

सामूहिक पहल

Samuhik Pahal

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● Reflections

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Gubbachi

In the course of distributing aid, team Gubbachi had to revisit their original mandate, review their abilities, and understand their capabilities to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. But, the biggest takeaway for them was knowing what it means to empathize.

Mohammad Faiz Alam

Mohammad's decision to return to his village in UP from Maharashtra was about survival. Under the lockdown in Maharashtra, he had to make do with just one meal a day for 15 days. Now back in his village, Mohammad is unsure of what's next when it comes to earning a livelihood.

Patang

While NGOs remained flexible during the pandemic, it has become critical to evolve, and design strategies and approaches, keeping in mind children's rights to education and their well-being, feels team Patang.

● Educational Resources

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Nature Conservation Foundation

Open-source content from Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) for educators to develop an experiential and a creative pedagogical approach to learning about nature both within and outside the classrooms.

Shikshamitra

Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) for mathematics, language, and arts and crafts with educators, who want to foster independent thinkers.

● Ground Zero

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Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST, Delhi), Towards Future (West Bengal), and Door Step School (Maharashtra)

In the aftermath of COVID-19 lockdowns and the consequent loss of livelihood, many children are likely to drop out of school. What circumstances are leading people from low-income communities to deprioritize education?

Dooars Jagron (West Bengal), Swatantra Talim (UP) Kshamtalaya (Rajasthan)

After their support to and active involvement in humanitarian aid distribution, education NGOs have started working on their education programs. The ground situation has prompted many organisations to design new interventions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on education.

● In Focus

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PRADAN

The COVID-19 lockdown impact on Jharkhand's tribal communities was alleviated by PRADAN's prompt intervention that included supporting communities in their livelihood and complementing government efforts in delivering aid.

● Collective Response

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In April, Wipro Ltd, Wipro Enterprises Ltd, and Azim Premji Foundation had made a commitment to invest Rs 1125 crore for tackling the unprecedented humanitarian and health care crises arising from COVID-19. In the past five months, we have received support from 500 partners in 30 states and have delivered humanitarian aid to more than 82 lakh people in need.

[CLICK TO VIEW
COVID-19 RESPONSE MAP](#)

What does it mean to empathize?

In the course of distributing aid, we also had to revisit our original mandate, review our abilities, and understand our capabilities to deal with this unprecedented situation.

By Somya R Nand, Gubbachi

We are a five-year-old organization, and are certainly in no position to claim that we have the resources to tackle the COVID-19 crisis. Like many other organisations, the pandemic has brought us face to face with a reality that we have never experienced before. However, it has helped us in truly understanding what it means to empathize and be present for another human being.

Over the last few months, we extended humanitarian aid to whoever we could, during the lockdown, and that work continues till date. But, in the course of distributing aid, we also had to revisit our original mandate, review our abilities, and understand our capabilities to deal with this unprecedented situation.

After much deliberation, we decided to keep our approach simple – to focus on one person, one family, and one day at a time. In our efforts, we prioritized preserving the dignity of a fellow human being. Many team members joined us, doggedly tackling whatever came their way. But, the team quickly recognized the need to address the educational losses that Gubbachi families were experiencing. Understanding the constraints, within which we needed to operate, we reached out to children within as well as outside the Gubbachi community. We only hoped to ease the situation and reached out to every

single child with nutrition supplements and worksheets for self-learning.

We came across different people – people who had a job until the day before, and people who wanted to hoard, not out of habit, but insecurity.

In the course of distributing aid, we came across different people – people who had a job until the day before, and people who wanted to hoard, not out of habit, but insecurity, and then there were those funders, who only cared for photo ops. What we knew vaguely became more evident – that building skills within communities is critical, but so is understanding our trauma, triggers, and our response to a crisis. As we worked together towards alleviating the challenges of those affected by COVID-19, we saw the real growth within us as a team. I feel this experience deepened our understanding and the practice of empathy.

You can reach out to Gubbachi on info@gubbachi.org.in



Dry ration packaging and distribution by volunteers Photo by Gubbachi

15 दिन हम एक बार खाना खाकर जी रहे थे...

मैं तीन महीने से अपने गाँव में हूँ। यहाँ काम बहुत कम है और माँग बहुत ज्यादा...

मोहम्मद फैज़ आलम (सीतापुर, यूपी. से है और उनके भाई “स्वतंत्र तालीम” से जुड़े हैं)

मैं महाराष्ट्र में पिछले 7-8 वर्षों से काम कर रहा हूँ। शुरुआत, मैंने पुराने कपड़ों को नया बनाने के व्यवसाय से की थी। लेकिन जब मुंबई में कारोबार उतना अच्छा नहीं चला, तो मैं महाराष्ट्र के उम्ब्रज चला गया। हमारे गाँव के कम से कम 400 लोग वहाँ काम करते हैं - हम पुराने कपड़े इकट्ठा कर बदले में बर्तन देने का काम करते हैं। इन इकट्ठा किये गए पुराने कपड़ों को धोया और फिर बेचा जाता है। आमतौर पर फरवरी से मई तक का मौसम हमारे लिए कमाई का मौसम होता है। लेकिन इसबार सारा पैसा फंस गया है। जिन स्थानीय व्यापारी से मैं बर्तन खरीदता था उनका मेरे ऊपर 20,000 से अधिक रुपए का कर्ज है। जब मैं उम्ब्रज से वापस अपने गाँव रामद्वारी के लिए चला तो मैंने केवल दो जोड़ी कपड़े अपने साथ लिए, मेरा अधिकांश सामान अभी भी उम्ब्रज में है। जब परिस्थिति सामान्य होगी, तो मैं वापस जाऊंगा।

