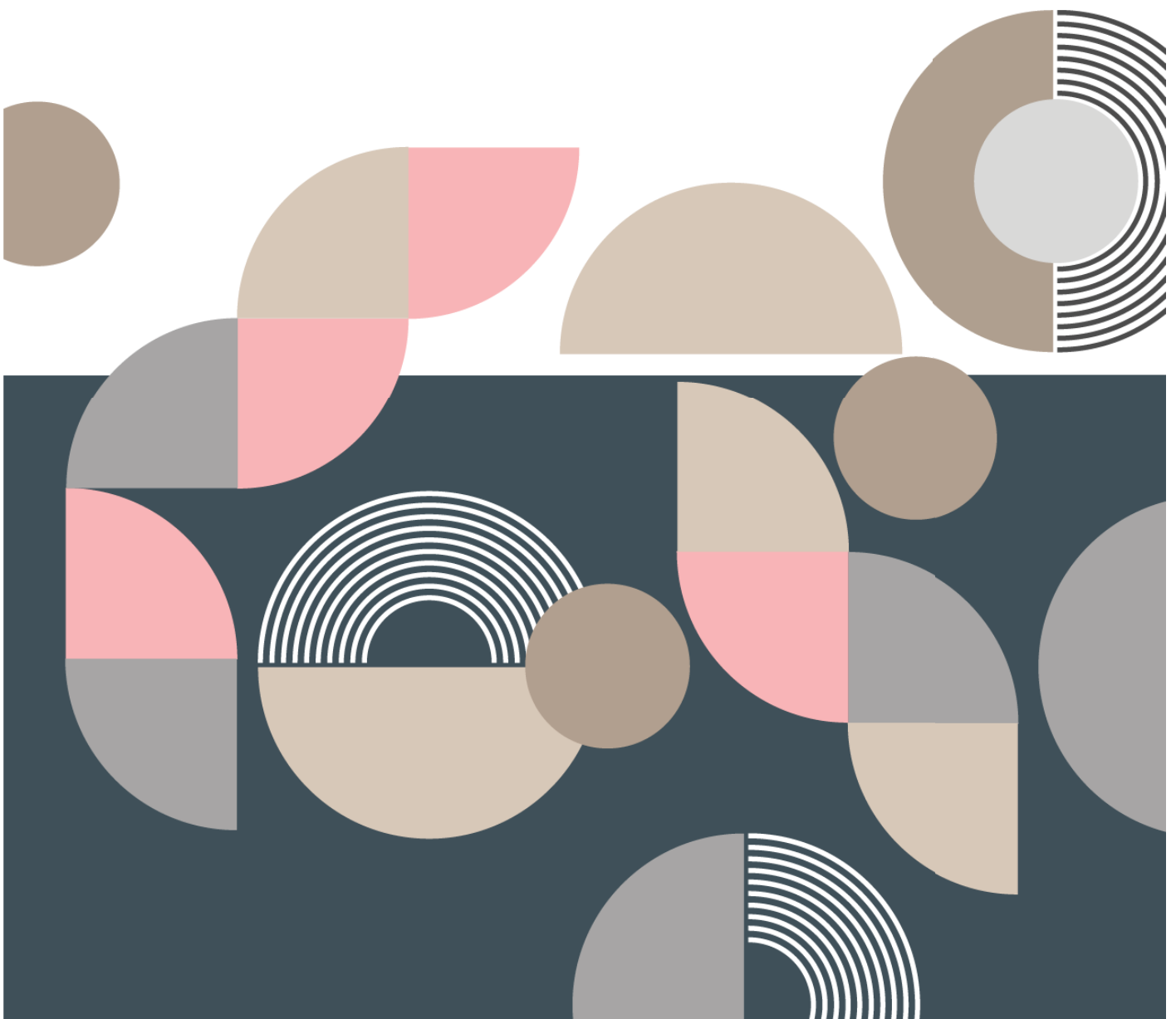
To start with, it can be read/used like a book in a sequence. However, that is not necessary; the reader can start reading from any chapter and move to any other chapter, in no particular order. Each chapter is self-contained with references to other chapters, where necessary. The following diagram explains this.

Building resilient school systems for comprehensive response to education in emergencies



Chapter 1

Learning through Letters - A Response to School Closures during Covid-19



1.0 Learning through Letters - A Response to School Closures during Covid-19

This chapter provides details of an initiative that we tried—Learning through Letters (LtL)—and the experiences we had with respect to its implementation and impact. We developed and implemented LtL as a response to the school closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the goal of continuing our mentoring-based teaching-learning work with about 700–800 students from a few government schools in the Indian state of Bihar.

We used letters as a way of creating connections, distributing learning materials, and engaging the students. The letters in LtL contained learning materials, poems, stories, and activities that were delivered twice in a week to all children’s homes. This eventually became an essential part of our Bihar Mentorship Project (BMP), which was designed as an action research project.

We were able to design and implement the LtL intervention only because we had already worked with the same children in their schools through our mentoring work. Here, we first present details of BMP, including the evidence on the impact of our work with children in schools, and then share details about LtL.

What is Action Research?



It is one of the research methods that combines action and research, linked through reflection and analysis on the action or intervention.



What makes it different from other research methods is that the one who implements or acts is also the one who is researching through reflection on the implementation experiences and the analysis of data collected on the action.



In education, it has been common for teachers in some countries to undertake research of their own practice by actively designing their classroom practice and reflecting on the experiences of their idea into practice.

1.1 Bihar Mentorship Model: Key Features of the Action Research

Module design and in-school delivery

In year one of the action-research, we started our work with students in classes VI and VII in ten identified schools. In the second year, we continued working with the same children when they moved to classes VII and VIII. Five of these schools were located in rural areas of Muzaffarpur district, while the other five were in peri-urban areas of Patna district. One of the schools in Patna was run by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and one of the schools in Muzaffarpur was a state-run residential school for girls, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya. The remaining eight were state-run co-educational day schools.

For the BMP, the research team developed and designed theme-based modules and detailed activities after an in-depth research and review of existing materials. The central focus was on developing critical thinking skills by (i) invoking the dimensions of 'why', 'how', and 'in what way' in the activities; (ii) going beyond information to knowledge; and (iii) exploring themes around equity, diversity, caste, gender, and climate change through interesting activities (please visit <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/BMP-InClassModule.pdf> to refer to the module wise activities). These were implemented in schools through locally based mentors who went to each school once a week to engage these children for one to three hours. The day and time for the engagement was identified in consultation and cooperation with the schoolteachers and administration at each school.

In the initial phase, we included a number of interactive and fun communication activities to help children break their silence and open up in the class. For instance, in week 2, we included activities such as **Just-a-minute**, where each child had to speak uninterruptedly for a minute on a given topic.

Based on these and other activities, we realised through our weekly calls with the mentors and the monthly reports written by the mentors that the children did not necessarily have grade level or even rudimentary reading-writing abilities. Based on this feedback loop, we included a number of activities that contributed to their reading-writing abilities while also breaking their hesitancy in voicing their opinions in class. One such activity in week was **Getting to know your teachers**, where we created groups of four students each, and each group then had to interview a teacher and present the things that they learnt from the interview to the entire class. Each group had to develop the interview questions with the help of their mentor using examples from TV and radio interviews. Two children from each group were designated as interviewers, while the other two were designated as note-takers. The note-takers typically presented the interviews. This arrangement was made in a manner that all children had opportunities to speak and present and were comfortable speaking in front of teachers.

We used **drama as a means to discuss the complex and sensitive issue of caste**. Using three different stories that depicted caste-based discrimination, children made skits of their own and presented those in groups followed by discussions.

We followed an approach known as the **ERAC (Experience, Reflection, Application and Consolidation) approach** for designing the activities, which also resulted into children taking initiatives and completing the tasks on their own.

Please visit <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/BMP-InClassModule.pdf> to refer to the three modules with week-wise activities and their objectives, preparation, execution, and reflection points in detail.

Questions for Reflection

- ❓ Are you aware of any such initiative in your own school or area? How different or similar is this initiative to that?
- ❓ Do you think such initiatives are needed in every school? Why/why not?
- ❓ Have you heard of or been a part of an action research project? If yes, what was the purpose of the project? What lessons emerged from that research?

Supporting the module preparation and delivery

In order to support our activities in the schools and to gain a better understanding of the children, we conducted a number of activities other than what we were doing in the classroom. These are listed below.



Community mapping

Community mapping helped us understand the home space of children and the vulnerabilities they carry. Later, during COVID19, these regular exercises came very handy as we were able to understand the needs of the community. We also had the students' addresses, phone numbers, and other details when we started contacting them on phone and sending letters during post-Covid period.



Continuous training and support on content and pedagogy

The local mentors who were delivering the modules in schools received continuous training. The initial training was more detailed covering various aspects of capacity building followed by an activity-wise training for each theme in the modules. The entire team of researchers and mentors together underwent a training on the ERAC approach.

We also trained the teachers of these schools periodically at key stages. The idea was to keep them informed about the activities being undertaken by the mentors and to orient them to the mentoring-based-pedagogy that we were adopting. The main objective behind these trainings was to help them internalise and adopt similar pedagogical practices by realising that the themes and topics in our modules overlap with the textbook contents and curricular objectives of the state government that they were responsible for delivering. In a period of three years, which included two years of Covid-19, we conducted four rounds of orientation-training activities with the teachers of the schools we were working with. All of this was made possible with the explicit support of the government of Bihar. Two of these orientations were during the pre-Covid19 phase and two workshops were conducted in a post-pandemic phase. The last workshop was divided into two phases: the first phase was a one-day in person orientation, and the second phase was an intensive five-day online workshop for.

Engagement with school teachers: 4 rounds of orientation-training

1. A one-day orientation of the Bihar Mentorship Project model, an Action Research method
2. A two-day residential training on the ERAC approach
3. A two-day training on inequalities in education
4. A one-day in-person orientation on Learning through Letters followed by a five-day online training on Education in Emergency (along with certification)

Please visit <http://cbps.in/publications/action-research-for-building-resilient-school-systems-resources> to refer to the summary details of these teacher-training activities.



Continuous feedback loop

We established a regular feedback loop between (1) the research team and the mentors, (2) schoolteachers and the mentors, and (3) schoolteachers and the research team. The mentors took daily notes and had weekly calls about their experiences in each school, covering various dimensions of student-response, teacher-response, and community-response.

This iterative cycle informed a continuous module building process, which contributed to developing the content of the letter-based learning materials. This also meant that when we were developing and designing the letters, we had a fairly good idea about the learners' abilities, strengths, and limitations and we used them to design activities accordingly. While the mentors kept in regular touch with the schoolteachers, the research team also regularly called and kept the teachers informed about the activities and how they could contribute; the team also documented their concerns related to teaching and children's time away from school. This helped establish a relationship of trust and mutual understanding.



Attendance monitoring

We started monitoring the attendance of students as we started observing irregularities in attendance. The motivation for doing this was to understand its implications for both the design and impact of the activities. While we had adopted spiralling in our design, we also realised that certain kinds of activities had a more lasting memory and impact on children. We took this into account in our successive modules.



Advisory committee meetings & support

We had established an advisory committee comprising of experts and practitioners who were experienced in working with children from marginalised communities and designing relevant interventions. We periodically met and sought their professional help at appropriate stages. It helped us arrive at appropriate solutions and easily access professional support.



Connecting with key stakeholders and the larger education system

Since we were outsiders to the state school system, it was important to connect with the system and also other key stakeholders. We undertook two kinds of activities for this purpose:

- We mapped BMP modules against the Bihar government's school syllabus and textbooks. We found that our themes were very much in line with the topics being taught as part of the regular syllabus, but our pedagogies, as practiced in schools, were dissimilar.
- We organised dissemination seminars to share the findings of our surveys, progress and impact of our work. The focus was on (i) what we were doing, (ii) why we were doing it, (iii) the results and impact of these activities, and (iv) how these approaches could be integrated in regular teaching to enhance the quality of teaching-learning processes. These seminars were attended by senior- and middle-level officials from the Department of Education, Bihar and Bihar Education Project Council, and representatives from the civil society and media.

Questions for Reflection

- ① Are these supporting activities important and necessary for better planning, design and delivery of this or any other similar module? Why do you think so? If not, what do you think can substitute for these activities?
- ② Have you ever experienced being part of a system where one or more of these features exist? If yes, please describe and compare your experiences with those described above.
- ③ Irregular attendance of children for a variety of reasons is common in many schools. Have you also experienced it? How does it affect teaching and learning?

Impact of in-classroom module

We had conducted a baseline survey just before entering the schools in July 2018 for 755 students in classes VI and VII. In addition to understanding the socio- economic profile of the households, we wanted to understand the lives of these children in terms of their daily activities, time use, social life, and attitudes towards gender and caste. Please refer to http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/BMP-Baseline-Summary-Report_Final.pdf to see the findings of the baseline report. This report was circulated amongst all stakeholders.

We conducted another survey mainly to study the change in attitudes of these children, if any, based on our intervention in February 2020 just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit. We reached about 468 children during the endline survey. We were unable to complete this survey because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. Please refer to http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/Bihar-Mentorship-Project-Endline-Report_Final-25-March-2022.pdf to see the findings of the endline report.



We present here some highlights that show significant results despite

- the short period of merely one and a half years
- the constraints of only once-a-week touch point, and
- irregularities in children's attendance, which means many of them did not have a weekly interaction.

We documented significant changes in children's attitude, which were more marked for girls as compared to boys (see Figure 1). What is interesting to note is that a higher percentage of girls shifted towards a more gender-sensitive response, reflecting a better understanding of gender and society, as compared to boys. This is especially significant if we take the overall shifts where we see that both boys and girls have supported the progressive statement and rejected the stereotypical statement in our endline survey as compared to the baseline. This signifies two major pointers for all those working on developing critical thinking skills among adolescent girls and boys:



- It is possible to develop critical thinking skills using gender equality as the main driving framework even in challenging conditions by following a suitable approach of content and pedagogy.
- It is important to work with both boys and girls for bringing any notable change in beliefs, awareness, knowledge and social norms.

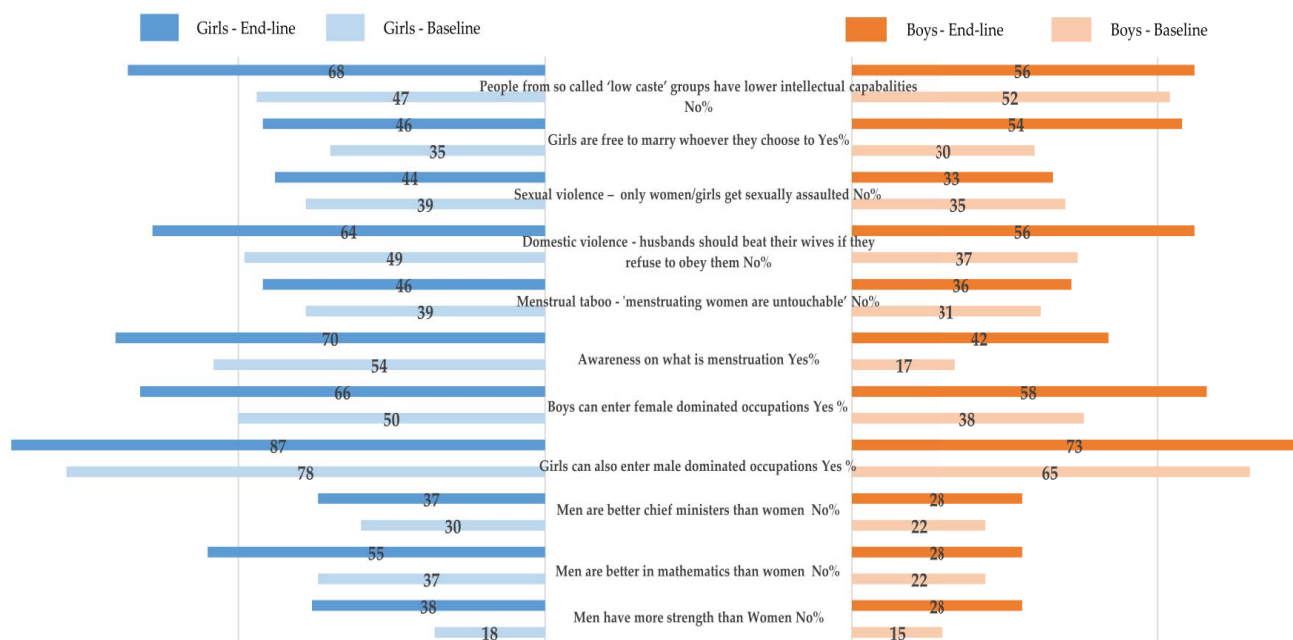


Figure 1: Shift in children's attitude towards society and gender (Baseline – July 2018; Endline – February 2020)

1.2 Unexpected Turn: Response to Covid19

When a sudden national lockdown was imposed in March 2020, we decided to conduct a telephonic survey of our children. We had their addresses and telephone numbers from our baseline survey. In our telephonic survey, out of 733 children (253 boys and 480 girls) in classes VII and VIII, 202 (28%) had no phone, and 154 (21%) could not be reached as the numbers were not operational. So, if we were to use only technological methods, we would have only been able to reach half of the entire population of children we were working with. With this insight, came other critical findings, listed below, that were instrumental for us to design the LtL:

- Only 277 (38%) had smartphones, and 114 (16%) had other phones. A higher percentage of boys (36%) had access to smart phones as compared to girls (28%). Families with no phones had a greater representation of girls; hence, we could reach only 44% of intended girls as against 51% of intended boys.
- In almost 95% of the 277 cases where families had a smartphone, the device belonged to a male member and thus, it was not always accessible to children; this was truer for girls than for boys. Such findings were insightful in understanding how difficult it could be for girls to use online learning materials, who we found also had a highly disproportionate burden of household chores.
- Girls rarely had any control over their time. This restricted their opportunities to even view educational programmes on TV channels. A number of state governments have started transmitting educational programmes through TV in response to schools being closed to curb the spread of coronavirus. TV, too, is a shared device, thus limiting access. Girls were not always free to watch the programmes when they were being aired.

Taking all these into consideration, we decided to implement a letter-based intervention using the already widely present network of post offices in rural areas. This led to the conceptualisation and implementation of the Learning through Letters (LtL) intervention.

Questions for Reflection

- ① Do you also notice similar needs for learning and poor access to online means for education around you? Why do you think these situations are similar/different (as the case may be)?
- ② Do you think it is important to keep regular contact with children? Why/why not?
- ③ What are the different restrictions for girls to access online resources in your context? What do you think are the core reasons? How do you think you can address these?
- ④ What could be the ways of keeping in touch with children in case of school closures? What are the pre-conditions for being able to reach children during school closure?

1.3 Learning through Letters: design, delivery and impact

Given that we decided to develop these learning materials in the form of postcards during the strict lockdowns imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions, the implementation was very challenging. However, we decided to go ahead for a variety of reasons. The most important reason was that we did not want children, especially girls, to have a long break in their learning; in addition, we also did not want them to be isolated in these troubled times.



Objectives

Some of the major objectives of this new initiative were

- to reach the maximum possible children because they could not be reached through online methods or medium, with the express purpose of continuing our work on critical thinking;
- to continue creating space for reading and comprehending with the ancillary objective of mitigating learning losses and keep up curiosity in learning;
- to continue engagement with children and their parents so as to prevent any dropping out when the school would eventually reopen;
- to deepen our relationship with students, parents, and teachers to create a support system and encourage girls to get in touch in case of any emergency; and
- to understand the issues that children were facing with respect to education

Questions for Reflection

- ❓ Have you written and received letters to your friends/relatives? Do you like writing and receiving letters?
- ❓ What do letters do? Think of and identify five reasons that make receiving letters a wonderful experience.
- ❓ Do you think it this format (letters) and means (post office) to reach children during any long school closure is good? Why/why not?

Main features of the LtL postcards

The learning postcards were developed by the same research team that had developed the in-classroom module. Although the main guiding principles, such as following the ERAC approach, remained the same, we had to be mindful of the fact that these were self-learning materials with no mentor present to help them negotiate the materials and learning. Therefore, while developing the letters, we agreed upon certain principles that allowed for the following to become the main features of the cards:



The content was conversational and personal to enable a relationship. The cards were in the form of letters written from the side of mentors whom the children knew well from their school interactions.



We developed the content taking into account the children's context. This ensured that despite the concepts being universal, the illustrations were contextually rooted.



The instructions were short and precise so that children could follow them on their own, without any external support. We also tried to break the concepts into small bits of resources/instructions so that they were easy to read, both at first and when repeatedly read. We used simple language and images in our design for easier comprehension. We also used the scaffolding or spiralling approach, where we repeated concepts in our sequencing of activities and resources. For example, we repeated certain activities, which we had already done in the classroom, in a different form in the letters.



We included diverse methods for exploration such as small experiments using easily available materials in rural homes, conversations with family members/neighbours of all ages, and observational activities. This was to ensure at-home exploration of any given topic in order to develop diverse set of skills besides breaking the monotony and making it more interesting.

