Education Cannot Wait.

#ActNow!

A fact-finding study report on elementary education in Chhattisgarh

Massive learning loss among school children due to the Covid-19 pandemic

The education of more than 1.5 billion students worldwide has been hampered due to the global pandemic. State governments and the Union Government had started many initiatives to engage children with education. But, due to the lack of digital resources or access, many children needed help to avail of these benefits.

To make up for the loss of studies in these two years, Dalit Adivasi Manch (DLM), a people's collective, and Jana Jagaran Samiti an NGO of Chhattisgarh, with the support from the non-profit Atmashakti Trust, decided to conduct a fact-finding study, to understand how the state is faring in terms of providing opportunities for students to bridge their learning loss in a post-covid scenario. It was a part of a collaborative national education campaign titled, "Education Can't-Wait! #ActNow."

Why the study was undertaken

- To know whether the education department has taken any initiatives toward the learning recovery program.
- To implement a refresher course for the Hindi-medium students of Class I – VII in Govt. Schools / Govt. aided schools
- To minimize the impact of lost learning among the students.
- To boost the confidence level of students for mainstreaming in the current academic session.
- To share the recommendations to the concerned regarding the bottlenecks and the addressing mechanisms for the education system

Coverage, process and methodology of the study

The fact finding study was conducted between November and December covering 323 villages of Mahasamund, Balodabazar and Janjgir Chapa district of Chhattisgarh to capture efforts of the state government towards the recovery of learning loss due to school closure during the pandemic. However, this time, the study was not limited to LRP but also migration, dropouts, and school infrastructure, which contributes to the overall learning performance of children. The study collected data from 651 respondents on LRP, 367 respondents on RTE norms, 101 respondents on dropouts, and 96 on migration.

The fact-finding was conducted using online forms covering all the stakeholders who are part of the Learning Recovery Program & Right To Education, Dropout & Migration. The sampling was done in the selected areas among the students, parents, SMC, and other stakeholders involved in the process to understand the ground reality of the implementation through a self-administered fact-finding form.*

Respondents: Students from Class III-IX, Parents, SMC members & Other Stakeholders

Key findings

Learning recovery programme (LRP)

- The fact-finding report shows that 80.49%(524) of students feel lost in education, as they have lost their learning over the last two years, whereas 8.44% (55) of students sometimes feel lost. If students feel lost in their education, how long they can continue is a big question for all concerned.
- 62.1% of students said that they are facing difficulties in their current curriculum because they aren't able to link it with their previous year's curriculum
- The fact-finding reveals that even if the schools have opened in the last seven months, there was no student assessment conducted to know the students' learning outcomes as per their standards.
- The report revealed that Chhattisgarh government has no LRP program in place, which will force children to be at the periphery of education. Therefore, it will be tough for the students to recover from the learning losses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Right to Education (RTE) Norms

The Right to Education Act lays down norms and standards relating to Pupil-Teacher-Ratios (number of children per teacher), classrooms, separate toilets for girls and boys, drinking water facilities, number of school working days, working hours of teachers, etc. Each and every elementary school (Primary school & Upper Primary School) in India has to comply with norms to maintain a minimum standard set by the Right to Education Act. Following are the study findings on the status of RTE norm compliance in the surveyed areas in Chhattisgarh:

- The fact-finding Report revealed that 27.52%(101) of schools are short of 1 teacher compared to the number of sanctioned posts in their school. The lack of adequate school teachers enormously affects education in Chhattisgarh. Similarly, 25.88% (95), 19.07%(70), & 7.90%(29) of schools are short of 2,3 and 4 teachers, respectively.
- Every school must have at least the same number of classrooms as the number of classes. Common classrooms for multiple classes impact the learning outcome on a large scale. The fact-finding Report uncloaks that 16.89%(62) of schools are short of 1 classroom compared to the number of classes in the school. Similarly, 29.97% (110) and 11.17%(41) of schools are short of 2,3,& 4 classrooms respectively.
- The fact-finding report disclosed that 14.71%(54) of schools don't have separate toilets for boys and girls In almost all the offices and institutions, we can find separate toilets for males and females then, why it is not there in schools even after 13 years of the implementation of the RTE, and this is the primary need for the students? The fact-finding report also explored the fact that 24. 52%(90) of toilets in schools are lacking water facilities. As per the statement given by parents, there is no use of toilets without proper water facilities.

- As per the fact-finding data, 11.71%(43) aren't using the toilets in the school either because of cleanness or damaged structures. Then how can we expect sanitation awareness from the children?
- The fact-finding report reveals that 6.26%(23) of toilets in schools are fully damaged, whereas the partial damage case is 18.80%(69). Villagers pointed out that many times, the existing toilets are fully or partially damaged. So one can assume how sanitation practice is going on in the schools.
- The fact-finding report discovers that 12.26%(45) of schools don't have playgrounds. Playground serves a vital role in the physical and mental health of students. SMC members and parents are seriously concerned about the lack of playgrounds.
- The fact-finding report shows that 70.02%(257) of schools need repairing. Parents' statement also implies that schools are struggling with delay in repairing.
- RTE act mentioned the special provisions for special cases, but as per the fact-finding report, 34.33%(126) of schools don't have any special provision for the disabled.
- A complaint lodging system is a sign of transparency and democracy, but the fact-finding report reveals that 67.02%(246) schools don't have to complain about lodging mechanisms in schools for the disabled.