हमें तय करना था कि गाँव आना है या नहीं क्योंकि हमारे पैसे खतम हो रहे थे। हमें लगा कि कम से कम गाँव में हमारे पास एक छोटा सा धान का खेत है, तो हम वहाँ ज़िन्दा तो रह सकते हैं और सब्जियाँ जैसी अन्य ज़रूरतों के लिए हम मजदूरी कर सकते हैं।

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जब हम गाँव वापस आए, तो हमें स्कूल में रखा गया। ज़िला प्रशासन ने हमें वहाँ कारंटाइन किया था और कुछ दिनों बाद जब हमारे अन्दर कोरोना के कोई लक्षण नहीं दिखे, तो हमें छोड़ दिया गया। मैं तीन महीने से गाँव में हूँ। यहाँ काम बहुत कम है, और काम चाहनेवाले ज्यादा हैं।



फ़ोटो: मोहम्मद फैज़ आलम

आमतौर पर, यहाँ दिहाड़ी मजदूर को प्रतिदिन 150 - 200 रुपये मिलते हैं।

अगर किसी को काम मिलता है, तो उससे सब्जियाँ या अन्य चीज़ें खरीदने में मदद मिलती है। हमें सरकार की ओर से भी कुछ मदद मिली - 10 किलोग्राम चावल, 2 किलो तूर दाल, 1 किलो सरसों का तेल, नमक, कुछ मसाले इत्यादि। लेकिन परिवार में हम छे लोग हैं - तीन भाई, मेरी पत्नी और मेरे वृद्ध माता-पिता - इतना सामान एक महीने से अधिक नहीं चलता है। परिवार में सिर्फ मैं और मेरा भाई कमानेवाले सदस्य हैं। हमारा सबसे छोटा भाई अभी पढ़ाई कर रहा है और “स्वतंत्र तालीम” के स्कूली शिक्षा कार्यक्रम के साथ जुड़ा हुआ है। मैं कभी स्कूल नहीं गया - मैंने सिर्फ कुरान (धार्मिक अध्ययन) का अध्ययन किया। हमारी मदद करने के लिए हमारे समय कोई नहीं था, लेकिन अब हम हमारे सबसे छोटे भाई, जो अभी 10 वीं कक्षा पास कर चुका है, की आगे की पढ़ाई सुनिश्चित करना चाहते हैं। यदि वह पढ़ाई करता है, तो वह दिहाड़ी मजदूर के रूप में काम करने के बजाय खुद के लिए कुछ कर सकता है। अभी के लिए, हमने तय किया है कि हम उसकी शिक्षा में उसकी मदद करेंगे और अपने माता-पिता की देखभाल करेंगे, और जो भी अन्य ज़रूरतें हैं, वह इंतजार कर सकती है।

Approach to delivering education in the post-COVID-19 world

Right to education and well-being of children from vulnerable communities must take precedence.

By Malaya Padhan and Rupesh Behera, Patang

At first, the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to be a problem that was affecting a certain part of the world. However, by early March, things began to change a little. We realized that it was not an 'outside' problem anymore. We consciously started taking precautions and decided to avoid or stop traveling, especially outside of Odisha. But even at that time, we didn't realise how soon this pandemic would affect all of us.

A large part of our work is focused on youth and communities, especially building critical citizenship and youth leadership. Although disaster response is something that we have extensively handled in the past since floods, droughts, and cyclones are regular occurrences in Odisha, the COVID-19 pandemic has been nothing like what we had ever seen before and it caught us completely off-guard.

Given its ever-changing nature, it took us some time to wrap our heads around the situation and decide on our plan of action. We realized that the pandemic, along with long periods of lockdown, has resulted in a crisis that made the sustenance of life and livelihood difficult for the marginalized communities we work with. From our planned work, we shifted our focus towards the community, which was struggling with its day-to-day existence. Most organisations focused their attention on distributing aid in urban areas, but we decided to prioritize rural areas and unreached urban pockets.

After multiple discussions within the team, we decided to work in partnership with the district administration to leverage efforts and to avoid duplication. We had to be flexible, and had to ensure our safety as well as that of the communities in which we work. Our efforts in the initial few months were around:

- Mapping the community and its needs
- Awareness building on COVID-19 and the preventive measures
- Health kit distribution like handwash/soaps, sanitizers, masks, and sanitary pad for girls
- Dry ration support: Rice, Dal, *Chivda*, etc.
- Linkage to livelihood opportunities and social security schemes of the government

At the beginning of the pandemic, we had to suspend our



Language activities with local resources Photo by Patang

regular programs and plans. We hoped that the situation would improve, and things would go back to normal within a few months. However, while working on the ground and after all the debates and discussions, it soon became clear that COVID-19 is here to stay at least until an effective vaccine is available.