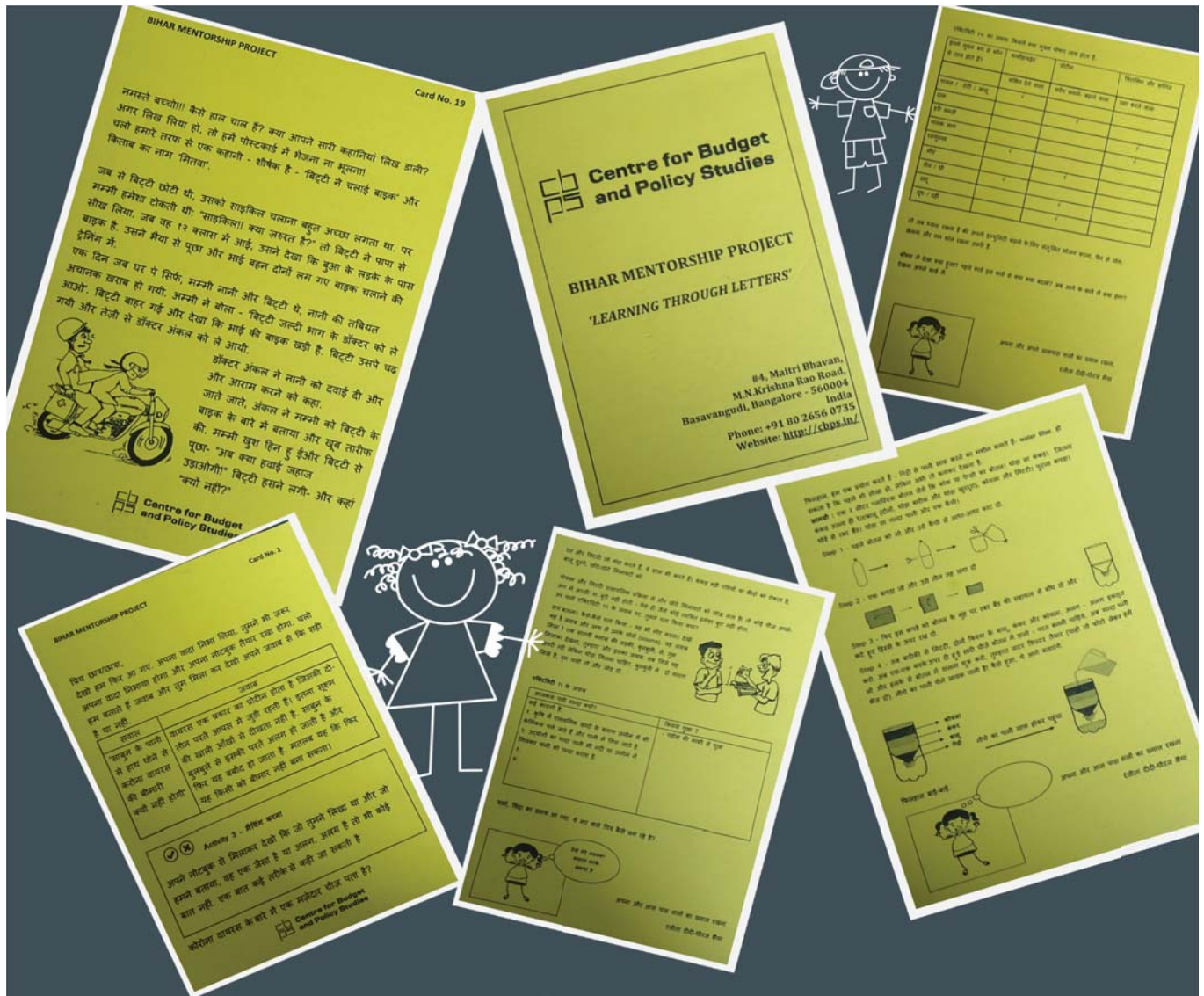


We extensively used questions to engage children in the learning process and created curiosity by leaving unanswered questions to be explored by the students. This also led to an element of 'waiting' for the answers that would arrive in the next card.



We used an integrated approach, where we included the concepts of science and social science and issues of equity, diversity and gender in an inter-connected manner.

Along with the letters, a packet of notebooks and colours and a packet of books were also provided. We also sent pre-paid postcards to children and parents, so they could send feedback without spending any money by just dropping the postcard in the nearest post box. We also periodically sent postcards to parents/guardians to keep them informed about our activities and approaches.



चिट्ठी आयी



Learning activities used for Letter-postcards: An Illustration

In this activity, children were supposed to fill in the blanks. These are common stereotypical statements in Hindi (selected):

- i. Fair _____ lovely
- ii. Mard ko _____ nahi hota. (Men don't feel _____)
- iii. Ek achchi ladki _____ kar sakti hai. (A good girl can _____)
- iv. ladko ko _____ se dukh hota hai (Boys feel sad when _____)
- v. Ladka _____ nahi kar sakta. (A boy can't _____)
- vi. _____ ladkiya sundar hoti hain. (_____ girls are beautiful)
- vii. Roti, kapada, aur _____. (Food, clothing, and _____)

Some cards provided the following answers that were very different from the common, stereotypical sayings:

- i. Fair why lovely
- ii. Mard ko seeng nahi hota. (Men don't get horns)
- iii. Ek achchi ladki apne sapno ko poora kar sakti hai. (A good girl can realise her dreams)
- iv. ladko ko doosron ke dukh se dukh hota hai (Boys feel sad when they see others sad)
- v. Ladka Ud nahi sakta. (A boy can't fly)
- vi. Saari ladkiya sundar hoti hain. (All girls are beautiful)
- vii. Roti, kapada, aur dukan. (Food, clothing, and shop)

We then used these examples, which were many more in number, to discuss stereotypes, with an emphasis on the following:

- Why were they difficult? Why is it hard to think of new answers?
- Is it easier to go with the flow instead of thinking about something new?
- What are the connections to stereotypes, pre-formed ideas about things?
- What is the basis for thinking of our opinions as facts?

From here, we moved to Facts and Opinions using very simple and friendly language, starting with universal facts such as 'The Sun rises in the east' and opinions such as 'I like to look at the Rising Sun'. We used some of the same (as above) and some new statements to ask children to separate what is fact and what is opinion. Some of the new statements were 'child marriage is illegal', 'all girls are bad drivers', 'both men and women cry', 'men also wear jewellery', and 'cooking and embroidery integrates mathematics'. We ensured that all of the statements included and explored different aspects of gender roles, gender and education, gender and professions, and sexualities. We used such techniques to engage with children with the idea that it would help them to think differently and dream differently.

Please visit http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/Learning-through-Letters-Postcards-Complete-Pack_compressed.pdf to see the complete set of 50 postcards.

Challenges and Solutions

The process of developing the content and design, printing those, and sending to about 800 addresses twice a week was not free of challenges. The challenges ranged from being operational to institutional, and from individual to social (as summarised below).

Constraints and Challenges



Operational and institutional

- The development, design, and production during Covid-19 lockdowns
- Verifying and maintaining address list and phone numbers as accurate addresses or phone numbers were not part of the school record keeping
- Receiving undelivered packages / letters (despite multiple verifications of address)
- Postal workers not being interested in delivery
- Floods



Individual and social

- Reading capabilities of students
- Lack of interest in initial phases
- Not trained to self-learn
- Families' apprehension of receiving mail from seemingly unknown persons
- Girls' care work responsibilities
- Lack of literate environment and support at home
- Paid work and early marriage

As we went along, we tried to address these through various methods such as the following:



Addresses

We continuously kept contacting children and parents on phone for addresses, which also kept changing. Changing addresses were more common in the urban areas in Patna than in the rural areas in Muzaffarpur. We spent nearly as much personnel time on maintaining and updating the address list as on developing the content.



Postal Department Linkages

We initially contacted the postal department in Karnataka (the state where we are headquartered and where the content was being developed). They suggested that we go for a larger size card and book-post mode of sending the letters that the regular postal department postcard for two reasons:

- the size of the postcard was very small, thus limiting the space for the content, and
- the price of a smaller printed postcard was about ten times the price of a book post for a bigger card.

We started sending cards in June 2020 and conducted a survey of 245 children, where among other things, we also asked about receiving the cards. Only 151 children out of the 245 surveyed had received the cards at that time (July–Aug 2020). In response, we contacted the postal department of Bihar (the state where the project was operational) and sought their intervention.



Lack of interest and weak parental support

The mentors continuously kept talking to both children and parents to understand the reasons for their lack of enthusiasm and tried to address them (when possible). We also encouraged the parents to find time and explore the cards. We were also continuously in touch with teachers and sought their help when it was necessary as they were also in receipt of these cards at the same time as the children. We encouraged those children who had access to online devices to respond to us through WhatsApp or send us pictures of their activities and experiments. When they did, we acknowledged their participation and shared it with others to generate greater engagement and interest from other children as well.



Weak reading abilities and non-literate environment

We first identified areas that needed greater support through face-to-face interactions. Once the lockdown was over and Covid-19 related guidelines allowed us to go to field, our mentors started going to these specific regions to provide additional support.

Questions for Reflection

- ❓ Do you think that these challenges faced by the children and their families are common in your context as well? If so, in what ways?
- ❓ What are the other challenges you would have faced in your context for conducting a similar activity?
- ❓ What could be some other solutions for the challenges that we encountered?



Learner and Teacher Support

Whenever lockdowns eased and it was possible to travel, we organised community-based learner support activities through our mentors. They organised small groups of children within their living areas while maintaining social distancing norms to provide assistance. This was aimed at

- (i) helping children negotiate the content of the letters – tackling doubts and clarifying concepts
- (ii) establishing peer networks to promote learning from each other; and
- (iii) seeing how the letters were being used for self-learning and to identify problems, if any, and using this feedback to design the content of the next set of cards.

The research team also visited these areas to gauge the situation in terms of the feasibility of holding community-based classes, helping the mentors carry out their community contacts and learner support activities, and connecting with schoolteachers to keep them informed as well as equipped to respond to similar emergencies.

The demand for the capacity building of teachers came from officials of the government of Bihar, and we responded (as mentioned earlier) by designing and implementing a six-day training on Education in Emergency (EiE).

Prior and subsequent to the pandemic lockdowns, we had conducted teacher trainings, where we came across two important findings:

- i. the teachers have had no systematic training in dealing in emergency situations when schools are closed, and
- ii. the teachers were making efforts but required additional support. We also realised that teachers are not always equipped to work with children from vulnerable communities; therefore, capacity building in terms of engaging with marginalised children in emergency situations was extremely necessary.

Based on this, we implemented the two-part training, where the first was an in-person one-day workshop, and the second was a five-day online workshop. The workshop focused on building an understanding of education in emergency, concepts of distance education, and critical pedagogy. Please refer to <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/BMP-TeacherTraining-EiE-Report.pdf> to see a short report on the workshop. A brief survey of the participants was conducted to provide an understanding of their experience and interests. An analysis of the answers helped in ensuring that the training was oriented towards their self-reflections and experiences. We gave all attendees a certificate of successful completion. The certification was linked with 100% attendance and submission of daily assignments.

1.4 Impact of LtL

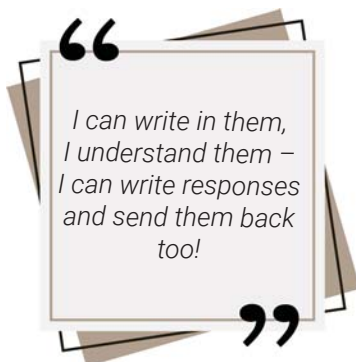
An initiative such as the LtL, which was conceptualised and implemented during the Covid-19 crisis period, is inherently full of uncertainties. Because the crisis is far from over, it is still too early¹ and difficult to understand the entire gamut of impact that it can potentially have. However, we present here the evidence we have collated that indicate signs of a multi-layered impact.

On Children

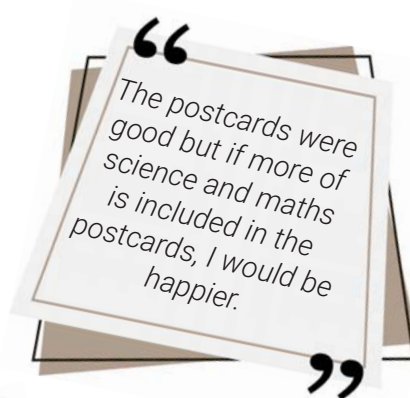
The mentors continuously kept talking to both children and parents to understand the reasons for their lack of enthusiasm and tried to address them (when possible). We also encouraged the parents to find time and explore the cards. We were also continuously in touch with teachers and sought their help when it was necessary as they were also in receipt of these cards at the same time as the children. We encouraged those children who had access to online devices to respond to us through WhatsApp or send us pictures of their activities and experiments. When they did, we acknowledged their participation and shared it with others to generate greater engagement and interest from other children as well.

Financial constraints prevented us from undertaking baseline and endline surveys. So, the data that we currently have (at least, quantitatively) is based on the changes that can be attributed to the in-class modules. However, we conducted rigorous case studies and share some of the responses from students below. The research report that includes these case studies in detail can be accessed at this link <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/BMP-ResearchReport-Final.pdf>.

¹ At the time of developing this toolkit in February 2022.



What students thought about the Learning Cards (postcards)



On Teachers

The teachers, who first started by being sceptical of our project, eventually became equal partners and whole-heartedly welcomed the idea of a training based on this experience. In fact, a number of them have continued using these cards in their classrooms since the reopening of schools. This signifies a definite shift in their attitudes towards accepting more active pedagogy than the one they have been traditionally used to. The real shift, however, will depend on a number of other constraining and supportive factors. We have also documented the impact of the project in our documentary, which also captures the feedback and experiences of the teachers (visit this link <http://cbps.in/publications/action-research-for-building-resilient-school-systems-resources>).

The School System

We implemented the project in partnership with officials from the Bihar Education Project Council and the Department of Education, Bihar. They facilitated the implementation of both the in-school and LtL interventions by issuing letters to relevant authorities in the district throughout the project life. They showed a keen interest in LtL and wanted to take this forward. The genesis of this toolkit was a direct result of these conversations and interactions.

1.5 A Major Lesson: Only a resilient school system can respond comprehensively to education in emergencies

Three major lessons emerged from this experience, the most critical being that in order to be able to successfully respond to emergency situations, a school needs to be resilient during its day-to-day functioning and be prepared for emergencies. The successes and challenges of our own intervention told us that it was possible to have various means of reaching and teaching children. But the critical factor was the establishment of relationships with the communities, families, and the children themselves. Had we not built these deep relationships before Covid-19, we would not have had the confidence and competencies to immediately respond to the Covid-19 pandemic using all the tools that we had been using. In turn, without this confidence and use of various methods, it would have been difficult to have a successful intervention such as LtL during Covid-19. A major lesson learnt during this period was that if the school system itself could adopt some of these ways to become more resilient, they would be able to respond to and respond well to any emergency. In fact, this toolkit is aimed at providing the kinds of resources that the school requires to prepare its students.

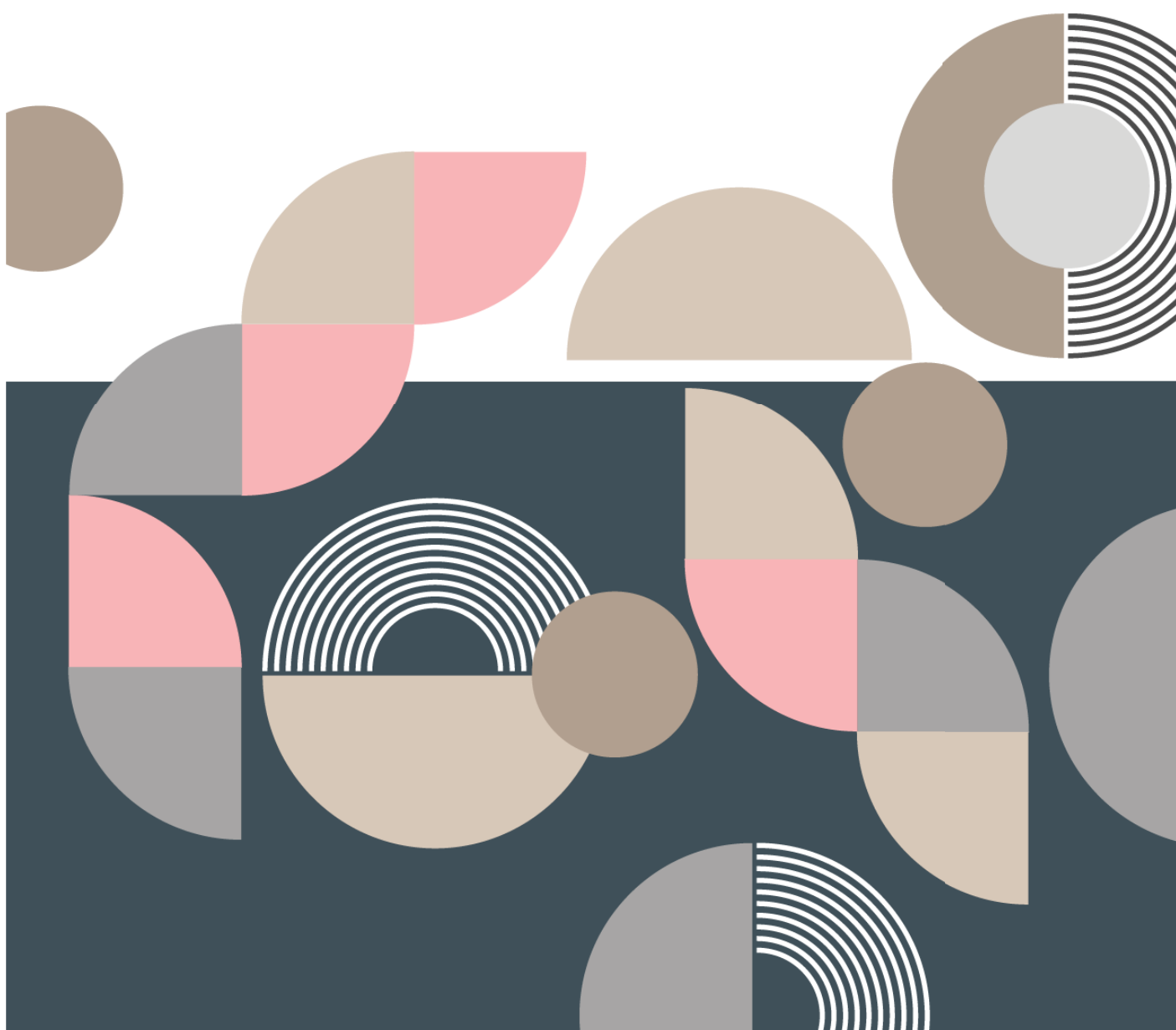
Another major lesson is that any emergency response to education needs to take the context into account, and more so, if the context is of marginalisation. For instance, we had conducted three rounds of surveys after the onset of the pandemic—these surveys show that an overwhelming majority of those in rural areas and those belonging to lower socio-economic backgrounds in urban areas do not and cannot access online or TV-based education. This is true almost for up to 90% of this population, irrespective of the presence of a TV or a phone at home. In our multi-state survey in India during the pandemic, we found that while 52% households had a TV, only 11% had ever watched an educational programme. Please use this link <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/The-Effect-of-the-Covid-19-Pandemic-and-Economic-Distress-on-Education-A-View-from-the-Margins.pdf> to view this report.

We also learnt from the same survey that when a school remains closed for longer periods of time, children get engaged in greater chores at home, care work, or labour, or they roam around in groups. In fact, school closures are common for a variety of reasons that are not limited to health crises like pandemics. Our surveys also told us that many children (at least half of them in this case) have no textbooks for the class, new or old. This means that we need to think of alternate ways of reaching them and ensuring that they have the means to learn even when schools are closed. To be able to develop this understanding through research and respond to that by designing an appropriate initiative is part of building a resilient schooling system.

The third major lesson is that in-school and emergency responses need to go hand-in-hand in terms of their broad focuses, curricular objectives, and pedagogical approaches despite being different in their implementation, taking into consideration the nature of emergencies and their ramifications. Therefore, before arriving at any principles based on this experience, it is important to know and understand other examples and experiences of education in diverse kinds of emergencies. We will explore these aspects in our next chapter.

Chapter 2

Education in Emergencies: Existing Knowledge



2.0 Education in Emergencies: Existing Knowledge

An emergency can happen anytime, anywhere, and to anyone. In simple terms an 'emergency' is a sudden and serious event that disrupts everyday life and needs immediate attention. Examples of emergency in our personal lives include road accidents, fire, sudden serious sickness, a fall, house collapse, financial setbacks, and more.

Questions for Reflection

- ① What do you understand by the term 'emergency' and what kind of emergencies have you faced in your life?
- ② What did you do? What kind of actions/responses did you take in face of the emergency?
- ③ What kind of preparations have you made in order to avoid emergencies of this kind in the future?
- ④ How would you help others during an emergency and/or be prepared for an emergency?

But there are emergencies that happen at a larger scale—at a community, village or state level, or even at the national level. The Covid-19 pandemic is a good example of an emergency at national and global level.

Questions for Reflection

- ① Do you remember any other emergency that your village/state faced?
- ② What happened during the emergency?

2.1 Definition of Emergency and Other Related Terms



Emergency

Emergency is a sudden and usually unforeseen event that calls for immediate measures to minimise its adverse consequences (UN DHA).

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4F99A3C28EC37D0EC12574A4002E89B4-reliefweb_aug2008.pdf

An emergency requires quick action and responses to minimise or stop any further damage to individuals, property or environment. At the same time, there are some devastating emergencies that require people to just flee and save their lives, such as earthquakes or floods. Emergencies can occur suddenly and can be of varying dimensions—small, large, or devastating. Emergencies are all events that pose a danger to human lives, infrastructure and the environment. When discussing 'emergencies' there are some terms that need to be understood.

Emergency-related terms

Disaster

A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses, and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Disasters are often classified according to their speed of onset (sudden or slow) or according to their cause (natural or human-made).

Hazard

A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption, or environmental degradation.

Risk

The chance or the amount/measure of damage that any hazard can cause to people, property, or environment. Risk may vary for different people, situations, or localities.

Natural Hazards

Naturally occurring physical phenomena caused either by rapid or slow onset events which can be sudden and devastating, such as

- geophysical (earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and volcanic activity)
- hydrological (avalanches and floods)
- climatological (extreme temperatures, drought and wildfires), meteorological (cyclones and storms/wave surges)
- biological (disease epidemics and insect/animal plagues)

Human-made Hazards

A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption, or environmental degradation.

