



SETTLING GRIEVANCES FOR SCHOOLS

A report on the project:
**Establishing Community-Based Grievance
Redressal Mechanism under RTE**

In collaboration with

unicef 
for every child

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Foreword

Education has the potential of bringing significant benefit to individuals and societies, which go well beyond the enhanced employability of individuals and their increased access to livelihood opportunities. Education can help individuals become a responsible and active citizens as they are equipped with knowledge and the skills required to acquire new knowledge and keep learning. The socialization brought about through the school community helps individuals acquire values and attitudes conducive to living harmoniously with others, in a community and society as a whole. Education therefore is ultimately responsible for the advancement of a society.

The 86th Amendment to the Constitution has made Elementary Education a Fundamental Right of every child in the age group 6-14 years. Based on this Amendment The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act was passed in Parliament in August 2009 and came into effect on April 1, 2010. This is a landmark legislation that seeks to make fundamental changes in the system of delivering education. One of the first and most crucial challenges facing future of the Act is the establishment of an effective Grievance Redress System. Unfortunately at present a well-defined grievance redress mechanism does not exist. The Act has made local authorities the grievance redress agencies and the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) the appellate bodies at State level, but that does not suffice to establish the modalities through which violations can be dealt with. A well-defined institutional mechanism for grievance redress involves a system of registering, investigating and responding within a well-appointed time frame.

A joint initiative of UNICEF and ActionAid India took up this key task to establish community-based grievance redressal mechanisms through its intervention in 523 elementary schools in 4 blocks of Ballia and Mahrajanj districts in the state Uttar Pradesh. *Settling Grievances in Schools* is a document that seeks to present achievements of the project entitled: *Establishing Community Based Grievance Redressal Mechanism Systems by Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) System in Maharajanj and Ballia Districts of Uttar Pradesh*. The project idea was

to work at the local and State level to improve the quality of and access to education among the poorest and most marginalized communities, including Dalits, especially those belonging to the Musahar community, Denotified Tribes, Muslims, girl children and children with disability in Maharajganj and Ballia districts of Uttar Pradesh. The intervention has sought to strengthen the local communities through the Panchayats (village councils), school teachers, School Management Committees (SMCs) and duty bearers and to ensure the Right to Education Act is implemented at the local level, resulting in functional, quality and non-discriminatory schools, providing free education to children, especially girls. The project facilitated the preparation of school development plans and strengthened local governance (PRI) by establishing grievance redressal mechanisms at the Panchayat level which also helped in improving the quality of education and infrastructure in schools and its functioning.

Settling Grievances for Schools unfolds our experiences and learnings of implementing the project - the lesson that the community is the real harbinger of change at both the community level and the school level. We are confident that the success stories emerging from the models implemented and the best practices incorporated in the document will be useful to all people concerned with improving both access to and the quality of education provided in government schools across the country. The success achieved was made possible by the engagement of the SMC and the establishment of grievance redressal mechanisms at community-level and the collaboration of members of the PRI and officials of the education department at the local and State level.

On behalf of ActionAid, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who provided continuous support for the project and the preparation of this document. I would like to acknowledge with much appreciation the crucial role of Mushahar Sewa Sansthan, Maharajganj and Nav Bharatiya Nari Vikas Samiti, Ballia, our partners in implementing this project, who helped in collecting the data and information to make this document. Many thanks go to Mr. Ritwik Patra, Education Specialist UNICEF, who gave his continuous support and guidance to make this effort successful.

I acknowledge with pride the work done by the team at our Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Regional Office, and especially the project team for the *Establishing Community-Based Grievance Redressal Mechanism Systems Project*, who played a crucial role in finalizing this document. The Communications Unit helped the

publication and special thanks go to Books For Change for editing and design of this document.

Please do share your thoughts and comments on *Settling Grievances for Schools*, so we can bring more voices into the conversation on ways of making quality education accessible to all.