While some of our team members joined us in relief work, others were stuck in their villages or in the field, unable to join us because of transport restrictions. We realized that we had to figure out ways to resume work despite not being able to go to the office or the field. Closing down educational institutions directly affected our learning center activities. All planned activities were disrupted,

As an organization, we were also facing the challenge of digital divide and inequality, while trying to keep in mind factors such as safety, cybersecurity, online trafficking, socio-emotional well-being, and health, along with other aspects of education.

creating difficulties in engaging with children. But through our relief work and our interactions with the community, we also learned that children were becoming restless because of the lockdown restrictions and the lack of avenues for learning and playing. These children didn't have the privilege of joining an online class as around 260 villages in Sambalpur still don't have network

connectivity. We also realized that in places where there is connectivity and gadgets are available for online engagement, most parents and students are not ready for it. As an organization, we were also facing the challenge of digital divide and inequality, while trying to keep in mind factors such as safety, cybersecurity, online trafficking, socio-emotional well-being, and health, along with other aspects of education. Keeping in mind these issues and challenges, we decided to work on home-based activities that children participate in. We designed the 'Kheli Kudi Sikhiba' book with the help of our team members and members of the community. It has a set of traditional games that have been carefully chosen to impart life-skills and to engage with linguistic and mathematical concepts. These games can be played easily at home and with small groups. Thanks to Action Aid, we received approval from Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) to recreate the activities from the book to keep children, staying at quarantine centers in different districts of Odisha, engaged.

With schools being used as quarantine centers, we had to shift the immediate focus from educational institutions/schools to the 'community' as the unit or center of learning.

With schools being used as quarantine centers, we had to shift the immediate focus from educational institutions/schools to the 'community' as the unit or center of learning. We have been working towards decentralized plans and strategies in each of the villages, and have enlisted the support of the local youth and the parents to play the role of resource people. We will have to continue to evolve and design our strategies and approaches,



Children learning activities. Photo by Patang

keeping in mind the children's rights to education and their well-being. We believe that well-being should not be seen in isolation as economic hardships are very real for the communities that we work with.

You can reach out to Patang on team@patangindia.org

Patang's Learnings:

- The notion of work from home has mostly been a new area of exploration, especially in the context of our field activities
- Use of online platforms and online teaching-learning (ideas about the different online sites for training/meeting) has also been a new experience and one that we realize we need to tread carefully on
- Shifting our current and immediate focus from 'schools' to the 'community' was another critical learning
- Continuing to maintain our relationship with the community, being with them in the difficult times, and trying to support them to the maximum extent possible by leveraging existing schemes/social security opportunities were recognized as vital elements of our work with them
- Learning to handle and work with the different district level line departments was also crucial
- Keeping ourselves safe while working in the community and ensuring the safety of the community members taught us how hard it is to translate ideas in the real world

Age-appropriate and locally relevant nature learning modules for schools

Open-source resource by Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) that connects children with nature.

Age-appropriate and locally relevant nature learning modules for schools

Open-source resource by Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) that connects children with nature.

Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) works closely with schools and teachers to develop age-appropriate and culturally relevant nature learning modules that can be woven into the existing Environmental Studies' (EVS) primary school curriculum. In this process, we develop empathy, experience and wonder, and help teachers and students build a deep connection with the world around them.

Our process is to facilitate nature immersion workshops for school teachers, observe classroom sessions, and co-design and trial nature learning activities. We also collaborate with other nature educators to develop a creative pedagogical approach within and outside the school classrooms.

The main goals of the project are:

- To shift the focus of environmental education from a human-centered approach to a nature-centered one
- To create and run trials of an age-appropriate and locale-specific framework, and nature learning modules within the existing school curriculum
- To ensure that these modules are consistent with the existing learning theories and practice

Each school presents to us unique opportunities to develop bespoke modules that allow teachers and students to know their school campuses, their neighborhoods, and the immediate local spaces that they can engage with. Several factors have been influencing our work so far; physical space (school campus, neighborhood), enthusiasm and motivation of the teacher groups, flexibility of the school timetable, support from the school management, and even an objective assessment of these learning modules by the school management.

Content creation, ideation, and trial

Our engagement with the EVS textbooks followed by the different boards and schools has revealed that lessons have a strong human-centric approach and narrative. Our attempts are to work on ideas that focus on the inter-relationships in nature rather than ideas that seemed to be



A student participates in 'Learning with Leaves' module facilitated by NCF. Photo by NCF

more utilitarian in approach and concept. To conceptualise and develop creative and contextual nature learning material therefore, we have several discussions, trials and classroom observations with teachers. Some examples below will highlight these.

Examples:

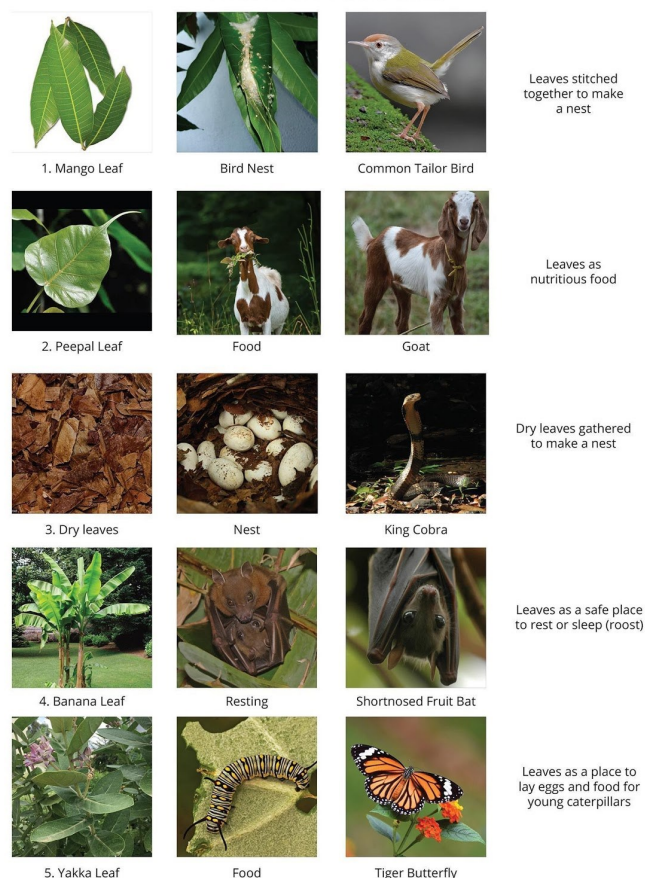
Module on leaves

As part of a lesson on plants and plant life, students look at different kinds of leaves and try to observe color, shape, size, texture, and smell. They then arrange the leaves according to size and use a hand lens to observe the finer details of each leaf.