Additional Challenges

Additional challenges are things like climate change, unplanned urbanization, under-development/poverty, and pandemics. These aggravating factors will result in increased frequency, complexity, and severity of disasters. (IFRC – International Federation of Red Cross)

Links:

https://www.unisdr.org/files/7817_UNISDRTerminologyEnglish.pdf

<https://www.undrr.org/terminology/hazard>

What is Climate Change?

Climate is an average pattern of weather that has been occurring over years. Climate change means a significant change in those average patterns. Climate change that the world is now seeing is caused by humans using oil, gas, and coal (fossils) in their lives (for homes, transport, and factories). Use of fossil fuel creates gases (greenhouse gases/ mostly carbon dioxide). These gases envelope the earth trapping the solar heat, causing earth's temperature to rise. A rise in temperature affects the entire earth's eco-system causing 'intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity'. These events are threatening lives, livelihoods, food production, and the environment.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-24021772>

<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>

It must be noted that the intensity of a disaster may be the same, but the developing countries often suffer much more than the developed ones who have better infrastructure, better systems, and preparedness. Also, when a disaster strikes, it affects people differentially; it is the most vulnerable in the community who get the most affected.

Understanding Terms: Vulnerability, Marginalisation and Exclusion

We often use these words ‘vulnerable’, ‘marginalised’, ‘excluded’, ‘disadvantaged’, but what do these mean? They are related and their meanings can overlap though they are not the same.

In simple words, one who is not central to development, planning, policies, and related discourses is marginalised. For instance, those whose voices are not heard are marginalised; those who are marginalised are more vulnerable because they are less powerful and therefore weaker. This means they remain excluded from most decision-making processes.

The socio-economic status of individuals and communities often drive marginalisation, vulnerability, and exclusion, but these are not the only drivers. Social norms, prevalent power structure, and positioning also play a major role, they often intersect. For instance, girls coming from lower castes and poorer households are far more vulnerable to forces that may compel them to leave school and get married at an early age; this is truer for girls in a south Asian context when compared to boys coming from high castes, or middle- or upper-class families.

These vulnerabilities get accentuated during emergencies; therefore, such individuals and groups need additional support. The very socio-economic status, social norms, and other barriers that make them vulnerable also make it more challenging to reach them during emergencies; it needs a deeper understanding of context-specific disadvantages and higher levels of efforts to reach them during an emergency.

Questions for reflection: mapping the vulnerable and most vulnerable

- Who are the vulnerable and most vulnerable groups/people in your state/village or community?
- Give reasons why you think they are the most vulnerable.

2.3 Understanding the experiences of emergencies

Natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, cyclones, and earthquakes have been occurring since time immemorial across the world, and so is the case with diseases and pandemics, and wars and conflicts. Incidences of natural disasters have only increased with climate change.

We present here a few examples of some key emergencies that have happened in the world—these examples give a good idea on the magnitude and devastation that some of the emergencies have caused. These emergencies, whether natural and human-made disasters, caused disruptions to normal life, and much more so for those who are already more vulnerable. Floods, for example, regularly occur in certain parts of India and Bangladesh and destroy lives, livelihoods, crops and disrupt regular running of the school every year in these parts.

Natural Disasters: A few examples

The Gujarat Earthquake (2001): A massive earthquake occurred in Bhuj, Kutch on 26 January 2001, in Gujarat. Twenty of the 25 districts in the state were affected; Kutch was most affected. In addition to killing more than 20,000 people and injuring more than 150,000 others, the quake left hundreds of thousands homeless and destroyed or damaged more than a million buildings. A large majority of the local crops were ruined as well. Roads, hospitals, historical buildings, government buildings, and schools were either destroyed or damaged.

<https://www.britannica.com/science/earthquake-geology>

The Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004): It killed approximately 230,000 people and displaced nearly two million people in 14 South Asian and East African countries. Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives were severely affected. In India, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the coastal states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the Union Territory of Puducherry got severely affected. The damage was devastating with loss of lives, many of them children, and there was large scale destruction of homes and other infrastructure including schools and Anganwadis, loss of crops and livelihood. Infrastructure damages included the shipping sector, harbours, jetties, roads, bridges, power and communication lines.

<https://www.livescience.com/33316-top-10-deadliest-natural-disasters.html>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/india/india-tsunami-report-nation>

https://archivepmo.nic.in/drmanmohansingh/reports_details.php?nodeid=25

Pakistan Earthquake (2005): The Kashmir earthquake that occurred in 2005 had a magnitude of 7.6. It is estimated that about 80,000 people were killed in north-western Pakistan and Kashmir. Tremors were also felt in the nearby countries of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, western China, and also the Indian part of Kashmir, where around 1,400 people died.

<https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/10-worst-natural-disasters.php>

Kosi Flood in Bihar, India (2008): In five districts of Bihar (Madhepura, Supaul, Saharsa, Purnia, and Araria) as many as 159 primary and middle schools were wiped off or completely damaged in the Kosi floods of 2008 that inundated 35 blocks and affected over 32 lakh people. Overall, 2,399 out of the total 7,480 schools in the five districts were damaged by floodwaters after the Kosi breached its embankment at Kusaha in Nepal on 18 August 2008 and caused huge devastations. Many schools were used as relief camps.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/web-exclusive/story/bihar-flood-takes-a-toll-on-education-31173-2008-10-08>

Haiti Earthquake (2010): The catastrophic earthquake of magnitude 7.0 that struck just northwest of Port-au-Prince on 12 January 2010 ranks as one of the three deadliest quakes of all time. One and a half to three million people are estimated to have died because of this quake.

<https://www.livescience.com/33316-top-10-deadliest-natural-disasters.html>

Wars, conflicts, and displacement are other forms of emergencies that severely disrupt education as well. As many as 39 countries were identified as affected by armed conflict in the period 2002-2011, and it is well known that girls face a disproportionately higher burden of school disruptions caused by conflicts or wars. A number of African and Asian countries have faced or are facing conflicts; this includes Angola, Somalia, South Sudan, DRC Congo, Burundi, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Nepal, parts of Pakistan, and Timor-Leste. Rwanda, Syria, and Myanmar too have experienced major human crises due to wars and conflicts in the twenty-first century.

<https://educateachild.org/explore/barriers-to-education/fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations/armed-conflict>

Conflict and education: the case of Afghanistan

Education in Afghanistan has always been caught between attempts to modernise education on one hand and the conservative religious lobbies on the other hand, who resisted any change, favoured religious education, and opposed education of girls. The swings in curriculum development were often drastic—from a move towards modernisation to a religion-influenced curriculum or a Communist ideology influenced curricular changes during the Soviet Occupation (1979-89). With the fall of the Communist regime and the ascendancy of Taliban, the extremist ideology of banning education and favouring religious education came in. With the fall of Taliban in 2001, the government once again tried to build the education system and curriculum on modern, contemporary lines (2001-14). The Taliban came back once again, and education of girls has been a casualty. The change in curriculum and the entrenchment of extremist ideology has left deep fissures in the Afghan society.

<http://www.infactispax.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/V14.2-Yazdani.pdf>

https://www.shs-conferences.org/articles/shsconf/pdf/2016/04/shsconf_ erpa2016_01124.pdf

At the time of writing this, we are witnessing a war between Russia and Ukraine.

Conflicts are known to 'violate every right of a child - the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to the development of the personality and the right to be nurtured and protected' (UNICEF, 2002).

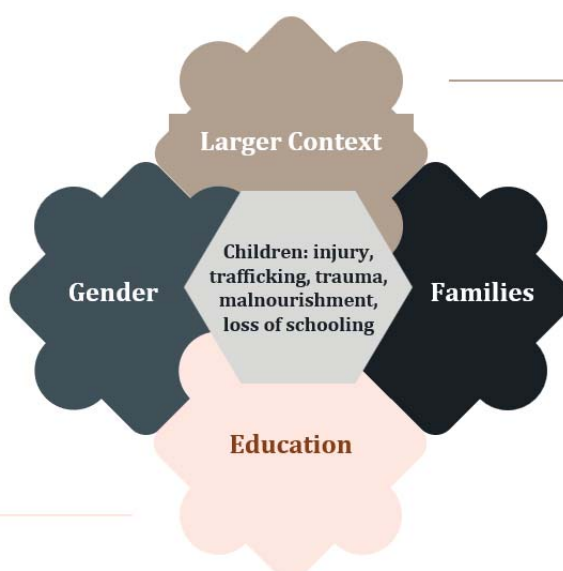
Teachers' strike is also an emergency as it leads to school closures for long periods. A number of Indian states have witnessed such situations at different points of time. A famous example is the seven-month long strike by Belgian teachers, which was studied ten years later, and the study concluded that students' learning had indeed been compromised because of this closure (Belot and Webbink, 2010).

2.4 Impact of Emergencies on Children and Education System

Emergencies affect children in multiple ways, both directly and indirectly. Directly, they may cause children to suffer from injury, ill-health, poor nutrition, psycho-somatic disorders, dislocation, loss of schooling, abuse, or trafficking. Indirectly, they get impacted as their parents, families, and communities get affected with loss of lives, homes, and livelihood. Some of this impact is short term, but often the impact lasts for a long time. Emergencies can create new barriers to access and quality of education or exacerbate existing barriers.

rape and sexual abuse, increase in early marriage and childbirth, malnourishment, sexually transmitted diseases, widows, low birth weight babies, increased responsibilities, exploitation, and increase in dropout

buildings, disruption, teacher attendance, issue of quality, learning material, and learning loss



marginalised on many variables such as governance, services, investment, justice dispensation, change in demography, environment degradation

displaced and in camps, loss of livelihood, debt, deaths, fragmentation, alcohol and drug abuse, and increase in HIV/ infectious diseases

Figure 2: Direct, Indirect, Short Term, and Long Term Impact on Children

Impact on schools, education and children



School infrastructure

Natural disasters like floods and earthquakes destroy or damage school buildings, other infrastructure, furniture, and learning materials housed in schools. School buildings are often the targets during wars and conflicts. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we saw school buildings being used for institutional quarantine.



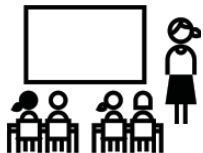
Disruption in schooling

Damage to school buildings means disruption in schooling. During natural disasters like floods school buildings are often used as relief camps, disrupting schooling for many months. The Ebola and SARS pandemic saw closure of schools for almost a year. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that schools were closed for more than a year or two. Closure of schools, especially when prolonged, results in learning loss for children. It also means that feeding programmes like the Mid-Day Meal in India get disrupted. Studies on the impact of Covid-19 show that it added to food shortages experienced by the families (Ghatak, Yereeseeme, and Jha, 2020)



Impact on quality

Even in normal circumstances schools for marginalised children struggle on quality parameters. In emergencies, the quality gets further affected. Covid-19 related closures have caused high levels of learning loss where children have not only lost that time that they missed schooling but have also forgotten what they had learnt earlier (APU, 2021).



Impact on teachers & other personnel

Teachers are a part of the community that gets affected by any emergency. However, teachers are expected to set aside their personal tragedies and continue with their teaching and any other work that is assigned to them by the government. Teachers too need support, both in terms of psychosocial care and guidance but more importantly, they too need psychosocial care and guidance. Teachers in conflict/strife zones are often most vulnerable as they often are target of attacks.



Impact on funding

There are competing demands on available resources during and after an emergency. Often the limited resources are diverted to building of infrastructure, health, food, and other immediate requirements.



Physical & mental well-being of children

Children during any disasters are vulnerable to physical injury, death, malnutrition, ill-health, violence, and abuse. Often children are emotionally traumatised and suffer from psychological issues like fear, anxiety, regression, and other post traumatic disorders.



Child protection issues

Issues of child protection are aggravated during an emergency. Increase in child trafficking, violence, and sexual abuse of children is often cited. In cases of conflict and wars, children are often used by both state and non-state actors; the use includes indoctrination of children, especially adolescents, as child soldiers and sex slaves. Increase in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is also a reality of many emergencies.



Schooling & education

Emergencies also result in increased absenteeism, increased drop-outs, and decreased enrolment. Often girls and children from marginalised communities are more likely to dropout due to increase in early marriage and child labour.

Pandemics and education: A few examples

Human Immunodeficiency Virus & Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV & AIDS): First reported in 1981, HIV & AIDS became a full-blown pandemic affecting different parts of the world in no time. Although it spread across the world, Sub-Saharan African countries were the worst affected. The HIV & AIDS pandemic had a devastating impact on education as there was a high mortality rate amongst adults, which included parents, teachers, and other education functionaries. This led to an increase in the number of orphans and child-headed households; this also increased the number of out-of-school children, reduced enrolment, and increased absenteeism.

(Ijumba, N. Impact of AIDS/HIV on education and poverty. UN Chronicles. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/impact-hivaids-education-and-poverty>)

Ebola: Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is a highly infectious and fatal disease. The 2014–2016 outbreak in West Africa was the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976. The affected countries were Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia; all three were emerging out of conflicts and violence and had relatively poor economies and capacities to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. Give that it was highly contagious, the Ebola crisis meant that there was a near ‘lockdown’ of activities, which seriously affected the economy, led to loss of livelihood and commerce, weakened social relationships and bonds, and stressed medical systems. Children became vulnerable to infection and malnutrition; loss of life led to increase in number of orphans; and there was an increase in the child labour incidence. Schools remained closed for nearly a year and more; prolonged closure of schools led to learning loss and increased dropouts. Mental health and child protection issues were pronounced. Between 2014 -2016, five million children are estimated to have missed school and two million children did not return to school because of Ebola. (Fisher, H-T., Elliot, L., & Bertrand, S.L. (2018). Guidance Note: Protection of Children during Infectious Disease Outbreaks. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/protection_of_children_during_infectious_disease_outbreak_guidance_note.pdf; Rohwerder, B. (2014). Impact and implications of the Ebola crisis. The GSDRC Research Helpdesk. <http://gsdrc.org/docs/open/hdq1177.pdf> https://www.who.int/healthtopics/ebola#tab=tab_1)

Covid-19: Similar to Ebola in some ways but much larger in its spread and longer in its reoccurrences, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and lives of children has been devastating in many parts of the world. In India, with a vast population losing their livelihood and facing marked reduction in income coupled with school closures, children have faced unprecedented breaks in schooling, an increase in their earning or care responsibilities, and uncertainties in their own potential for continuing their schooling. In poorer areas where social norms are not strong for girls schooling, the impact on increasing children’s engagement in paid labour for petty jobs (for the sake of additional income to the family) and girls’ early marriage (for perceived safety and reduced responsibility of protecting her) has been more visible. Please see the three reports based on research studies undertaken by CBPS and its partners on the impact of Covid-19 on the lives and education of children here.

- <https://thewire.in/education/online-school-education>
- <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/Report-Final-1.pdf>
- <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/The-Effect-of-the-Covid-19-Pandemic-and-Economic-Distress-on-Education-A-View-from-the-Margins.pdf>

'Education in emergencies refers to the quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education. Education in emergencies provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives.'

<https://inee.org/eie-glossary/education-emergencies>

There was a time when it was considered that 'education' can come later or that it is not a critical component of a humanitarian response. However, advocates of education argued that like all other rights, education is also a right that needs to be fulfilled under all circumstances, including during emergencies. The Convention of Rights of Children (CRC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4) are global commitments whereby countries are bound to provide education to children under all circumstances. In emergencies, human rights law applies in all contexts; people do not lose their human rights because of conflict, famines, or natural disasters.

<https://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/education-emergencies>

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG -4) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.

<https://campaignforeducation.org/en/who-we-are/the-international-education-framework-2/the-sustainable-development-goal-4/>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) applies to children under 18. It recognises education as a legal right to every child on the basis of equal opportunity.

<https://www.right-to-education.org/resource/convention-rights-child>

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/CRC.GC.C.11_EN.pdf

Humanitarian professionals further pointed out that schools are also necessary as they 'provide children with lifesaving food, water, health care and hygiene supplies. And they offer psychosocial support'. Giving children stability and structure helps them cope with the trauma they experience every day. Importantly, schools also protect children from other dangers like physical harm and abuse, extreme forms of indoctrination, and trafficking. The long-term importance of education for economic growth and development is also acknowledged.

<https://www.unicef.org/education/emergencies>

Right kind of quality education also plays a preventative role. 'Human rights education enables people to recognise they are rights-holders and to respect the rights of others. Education for peace and responsible citizenship can likewise promote peace and tolerance for others.'

<https://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/education-emergencies>

Activity

1. Please list different ways in which children and schools get affected during an emergency by selecting one kind of disaster (flood, earthquake, pandemic, or conflict) and list the impact of that particular disaster on children and schools.
2. Match this with the list prepared by your colleagues and discuss.

The Three Phases of EiE Response

The Education in Emergencies (EiE) literature refers to a three-phase EiE response in case of any emergency. Although the exact duration of the three phases may vary depending on the nature of the emergency, it helps to be aware of this approach and understand the activities that are required for respective phases of preparedness, mitigation and prevention.

<https://inee.org/resources/eie-harmonized-training-module-3-technical-components-eie>

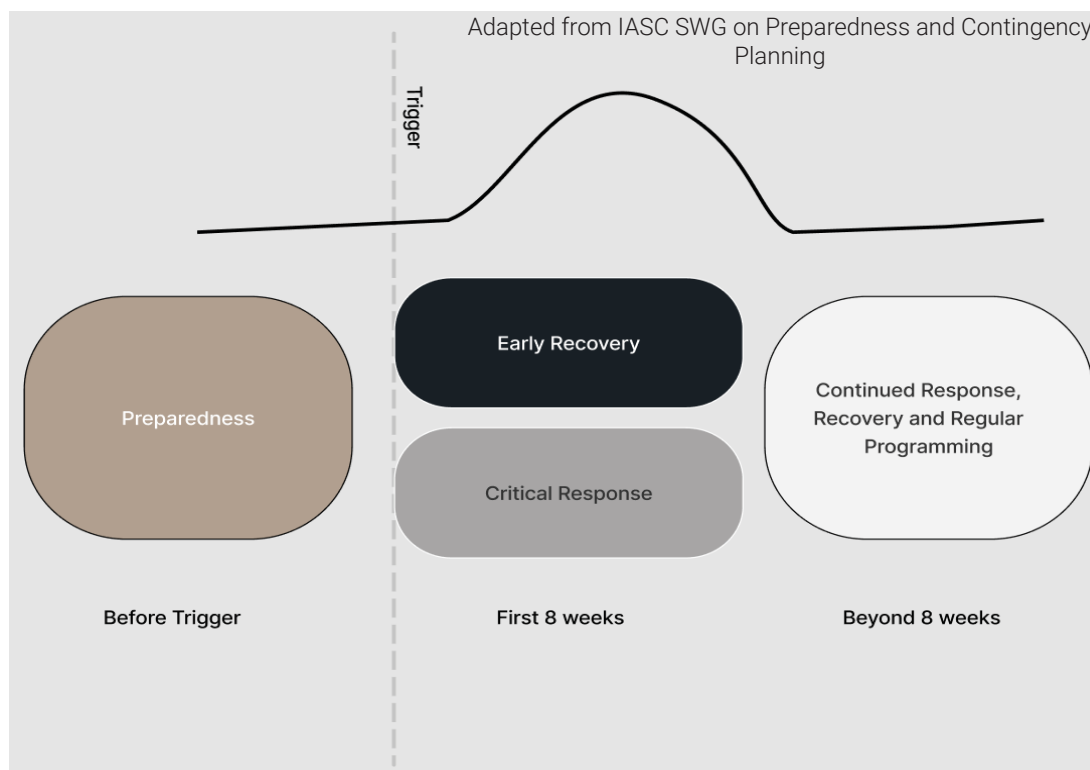


Figure 3: Three Phases of EiE Response



Preparedness

Preparedness is being ready with an emergency response plan, resources, and systems to respond to a disaster and its aftermath. Preparedness is about thinking in advance about the following:

1. What are the possible conditions/state?
2. What would be the impact of this on the community?
3. How can risks be reduced? and
4. How will we respond?



Mitigation

Mitigation is about taking steps/precautions to reduce or eliminate possible damage to people, resources, and infrastructure in event of any disaster. It is also about trying to take steps to reduce the frequency/occurrence of disasters. For example, undertaking reforestation to minimise landslide and droughts.



Prevention

Prevention is taking action or putting in place systems to prevent or minimise damage if a disaster is to strike. For example, building earthquake resistant school buildings.

The reconstruction phase is about building back the lost infrastructure, facilities, and systems. The key guiding principle here is **'Build back better and do no harm'**. That is rather than build back in the same conditions as before the emergency, the planners should take this opportunity to build back better infrastructures and systems. For example, build earthquake and flood resistant child-friendly schools. This could also include reviewing and redefining quality measures like renewal of curriculum, learning material, teacher training, classroom practices, and student assessments.

Key Principles of EiE Response

- Planning and Implementation should be based on data and other credible evidence.
- Participatory planning needs to be adopted with representation of relevant stakeholders.
- Planning and implementation should be inclusive with a special focus on gender, disability, and marginalised socio-economic groups.
- Innovations and responsive strategies need to be considered.
- EiE response should consider the twin principles of 'Build Back Better' and 'Do no Harm'.

2.6 Providing access to education in emergency contexts: existing examples

One of the doyens in the field of EiE, Margaret Sinclair¹, quotes 'Education that protects the well-being, fosters learning opportunities, and nurtures the overall development (social, emotional, cognitive, physical) of children affected by conflicts and disasters.' Source: Save the Children Alliance Education Group (2001) to explain what EiE means.

Early EiE models/strategies emerged from different agencies working with children affected by natural disasters, and more so from work with conflict affected children—this meant significant work with refugees and displaced children. The focus in these initiatives was on providing access to learning opportunities, creating protective environments, and nurturing the well-being of children. Since significant work was with displaced communities and refugees, community participation in education assumed importance. These initiatives were also working with very traumatised children who had closely experienced violence and loss; therefore, the focus was on engaging children through play, activities, and psychosocial care. These interventions emphasised the need for life skills, vocational skill development, conflict resolution, aspects of peace education, human rights, and citizenship.