Sandeep Chachra

Executive Director

ActionAid India

Introduction

The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the state may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full-time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

Article 21-A and the RTE Act came into effect on 1 April 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words ‘free and compulsory’. ‘Free education’ means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. ‘Compulsory education’ casts an obligation on the appropriate government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 years age group. With this, India has moved forward to a rights based framework that casts a legal obligation on the Union and State governments to implement this fundamental right for children as enshrined in Article 21-A of the Constitution, in accordance with the provisions of the RTE Act.

The RTE Act provides:

- Right of children to free and compulsory education till the completion of elementary education in a neighborhood school.
- It clarifies that ‘compulsory education’ means the obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the 6-14 years age group. ‘Free’ means that no child shall be liable to pay any

kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.

- It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
- It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate governments, local authorities and parents in providing free and compulsory education and sharing financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.
- It lays down the norms and standards relating *inter alia* to pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days and teacher-working hours.
- It provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified PTR is maintained for each school, rather than just as an average for the state or district or block thus ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in teacher postings. It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authorities, state legislatures and Parliament and disaster relief.
- It provides for the appointment of appropriately trained teachers, that is, teachers with requisite entry and academic qualifications.
- It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers; and (e) running of schools without recognition.
- It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution and which will ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child's knowledge, potential and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centered learning.

Grievance Redressal Mechanisms under the RTE Act

One of the first and most crucial challenges for the future of the RTE Act is the establishment of an effective grievance redress system. Unfortunately, a well-defined grievance redress mechanism does not exist right now. The Act has made local authorities the grievance redress agencies and State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) as the appellate bodies at the state level.

However, this is not enough for establishing the modalities through which violations can be dealt with. A well-defined institutional mechanism for grievance redress involves a system of registering, investigating and responding within a well-appointed time frame.

To redress public grievances related to the RTE Act, the State Elementary Education Department has established RTE Grievance Redressal Cells (GRCs) at block, district and state levels and if the grievances are not redressed at the school level, the complainant can approach the block RTE GRC. If the grievances are not addressed there, the complainant can move to the district GRC and if not satisfied, the state GRC. Block Education Officers have been made appellate authorities at block level, the divisional commissioners at the district level and the state government above that.

The GRC at the block level is headed by a Block Education Officer (BEO) with the kshetriya panchayat head and inter college principal as members. People have been advised to lodge complaints with the BEO's office to get them redressed within three months. The district level cell is headed by the District Magistrate or Chief Development Officer with the district education officer and additional district education officer as members, likewise the directorate level cell is headed by a director with other members.

Establishing Community-based Grievance Redressal Mechanism

A UNICEF and ActionAid Pilot Project

Community mobilization formed the base of the project. Some of the other aspects that it covered includes

- Collaboration between SMCs and panchayats.
- The basic idea behind the project was establishing a model so that the local issues can be addressed at the panchayat or block level to bring a sustainable mechanism.
- Develop structural mechanisms for grievance redressal. This was done by bringing together community members, SMC member and panchayats in the Village Education Council.
- Involving the district administration and district and block elementary education departments in the process.

Experience from Phase 1

In the 1st phase pilot project ActionAid and UNICEF implemented the project in 95 schools of Maharajganj and Budaun district of Uttar Pradesh in partnership with local grassroot organizations in these two districts. The objective of the project was to establish a community based redressal mechanism by strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the village level in four blocks of Maharajganj and Budaun districts.

1. The first phase of the intervention enhanced opportunities among marginalized children on aspects such as public speaking and involvement of Scheduled Caste

(SC) students in classroom discussions. It also provided leadership opportunities to children.

2. Through these intervention efforts the project was able to make a difference in the discrimination faced by SC and minority students in schools.
3. Through an applied intervention strategy, ActionAid and UNICEF learned how to work in developing leadership opportunities among the discriminated and marginalized children in these two districts.
4. The project helped augment school infrastructure and basic facilities like developing boundary walls around schools, ensuring availability of drinking water and ensuring covered kitchens in the schools.
5. One achievement of the project was celebration of Muslim festivals in most of the schools.
6. A difference approach revealed that the intervention had led to a five-fold impact in the intervention areas in comparison to non-intervention areas.