Learning about leaves

We then designed an exercise looking at uses of leaves in nature. We made the shift from a purely human use as shown in the textbook, to how other life forms like insects, birds and other animals also use leaves. This lesson idea underwent a few iterations; our first form (a matching card game with photographs) did not work well for a younger

Leaves and their uses



A screengrab of NCF's educational resources on leaves

age group and we reworked the concept to align with our framework and the needs of the group

Here's a module on leaves for the teacher to discuss in the class:

Some reflections, challenges, and impact of COVID-19:

Like all non-formal education interventions, negotiating school systems, with constraints of time and pressures to complete the syllabi, has been a challenge for us. But we are trying to understand the impact of our work. How do we measure the wonder a child experiences as she watches an ant make its way across the classroom? How should we quantify the connection a child feels to a cluster fig tree and all the life forms it supports in a school campus? Some of the impacts of this work are likely to remain dormant for a while. They only manifest after a few years when students begin making decisions and expressing themselves in different groups at school, home, or in their communities.

We are developing online training, and lesson planning sessions and discussions with teachers of the schools we collaborate with – this involves brainstorming on adapting nature learning modules to the current situation (both independent, self-directed learning as well as online learning). We are also researching, trialing, and reaching

out to other education groups to understand how they plan to deliver their training to schools, teachers, and children.

How does a spider jump so high? How does a lizard walk upside down on the ceiling? Why do some wasps carry around little balls of wet mud? To answer these and many more questions of curious children, we have designed a series of activity packets titled 'Hidden Housemates'.

A challenge with the government schools we work with is that many teachers and students in non-urban setups do not have access to smartphones and/or deal with very poor internet connectivity. In these cases, we are putting together physical learning material involving nature stories, puzzles, poems, and art as educational kits. We have developed some online learning modules (see the Hidden Housemates series below), including awareness material (regarding Bats and their role in the ecosystem) during the COVID-19 period.

How does a spider jump so high? How does a lizard walk upside down on the ceiling? Why do some wasps carry around little balls of wet mud? To answer these and many more questions of curious children, we have designed a series of activity packets titled 'Hidden Housemates'. As the name suggests, these activities introduce children to nature in their immediate surroundings at home, which they may not have had the chance to explore before. These activity packets are complete with games, short articles, video resources and plenty of activities. The Hidden Housemates series is available here: <https://bit.ly/hiddenhousemates1>

We have also produced a short educational video to discuss bats and their association with the COVID-19 pandemic. Created specifically for schools and communities, the video informs children about the ecological importance of bats and the current scientific data about COVID-19. The video, available in multiple languages, can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/batsCovi19>

As we develop more nature learning modules we will make these available as open-source resources for educators to use and modify.

If you want to get in touch with us, learn more about our work and the nature learning curriculum that we are developing, please email us at edu@ncf-india.org

Resources:

To access other resources shared by Wipro's partners for the network, visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/covid19collectiveaction/home>

To contribute ideas, resources, articles, or to share your stories for future issues, send us an email on foundation.communications@wipro.com.

Easy to use Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) and books

Shikshamitra's materials support teachers who want to use classroom time creatively and efficiently.

Shikshamitra was founded in 2005 as a school and education resource centre, working on the issues of equity pedagogy and sustainable learning. Shikshamitra ran a school which offered children ages 8 to 16 a supportive, artistic, and magically creative environment where they could discover their personal strengths, explore and develop their individuality, and grow in understanding and confidence. Since 2008, Shikshamitra has been focusing on its teacher training program, concentrating on languages (Bangla and English), math, art, and library management. This has now developed into a systematic program based on years of actual teaching experience. The organization currently serves as an open learning platform and resource center that works on sharing knowledge with children, teachers, parents, and education practitioners who are struggling to achieve the age-appropriate education mandate for 8 to 14 year olds.

Keeping in mind the needs of educators who want to foster independent thinkers, the organisation designs and produces easy-to-use Teacher Learning Materials (TLMs) for mathematics, language arts, and arts and crafts.

Over the years, Shikshamitra came to realise that in classrooms throughout West Bengal, there was a real need for materials that support teachers, who want to use classroom time much more creatively and efficiently – less textbook-centric, more learner-centric. The materials they developed are appropriately tailored to the needs of a range of learners and go hand in hand with Shikshamitra's unique training programs. Keeping in mind the needs of educators who want to foster independent thinkers, the organisation designs and produces easy-to-use Teacher Learning Materials (TLMs) for mathematics, language arts, and arts and crafts. These materials include manipulatives, worksheets, flashcards, and other learning props. Shikshamitra believes that an interest in reading and language can be initiated from an early age and developed as a child grows. The organisation publishes a modest range of children's storybooks with a lesson in them in Bengali and English— there are many books in Shikshamitra's catalog to inspire teachers as well as parents.