The section below describes some key interventions.



Psychosocial care & child protection

Providing safe space and facilitative and responsible relationships to disaster affected children have been integral to EiE activities. Psychosocial care is also central. Teachers are trained in basic approach and activities for psychosocial care. Teachers are also oriented to identifying cases needing specialised attention and referring them to more trained personnel.



Pre-packaged kits

The early 1990s saw an incidence of a number of global conflicts and civil wars, like in the civil war in Somalia, genocide in Rwanda, strife in Congo, and wars in Bosnia and Afghanistan (<https://www.mapsofworld.com/answers/world/main-conflicts-in-90s/>). These conflicts led to a massive number of people, including children, being displaced. Pre-packaged educational and recreational material emerged as an effective and efficient solution of reaching children and were widely used in many of the conflict contexts. The pre-packaged kits were also used in many natural disasters, including in countries affected by the tsunami in 2004. The Recreation Kit comprised of sports and play material, which were also thought to be important in helping children address their trauma.

Similar to the recreational kits, agencies like United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also developed Teacher Emergency Package (TEP), and the School in a Box Kit (SIB). The School in a Box comprises of basic educational supplies that would help a quick resumption of structured learning activities for children in crisis setting. The TEP contained basic teaching and learning supplies as the SIB but designed to start a short-term literacy and numeracy course but would take at least three months to adapt and put into implementation.

- <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/the-use-of-emergency-education-and-recreation-kits-in-aceh.pdf>
- <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6354084>

Although an effective strategy, it is also observed that the pre-packaged material sometimes is not culturally relevant and often driven by donor agencies or International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). To overcome this criticism, national and state level disaster response bodies are undertaking efforts to develop a contextual learning kit with locally procured material. It is also noted that these kits cater to young children of pre-school and early grade age groups only.

Activity: Local Education Kit for Emergencies

One of the criticisms of pre-packaged kits being delivered by aid agencies is that they were often inappropriate for local contexts and often expensive too.

In this activity you are to create a list of items that can go in an Emergency Education Kit for the following:

- Pre-school
- Classes 1 to 3
- Classes 4 to 5, and
- Classes 6 to 7



Child-friendly safe spaces (CFS)

As discussed earlier, disasters expose children to a number of risks making them vulnerable to abduction, sexual abuse, or violence. Their normal lives, including systems of care, are disrupted. These spaces are created in safe and secure spaces; sometimes, temporary tents are used to create these. A local adult facilitator is recruited to supervise the children and care for them and conduct some basic recreational and educational activities with psychosocial care and basic emergency education. Child-friendly safe spaces aim to strengthen local mechanisms for support, protection, and care for children by serving as a focal point for engaging with parents and mobilising other community resources and services.

The space is essentially a temporary arrangement made to keep children safe and give them a sense of normalcy and provide care in situations of extreme adversity; CFS have become a standard approach to address the protection and psychosocial needs of children in the context of humanitarian emergencies.

- <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-6939-2>
- https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/ec_guidelines_for_child-friendly-spaces.pdf/

Activity: Visioning a Child Friendly Space (CFS)

Suppose your area is prone to floods and there are floods almost every year. You and your colleagues are given the responsibility of envisaging CFS and designing a prototype of what would a CFS look like and what would it do. Try to visualise that either alone or in a group.

Can you help the local government body develop this prototype?



Learning Centres

In cases where schools are damaged or children are losing on schooling because of displacement, as in cases of refugees, Learning Centres (LC) become an important option. Like the Temporary CFS, LC are spaces that have all the elements of being safe and child-friendly but unlike the temporary centres, LC are meant for a longer duration and are built with more sustainable material. The centres are meant to provide children with formal or formal equivalent learning opportunities; it is found to be an effective way of reaching education to displaced or refugee children who are housed in large refugee camps along with their family and other displaced community members.

- <https://www.unicef.org/media/102011/file/Bangladesh%20case%20study%20-%20refugee%20education.pdf>
- https://inee.org/system/files/resources/Learning_Spaces.pdf

Learning Circles: Colombia

The Escuela Nueva Learning Circles (ENLC) were designed to provide high quality education to out-of-school children (OOSC) displaced by violence and other emergencies. The teaching-learning methods in regular schools are based on the belief that children have similar abilities and learn at the same space; the teacher-centric teaching and whole class approach makes it difficult for children to learn, especially for children from marginalised communities and difficult contexts. The ENLC are an adaptation of the Escuela Nueva child-centred pedagogical model.

The ENLC are recognised by the Ministry of Education (MOE) but operate in a nurturant and safe community space and are linked to a given formal school, through shared regular curriculum, academic calendars, grading systems, and extracurricular programmes. A tutor facilitates the learning providing personalized attention to children on attainment of required competencies children are integrated into the formal school. Children learn in groups through self-learning guides, which are lighter in terms of content but stronger in life skills. The emerging lesson is that development of social skills like conflict management, group work, acceptance of diverse opinion, and reflection are important to succeed in life.

The approach was adapted to during the Covid-19 emergency, by using a family based approach which had three elements:

- i. use of learning materials delivered to each child (photocopy or originals of guides, workbooks, supplies);
- ii. delivery of written guidelines to parents or other adults responsible for the children with information on how the tutors and others will support children through phone calls or virtual media when available; and
- iii. use of the structure, timetables, and activities of the learning guides so children learn at their own pace and the tutors can monitor their progress and provide the required support.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/escuela-nueva-learning-circles-learning-emergency-situations>



**Bridge courses/
accelerated
education
programme (AEP)**

This is a programme that is specially designed for older out of school children or for children who had a substantial gap in their schooling. An AEP helps these children gain equivalent (to formal schools) competencies of basic education through well designed teaching and learning approaches that commensurate with their level of cognitive maturity. The programmes help children attain these competencies in a reduced time frame; on attainment of the required competencies, learners are either integrated into regular formal schools or enter into skills-based technical and vocational education.

<https://inee.org/collections/accelerated-education>

In India, a number of AEP models were innovated under the Education for All (EFA) efforts. These include Camps by M V Foundation, bridge courses tried out in Balika Shivirs of Lok Jhumbish, and CARE India's model for girls called Udaan.

Providing Education Post-Earthquake: CARE India's Experience in Kutch

CARE India adopted a multi-pronged approach for ensuring education of children and adolescents after the devastating earthquake in Kutch in January 2001. The efforts included both working with formal schools as well as setting up alternatives where needed. The interventions are highlighted below:

Formal schools: CARE actively supported the re-building of schools that were damaged or destroyed because of the earthquake. In rebuilding the schools, they opted for a more child-friendly structure and also created child-friendly elements in the school. It provided well selected child-friendly teaching learning material and books to the schools; while providing the books and material CARE ensured that there was no duplication of the material. The infrastructure enhancement and the material selection were planned together with the teachers of the schools.

Adolescent Learning Centres: Meant for out-of-school girls in the age group 12-18 years, these centres transacted a specially conceptualised curriculum that focussed on basic literacy, numeracy, life, and livelihood skills. An educated woman in the village facilitated the teaching-learning in these centres. Around 50 such centres were operational in the earthquake affected area and covered around 1,000 adolescent girls.

Bridge Course: A two-month summer camp was organised for children for children who had dropped out of schools due to the earthquake or had never been to school. With the help of partner NGOs children from the most marginalised communities like Koli Community, Dalits, and Muslim communities were identified and enrolled in the two-month camp. At the camp, children learnt the basic learning and literacy skills through child-centred, joyful teaching learning methods.

<http://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/evaluations/ind-fcgrp-final-oct-03.pdf>



Literacy and vocational centres

Mostly, the two operate for adolescents/youth and in some cases for non-literate adults, mostly women. As the name suggests, these centres provide basic literacy skills like reading, writing, and numeracy. Sometimes there are standalone vocational centres that cater to the needs of young people, providing them with locally relevant vocational skills such as mobile repair, computer literacy, carpentry, etc.



Home and community-based schools

In normal times, community and home-based schools are ways of reaching education to children in remote areas or children of nomadic tribes in many countries. The approach has been effectively used in contexts of conflict or in cases where education of girls was restricted by fundamentalists. As the name suggests, these schools operate either in homes of people or in a community space, where an educated person from the community facilitates the learning process. In most cases, the teaching-learning material, the content, and the curriculum is provided by NGOs, care is taken by the NGOs to maintain equivalence to formal school curriculum. In most cases, however these home and community schools either provide education equivalent to primary grades or ensure basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills. These options were adopted extensively to reach education to girls during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.



Radio and television as a medium of reaching education were used in many conflict and post-conflict contexts (e.g., Somalia and South Sudan). The advantage of these mediums was their cost effectiveness and the ability to reach a large number of students. With the development of technology, mobile phones are also being used in place of computers in emergency contexts; the advent of the internet has further helped the use of these mediums.

Questions for Reflection: Use of TV and Radio

In the Indian context, with the help of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and other resource agencies, Doordarshan (government-founded TV channel) and national (as well as local) radio relayed a number of educational programmes.

- ❓ Did you ever use these programmes for teaching-learning?
- ❓ What were some of the advantages of using these mediums?
- ❓ What were some of the challenges of using these mediums?
- ❓ Can these mediums be used for teaching during emergencies?
What are your recommendations for their use during emergencies?

It is established that emergencies disrupt education of children, and the impact of emergency on education of children is long lasting. The Covid-19 emergency has brought to the forefront a completely new dimension of disasters. While disasters like floods and earthquakes were localised emergencies where schools were disrupted for a finite period, Covid-19 has been a global emergency affecting many countries and bringing schools to a closure for a prolonged period of time. With Covid-19, it has become clear that all those involved with education need to begin to rethink emergencies and the approaches to reaching children during such prolonged disasters. It is evident more than ever before there is a need to build resilient systems, which include developing resilient learners, schools, communities, and resilient education systems.

Examples of EiE Response in Select Emergencies

HIV Aids Pandemic: *High mortality amongst adults, increase in the number of orphans and child-headed households, increased OOSC, and absenteeism*

Strategies:

- Awareness building in schools on the disease – links to COVID-19
- Sub-Saharan Africa: National Orphan programmes; orphans in schools given more attention
- Provision of school uniforms and textbooks.
- School fee waivers: payment in instalments encouraged individual localised efforts
- Example 1: a teacher during a survey managed to re-admit 150 students back to school
- Example 2: civil society organisations financially supported orphans by providing school fees

Ebola Pandemic Programme: *school closure, increased OOSC, impacted learning levels, fear and distress amongst children, and school feeding programme disrupted*

Strategies:

Targeted communication

- Reach poorest of children, even in remote areas
- Back-to-school campaign
- Radio and door-to-door campaigns
- Bridging courses for pregnant girls/women to continue education

Specific Incentives for poorest of children

- School and examination fee waivers
- Provision of learning materials to teachers and children
- Government scaled up feeding programme

SARS and Covid-19: *school closure, loss of learning*

Strategies:

- Module formulated in collaboration with teachers, school committees, and members of the education department
- Provision of digital resources to children
- Week-long course to train students and parents on e-learning
- Other countries in South-East Asia, like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, etc., follow this module during emergencies
- Choice of a hybrid system of learning, a combination of e-learning and classroom learning

School education was not affected because they had an existing emergency module.

***Note:** Please refer to the list of resources and readings provided below for additional information on these topics.

Additional References

Azim Premji University (2021) Loss of learning during the pandemic. Field Studies in Education. https://cdn.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/apuc3/media/publications/downloads/Field_Studies_Loss_of_Learning_during_the_Pandemic.f1622994202.pdf

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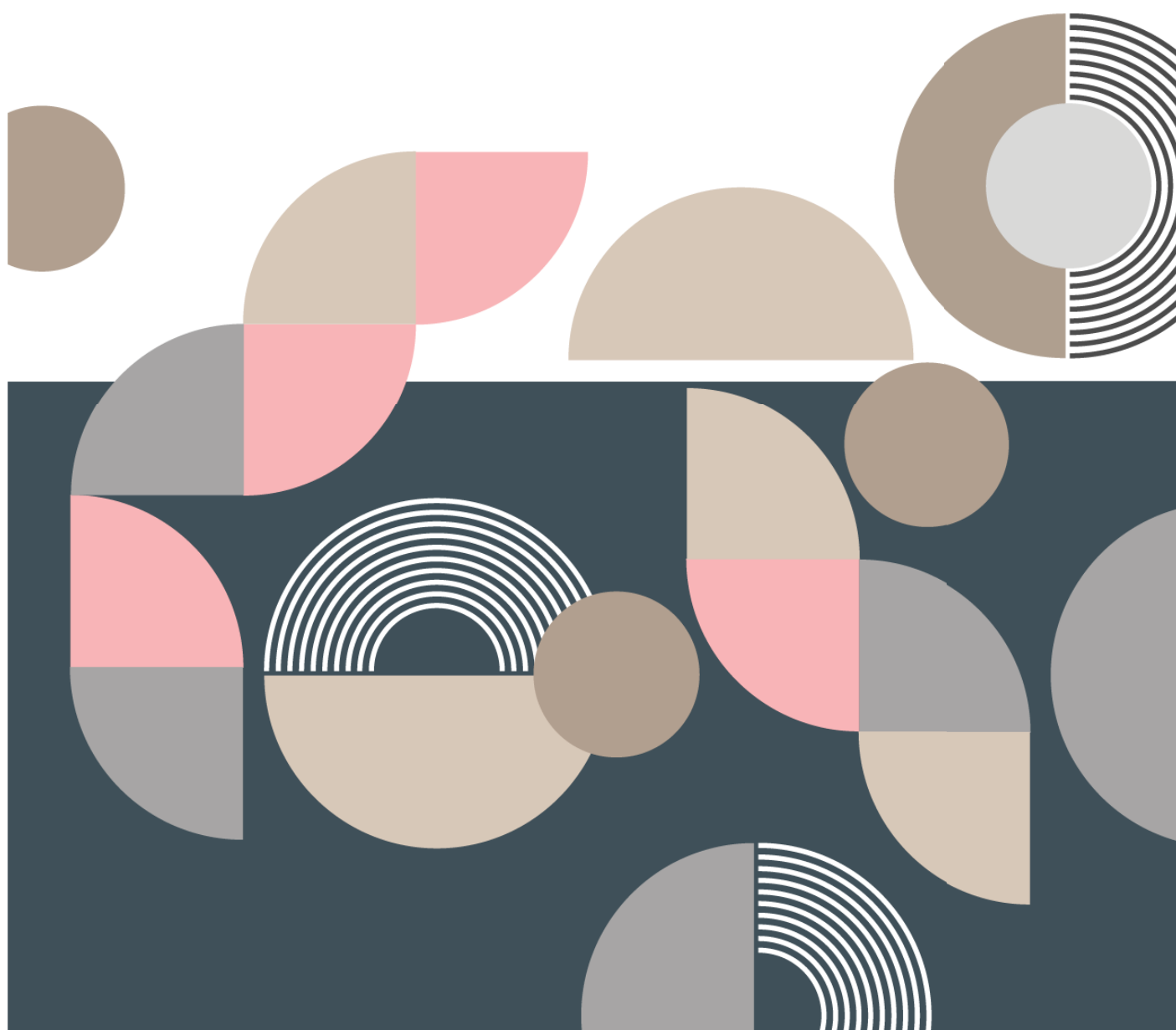
<https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/lessons-from-ebola-how-to-reach-the-poorest-children-when-schools-reopen/>

Links

- https://inee.org/system/files/resources/EiE%20Guide%20Number%201_An%20Intro%20to%20EiE_FINAL.pdf
- <https://www.unhcr.org/3b8a1ba94.pdf>
- https://www.preventionweb.net/files/8401_guidebook.pdf

Chapter 3

Understanding children's lives and preparing children for education in emergency



3.0 Understanding children's lives and preparing children for education in emergency

A school or a school system can act quickly and comprehensively in an emergency if

- i. it has pre-existing knowledge of children's lives, including resources and barriers,
- ii. it has ways and means of understanding new dimensions of children's lives that may have become necessary because of the emergency, and
- iii. it has already taken some steps for preparing students to be able to negotiate in diverse, including adverse, conditions.

3.1 Understanding children's lives and contexts

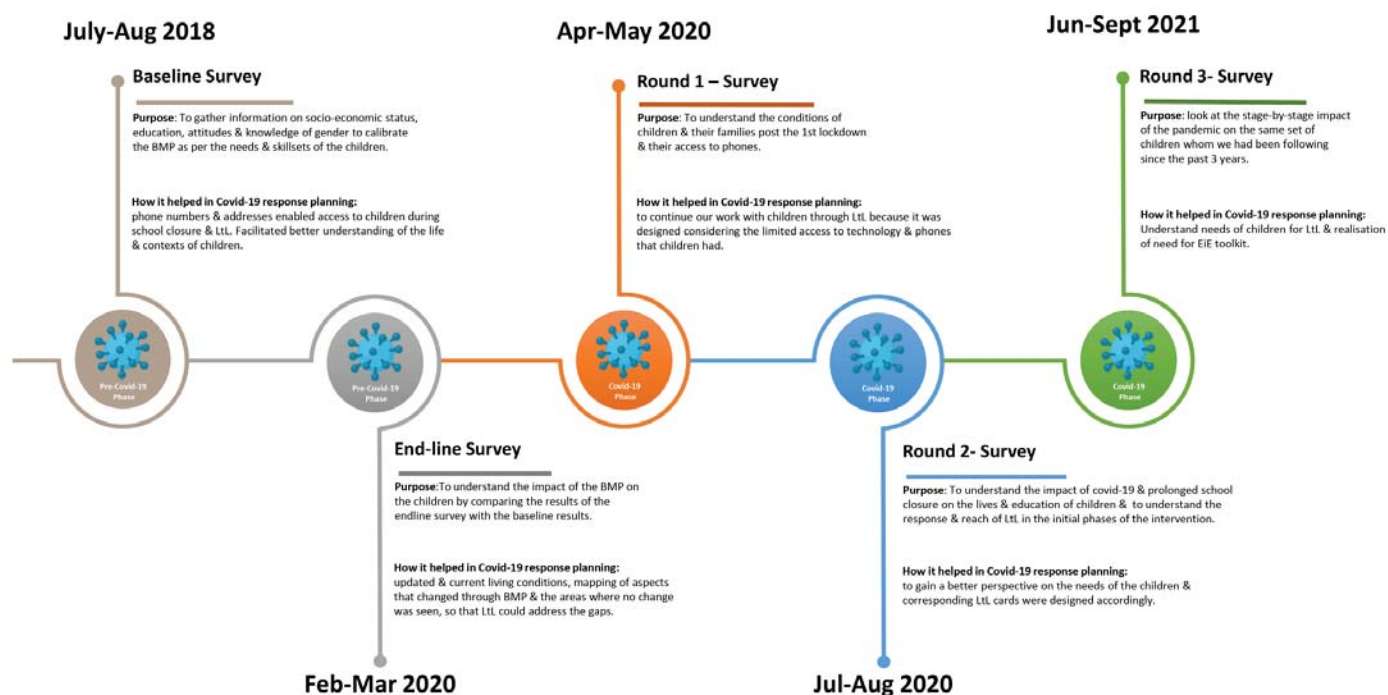
Understanding children's contexts and lives is important not only during an emergency but also on a regular basis for teachers to be effective. It helps teachers in making several decisions such as which languages to use, what kind of illustrations to choose, what level of abstraction to go for, and various other choices that they make on a continuous basis. For instance, a teacher teaching in a slum school in Delhi with populations largely coming from parts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh could be often using words from Awadhi, Bhojpuri, or Maithili, and drawing examples from festivals celebrated in those parts to help children connect to those experiences. The use of familiar language and experiences help children both in developing a sense of belonging leading to an enabling child-teacher relationship, and in children being able to follow what is being taught leading to better learning. Similarly, teachers need to know if children, especially girls coming from marginalised communities, will have enough time at home or not to complete the homework, before setting their expectations for the same. For this, the teachers need to know what the child's day looks like: how much time they spend on care work, how far is the school and how long do they take in reaching school, if they have any literate relative at home, etc.

Further, the teachers must have knowledge of existing skills, information, knowledge-base, and experiences of children. For instance, a secondary school that admits students from different elementary/primary schools needs to know about the diverse skill-sets that the children have and plan accordingly.

The more teachers know about their children, the easier it is for them to make pedagogical and other relevant choices. The same is true for any intervention related to education in an emergency, except that this list gets extended in emergencies. Depending on the nature of an emergency and its impact on children's lives and education, teachers, school and school systems need to know what kinds of education in emergency is needed and have potentials for responding best in a given situation.

Chapter 2 outlines how relief becomes paramount during the first few weeks in case of natural disasters, like earthquakes or tsunamis. Only when the relief phase is over, does one enter the mitigation and then the reconstruction phase. A number of organisations and governments in different parts of India and other countries responded to the need for continuing education during the prolonged school closures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The suitability, relevance, and success of these interventions were subject to careful planning, which in turn depended on how well these school systems or organisations knew the context and lives of their children and made efforts to understand the impact of the pandemic in particular locations and for particular population groups.

Household and Child Surveys during life of the Bihar Mentorship Project by (BMP) CBPS: How it helped in responding to Covid-19



Links:

- <https://thewire.in/education/online-school-education>
- <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/Report-Final-1.pdf>
- <http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/The-Effect-of-the-Covid-19-Pandemic-and-Economic-Distress-on-Education-A-View-from-the-Margins.pdf>

Activity: Do I/we know our children?