Dropout of children

The last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have been challenging for all of us, and children were the worst victim of it. The fear of getting infected and the lockdowns meant that educational institutions, including schools and colleges, remained shut for regular classes for the better of 2020 and 2021. Though classes switched to online mode, only a few portions of these children could get access to it. The reason was that neither they had a digital device to access online education nor the facility of internet connection in their areas which deprived them of learning in online mode. As a fallout, many children dropped out of school since they remained out of education for a prolonged period. Following are the study findings on the dropout of children from school in the surveyed areas in Chhattisgarh:

- The fact-finding report revealed that out of the 101 dropout cases, 32.67% belong to ST, whereas 26.73%, 38.61% & 1.98% are from SC, OBC, and General categories, respectively.
- The significant reasons for dropout found from the fact-finding are 32.67% said because they are engaged in household work. 7.92%, 14.85%, 7.92%, & 36.63% have told their dropout reasons as because of difficulties in the curriculum, other logic, parents aren't interested, engaged in labor work, & either parent has migrated or not interested respectively.
- Teachers counseling for rejoining the school- The fact-finding report says that in the case of 8.9% of students, not any of the teachers came and asked them to go back to school, and the rest, 67.32% have shared the fact that though the teachers have come to them and asked them to rejoin the school, they didn't go.

- The fact-finding also found that 18.81% of the parents didn't even try to send their children back to school. There were no efforts from the SMC, said 26.73% of the respondents, to bring back dropout students.
- The fact-finding revealed that 77.22% of students had no opportunity to read, nor was there any scope for them to engage in reading activities because of different issues during the COVID-19 pandemic

Migration and its impact on children's education

India's 2011 Census recorded 453 million internal migrants in India, forming a significant 37% of the total population. One in every five migrants is a child, resulting in an estimated 92.95 million migrant children.

Children whose parents migrate accompany them to work sites or stay back in the source village left behind without one or both parents. In addition, the generally fixed nature of the schooling system makes it difficult for children who accompany their parents to continue their education during their movement to and from work sites and stay therein. Following are the study findings on migration and its impact on children's education in the surveyed areas in Chhattisgarh:

- Out of a total of 96 students who participated in the interview, 91.66% said they were temporarily migrating. 44.79% said they migrated out because of insufficient livelihood opportunities in the locality. In addition, 11.45% of the respondents said they willingly migrated out, whereas the other 42.70% said they migrated to repay the pending loan.
- Current engagement of the migrant students-57.29% have said they are helping their parents in the household work, 9.37%, 9.37% & 7.29% have said working outside, supporting their parents at the work site, and due to some other reasons, respectively.
- The fact-finding reveals that 68.75% of the parents take their children with them while migrating because no one is left in their homes to care for them. Similarly, 30.20% said they need their children's support at the worksite for more income.

Recommendations

Taking into account the issues found during the survey, a series of discussions took place with teachers, parents, SMC members, PRIs, academicians, and local education administration to address the current situation. After discussion, some broad recommendations came up, which are mentioned below:

- Students found the LRP teaching materials interesting. The material should be distributed and made accessible to all students.
- The LRP learning materials could also be prepared in tribal or local languages wherever the Multilingual Education Scheme is implemented.

- A long-term approach is required to meet the gaps created. Therefore, LRP should continue until the students achieve the class-appropriate learning output.
- The state government should arrange a monitoring mechanism for LRP in the public domain for assessment from the general public.
- A visible transparency board in the school informing the compliance status of RTE norms shall be made on the premises.
- The infrastructural requirements, such as the appointment of teachers, proper classrooms, boundary, water, and separate toilets for boys and girls, different kitchens, playgrounds, etc., need to be fulfilled urgently as per the Right to Education norms. Additionally, there is a need for more benches & chairs for students in most schools. We recommend arranging some funds for the given reason too.
- The state government may conduct Social Audit to assess the implementation of RTE.
- The parents and school management committee should be proactively engaged in the Learning Recovery Plan. More sensitization is required for the parents on the immediate need for learning recovery.
- Teachers' training is crucial for the success of any program such as LRP.
- The student's assessment results and LRP, in particular, should be communicated to parents in time.
- Community awareness is required to resolve many issues, such as the engagement of students in household work.
- Only attending school will not help children to recover from their learning loss; hence students need to spend time on their studies during off-school hours. School teachers or volunteers can facilitate the classes during those hours for faster recovery.
- PRIs need to be sensitized to RTE norms and LRP. The government should ensure the participation of PRIs in LRP implementation and fulfilling the norms of RTE.
- A shortage of teachers hampers the quality of learning imparted in school. In many areas, only 1 or 2 sikhsamitra runs the school, and not a single teacher is appointed. Hence, the appointment of the teacher is a must to run any program effectively, such as LRP.
- Teachers are engaged in many non-teaching activities affecting the learning of students. Therefore, teachers should be only entrusted with teaching and engaging with the students.
- Lack of funds at the panchayat level results in the delay in completing infrastructure building/repairs of schools. Hence adequate funds should be with the Panchayats to meet the infrastructural requirement.

About Us

Atmashakti is a right-based catalyst organization that coalesces Tribal and Dalit people for their socio-economic and political empowerment. For over a decade's consistent focus on collectivizing the community, Atmashakti has facilitated the formation of more than 23 collectives in 17 districts and 84 blocks of Odisha and Uttar Pradesh and has now started its operation in Chhattisgarh. Atmashakti closely works with Dalit Adivasi Manch in a long-term mission to bring the benefits of government programs to the poorest of the poor, focusing on the rights-based framework. Atmashakti started its work in Chhattisgarh last year in 26 villages under 4 GPs of Kasdol block in Balodabazar district. To learn more about us, please visit www.atmashaktitrust.com

Contact Us

Atmashakti Trust, 101- A, Friends Colony East, New Delhi-110065, Phone: 011 2631 1407
Email: communications@atmashaktitrust.com, Website: www.atmashaktitrust.com

Social Connect

atmashaktitrust   atmashakti.trust   Atmashakti3   https://bit.ly/2ZofIKW