Their latest release includes Phase I and Phase II

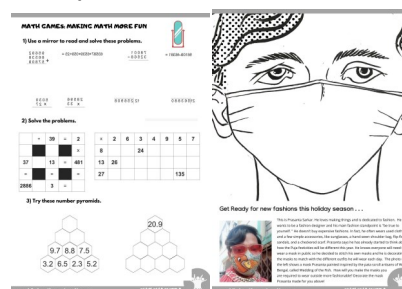


Teachers working with Shikshamitra resources Photo by Shikshamitra

Worksheet Collections with guidelines that coincide with Shikshamitra's Basic Teacher Training course for beginner-level English learning. Parents or educators looking for creative worksheets for children during the COVID-19 lockdown can use 'Unlock Learning Worksheet Packets'. There are approximately 12 pages in each variety pack and the level of difficulty of the problems in the worksheets vary each time. Updated every 2-3 weeks, these packets can be procured at a nominal cost.

Explore all this and more of Shikshamitra's catalog on [TLM catalog](#) and [studies](#).

A snapshot of Shikshamitra's worksheets:



For updates, visit Shikshamitra's [Facebook](#) page:

For further information or specific inquiries, please contact Sudeshna Sinha at shompare@gmail.com.

It's a matter of survival now

Loss of livelihood due to COVID-19 lockdowns is having an impact on education.

With the lockdowns getting extended, millions of families have lost their source of income. According to reports, more than 400 million people are now dependent on aid provided by the government through the Public Distribution System (PDS) or on the support provided by nonprofit organizations. Most anticipated the lockdown to get over, but the situation has worsened and is beginning to have a cascading effect on education.

Organizations like the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST, Delhi), Towards Future (West Bengal), and Door Step School (Maharashtra) have been delivering dry rations to affected families and also using the opportunity to stay in touch with the children. As more and more organizations are starting to connect with the children either through online interventions or through the partially opened centers, they are getting a clearer picture of the ground situation.

Kamlesh, from the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST, Delhi), says, "A majority of the families in the communities we work with, have stayed back knowing well that life in villages could be much tougher. Many have changed their occupations – for instance – those driving auto-rickshaws have turned to sell vegetables or fruits."

Many parents don't have money for recharge – if there are two smartphones in the house, they are only recharging one phone. Usually, fathers take the phone with them when they go out for work or in search of work, and the child only gets the phone by evening. So, these things are impacting the delivery of education.

- Kamlesh,
Institute of Social Studies Trust

Delhi-based ISST works on conducting research and action programmes to promote social justice and equity for the under-privileged with a focus on women. ISST works in resettlement colonies of Kalyanpuri, Trilokpuri, and Kichadipuri – areas where children are exposed to crime and drug peddling. In a resettlement colony, the community is usually made up of old and new migrants, coming from all over India.

"We supported many families in getting e-coupons for



Facilitating classes for children in small groups due to COVID-19
Photo by ISST Delhi

ration supply from the Delhi government, but paying rent has been one of the key challenges for them. Older tenants were able to convince their landlords and defer payments, but those who had only been here for a year or less had to vacate," she says.

With partial relaxations on lockdowns, life is returning to normal. While some families have found work, many others are struggling for one square meal a day. In the ongoing struggle to meet their basic needs, many parents fail to support the online education of their children.

"Many parents don't have money for recharge – if there are two smartphones in the house, they are only recharging one phone. Usually, fathers take the phone with them when they go out for work or in search of work, and the child only gets the phone by evening. So, these things are impacting the delivery of education," says Kamlesh.

In the community where ISST works, education for children in class 9 and above continue online, but many parents don't have the necessary resources and remain concerned about their children's future. In some cases, the loss of livelihood in families has forced those above 18 years to consider taking up jobs to support their families.

In West Bengal, the situation could worsen further for the children of brick kiln workers.

During the lockdown, the Towards Future team came to

Educational aspirations will have to wait for Sanjana and Fayyaz

Sanjana and Fayyaz both live in Kalyanpuri (Delhi) and have passed HSC examinations with above-average scores. Before the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, they had planned to enroll themselves in regular courses. While Sanjana aspired to pursue Chartered Accountancy (CA), Fayyaz wanted to complete his B.Com through a full-time course.

Sanjana's parents had come to Delhi from Bihar 10 years ago, and her father had started working as an auto driver. The first few years after the migration were fine, but later, he got into bad company and started spending much of his income on gambling and alcohol.

"The last few years were difficult, but somehow we managed. I focused on my studies and ensured that I got good scores as I knew only education could change our situation. But, after the pandemic and the lockdown, we have had to struggle a lot. My father comes home once a week. We have mainly been surviving on the savings of my mother for the last three months," says Sanjana.

Sanjana has now started working in a grocery store and also takes tuition classes for children up to grade 8. Once the financial situation in the family stabilizes, she plans to prepare for CA.

In the case of Fayyaz, his family was stuck in Buxar (Bihar) for over three months because of the lockdown.

"We had gone to our village for a family function. When we were there, the lockdown was announced, so we could not move back. We spent all our money during our stay in the village. When we returned to Delhi, we found there was no work at all."

Fayyaz's mother, who works in a garment factory, was furloughed by the factory, which meant she now has no income. Also, Fayyaz's father lost his job at a hardware factory, but was the only one in the family who was able to find temporary work during the pandemic.

"I felt that I too should help. So, I started working as a helper at a shop that sells electrical materials. I was planning to enroll in a fulltime B.Com course, but that will have to wait for now", says Fayyaz.

know about the plight of hundreds of brick kiln workers. The team organized dry rations for over 180 families in five brick kilns in West Bengal's Rajarhat and Vangar 2 block regions as workers, many of whom didn't have Aadhar Cards, found it difficult to get government support. The children of majority of these workers don't have valid photo IDs or health cards.