1. What is the rough estimate of the percentage of girl students in my class/school/area with no leisure or study time at home because of domestic chores and care responsibilities? How do I/we know that?
2. What are the educational qualifications of women in the families from where children come to my/our class/school/area? Are younger women in those families, literate and educated – how do we/I know that?
3. How many of my/our students have access to smartphones whenever they want to? How many of them can afford internet packages that allow them access to online teaching? Is there a difference between girls and boys?
4. How authentic or unauthentic is what we/I think we/I know? Why do I/we think so? Is there a need to test that? What could be the possible and cost-effective ways of testing that?

In order to know about the context or the impact of a particular disaster or emergency, it is not always necessary to have your own new activities. It is also important to use the existing knowledge around us. For instance, certain research studies such as one on the loss of learning carried out by Azim Premji University during the pandemic had relevance for all others who were trying to address education in India and even in other countries during that period.

Loss of Learning during the Pandemic

Azim Premji University, Bengaluru conducted a baseline assessment of 16,067 children in 1,137 public schools in 44 districts across 5 Indian states in March 2020 and an endline of the same children in January 2021. It focused on the assessment of four specific abilities each in language and mathematics, across classes 2 to 6. These four specific abilities for each grade were chosen because these are among the abilities for all subsequent learning across subjects, and so the loss of any one of these would have very serious consequences on all further learning.

Key Findings

Learning loss in language

- 92% of children on an average have lost at least one specific language ability from the previous year across all classes.
- Illustratively, these specific abilities include describing a picture or their experiences orally, reading familiar words, reading with comprehension, and writing simple sentences based on a picture.
- 92% of children in class 2, 89% in class 3, 90% in class 4, 95% in class 5, and 93% in class 6 have lost at least one specific ability from the previous year.

Learning loss in mathematics

- 82% of children on an average have lost at least one specific mathematical ability from the previous year across all classes.
- Illustratively, these specific abilities include identifying single- and two-digit numbers, performing arithmetic operations, using basic arithmetic operations for solving problems, describing 2D/3D shapes, and reading and drawing inferences from data.
- 67% of children in class 2, 76% in class 3, 85% in class 4, 89% in class 5, and 89% in class 6 have lost at least one specific ability from the previous year.

Source: **Loss of Learning during the Pandemic**, Research Group, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

https://cdn.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/apuc3/media/publications/downloads/Field_Studies_Loss_of_Learning_during_the_Pandemic.f1622994202.pdf

Contact: field.research@azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in

A number of regular practices existing in school systems can be of major significance, both during normal times and during emergencies if records are designed and maintained well. Even for us, some of our regular exercises had provided us with information that became very relevant during the pandemic. For instance, the community mapping exercise that we had already undertaken enabled us to locate and reach out to children who could not be contacted through phones during the periods of Covid-19-induced school closures. We were able to build an immediate rapport through these means of communication as we already had an existing understanding and relationship with the children, their parents, and communities.

We list a few such regular activities in practice in the state schools in India with potential for translating those into opportunities for knowing the context of students better.



School Management Committee (SMC) Meetings

All schools have SMCs with representation of parents (at least half of them have to be mothers), Gram Panchayat, and many others, including children in some cases. They meet periodically to discuss school-related issues, and these are very good opportunities for teachers and schools to delve deeper into some issues in order to know the community better. This could include diverse aspects of their lives (e.g., occupations, migration, education, shortages, etc.) and can provide opportunities for understanding the diversity within the community. All families are not the same in one area, and it helps to know who are more vulnerable than others, especially as they are likely to be worse affected in an emergency.

These will help in making the school more responsive and vibrant during normal times, while also creating a repository of information for the school to act during emergencies. The things mentioned above are not an exhaustive list, but only an indicative one to trigger your ideas!

Activity: Potential Questions for School Management Committees (SMC)

1. What are the questions that you would like to ask SMC members in your school/area?
2. Do you think you can motivate a subgroup of women or men to form an emergency response group in your school/area? Why/why not? How will you motivate them, if necessary?
3. What are the skills that men and women in this area have? Can you undertake a skill mapping exercise using SMC members in the area served by your school? What are the ways of doing that?



Annual Enrolment Drives & Field Visits

Most schools undertake annual enrolment drives around the start of a new school calendar year. In addition to systematic analysis of data collected during such drives, these are also good opportunities for familiarising oneself with the areas from where students are coming from to the school and also take note of other dimensions: who is powerful, who is not; who command respect among the community; who are most vulnerable and marginalised; how common is migration; how do women-headed households operate differently from others; and what are the caste and gender dynamics. The list can be long.

Once teachers or others going to the communities develop the skill of observing and taking detailed notes, these are invaluable resources not only for self but for the entire school and the community of teachers, resource persons, and trainers. Periodic field visits can be planned for this purpose in rotation among teachers of a school. However, it is important to remember that community observation and unbiased note taking is a skill that needs to be learnt and can be part of the training exercises at various levels.



Annual Celebrations/ Local Fairs

Many schools celebrate annual festivals and participate in local fairs as part of school activities/enrollment drives. We can also use these to know more about the context of our children and diversity therein.

These are only a few examples. We can find and create more opportunities once we start thinking. It is also important that we systematically record our data and observations. We will talk about it more in the chapter on school systems.

Here, we now move on to discuss about preparing children for emergencies.

3.2 Preparing Children

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent school closures has taught us the importance of preparing children for education in emergencies like none other. However, the need for preparation exists in all situations, be it a natural disaster or a localised emergency. In places such as Bihar and Assam in India, flood is an annual phenomenon that disrupts the schooling calendar almost every year. In all such situations, it would be helpful if children, through their normal learning experiences in school or any other learning centre, develop certain skills and are also given certain resources that they can access during an emergency. We discuss those here briefly.



Self-Learning

The skill of learning on your own, or self-learning, comes through practice. Often, in our schools, we don't encourage and create opportunities for self-learning. That said, the activity-based learning that is being promoted by the policies have the potential for developing self-learning skills if designed with that objective in view.

Self-learning is an important life-skill for adult life as well but it helps children to learn on their own during emergencies. For instance, technology-based teaching-learning such as online classes or TV/radio broadcasts expects the child to learn on her own while using the material and direction given on the device.

Even the LtL expected children to read the material on their own and do the activities either alone or with friends/family members. The fact that a good proportion of children could undertake those activities was also because of the fact that they had experienced self-learning experiences during the in-school mentoring sessions. For instance, the 'know your teacher' activity mentioned in Chapter 1 where children had to interview their school teachers, they also had to identify the topics and related questions that they would ask the teachers and get the teacher's consent for the interviews before presenting the interview findings to the class. Many more such examples can be drawn from LtL, BMP, and similar other initiatives where self-learning is deliberately promoted during in-class interactions.



Peer Learning

This is also an important skill, in general, and during emergencies in particular. In the absence of regular interactions with the teacher, children living close to each other can come together and learn together using whatever learning materials they have access to. This also helps in breaking the isolation and mental stress caused by the emergency.

Group activities, such as interviews where four children formed a group to complete a given task, enable peer-learning skills, and children, if made to undergo diverse learning experiences, internalise values of cooperation; this is something that is really needed during emergencies. A good proportion of activities in the BMP in-school modules were group-based, including the skit that children developed and performed based on the stories of caste-based discrimination (mentioned in Chapter 1), aimed at promoting empathy, cooperation, and peer-learning.

Most of the textbooks developed after the adoption of National Curricular Framework (NCF) 2005, including those published by the NCERT (National Council of Education Research and Training) include such activities, and it is important that teachers implement those as essential elements of the syllabus that they need to follow. If not already exposed to such activities, children cannot resort to this during an emergency.



Awareness of rights, duties and resources

Emergencies are known to exacerbate the inequalities, and those already vulnerable tend to become even more vulnerable and marginalised. For instance, pandemics such as Ebola or Covid-19 are reported to have had an adverse impact on child marriage and child labour, as discussed in Chapter 2. Children coming from the most marginalised families are far more vulnerable as their families face financial crisis, indebtedness, and food-insecurity—this forces them to resort to such acts. If children are themselves aware of their rights, they can raise their voice against such practices for themselves as well as for others in their surroundings. For this to happen, school education needs to include rights-education and also equip them with resources such as child helpline numbers. We will elaborate this when we come to the chapter on school systems.



Communication, critical thinking and action

Being able to speak for yourself or for others' rights is not just dependent on the awareness of legal clauses and access to resources. More importantly, children need to have skills of communication and experiences of independent and critical thinking and action to be confident enough to engage with these in their own contexts. This too is a subject of critical pedagogy practiced in the classroom that can equip them to act during both individual and collective crises. Life skills education¹ and Meena Manch are other such initiatives, including BMP, that have helped developing such skills to an extent, but the regular classroom pedagogy also needs to move towards that. The BMP in-classroom activities focused on this aspect, which helped in the uptake of the LtL content.

Questions for Reflection : Active learning and critical pedagogy

- ❓ What is active learning? How do I/we define and understand it?
- ❓ To what extent is my classroom an 'active' class? Why/why not?
- ❓ What is critical pedagogy? Does ERAC, mentioned in Chapter 1, have the potential of integrating critical pedagogy in our regular state school classrooms?
- ❓ What more do we want to know to better understand active learning, critical pedagogy and ERAC?

¹ Life skill education is offered to students from classes 9 to 12 in government schools of Bihar, where the adolescent boys and girls are trained in communicative English, computer skills and critical thinking. As a part of this training, academic and career-based counselling is also offered to the students. Meena Manch is a platform for girls in all government schools in Bihar. The main objective of this platform is to make girls aware of the importance of education and practices to maintain good health and hygiene. The idea behind Meena Manch was to create a core group of empowered girls who ensure reduction in child marriage in their communities, help in mainstreaming drop out girls, and, in turn, increase retention.

Chapter 4

Teachers in an Emergency Context: Role, Challenges and Preparation



4.0 Teachers in an Emergency Context: Role, Challenges and Preparation

Teachers play a pivotal role in educating children, more so during emergencies. Even when schools get damaged or disrupted, teachers are the ones who continue with their teaching. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers in most contexts had to adapt to various forms of teaching that they had not been used to. The current section helps understand teachers and their role in various emergency contexts. The section highlights the challenges teachers experience in contexts of emergencies like natural disasters, refugees, and pandemics. Importantly, the section also elaborates on measures that can be adopted to prepare teachers to respond and function effectively during and after emergencies.

4.1 Defining Teachers

In Emergency in Education (EiE) literature, the term ‘teacher’ refers to ‘professional personnel’ directly involved in teaching students; this includes classroom teachers, special education teachers, and other teachers who work with students as a whole class in a classroom, in small groups in a resource room, or in one-to-one teaching inside or outside a regular classroom’.

<https://inee.org/eie-glossary/teacher>.

In other words, the term teacher refers to all persons engaged formally in teaching children, adolescents, or adults in formal schools, non-formal learning centres, pre-school centres, adult learning centres, community schools, home schools, and now through digital medium. This would also include those who are engaged in developing and delivering distance learning print materials such as postcards. Additional resource persons who assist in teaching using specific skills such as mentoring, may not be referred to as teachers.

For people used to seeing teachers only as someone who teaches in formal schools in stable conditions, this wide definition of the term teacher is a bit bewildering. In EiE, one is also talking of emergency contexts like conflicts and war zones, refugees, and displaced people. It is also about reaching education to children through many alternative methods (learning centres, community schools, home schools, distance mode, and using print, phone, and internet), and all those teaching there are seen as teachers. For instance, our mentors who followed up the letters through phone and later through small community classes during Covid-19 were also teachers.

4.2 Role of Teachers

The primary role of a teacher is to facilitate ‘learning’ amongst her learners. Both in formal and informal setups, most often, what the children learn is prescribed by a curriculum framework that defines age, grade, and context appropriate learning competencies. In facilitating learning, the teacher undertakes a number of tasks such as planning lessons, developing teaching aids, managing and organising classrooms, assessing students, managing and maintaining records, and communicating with parents. Within this broad spectrum of activities are embedded theories and principles of learning, child-development, mental health, and management. In addition, there are a number of philosophical beliefs and perspectives of human rights, citizenship, gender, equity, and inclusion that inform teachers’ teaching practices.

In real life, school teachers in developing countries and resource-poor contexts are often burdened with a number of administrative duties, which include record keeping, disbursing incentives, etc. Often the teachers also work under constraints such as poor infrastructure, limited resources, high number of children in every class, etc.

Activity: A Typical Day for a Teacher

- Describe your typical day and the tasks you attend to from morning to night.
- Describe the tasks you undertake at the school.
- List out tasks that you perform on a regular basis, i.e., your key responsibilities as a teacher, and indicate the percentage of time you spend on each task.
- Highlight things you enjoyed doing, which give you satisfaction.
- Point out the challenges you face during the day.

The same activity can be undertaken by others such as teacher trainers or school managers, where they work on their perception of a teacher's typical day. If being used for a workshop with a mixed group, it would be interesting to compare those and discuss diverse perceptions and the reasons for the same.

In emergency situations, teachers are expected to take on these responsibilities and more but now in a much more difficult and complex situation. This calls for specific skills, knowledge, and attitude, without which it may become difficult to respond well. Different emergencies present different kinds of challenges; we have discussed in Chapter 2. We present here a recap of those challenges.

<p>Natural Disasters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage and disruption to Schools • Loss of learning material • Traumatized learners and communities 	<p>Displaced Population:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and children dislocated • Experience of violence, abuse, and trauma • No school building, curriculum, or learning material • Teachers to be recruited and trained • Under-qualified teachers • Issues of language of teaching materials and teaching-learning processes • Provision of education through Learning Centres (LC), home schools • Multi age, multi-level situation in LC
<p>Conflict and Civil Strife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools damaged, closed, or occupied • Ban on education in some cases, especially for girls • Teachers vulnerable to attacks • Teachers vulnerable to attacks 	<p>Pandemic: Covid 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School closure for a long time • Teaching through a new medium • Problems of equal access to online learning • Learning loss • Trauma and mental health issues amongst children and teachers

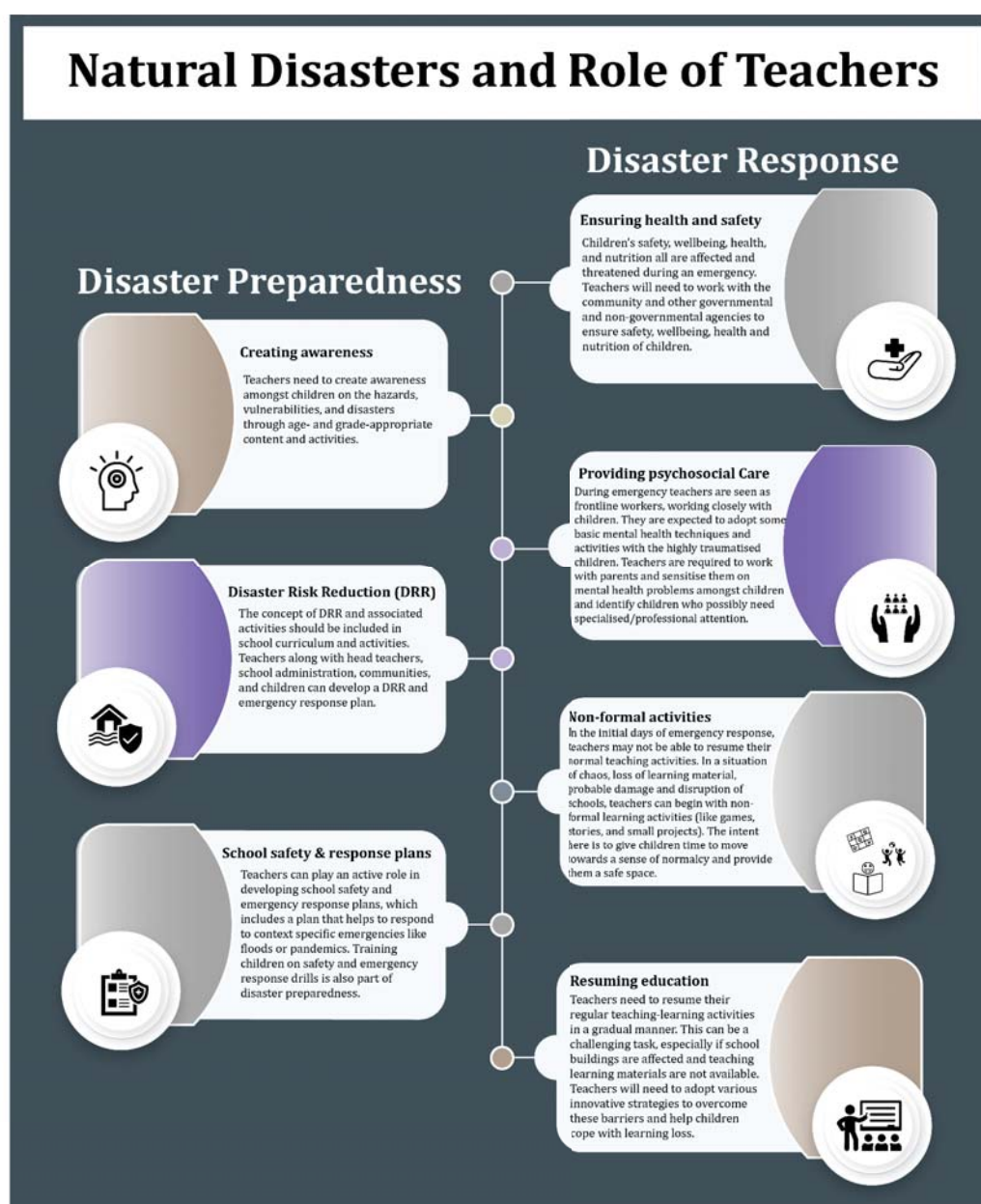
Activity: A Typical Day after an Emergency

Scenario: It has been a week since the earthquake has hit your district, and your village too is affected. The school you are working in is heavily damaged. Some of the children in your school have lost their homes. The children and their families have moved to the temporary camp set up by the government and aid agencies. Your house too is somewhat damaged; a member of your family has fractured his leg and is now resting.

The government has issued an order to re-open the school. This is your first day at school; the children are to come next week.

- Imagine what your day will be like. List out activities that you will undertake at the school on day one.
- What preparatory activities will you and your colleagues undertake during the first week?

4.3 Role of Teachers during Emergencies



Activity: Children at School After the Earthquake*

Scenario: The week before reopening of the school went by quickly. You and your colleagues spent a lot of time in preparatory activities. The children are coming today; what will the first day for you and the children be like?

- What will your interaction with the children be like?
- How will you help children feel comfortable coming back to school after the earthquake?

* The above activity can be conducted as a role-play in a workshop.

Resources

1. Teacher Training Module on Disaster Risk Reduction and School Safety, State Council of Educational Research and Training, Assam in Collaboration with UNICEF Assam.
https://elementary.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/swf_utility_folder/departments/elemenataryedu_medhassu_in_oid_3/portlet/level_2/Training%20Module%20on%20DRR%26SS.pdf
2. School Safety (guidelines).
https://nidm.gov.in/safety_school.asp
3. Ensuring Safe Learning Environment for Children, RedR and UNICEF.
<https://www.redr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/School-Safety-Pack-for-DA-May.pdf>

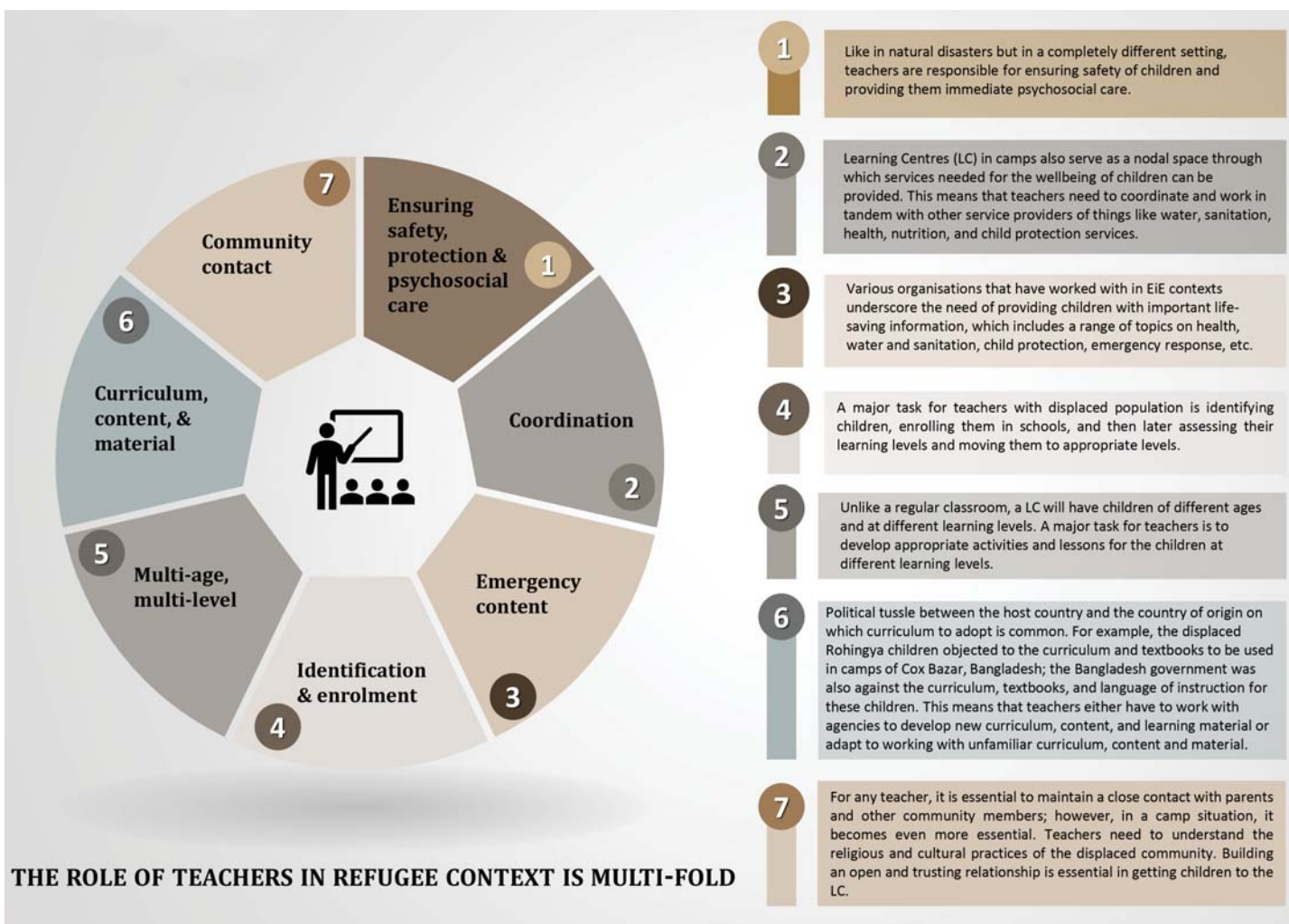
Teachers in Camps for Displaced or Refugee Children

It is often difficult to find trained and qualified teachers in camps for refugees or displaced children. Children who have the status of refugees have the Right to Education in the host country. The host country attempts to either integrate the refugee children in their government-run schools or starts new schools with the help of United Nations (UN) agencies, International Non-Governmental Organisations (I-NGOs), or local NGOs. The curriculum and language of instruction in most cases is that of the host country, and the teachers are also trained teachers in most cases.

However, the number of children covered by this arrangement are invariably few; a large number of children are unable to access this facility either because the schools cannot accommodate them or, importantly, because they do not have the refugee status and therefore no entitlements. For example: the Rohingya children in camps in Bangladesh.

‘Teachers are the key to success in any education system. In refugee settings, the role of teachers is particularly significant, as they can provide crucial continuity and socio-emotional support. They are sometimes the only educational resource available to students.’

- [http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/teacher-management-refugee-settings#:~:text=Teachers%20are%20the%20key%20to,educational%20resource%20available%20to%20students;](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/teacher-management-refugee-settings#:~:text=Teachers%20are%20the%20key%20to,educational%20resource%20available%20to%20students;_)
- <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED588878.pdf>



- <https://inee.org/resources/global-framework-refugee-education>
- <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/refugee-children-crisis/what-is-refugee>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/4fe317589.pdf>

Teachers' Role in Covid or Pandemic Times



Psychosocial care & support

Pandemics such as Covid-19 cause enormous mental health issues and trauma because of the associated dos and don'ts, especially during closure of schools, restrictions on play and social interactions, long spells of being confined to home, fear of getting infected, and death in the family or loss of parental livelihood leading to food or cash crises. Chapter 3 provides links to reports of the surveys carried out by CBPS on the impact of Covid-19 on children's lives and education, which was severe by any standards.

'Uncertainty. Loneliness. Grief.

These powerful emotions have enveloped the lives of many millions of children, young people and families. Children and young people could feel the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health and well-being for many years to come.'

https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2021?utm_source=referral&utm_medium=media&utm_campaign=sowc-web

One of the critical tasks for teachers is to provide children psychosocial support and guidance—this is not easy. The role of the teacher is to find ways and means to reach children, communicate with them, and help them to form supportive networks.



Reaching education/ Teaching through alternative modes

In most cases, teachers are trained for classroom teaching. Under the pretext of technology, in most developing country contexts, they are at most taught to use different teaching aids, including computers. Therefore, teachers were found to be inadequately prepared to transact an entire year's curriculum through alternative modes like online teaching, WhatsApp lessons, etc., which became the norm in many areas and countries during Covid-19.

As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the most critical responsibilities for teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic was thinking about alternative modes and planning as well as executing the most suitable alternative modes of teaching-learning. For instance, the Bihar Mentorship Project (BMP) team in CBPS decided to go for Learning through Letters (LtL) rather than using the online mode given that majority of students had either no or very low access to. Similarly, any group of teachers or school systems can take note of their contexts, the nature and impact of emergencies, and choose an alternative taking the context and feasibility into account. We will discuss this more in the chapter on school systems.

Activity: Preparing for an emergency

Scenario: A new pandemic has started erupting and is likely to spread fast. It may or may not enter your area; currently, there is a lot of uncertainty, but schools are likely to be declared closed. Children and parents are also confused and want to know more.

What are the tasks that the school should undertake?

- To inform children about the pandemic and precautions
- To inform communities about how to prepare themselves
- To continue learning and teaching, in case the school really closes and remains closed for a long time
- To prepare children for learning outside the classroom environment in case school closes for a long time

Where will the school get these information and support from?

Whom should they consult?



Addressing the issue of learning loss

We have discussed this issue earlier but let us refresh it here again. If children do not go to school for two-three days, they find it difficult to follow their teachers in the classroom. As a result of Covid-19, schools have been closed for more than a year; all children have lost out on learning, but children from marginalised communities who do not have access to online learning nor have the parental support have been affected the most. Covid-19 has further deepened the existing gaps in school participation and learning. It is difficult to understand the magnitude of learning loss although efforts have been made, and we have discussed that in the last chapter. What skills have children retained? What have they forgotten? When schools reopen, will children be able to learn like they did before? These are questions that are difficult to answer, but these are questions that the teachers will have to deal with.

The immediate concern for schools and teachers is to understand the learning loss, find ways and means to assess it, and offer remedial action. Teachers will have to develop strategies to understand learning levels amongst children and develop strategies that will help them attain age- and grade-appropriate competencies. Managing the back-to-school transition will require remedial action, and a great deal of recalibration of school calendar, learning objectives, delivery modalities, and assessments.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373610/PDF/373610eng.pdf.multi>

What is Learning Loss? A Recap

'The term **learning loss** refers to any specific or general loss of knowledge and skills or reversals in academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student's education. Traditionally some of the causes of 'learning loss' was due to discontinuity in schooling due to summer break, gap due to prolonged illness, dislocation of family, returning after dropping out of school.' <https://www.edglossary.org/learning-loss/>

As discussed in the previous chapter, learning loss can also happen because children are unable to learn through online mode. This is because they are not used to the medium, have limited access to the tools that are being used, have limited self-learning skills, or have limited to no support at home.



School Reopening Protocol

Detailed school re-opening protocols have been shared by governments and professional bodies of doctors and educationists. These include detailed care that will have to be taken on different fronts in case of communicable diseases such as Covid-19. Some of the protocols include - maintaining cleanliness and sanitisation of the building and furniture, adopting social distancing norms, establishing preventive rules and regulations in school, bringing in behavioural change amongst teacher and students, coordinating with parents and reassuring them on safety of children, and establishing referral networks with health and mental health professionals.

<https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3850af92f8d9903e7a4e0559a98ecc857/uploads/2020/10/2020102974.pdf>;

<https://www.indianpediatrics.net/dec2020/dec-1153-1165.htm#:~:text=The%20school%20reopen%2Ding%20should,in%20work%20from%20home%20mode>

4.4 Challenges and Issues

The challenges teachers face in normal times get exacerbated during emergencies. For teachers in non-formal set ups, there are some additional challenges to deal with. The section enumerates some key challenges teachers face during emergencies.

Teachers are themselves affected

Be it earthquakes, floods or pandemics, teachers are just as affected as the rest of the community. Yet, as frontline workers, they have to be at their work keeping aside their personal tragedies.

‘Teachers working in contexts affected by conflict and disasters often experience the same disruption, violence, and displacement as their students. While they work tirelessly to provide psychosocial support to their students, they are rarely provided with this support themselves’.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/10/teachers-shoulder-burden-improving-support-crisis-contexts/>

It is essential that teachers are trained in measures of self-help, trained to recognise signs of stress and strain, assured of supportive networks and, if needed, of professional help. There is an urgent need to establish supportive and facilitative teacher supervision and management systems.

Activity: Self-reflection on Covid-19 days

Reflect on the questions below and write a short write-up titled ‘Me in Covid Days’

- How did you feel during the Covid-19 pandemic? What were your fears and concerns?
- Did any particular incidents affect you?
- How did you cope with your professional duties as a teacher?
- What were the challenges you faced, especially while teaching remotely?
- What kind of support would have helped you at both personal and professional levels?
- What kind of trainings would you like in the future to continue with the blended teaching mode?

Teacher Compensation

Payment of ad-hoc or temporary teachers or teachers teaching in non-formal schools is a critical issue. Very often these teachers are underpaid, with no proper service conditions and no guarantee of service.

Payment and compensation for teachers is a persistent issue in many emergency-affected countries, especially countries that are at war and poorly resourced. Lack of funds, poor or no teacher management systems, and poor fund flow mechanisms affect teacher compensation.

https://inee.org/system/files/resources/TWB%20Landscape%20Review_August%202019_0.pdf

Teacher Training

There are two aspects to teacher training. The first refers to trained teachers in formal schools, and the second refers to untrained teachers in non-formal settings. The key issues around formal schoolteachers, who are often trained, is about the quality of training inputs they have received and whether they are trained on EiE issues like DRR, psychosocial care, and school safety and related dimensions. Other important issues that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought forward are about teachers' competencies to adopt alternative methods of communication and planning and adopting blended teaching approaches for creating resilient and reflective learners.

With untrained teachers in non-formal set ups like refugee camps or community schools, the issue is the kind and quality of training and support the teachers receive. Are the inputs systematised, and will they lead to a recognised certification? The issue remains festering and unresolved.

Administrative Tasks

Teachers in both formal or non-formal set ups are often burdened with a numerous administrative and book-keeping tasks. Sometimes, these tasks overwhelm the teachers, thus affecting their core work of planning lessons, assessing students, and facilitating learning experiences.

Teacher Autonomy and Support

In normal times, in traditional and large school systems, teachers are deprived of any autonomy. In most cases what they have to teach and what they have to do is prescribed through a top-down approach. It is essential that teachers have the autonomy to design their teaching-learning process. The need for teacher autonomy becomes even more crucial during an emergency response, which calls for a localised, need-based, and responsive approach. Teachers need nuanced and differential support to build responsive and resilient schools and learners.

Teachers need adequate and appropriate training to be able to act autonomously in a responsive and comprehensive manner. Nevertheless, each teacher in their classroom is an autonomous actor and has the potential to convert any classroom into an active and equitable classroom for all. This is the philosophy with which CBPS tried to approach its work with teachers in BMP.

The Bihar Mentorship Project (BMP) approach to teachers and teacher training

In the BMP, we partnered with both formal and informal teachers. The government schoolteachers whom we interacted with and trained periodically were formal teachers working with the government of Bihar. The mentors who delivered in-school modules and followed up the letters with phone calls, and community classes could be categorised as informal teachers. The mentors were paid almost at par with new teachers in formal schools.

The mentors were trained continuously on every aspect of the project, including community contact, teaching, and learning. The inputs on teaching-learning covered aspects of with respect to the context of marginalisation; therefore, issues of gender, caste, poverty, and intersectionalities were covered in detail, while keeping the focus on active pedagogy and the ERAC (Experience, Reflection, Application and Consolidation) approach.

Similarly, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, formal schoolteachers working with schools where our action research project was located, were trained periodically; the training included sessions focussed on emergency response. They were exposed to different kinds of emergencies, challenges of education, the importance of preparedness for being able to respond in emergency, possible contextual responses during an emergency, ERAC, and the major principles of successful use of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) tools. Chapter 1 provides links to relevant reports.

Three important dimensions of the teachers' training were as follows:

1. Focus on developing critical thinking both through in-class modules and in the Learning through Letters (LtL): This was primarily done by adopting the ERAC approach as this provided a conceptual frame that, once internalised, was easy to implement¹. These four stages help in (i) connecting with a topic (experience); (ii) thinking, questioning, and discussing (reflection); (iii) applying the same to something else that is relevant (application); and (iv) then going through all over it to reinforce the learning (consolidation).
2. Importance of mentoring: The entire BMP action research was based on the premise that mentoring is an important pedagogical tool. Mentoring here simply refers to developing an individual relationship with children, moulding teaching-learning experiences to make them more suitable to children's needs and enabling children to be more receptive to and engaged with the learning process.
3. Retaining mentoring elements and ERAC in the distance learning mode: This was critical when the BMP had to respond to COVID-19 emergency through LtL, which is essentially distance learning. We did it through the range of activities; this included learning activities where children could do it on their own and experience ERAC, and support activities such as regular telephone calls during Covid-19 school closure. An ability to recognise resources in every context is critical for working successfully with the ODL mode.

Chapter 1 has links that would give details of these training programmes.

It needs to be remembered that education of displaced or refugee children is often fraught with political instability. Education in camps or in schools of host countries is characterised by lack of resources and limited learning spaces. Curriculum and curricular material as accreditation of learning often becomes contentious.

Teachers, be in the camps/learning centres or teachers in the formal schools, are important not only in promoting learning but also because they are working in extremely complex contexts. In the context of camp/LC, teachers are generally untrained and less qualified. Even the formal school teachers usually lack the professional skills they need to work with refugee students, as this kind of teaching needs a nuanced understanding of the children's backgrounds and well-being. Researchers observed that teachers' professional development across the world is fairly standardised; the training is often decontextualised from the complex social and political environments of their work, and as such, it has minimal effect on their teaching practice.

https://archive.nyu.edu/bitstream/2451/61015/3/JEiE_Vol5No2_March2020.pdf

The resource-rich contexts where technology thresholds of access, affordability and technical literacy are not major constraints, technology can be used innovatively in emergency response.

¹ We would like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Subir Shukla in training the BMP team on ERAC.

Transformational and Reflective Teachers, and Teacher Education: An Experience of Work with Refugee Children in Lebanon

A qualitative study of Syrian and Lebanese teachers in the context of a protracted crisis in Lebanon tried to understand teachers' perspectives around the central question, 'What models of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) may best address the complex needs of learners in contexts of mass displacement?'

Based on discussion with teachers, the researchers proposed that the TPD programmes in crisis settings should help teachers engage critically with their work and the conditions around and play a transformative role in their context instead of the established role that reproduces existing power relationships. The intent should be to help displaced children reflect on their context and causes and re-imagine the future differently. For this, Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecosystems, comprising of micro-, meso-, and macro-systems can be adapted in contexts of refugees along with the transformative and reflective practices advocated by Aronowitz, Giroux and Freire.

Teacher development here cannot be a one-way information giving approach; rather, digital platforms can be used creatively to develop online reflexive spaces where they are able to share their knowledge and innovative practices with other practitioners and teachers in the field. The need is for shifting the emphasis from the idea of online courses to online collaborations. This perspective led the design of a massive open online collaboration for teacher professional development in these contexts.

This Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), Transforming Education in Challenging Environments, was codesigned and coproduced with teachers working with children—those who are refugees themselves and those from the host community—and education practitioners in Lebanon. The curriculum content evolved and consisted of videos and narratives of real teachers' experiences. It is felt that an initiative as MOOC has the potential of becoming a dynamic global platform based on experiences, practices, and reflection of personal and pedagogic work in difficult contexts.

Source: https://archive.nyu.edu/bitstream/2451/61015/3/JEiE_Vol5No2_March2020.pdf

Activity: Listing essential elements of teacher training and school preparedness for education in emergency

Scenario: You live in an area (Assam, Bihar, or Bangladesh, for example) where floods are common leading to school closures and disruption of normal lives. It happens every year; hence, though an emergency, it is rarely treated as one. As a result, schools remain closed for two to four weeks every year, and there is rarely any plan to prevent learning loss.

Please make a list of activities that you think school could do, what training the teachers would require for them.

4.5 Teachers in Emergency Context: The 4R principle

Teachers face many varied challenges in their day-to-day work, and these challenges multiply in emergency contexts. Teachers need to be viewed in a comprehensive manner, their personal needs and trauma should be acknowledged, and provisions should be made for their psychosocial support. In addition, teacher training programmes that help teachers facilitate learning in challenging contexts could be designed, and support mechanisms that help teachers evolve and respond to ever-changing contexts could be developed.

It is also evident that teachers need some fundamental qualities to be effective in difficult contexts. Some of the key competencies/qualities required are for them to be responsive, resourceful, reflective, and resilient.

Teachers in Emergency Context: The 4R principle

Responsive: Emergencies are about uncertainties, unknown challenges, ever-changing situations, and changing student needs. Teachers need to be able to quickly assess the situation and respond with appropriate strategies.

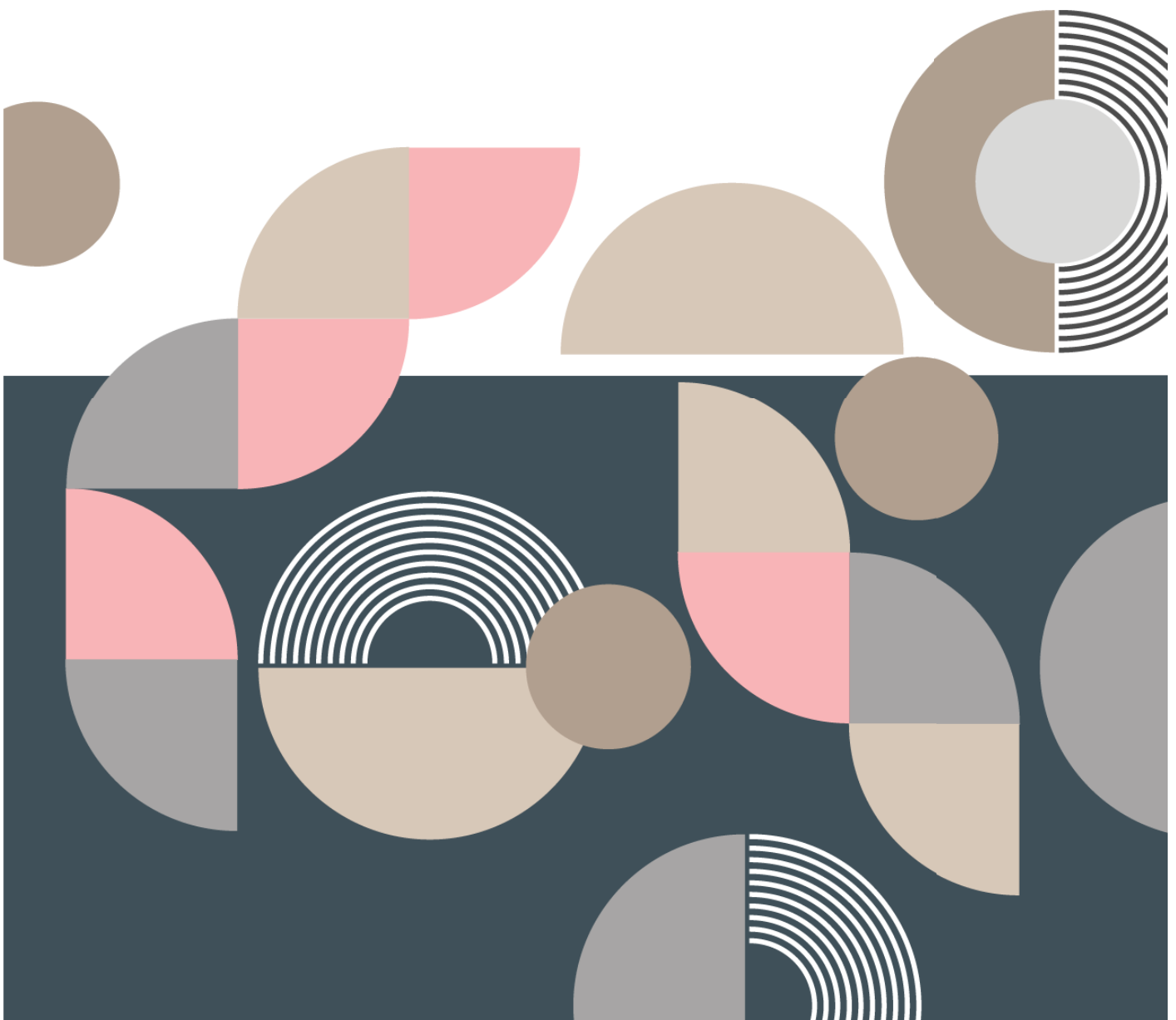
Resourceful: Emergency contexts are under-resourced. There could be paucity of funds, learning materials, and other accessories. Teachers' ingenuity would be helpful in this situation.

Reflective: A teacher can enable critical reflection and scientific thinking amongst their learners only if they themselves have these competencies. Teachers have to cultivate these competencies through training and self-learning.

Resilient: During crises, teachers are under tremendous personal and professional stress. Teachers who are able to address these, work on their problems, develop supportive relationships, and continue their work are indeed assets in times of crises.

Chapter 5

Understanding community and ensuring community preparation and participation



5.0 Understanding community & ensuring community preparation & participation

Ensuring that the response for education in any emergency is based on an understanding of the community and that it integrates strategy for community participation and preparation is essential for success. While it is important for a successful school even in normal times to be aware of the community context, it becomes even more critical for Education in Emergency (EiE).

5.1 What is a 'Community'?

The term community is simply defined as 'the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality'.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/community>

An example of community could be residents of a village or a town or even a country—a set of people who are together because of their geographical location. A community of engineers are a set of people grouped together because of their profession. Other examples of a community could also include groups based on caste, class, religion, or ideology.

From disaster management lens the term 'community' refers to 'a group of people who share similar set of vulnerable conditions and are affected in almost the same fashion when hit by hazards and disasters'.

<https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/58959/1/Unit1.pdf>

Community is never a homogenous group; there are sub-groups within it, such as old and young, men and women, well-to-do and not so well to do, entitled people and marginalised. In an affected community too, there could be many a sub-groups. In EiE work, parents (especially mothers), young children, adolescents, youth, children from marginalised communities, and girls are important sub-groups to be considered.