Brick kiln owners are notorious for exploiting workers in India. It is a sector primarily controlled by brick kiln owners and a network of contractors with significant influence in the villages of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Orissa. The modus operandi is that contractors offer loans to villagers and ask them to repay by working in a brick kiln. Many villagers take up the offer and travel with their entire families to work for six to eight months.

Supriya, who works on Towards Future's Mukti project, says, "Some children of seasonal migrants are enrolled in government schools in their villages, but they leave school when they come to the destination site. The language at the destination site school is usually different from the village school. We try to assess these children to understand their learning levels and ensure that they stay connected with reading, at the very least."

Towards Future's Mukti project has been designed to



Dry ration distribution in communities of brick kiln workers

Photo by Towards Future

promote the educational and protection rights of the children of migrant families working in the brick kilns in West Bengal. As a part of their programme, the team counsels the parents on RTE Act and encourages them to enroll their children in the school once they return.

"In some cases, we see the children enrolling in schools after returning to their villages. But given the current

situation, and the uncertainty over livelihood, education of these children will take a hit. Unfortunately, tracking these children, once they return to their villages, has been a challenge for us as many of these families change their SIM cards – so we are not sure what to expect now," says Supriya.

We have been speaking to these children over the phone and during the distribution of dry ration, but now since we have to maintain social distancing norms, it's not easy for us to make them open up and talk. But, these children are definitely missing their peers a lot.

- Ankita,
Door Step School (Pune)

School enrollments among children of brick kiln workers are low and they require tremendous effort. Last year, only 18 out of the 150 children, who were part of Towards Future, got enrolled in a school.

The situation for migrant workers in Maharashtra's Pune and the surrounding Pimpri-Chinchwad region has been distressing as the area was categorized as a red zone.

Over the last few months, Door Step School (DSS, Pune) has provided rations to 3466 families from migrant communities, such as construction workers, brick kiln workers, and families who stay in shanties and do odd jobs for their living. DSS has stayed in touch with the children through online and in-person engagement. Like most educational organizations, DSS has used the opportunity of distributing dry ration to provide children with activity sheets and storybooks.

Ankita Yadav from DSS says, "The situation is very challenging. Sometimes the families say that they can come and collect the ration from us. They further add that they don't have anything left in the house to eat. Their children are afraid. They want to know when things will normalize. These children used to get snacks from their parents before – not anymore. We have been speaking to these children over the phone and during the distribution of dry ration, but now since we have to maintain social distancing norms, it's not easy for us to make them open up and talk. But, these children are definitely missing their peers a lot."

DSS provides education and support to the often-forgotten children of pavement and slum dwellers, construction site families, temporary and permanent slum communities, and many other underprivileged families. Many of these children are not enrolled in schools and have limited access to books. Many of them don't have a designated place to study. Wherever DSS cannot set up a physical center, their 'School on Wheels' bus (modified into a classroom) takes education to the children. In addition to working directly with communities, DSS also runs reading programs in Government schools, and networks with other



NGOs, which are working with children, to share best practices and teaching expertise.

In a bid to help these children and their parents, DSS has been posting various activities via WhatsApp messages, which can be done by the children with help from their parents. This can help strengthen the bond between these parents and their wards. The organization has been conducting online classes, sharing learning videos, and helping them in downloading the Diksha App for studies. In places where children do not have access to phones or education material, community leaders are helping them. Through this intervention, DSS is reaching out to 14,000 children in and around Pune and Pune Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC).

"There are high chances that children of street vendors will drop out of school. But, let's suppose that we can convince parents that the education of their children will be taken care of and that their children will be safe in school, they might continue with their education – only after a lot of intervention and convincing. For children above ten years, the risk of dropping out of school is high as parents would expect them to work," says Ankita Yadav.

You can reach out to:

Door Step School on pune@doorstepschool.org

Institute For Social Studies Trust on isstdel@isstindia.org

Towards Future on 2wards.future@gmail.com

Mitigating the effects of the pandemic on education

Preparing for a post-COVID-19 world, education nonprofits in India are reinventing their models.

 West Bengal

Many education nonprofits in India took steps to mitigate the crisis unleashed by COVID-19 over the last 3-4 months by using their networks to distribute aid. The beneficiaries mainly included parents of children studying in government or low-income private schools, who had lost their livelihood. While many private schools transitioned to online delivery of education, those in public or low-income private schools were not as lucky, given the lack of resources – from access to android phones to having enough money for data recharge.

Organisations like Dooars Jagron (West Bengal), Swantanra Talim (UP), and Kshamtalaya (Rajasthan) have been working hard to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, keeping in view the socio-economic situation of the communities they work with.

Victor Basu from Dooars Jagron, an NGO in Jalpaiguri that works for the welfare of over 1,00,000 tea garden workers, feels that over 40 percent of children in his region are likely to drop out of school.

Victor says, "A majority of the children that we work with are first-generation learners. Parents have been out of work for 2-3 months, and this has put them under tremendous pressure. Some workers have received money as advance payments, which may not be sufficient to alleviate their privations. We know that they are struggling to survive, and we fear that this could lead to many cases of malnutrition – our priority is not education for the moment, but the well-being of these families."

Tea garden workers are typically women and are some of the most exploited workers in India, spending anywhere between 8 and 12 hours on backbreaking work for INR 176 per day.

"Schools remain shut in our region. Most of the education has moved online. But, parents here cannot afford android phones or data recharges. For now, we have opened study centers in every garden where our volunteers are helping 30-50 students with their education," says Victor.

Given the worsening situation in the region, the threat of human trafficking is extremely high now, given the proximity of this region to international borders, such as Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

Victor says, "Our team is on high alert to prevent such



Learning outside the classroom during covid times; Jalpaiguri, West Bengal Photo by Dooars Jagron

instances. We have been running awareness programmes in the community to prevent trafficking. We are also focusing on supporting the families in finding employment through MNREGA in coordination with Panchayats and block-level officers and helping them in starting kitchen gardens so that their nutritional requirements are met."

Schools remain shut in our region. Most of the education has moved online. But, parents here cannot afford android phones or data recharges. For now, we have opened study centers in every garden where our volunteers are helping 30-50 students with their education.

-Victor
Dooars Jagron

In Kotda block (Rajasthan), the average literacy rate is 26 percent, one of the lowest in India. Kshamtalaya has been working on learning and governance in this region for over four years, mainly focusing on tribal communities. During the pandemic, they focused on complementing government efforts by working on the field, providing the Sarpanch and Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) with information on high priority families, such as those with widows or senior citizens that deserved immediate aid.

As much of India moves towards a 'living with COVID-19' phase, the organization has shifted its focus back to its education initiatives, with an intervention that utilizes the

reach and simplicity of community radio.

Vivek from Kshamtalaya says, "To reach communities with no/low internet and to re-build connections with learning, we began creating 30-minute long integrated audio-sessions that deliver content that is meaningful, contextual, relatable, and creates opportunities for children to apply concepts they learn from these sessions."

Using the reach and resources of 'Radio Madhuban', Kshamtalaya's partner for the intervention, the audio learning programme is reaching out to tribal areas near Abu Road and Kotda, in small clusters of 10-15 children. Kshamtalaya has provided these clusters with audio speakers, which are big enough for small groups. The 30-minute programme covers topics like daily mindfulness and mental well-being, storytelling on thematic learning, fun activities that check student understanding, learning through music, problem-solving, and a separate segment, in which, the children get a chance to share their efforts from the week.

"We found that there's a tremendous loss in the learning

To reach communities with no/low internet and to re-build connections with learning, we began creating 30-minute long integrated audio-sessions that deliver content that is meaningful, contextual, relatable, and creates opportunities for children to apply concepts they learn from these sessions.

- Vivek
Kshamtalaya

levels in the children of this region, and if we don't intervene now, things could get worse – a child who used to write in Hindi earlier has forgotten how to write. It will require a lot of effort to bring these children back to their previous levels, but what we want to ensure first, is that their well-being is taken care of, as the children have suffered along with their parents during the pandemic," says Vivek.

The majority of migrants in urban cities are from Uttar Pradesh (UP). During the lockdown, many news reports narrated the plight of hundreds of lakhs of migrants walking back to their villages in UP from cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore.

Sitapur is located halfway between Lucknow and Shahjahanpur in UP. The town is known for its artisans who are skilled in garment design. For over 25 years, artisans from Sitapur have migrated to urban cities in search of work. As expected, many returned when they lost their only source of income.

Swatantra Talim, an organization that works with rural children in regions like Lucknow and Sitapur, has been working closely with the community.

Rahul from Swatantra Talim says, "A few families needed



Children from tribal regions in Rajasthan participate in an audio learning program Photo by Kshamtalaya

support with tickets to return, and we helped in arranging that for them. Some were struggling to talk to their loved ones, and some did not have cooking gas at home, so we provided them with money to refill their gas cylinders and recharge their cellphones. But right now, they do not have any work, and some are exploring options, such as starting their own business, forming self-help groups, or returning to the cities to collect their payments."

Swatantra Talim was founded with the objective of giving children the power to make decisions and be an active part of the learning process. The organization works with rural and government school children through contextual, hands-on, and inquiry-driven curriculum, and pedagogy. After the lockdown, the direct intervention work through the 'Khoj Dabba' program, running in government schools and community centers, stopped. As an alternative, Swatantra Talim is conducting WhatsApp training sessions with community youth facilitators, who in-turn facilitate these sessions with students.

"The contextual and hands-on activities are re-designed in such a way that students can perform them in their homes with the material available in their surroundings and with the help of their parents. Ten community youth facilitators, with five smartphones at Ramdwari village (Sitapur), facilitate the activities with two batches of students, who come every day for 2 hours. From July, using these re-designed activities, 'Khoj Dabba' Extension program is underway in rural parts of UK and UP, through 100 community youth facilitators, reaching to 1200 disconnected government school children," says Rahul.

This dual model of engaging with the children through community youth leaders as well as through community teachers serves its purpose for those with no access to smartphones. The organization is also trying to develop innovative board games for pre-primary children, incorporating contextual, re-cycled, and eco-friendly material that can be made available to disconnected children through partner organizations.

Dooars Jagron (West Bengal), Swatantra Talim (UP), and

Supporting tribal women in distress

PRADAN's livelihood interventions have given a new lease of life to Jharkhand's tribal women.



The COVID-19 lockdown impact on the tribal population in Jharkhand could have been worse. But, the potential issues of humanitarian crisis in this belt were mitigated by PRADAN's prompt intervention that included community coordination and complementing government efforts in delivering aid to one of the most vulnerable groups. PRADAN works in seven states in India, but their maximum outreach is in Jharkhand, where they work with 3-4 different tribes.

Post COVID-19 lockdown, the PRADAN team worked on – identifying vulnerable families, taking steps to stop community spread, and engaging members of the community through their livelihoods.