It is also important to understand community dynamics and relationships through the lens of hierarchy and intersectionalities. For instance, in India, religion and caste, including jati or sub-caste, often unite groups of families into sub-groups with a shared identity within a village or a locality. These categories/sub-groups often have complex social hierarchies and inter-relationships depending on the power structure of these hierarchies in specific localities.

Political and social associations and affiliations add another layer to the division within the communities. These hierarchies and relative positioning also shift over time and space depending upon a number of factors. It helps to be aware of these in a context where a school or an EiE intervention is located as it informs about the risks and potentials of any given strategy.

The issue of gender in the community is also very pronounced in India as well as many other similar contexts, because of the deep-rooted structural barriers of patriarchy that make women's and girls' positioning secondary in the society. Special efforts are needed to enlist participation of women and other marginalised group in any community-based planning exercise. An emergency response is no time to resolve some of these deep rooted issues, but response workers have to be aware of these existing dynamics and inequalities and learn to not only navigate around them to avoid a conflict but at the same time adhere to principles of equity and build in measures and learning materials that help in questioning these.

5.2 Importance of Community Participation

Humanitarian agencies have over time realised that it is the 'community', which is the sufferer but also the first to respond because it is right there at the location. Hence, it is critical to have the community prepared and participating in emergency response as an important actor.

In high risk areas (e.g., flood prone areas), communities with experience develop their own coping and risk reducing strategies. This knowledge and their competencies should be respected and strengthened. It is paramount that communities remain prepared and have the mechanisms to respond for it may be possible that external help takes time to reach or doesn't reach at all due to unforeseen circumstances. Community involvement ensures a coordinated, collective response during an emergency. In a traditional EIE frame, community involvement needs to be ensured during all phases: from preparedness and mitigation to rescue, response, relief, rehabilitation, and finally, recovery. <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/58959/1/Unit1.pdf>

Activity: Personal Experience

1. What can a community do immediately if a disaster is to occur?
2. Can you cite any personal examples where a community played a critical role?
3. Who amongst the community are most likely to come forward to help?

Activity: Community's Role in Different Phases of Emergency Response

The village you are living in is highly prone to floods. Nearly every year, there is a flood causing major damage and destruction. The local school, which is also used as a relief centre in event of a flood, remains closed for many days.

1. What should be the community's role during the following different phases of response?
 - i. Preparedness,
 - ii. Immediate Response
 - iii. Recovery, and
 - iv. Development

5.3 Knowing the communities

In order to enable community engagement, it is important for schools, school-systems, or anyone engaged in the act of imparting education to know the communities one is going to work with, whether in an emergency or before that. In fact, if you already know your communities, it is easier to decide your strategies when an emergency strikes. For instance, if it is known that majority of children in the area cannot access online education because of affordability, connectivity, or other barriers, it does not make sense to plan for that in response to school closure caused by an emergency. There are several ways of knowing the communities and enabling their participation.

Surveys

Household surveys with all basic indicators of social identification, education, assets, livelihoods, and time-budgets are very useful in understanding the lives of children and their families. However, it is difficult to do surveys in the middle of an emergency. But alternative ways such as using telephones as a medium for surveys can be used. For instance, Chapter 1 provides examples of surveys conducted during times of Covid-19. The choices and decisions regarding whether a survey is possible and if it is the best option in a given circumstance has to be based on the context and specific situation.

It is also not necessary to conduct a fresh survey when an emergency strikes. School systems generally conduct periodic surveys such as enrolment drives for admissions and other purposes. It is important that these data are processed, shared, updated, and internalised for the purpose of knowing the communities. If necessary, certain key variables can be added to regular surveys to have critical information that may help during emergencies. While doing so, it is also important to follow all norms of data protection and ethics to ensure that personal data are not misused for any surveillance or other non-designated purposes.

Community Visits and Mapping

Regular community visits is one of the best ways for both establishing rapport with communities and understanding their status as well as dynamics. Non-formal and alternative schooling interventions usually have components of community contact, but it is always a good idea for teachers to have a system that allows them to periodically visit the areas from where their students come from, even in formal schools.

Village/area/resource mapping is a tool that allows the use of a diagram to map the institutional locations and caste/community based habitations in any given locality. This is a very helpful tool to understand the inequalities and also the distances between various groups such as school, post-office, water sources, banks, or Primary Health Centres. These come handy in planning a response during an emergency. For instance, if we know which households are closest to the school and which ones are the farthest, we can plan the locations community-supported learning centres accordingly.

Village or resource mapping are part of the approach that is commonly known as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

http://nirdpr.org.in/nird_docs/gpdp/prs.pdf

The advantage of PRA is that it uses pictorial tools and taps on villagers' or community knowledge for getting a number of pieces of information quickly. These tools are considered reliable for community level information and is a good choice for this purpose. For information at the individual level, these may not be the best tools to go for.

In Bihar Mentorship Project, community mapping helped deepen the understanding of marginalisation and that was considered both for designing activities for in-school modules and Learning through Letters (LtL) content. It also helped in follow up activities for the LtL initiative as we were already aware of the children who were more vulnerable and who faced exclusion in terms of delivery of postcards to their homes.

Diagram of village mapping



5.4 Importance of Community Participation



**Enabling
the community
to express**

There are different ways in which one can engage with the community. A simple and powerful way is to listen to the experiences and narratives of different community members, such as children, women, village elders, teachers, health workers, youth, etc. The use of participatory tools mentioned earlier are simple and effective to elicit community participation.



Building trust

It is essential to build trust amongst community members and work for the education and well-being of children, by adopting a culturally sensitive approach.



Real participation vs tokenism

Community participation means that the community has the voice and agency in the planning and implementation process. It is not a 'token' participation, where community representatives are mere head counts or are manipulated by external facilitators.



Community dynamics

It is essential that government and other agency representatives are aware of the community dynamics and the sensitivities around it. It is essential to adopt both the 'do no harm' and the 'conflict sensitive programming' principles in ensuring community participation. It is important to mention that community dynamics are often too deep-rooted, and it becomes difficult for teachers or a school alone to address or resolve that. Nevertheless, being aware of the dynamics and having a set of non-negotiables based on principles of justice, equity, fairness, and transparency can go a long way.



Coordination

Communities need to work in coordination with government agencies and other external agencies like non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporates, or resource agencies.

https://inee.org/system/files/resources/INEE_Good_Practice_Guide_Community_Education_Committees_2004_ENG.pdf



Inclusive community participation

Community participation needs to be integral to all phases and activities, such as analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In fact, it is ideal if deliberate efforts are undertaken to have representation from all groups of castes, religions, ages, and genders. Any member of the affected community should be able to participate, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, HIV status or other factor.

<https://inee.org/minimum-standards/domain-1-foundational-standards/community-participation-standard-1-participation>

Activity: Mapping community dynamics

Divide the group in smaller groups of 6-7 members in each group.

Material: Chart Paper and Markers

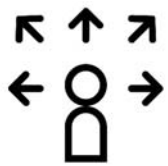
A flood warning has been issued for your village. You need to develop a community-based response plan. As a first step you have to do the following:

1. Identify and list the different groups in your village that need to be consulted while developing the response plan.
2. Map the possible dynamics/ issues that could come up in the village amongst the community members during the planning and implementation of the response plan.
3. What strategies will you adopt to minimise these dynamics and build trust amongst the community members?

5.5 Some Key Strategies of Engaging Community

Community participation can be more consultative, where there is a give and take of ideas, and through a process, the community and the facilitating agency (government or an NGO) arrive at a joint decision. An empowered community would be one where the community through a process makes its own decisions, and agencies support the decisions made.

- <https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G01549.pdf>
- http://www.saciwaters.org/CB/PRM/PRM/IV.%20Readings/2.%20Readings%20on%20Participatory%20Research%20Methodologies/2.4%20Participatory%20Learning%20and%20Action%20PLA%20-%20A%20brief%20introduction_Phuyal%20Kamal.pdf
- <https://www.mcgill.ca/mchg/files/mchg/chapter2.pdf>.



Awareness building

There are a number of strategies that can be adopted to raise awareness amongst the community. It is essential that there is a well-defined plan in place on building community awareness. Based on an understanding of the community the plan should explicitly state the purpose of awareness generation, content, communication strategy, and activities. Sometimes differential communication strategies are adopted for different groups within the community, such as for women, children, youth, etc.

Some of the topics/themes that require community awareness include the following:



Preparedness phase

local risks and hazards, dos and don'ts during emergencies, preventive measures for a pandemic, availability of services like health, education, and nutrition.



Early response phase

scientific information on issues of health, hygiene, child protection, and education; dos and don'ts during emergencies, preventive measures in case of health pandemics and services available.

Activity: Mapping community dynamics

Divide the group in smaller groups, of 6-7 members in each group. The members will discuss the given questions and develop the given matrix.

Each group will make a presentation at an appropriate time.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has been an emergency unlike any other. It affected the entire world; knowledge and information about it kept evolving, and it has continued for more than two years.

Questions (in a self-learning mode the learner will write an assignment based on the questions below):

1. What according to you are the important topics/issues that the community needs to be aware of during a pandemic like Covid-19?
2. Why is this information important? What change do you expect amongst the community members?
3. What are the activities/ communication strategy you will undertake to generate awareness on the selected topics?

Based on the discussion, develop a matrix in the format given below:

Topic	Change expected in the Community	Method of Communication



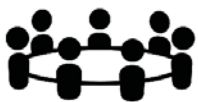
Capacity building

Community participation needs to be integral to all phases and activities, such as analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In fact, it is ideal if deliberate efforts are undertaken to have representation from all groups of castes, religions, ages, and genders. Any member of the affected community should be able to participate, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, HIV status or other factor.

<https://inee.org/minimum-standards/domain-1-foundational-standards/community-participation-standard-1-participation>

In the area of EiE, capacities of communities need to be built to support or facilitate sustained and uninterrupted provision of quality education to children. Some of the work in EiE shows that depending on the context, community capacities are built around themes listed below:

- Safe schools and disaster risk reduction
- Creating child-friendly safe spaces
- Planning, implementation, and monitoring of education activities (during and after emergency)
- Developing community-based early childhood care and education



Community-based groups/committees for education

Community based groups like existing School Management Committee (SMC), Village Education Committee (VEC), Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Mother's Groups (MG), or youth groups can be productively engaged for an EiE response.

The advantage of existing groups like VECs and PTAs are that the

- i. groups are already constituted by a due process, and
- ii. groups are conversant with their roles, responsibilities, and the process of planning, budgeting, and implementing.

In situations where there are no existing groups available, it may be necessary to form appropriate groups with fair, equal representation and train them in taking the responsibility of EiE activities. Formation of groups take time, and it may not be possible in the early days of emergency response. Furthermore, in situations like refugee crises or displacement-related emergencies, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of the refugee or displaced community.

School Management Committee (SMC) Meetings

In India, it is mandatory for every school to have an SMC at elementary level.* The Central Boards of School Examinations (CBSE) has made this a mandatory requirement for affiliation** and hence more or less, majority of schools teaching all levels have an SMC. The formation# and functioning of SMCs vary across states###, ###. However, given the fact it is almost universally present and has an adequate representation of parents, women, marginalised groups and in some cases even children, it presents an enormous opportunity for community engagement during normal times and community preparedness for emergencies.

*https://www.education.gov.in/en/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/rte_2019.pdf

**<https://www.cbse.gov.in/cbsenew/board//Role%20of%20School%20Management%20Committee.pdf>

https://www.education.gov.in/en/rte_smc

http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/Report_-SMC-Study_Jharkhand_March-2016_CBPS_FINAL.pdf

https://tiss.edu/uploads/files/SMC_september_Web_2019_compressed.pdf

A school can have a strategy to use regular SMC meetings to either understand the community (e.g., drawing a village map with SMC members or drawing a time-budget chart of women with women SMC members) or to orient them (e.g., history of pandemics such as Plague, Ebola and Covid-19, immediate response to a natural disaster such as flood, or how are earthquake resistant houses built using local resources)—these can be undertaken without any additional interventions and costs.

School Management Committee (SMC) Meetings

Similarly, there are many more touch points available to schools to engage with the community. For instance, hot cooked midday meal is an issue that can be based on caste-based objections from the community. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/how-caste-is-marring-mid-day-meals-60898>

In such situations, the school can start engaging with parents to allow all children to eat together by having little sessions of reflective activities to show why it is important to break these barriers. This will create a basis for similar interventions with the community during crises. Similarly, a number of schemes such as textbook, bicycle, or uniform distribution that take place through the school, provides schools with opportunities of deepening their contacts with the community; in turn, this can contribute in making the school more resilient.

Questions for reflection

- ① Do you think SMC meetings provide good opportunities for community engagement? If yes, plan a strategy for the coming six months. If not, why not and what are the barriers?
- ② Do you remember any interaction with the community where a meeting turned into an opportunity for deep interaction and helped you in your work with teachers/ in school, with children, and/or with the community? If yes, please share the experience.

5.6 Risks of Community Participation

It is also important to be aware of the risks and barriers to effective community participation. First of all, communities affected and often devastated by disasters or hardships may not be in a position to participate and contribute to EiE activities. Their immediate focus may be on survival needs. It is also possible that communities may not have the capacities to participate or manage educational activities. Community dynamics as discussed earlier pose a big challenge. Often, there is a risk that education is used to foster factional, religious, or political agenda. In such cases, communities tend to reinforce inherent divisions, discriminations, and structural barriers; they may need an external facilitation to address some of these entrenched barriers of caste, class, gender, religion, etc.

https://inee.org/system/files/resources/Community_Participation.pdf

Questions for reflection

- ① List some of the barriers you think you could face in involving the community in EiE response activities.
- ② What are some of the measures or strategies you could adopt to overcome these barriers?

5.7 Examples of Community Participation in EiE

Schools as Zones of Peace: Nepal

The decade long civil war for establishment of democracy in Nepal ended in 2006; however, the war and its aftermath left a deep impact on education in the country. Even after 2006, the Terai region continued to experience violence, with schools often being the target. Non-state actors continued to attack, occupy, or damage schools. Schools were often forced to close because of frequent bandhs (shutdowns).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-funded School as Zones of Peace (SZOP) project 'aimed to increase children's access to quality education by ensuring peace in the schools most affected by civil unrest and political activities'. The main aim of SZOP was to develop a code of conduct for each school. The community played a major role in bringing together different stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, journalists, teachers, and youth, and getting them to agree on a code of conduct where everyone agreed to make schools as zones of peace. This meant that schools would not be attacked or disrupted and would function for quality education for the agreed number of days. Local and district bodies were part of the agreement. This resulted in more schools remaining open for education for more than 180 days in a year, and it also saw the end of school grounds being misused and mismanaged (for example, being rented out for wedding functions, etc.). Community participation meant improved school governance and strengthened School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations.

<https://nepal.worlded.org/projects/school-as-zones-of-peace/>

Community Based Pre-School in Cambodia

Cambodia's problems began as early as the 1970s. Caught between the dynamics of China and the United States (US), Cambodia suffered consistently. The worst period was between 1975–1979, when Khmer Rouge came to power. This period saw one of the worst mass killings of the 20th century; it claimed lives of nearly two million people. In an attempt towards social engineering, millions from cities were forced to go to countryside and work on farms. Drastic steps like abolishing money and private properties and derecognising ethnic minorities were implemented. It was only in 1979 that Cambodia was freed from the Khmer Rouge regime.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-10684399>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambodia/Civil-war>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodian_genocide

Building back education for Cambodia was not easy. The economy was devastated, and educational institutions like universities and schools were completely destroyed. All—buildings, teachers, books, curriculum, and textbooks—ceased to exist. Under the circumstances, even if shattered and broken, the community became the only resource available to build back the education system. brick by brick with the help of international donor and humanitarian agencies. A number of initiatives have evolved over the years, many having a strong component of community participation.

An intervention by Plan International (Plan) worked with government's grassroots governance structure and commune councils to integrate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); nutrition; and protection in its interventions. Plan and its partners supported the construction of over 340 community preschools, including mobile preschools. Four hundred volunteer preschool teachers from the community were trained to run the classes. Parent groups played an active role in the pre-schools. An 'home based' initiative trained some mothers to go on and train other mothers on child rearing practices and pre-school activities for children's well-being and development. The community-based initiative along with the government-run pre-school centres managed to reach pre-schooling to a vast number of marginalised children.

<https://plan-international.org/cambodia/early-childhood-care-and-development-cambodia>

<https://ijccep.springeropen.com/articles/10.1007/2288-6729-3-1-13>

Tsunami 2004 and Community Engagement

A review of community engagement in tsunami emergency response acknowledges that a wide range of programmes were undertaken for the affected community, but importantly the review found 'community engagement is not something that was just "done to" people affected by the 2004 tsunami; rather, it was something that communities themselves drove, initiated, and contributed to'. The review cites that the initiatives helped empower certain sections of the community, like women and youth. In some cases, it also led to improved community cohesion and improved health benefits. On the converse. it was also observed that in many cases there was under representation of some groups like youth and women and also, there was an 'engagement fatigue'.

Some examples emerging from the review:

- Numerous examples of children and youth taking initiatives in a number of activities emerged during the review. For example, young people from the Moken community in Thailand created and managed a local radio station to transmit news, music, and features, and to build awareness around emergencies; this is an example of children and youth coming forward as volunteers to support emergency response activities.
- Examples of women's participation range from simple activities that enabled women to share grief and experiences to women taking up leadership roles in economic and collectivisation activities.
- Setting up of community information centres where affected members could go and share their problems and get the key information they need.

<https://www.nuffieldbioethics.org/assets/pdfs/Community-engagement-after-the-Indian-Ocean-tsunami.pdf>

5.8 Covid and Role of Community in Education of their Children

The Covid-19 Pandemic has been an unprecedented emergency. Schools were closed for a long time. The fear of Covid-19 infections affected lives of all people, especially children. Their normal life of school, play, and fun was replaced by long periods of confinement, less or no play for days together, and a new way of learning or no learning.

In addition to the above, there are many other problems that have emerged, including the following:

- Some migrant workers and children returning to the village reduced family income.
- Children, especially girls, dropped out of schools.
- Learning loss, which in simple terms is children forgetting what they had learnt, was observed.
- Online classes are a new medium for the children; it is challenging for children to learn through this new method.
- Not all children have access to computers and mobile phones, and girls in particular are the one most often deprived of this facility.
- Young children in pre-schools and early grades find it exceedingly difficult to learn through online medium.
- Closure of schools has also meant that children are deprived of schemes like Mid-Day Meals, and even textbooks have not reached children in many places.

Activity

Form groups with 6-7 members in each group

Material: Chart Paper and Markers

****Self Learning Mode:** Learner will develop a project based on the points below.

Each group will discuss and identify the following:

1. Key problems faced by children in their schooling/learning during Covid times
2. What role can a community play in helping children in their community learn? List down some of the possible strategies that can be adopted.

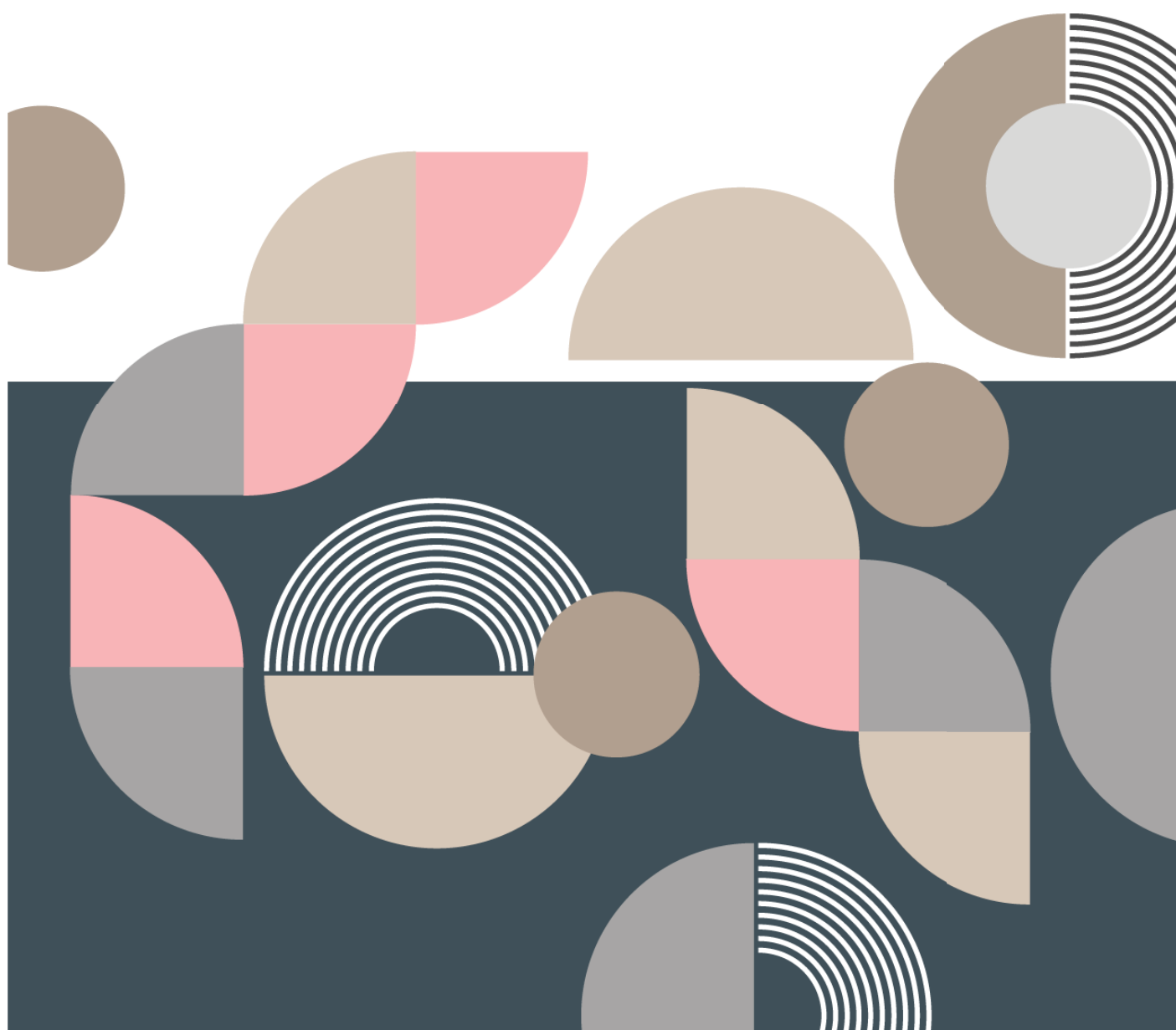
5.9 Conclusion

Community participation is critical for all three phases of an emergency response: preparedness, immediate response, and recovery. Without doubt, a cohesive community characterised by mutual trust and respect will go a long way in being prepared to respond to any emergency, mitigate risks, and respond with interventions that ensure equity and quality.