Nrusingh from PRADAN says, "When the lockdown started, people started coming back to their districts and villages. We started working with the panchayat raj institutions, block administration, and district administration to identify families that required immediate help. For this, we leveraged our network of community-based organizations like Self Help Groups (SHGs) in the region."

Although a lot of content on COVID-19 was available on government websites, we had to translate that into local languages Sadri and Kuduk for people to understand.

- Nrusingh
PRADAN

In all, the PRADAN identified 38,733 vulnerable families, who were promptly provided with dry ration, medical safety goods, and sanitary pads for women.

The team identified 84 panchayat bhavans and schools, where people could be quarantined in order to prevent further spread of the disease. The district health care workers monitored all families returning to their villages. To ensure that the community was well-informed on COVID-19 social distancing norms and preventive measures, the PRADAN team embarked on an awareness campaign using microphones and speakers. Over the last 3-4 months, the team has covered 8306 hamlets through such campaigns.

"Although a lot of content on COVID-19 was available on government websites, we had to translate that into local languages Sadri and Kuduk for people to understand," says Nrusingh.



Workshop on livelihood opportunities for tribals in Jharkhand
Photo by PRADAN

During the lockdown, livestock proved to be a good source of income for many families, as women were able to sell backyard poultry. To encourage this, PRADAN's team regularly engaged with the women of the community, advising them on increasing their capacity and on animal vaccination. Given the organization's focus on cultivation, including kitchen gardens that can help families meet their nutritional needs, the team embarked on one of their most significant missions.

Nrusingh says, "One of the key things that we did during the lockdown was mapping community demand for fertilizers and seeds. We consolidated data on the requirement of such items and linked this demand with traders for procurement. Although we had done this before, what we did during the pandemic, was on a much bigger scale."

Through this exercise, the PRADAN team supported 30,922 vulnerable families with improved seeds of paddy and pulses. The team now plans to train tribal women on dealing with merchants, on bargaining with them, and on selling their produce at a reasonable price.

To support communities, PRADAN worked with multiple donors, including Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI).

"Once food crops like paddy and pulses are stabilized, we will also take up the role of marketing. We want to cultivate all types of vegetables to help tribal farmers make some cash," adds Nrusingh.

You can reach out to PRADAN on headoffice@pradan.net

Collective response

Nonprofits have played a vital role in mitigating the adverse effects of COVID-19 crisis in India.

Be it delivering humanitarian aid or supporting the healthcare system – nonprofits have responded swiftly to people in distress. After the COVID-19 outbreak in March, Wipro Ltd, Wipro Enterprises Ltd, and Azim Premji Foundation had committed Rs 1125 crore towards tackling this unprecedented crisis. Over the past two months, we have received support from 500 partners in over 25 states and have delivered humanitarian aid to over 82 lakh people in need.

We have been able to provide cooked meals and dry rations to more than 80 lakh people, including migrant laborers, and those from vulnerable communities, with support from nonprofit partners. Since the partial relaxation of the lockdown, the migrants have been attempting to return to their homes. It has, therefore, become imperative to support these stranded migrants across the country. The Government of Karnataka, for instance, is running special trains for migrants from Bihar, Bengal, UP, J&K, and other states. Our nonprofit partners have promptly organized more than 15,000 packets of food, water and dates as the migrants will travel to their villages to unite with their families.

To date, from our kitchen facilities in Bangalore, Kolkata, and Pune, we have delivered nearly 29 lakh cooked meals, and we will continue to do this till the lockdown ends. We are also providing immediate protective relief, in terms of soaps, sanitizers and sanitary pads.

On the healthcare front, we have supported the country with setting up hospitals for tribal communities, isolation wards, and ICU units for the vulnerable, in addition to providing PPE kits, masks, ventilators, and other specialized equipment to various state governments and metros. We are on track to deliver all the 2.5 lakh kits and masks we have committed to. This first line of protection is crucial in ensuring that the COVID-19 infection doesn't spread further. We want to emphasize that our healthcare commitment is for the long term, and we are working towards strengthening the country's screening, testing, and critical care infrastructure. Lastly, but most importantly, we want to thank all our partners for their perseverance and for showing exceptional courage in tackling this crisis.



82 lakh

Total number of people who have been supported with humanitarian aid



80 lakh

Number of people who have received our dry rations support



29.69 lakh

Number of cooked meals facilitated by Wipro kitchens in Bangalore, Pune and Kolkata



2 lakh

Total number of PPE kits facilitated



37.76 lakh

Total number of soaps distributed



**29 States, 1 UT,
505 Districts**

Total number of states/districts reached through our humanitarian and health care efforts

[CLICK TO VIEW THE MAP](#)

Data compiled on July 27, 2020

Last update: Aug 21, 2020

Corrections and updates:

In the story 'Age-appropriate and locally relevant nature learning modules for schools' (Section: Educational Resources, pg 8), the section 'Content creation, ideation, and trial' and the 'examples' subsection have been updated to give the reader the accurate context of the organization's work and approach on nature learning.

In the story 'Easy to use Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) and books' by Shikshamitra (Section: Educational Resources, pg 10), it was erroneously mentioned that 'Shikshamitra continues to run a school.' Since 2008 Shikshamitra has been focusing on its teacher training program, concentrating on Language Arts (Bangla and English), Maths, Art, and Library Management.



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Send your comments or feedback on foundation.communications@wipro.com. To read previous issues of Samuhik Pahal, please visit: <https://issuu.com/wiprofoundation/>



For more information, visit:
<https://www.wipro.com/sustainability/>

Cover Photo:
Worksheets distribution during COVID-19 lockdown.
Photo by Door Step School, Pune

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