Community participation is also key to building a resilient school, which is much better prepared to respond to an emergency. Schools or any other educational institutions are generally a part of a school system, and schools within a system need to be enabled for taking steps that would make them resilient. The next chapter discusses the pre-conditions and actions that a school system needs to enable to make schools resilient.

Chapter 6

Enabling School system for building Resilient Schools



6.0 Enabling School system for building Resilient Schools

The concept of a resilient school has emanated against the context of climate change or in relation to emergencies. The focus is on adopting sustainable development measures within the school and building both awareness about and capabilities for adopting measures that promote sustainable living among children¹. The Education in Emergency (EiE) community also discusses resilient schools though with slightly varying meanings as described below.

‘There is some precedence for describing resilience in schools, especially among the international community focused on education during emergencies. But a quick scan of existing literature reveals that the word “resilience” may have a range of subtly different meanings:

- Is resilience about identifying and mitigating risks on the front end in order to be more prepared to respond to crises? This report from UNICEF suggests so.
- Is resilience about being able to bounce back quickly after a crisis? This piece draws on the term’s original usage in material science and structural engineering to suggest this.
- Or is resilience about designing adaptable systems that can persist through a variety of changed circumstances?’

Source: <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/envisioning-the-7-habits-of-highly-resilient-schools/>

Our understanding of a resilient school is closest to the third one. We define a resilient school at the beginning of this report as ‘a school that has the tools and capacities to adapt and, identify resources, respond and act with focus on inclusion, and ensure justice and equity for continuing critical-thinking based learning in a meaningful and responsive manner in changed circumstances, including different forms of emergencies’.

In previous chapters, we focus on preparedness of children and preparedness of teachers and communities for EiE, highlighting that the robust response during an emergency is dependent on how resilient the system is during normal times. In this chapter, we focus on school systems. Schools are usually a part of a system, which controls and guides their functioning; unless the school system has an enabling approach, the schools cannot become resilient on their own. We discuss here some basic principles and responsibilities that school systems have to make the schools more resilient.

School systems are of different kinds: some are big (government school systems), some small (private chains), some extremely centralised and bureaucratic, and some decentralised and democratic. Hence, the manner in which a particular system can covert itself into an enabling one will also vary. A large government system faces the challenge of scale and is usually dependent on rules and mechanisms that often make it centralised and rigid. Schools belonging to private, profit-making systems face the challenge of parental pressure as parents often view the school-child relationship as a provider-client relationship. A small non-governmental organisation (NGO) system-based school may face issues of resources. Hence, the challenges of such systems may vary from other schools. Each school will need to decide its own pathway for change.

Here, we are identifying the roles any school system will have to play for being an ‘enabling’ school

¹ For instance, see <https://oaec.org/what-is-a-resilient-school/>

system and discussing some of the tools that may help them in this process of change.

The process may involve a greater rethinking about their present role for some systems than for others, depending on where they are and how far they are from this desirable state. Before discussing what the role of an 'enabling' school system is, we discuss the main features of a resilient school that the school system needs to enable.

6.1 Resilient Schools: Main Features

Based on the discussions so far and also taking from literature, we have identified six main features of a resilient school. These are partly a recap of earlier discussions but presented from a different perspective. Following this, we discuss what the school system can and should do to enable these characteristics in the school. The focus is on most vulnerable and the marginalised in each of these, and hence it serves as a guiding principle rather than a feature.



Inclusive school ethos and practices

This is the first and most important feature of a resilient school. Most schools, even if catering to particular class of children have students from diverse backgrounds. This diversity is much more pronounced in some as compared to others. It is important for a school to institutionalise practices that help students from different backgrounds and abilities feel welcome and develop a sense of belonging.

An example in the Indian context is caste. Children from different castes and communities can be made to sit and eat together without any segregation at school when midday meals are served. It is possible that the school may face some resistance from some communities, as has been the case reported by several research studies.

https://www.academia.edu/11562065/Caste_Discrimination_in_Mid_day_meals_MDM_

It is important though for the school to deal with such resistance without being confrontational rather than practice something that gives sanction to unequal norms and reinforces societal divides. Similarly, the school can make committees of children to manage libraries, serve food, maintain cleanliness, etc. Children can participate in these committees in rotation, thus getting diverse opportunities and, in the process, breaking the caste-occupation linked social norms. Such practices can help in establishing an inclusive ethos, which can then help even during emergencies in creating support groups and taking collaborative initiatives.

Another example can be taken from the fact that all children do not necessarily learn in similar manner. Each child comes with varied experience and orientation. Some like to speak, while others may prefer to remain quiet and listen. Some like to work with hands, while others may prefer to read and write. While it is important that all children have the opportunity to engage with diverse learning experiences, it is also important for the school and teachers to recognise that diversity in the classroom is not only about socio-cultural diversity but it includes individual diversity as well, and this too needs to be understood and respected.



Knowing children & creating relationships

It is a well-known fact that the act of teaching and learning are inherently dependent on teacher-student relationship. Children learn when they start trusting the teacher. A school can act responsibly when it creates a relationship with children and their extended support systems that include peer groups and families.

<https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/how-and-why-to-prioritize-relationships-in-your-covid-19-response-plan/>

This helps in contextualising the illustrations and experiences in the classroom with direct implications for learning. In addition, during a crisis, it helps in identifying those who are more vulnerable in the absence of support systems and need more urgent help. This is especially important in the context of a crisis such as Covid-19, which may mean facing multiple forms of losses (e.g., peer support loss, food and cash crises in the family, illness and death, etc.) that could cause trauma and mental health issues.



Viewing Community, students & context as resources & knowledge partners

A resilient school views students, communities, and contexts as resources even in the midst of poverty, deprivation, and inequalities, and it uses them suitably. For instance, if there is an old person who has witnessed outbreaks of plague and cholera during older times, they could share those experiences with children to help them realise that Covid-19 is not the only epidemic the community has faced. Similarly, a person who migrates to faraway places for livelihood can share their experiences of travel and working conditions, which is an essential part of social and political life curriculum in most countries. The experiences of cooking can be used in the context of mathematical concepts of estimation and proportion; this will not only help in connecting children's home life with formal learning but also help in addressing gender issues. In an emergency situation, previous knowledge of available skills coupled with established relationships would help schools in responding quickly and suitably.



Preparedness for innovative forms of blended learning

Blended learning usually refers to face-to-face teaching and online teaching, and it has become much more popular after Covid-19 pandemic. We refer to blended learning as a combination of diverse delivery modes and not necessarily limited to face-to-face and online. For instance, under BMP, we sent regular postcards that contained learning activities to all children and followed it up with additional audio-visual materials related with the same topic/activity to those who had access to smart phone, and then started organising small face-to-face community-based classes to help them negotiate the postcard content and establish village-based peer support groups to help each other. This too is an example of blended learning.

While blended learning becomes important in emergencies, it is important to note that the choice regarding which form of blended learning would work is

dependent on the context. For example, in the BMP, online teaching alone would not have worked as a majority of children did not have access to internet-based devices. In some other context, it may work well. If a school already knows the students, communities, and context well, and it has an easy relationship with them, it would be easy for the school to decide what would work and what would not. In addition, the choice of blended learning form also needs to be informed and guided by the school's ability to deliver and sustain the chosen learning model.



Skills for action research & relevant innovations

Action research by teachers helps in judging the efficacy of the practice and, depending on the result and responses, in adopting innovations. If teachers in a school are trained in action research methodology and have the requisite skills, it helps in making the school more resilient. Small action research projects can be undertaken on a regular basis, either jointly or individually, in different areas such as classroom teaching, blended learning, school management, community contact, etc. Over a period of time, this could lead to adoption of innovative and robust pedagogical and school management practices.

Collaborative action research projects, either at school or an inter-school level, could also contribute in developing an inclusive school ethos, which in turn can help in emergencies.



Suitable use of technology

Use of technology in education has become more common, especially in the post Covid-19 phase. Suitable use of technology and the ability to decide what is suitable and what is not is what makes a school resilient. For instance, in the context of BMP implementation in Bihar, the use of online teaching alone was not a suitable strategy, but using online teaching alongside postal materials was relevant.

Similarly, technology can be very helpful in maintaining, processing and retrieving information from large data sets, or as a complementary tool for teaching-learning. For instance, a video on northern lights can be shown in a science class leading to discussions that may not have been possible without a video may be a suitable strategy. But, to depend on the video alone to teach all related scientific facts and debates may not be successful, and hence not a wise choice.

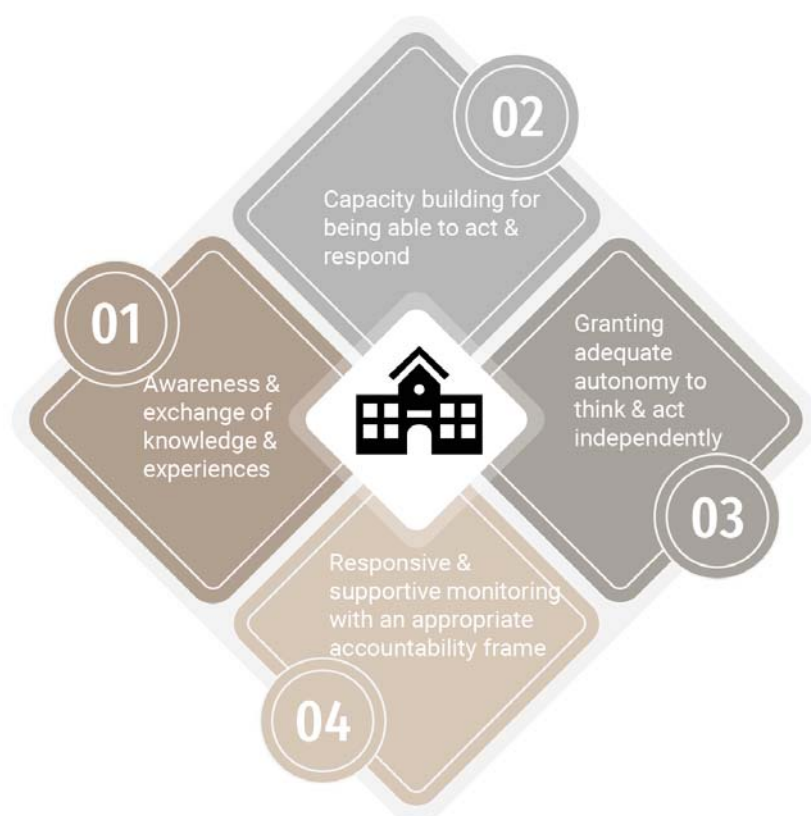
A resilient school will have the resources and skills to decide what kind of technology is suitable in a context for the specific purposes such as a pedagogical tool, a delivery mode or a data analysis tool. This is different from using technology as a solution for all problems or rejecting it entirely.

Questions for Reflection

- ① Have you ever used/viewed the use of technology in education? What was that for? Please describe and discuss.
- ② List the ways in which technology can be used in/for education? What are the prerequisites for the successful use of technology in education?
- ③ What do you think about the use of technology in education in your given context? What are the pros and cons?

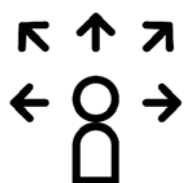
6.2 Enabling school systems for resilient schools

The school system needs to undertake four kinds of activities:



This four-fold classification is broadly indicative and more could be added to this, if necessary.

Each of the above four needs to be understood with reference to specific features or characteristics of a resilient school. We first discuss these here, one by one, and then introduce the matrix that can be used as a tool for both needs assessment and strategy development for making schools resilient.



Awareness & exchange of knowledge/experiences

Awareness about these features is the first step towards becoming a resilient school. A school system has to ensure that all schools working under the same system must be aware of these features and strive to have them. There can be multiple ways of doing this including an awareness-building workshop or an exchange workshop.

Individual schools can be both large and small. Primary schools are often small and, therefore, isolated in terms of ideas and limited in terms of experiences. Even secondary schools in rural areas are small, and teachers do not have many opportunities for exchange of ideas and experiences. This can become a barrier in the growth of the school as an institution. The school system can create opportunities for exchange of ideas and experiences both within the system (e.g., all schools working under one management) and outside the system (e.g., conferences where schools under different school systems get an opportunity to share and exchange ideas and experiences).

In case of state schools, exchange of ideas and experiences also become crucial for better inter-departmental coordination. These departments often work in silos and remain unaware about other departments' interventions. It would help if localised mechanisms are available for sharing and exchange, leading to better coordination and in turn delivery of services.



Capacity building to act & respond

Capacity building of teachers, headteachers, and other staff of at schools is essential in order for them being capable of responding to emerging needs during both normal times as well as crises. It is possible that teachers are aware about the needs of students in their school but do not have the requisite capacity to respond. It is also possible that certain kind of capacities exist, but certain others are lacking. For instance, in BMP, local mentors knew how to conduct the activities and had been trained for the same; however, they had no training in developing learning materials. There, the research team undertook the task of development of postcards, while the mentors were retrained in making telephonic contacts and providing inputs to students for carrying out those activities. Capacity building strategies need to be tailored to specific contexts as and when needed.

In case of areas prone to natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes, capacity building efforts should also include aspects of urgent responses and access to various support services. A school located in such areas should have all the relevant information easily accessible to all, and the school system needs to prepare the school by supplying the school such information. Similarly, in case of an epidemic or pandemic, correct information on a particular disease must be easily made available. For instance, a lot of misinformation about Covid-19 led to discrimination against particular communities was witnessed in parts of India—this could have been avoided if the school systems were better prepared.



**Granting adequate
autonomy to
think and act
independently**

Autonomy to act is critical. It becomes important because, in most cases, every school's context varies, and what is needed in one place may not be needed in another. Having the same set of rules for all the schools in a school system may prevent a school to act comprehensively even in an emergency. For instance, the spread of Covid-19 was most uneven in rural and urban areas, and many remote parts in India remained unaffected. But the national lockdown was country-wide and there were subsequent state-wide closures. This meant schools remained closed for long periods even in those areas where there was not a single case reported. This could have been different if the local authorities such as Gram Panchayats, the elected third tier of government, had the autonomy to decide what to do. Even when the lockdowns were lifted and teachers returned to their schools, children were not allowed to enter the school even though they kept roaming around the school all the time—this is something the BMP research team often witnessed in their project area. Schoolteachers had no autonomy to decide to teach as they were ordered not to allow children into the school premises.

Learning is an autonomous process where teachers need to allow children some autonomy to explore on their own to be able learn better. However, only when teachers experience autonomy would they understand its value and importance and, in turn, allow students too the autonomy they deserve.

It is not the government system alone that is hierarchical. The lack of autonomy of teachers and schools is common even among private schools, where commerce often takes priority in the choice of decisions. Even NGO-managed schools could be highly centralised.

Questions for Reflection

- ① Your school/schools in your area would have also perhaps faced unexpected closure during Covid-19 or any other emergency. If so, what did you do in that period to continue the education and why?
- ② If you had the freedom to decide on your own, what would have you done differently to continue education during that crisis?
- ③ What are the steps you took when schools reopened after that crisis to help children deal with the learning losses? Were these adequate and appropriate? If not, what additional steps would you like to take and why?



**Responsive
& supportive
monitoring with
appropriate
accountability frame**

Any form of autonomy needs to operate under an accountability frame. In order to enable schools to act independently using their capacities and experiences, it is also important to provide them an accountability framework that sets the boundary and prevents them from crossing it. This can also be a set of principles such as 'Do no harm' or 'Build back better' or 'No compromise with gender equality'. Accountability frameworks should ensure accountability to all: the system, the community, and the children. The application of these principles would ensure that the chosen strategies would follow a path that would not be counter-productive and regressive for anyone.

Activity (developing autonomous plans and accountability framework)

Scenario: School A and School B were chosen to be the pilot schools that would be granted greater autonomy in deciding (i) the school calendar, (ii) how to use one day per week differently to enhance children's learning experiences, and (iii) how to make the School management Committee (SMC) more active. However, they were told that they needed to spell out the accountability norms for their acts.

The following are the proposed activities and accountability norms of School A and School B. Review/discuss these and give your opinion regarding the quality of these plans with reasons.

School A		School B	
Activity	Accountability Norm	Activity	Accountability Norm
1. The school will have a shorter summer holiday and a longer winter holiday as winter months are also the months used for collecting forest products in this tribal village	a. The total number of school days will not be less than that stipulated by the relevant state education policy. b. The dates of holidays will be decided in consultation with SMC and Gram Panchayat members.	1. The school will adhere to the holiday list as provided by the state government.	a. It is easy to coordinate with other schools and administration if the holidays are the same; otherwise, it will create problems for administration
2. The school will map the diverse occupations present in the village with the support of SMC. It will then invite people of different professions to demonstrate how they work, such as carpenters, potters, farmers, beedi (tobacco) rollers, etc.	a. All occupations will be mapped and included without any reference to caste. b. If caste references are made during discussions, this would not be used for any reinforcement of caste hierarchy. c. Efforts will be made to include occupations where women are engaged and invite them as well.	2. The school will start inviting educated individuals from the village and neighbouring places to share their experience of how they got educated and how it helped them in their careers.	a. All educated people (including women) from all caste groups will be invited.
3. Each SMC member will be responsible for organising the weekly 'local' class on a rotation basis.	a. This will include all members (women and all caste groups), and teachers will help them if needed. b. The SMC member and the invited teacher will be felicitated.	3. SMC members will have the responsibility of identifying educated people around them.	a. This will include all members (women and all caste groups), and anyone from the SMC would be free to suggest a name.

Supportive monitoring and even hand-holding, if needed, is essential for allowing a school to become more resilient. Supportive monitoring refers to monitoring processes that are meant to help one reflect and improve, rather than punish for non-performance.

In order to apply one or more of all these four actions vis-à-vis characteristics of a resilient school, we have developed a tool that can be used either for need assessment or for strategy planning.

6.3 Planning for resilient schools

Although a number of tools exist to help plan resilient schools, we are presenting one simple tool that can be easily adapted by various school systems or even be used in training workshops.

For more information on other tools, visit <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/media/8011/file/ECAR%20CONSIDERATIONS%20FOR%20EDUCATION%20PROVISION-%20v2.5%20ENG.pdf>

Below is a set of simple tools that can be filled to (i) to map the needs of a particular school system with adequate attention to what they have and where they have gaps, (ii) to identify the strategy with respect to each of these, or (iii) for supportive monitoring. The tool is in the form of a 4X6 matrix where each row represents action areas for the enabling school systems and each column represents characteristics of a resilient school.

Planning Framework and Tool for resilient schools and enabling school systems

Enabling School System: Responsibilities	Resilient Schools: Characteristics					
	Inclusive school ethos and practices	Knowing children and creating relationships	Viewing communities, students and contexts as resources	Preparedness for innovative forms of blended Learning	Skills for action research and relevant innovations	Suitable use of technology and most vulnerable
Focus on marginalised and most vulnerable						
Awareness and exchange of knowledge/ experiences						
Capacity building for being able to act and respond						
Granting adequate autonomy to think and act independently						
Responsive and supportive monitoring with appropriate accountability framework						

In order to fill this for any one of these purposes, e.g., needs assessments, each of these boxes can be filled with references to a particular row and column. We can develop a multi-stage colour code as one below and use it to fill all the 24 boxes for each school within a school system.

Planning Framework and Tool for resilient schools and enabling school systems - Needs Assessment

Enabling School System: Responsibilities	Resilient Schools: Characteristics					
	Inclusive school ethos and practices	Knowing children and creating relationships	Viewing communities, students and contexts as resources	Preparedness for innovative forms of blended Learning	Skills for action research and relevant innovations	Suitable use of technology and most vulnerable
Focus on marginalised and most vulnerable						
Awareness and exchange of knowledge/ experiences						
Capacity building for being able to act and respond						
Granting adequate autonomy to think and act independently						
Responsive and supportive monitoring with appropriate accountability framework						

- Red : Nil capacity
- Brown : Some capacity but scope for improvement
- Green : high capacity – no need for additional inputs

The school system using this tool can decide how many levels of differentiation they want. These three levels are just one example; there can be as many levels as a system is capable of handling.

In the same way, this tool can be used for strategy development or monitoring through use of varied set of icons/colours/codes for identified strategy.

Planning Framework and Tool for resilient schools and enabling school systems - Progress Monitoring

Enabling School System: Responsibilities	Resilient Schools: Characteristics					
	Inclusive school ethos and practices	Knowing children and creating relationships	Viewing communities, students and contexts as resources	Preparedness for innovative forms of blended Learning	Skills for action research and relevant innovations	Suitable use of technology and most vulnerable
Focus on marginalised and most vulnerable						
Awareness and exchange of knowledge/ experiences						
Capacity building for being able to act and respond						
Granting adequate autonomy to think and act independently						
Responsive and supportive monitoring with appropriate accountability framework						

- No progress
- ▲ Some progress
- High progress

Notes

Notes