The intervention was implemented among local communities at the panchayat and block levels and it worked directly at strengthening local communities' (SMCs, PRIs, teachers and duty bearers) capabilities and skills through meetings,



School Management Committee members giving an application to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate at Nichlaul Tahsil, Maharajganj district, for infrastructure improvement, teacher deputation and quality education in elementary schools

training, networking, review and exposure to different government departments. SMCs established grievance redressal mechanisms in the villages/panchayats and issues were addressed to make the structure functional with support of the BEO, DEO, SCPCR and NCPCR. Every government department was engaged at every stage to help establish grievance redressal mechanisms at the panchayat level.

In the first phase the project succeeded in making local communities functional and active in establishing grievance redressal mechanisms at the panchayat/local levels. Local communities (SMCs, PRIs and duty bearers) became more accountable in redressing the grievances at the local level. In first phase 80 applications were filed 50 per cent of which were resolved at the village and panchayat levels.

The project also worked for strengthening local communities (SMCs, teachers, PRIs and duty bearers) at the school level (primary and upper primary) in two blocks of Maharajganj and Budaun districts.

Process followed in second phase

Since major changes were noticed in four blocks of these two districts during the 1st phase of the intervention, this allowed ActionAid to propose for second phase of the intervention in these two districts.

Community Involvement in Filing Applications

Since community mobilization was the base of this project, the project personnel contacted members of the SMCs and generated awareness about RTE Act, 2009 the roles and responsibilities of SMCs. This helped identify issues at the community level and how SMC members can address the issues and do advocacy on this. Applications demanding effective implementation of the RTE Act were filed at the panchayat, block, tehsil and district levels. It was seen that 90 per cent of the grievances were resolved at the local level.

School Management Committee and Panchayat Collaboration

Collaboration between SMCs and panchayat was another focus of the project. SMC members met every month to monitor their schools on regular basis.. They also discussed the issues and visited local level authorities to resolve any grievances.

Table 1: Record of functioning of Grievance Redressal Mechanism in Maharaganj and Ballia districts

Sl. No	Type of Grievances raised	No. of Grievances raised	No. of cases solved	Grievance raised by	Place of Grievance Redressed
Infrastructure Related					
1	Boundary wall	189	89	SMC	PRI
2	Kitchen shed	35	17	SMC	BSA/PRI
3	Availability of utensils in kitchen	6	6	SMC	BSA
4	Quality dress distribution	9	7	SMC	BSA
5	Bag distribution	25	25	SMC	BSA
6	Electricity connection	65	32	SMC	BSA
7	Electricity equipment	64	32	SMC	School
8	Gate	64	27	SMC	PRI
9	Repairing of floor	107	57	SMC	PRI
10	Hand pump repairing	129	118	SMC/Parents	PRI
11	New hand pump	80	60	SMC	PRI
12	Repairing the tap	130	126	SMC	PRI
13	Playground	12	8	SMC/students	PRI
14	Playing kit	92	22	SMC	PRI/school
15	Library	39	2	SMC	BSA
16	Science lab	17	4	SMC	BSA
17	Toilet repairing	384	356	SMC/Parents	PRI/BSA
18	White wash	164	114	SMC	School
19	Sitting arrangements	86	61	SMC Students	BSA/school
School Building and its maintenance					
20	School Building/Classroom repairing	39	18	SMC	PRI
21	Playing cards/drinking etc.	4	3	SMC	Tehsil/PRI
22	Cleaning toilets	34	30	SMC	PRI
23	Encroachment in the school premises	9	6	SMC	Tehsil
24	Water logging in school	28	18	SMC	PRI
25	Leveling of ground	46	31	SMC	PRI
26	Fencing	96	54	SMC	PRI
27	Road repairing	28	17	SMC/Parents	PRI
28	Ramp	67	60	SMC	PRI
29	Plantation	109	89	SMC	PRI
Teacher deputation and regularity					
30	Teacher deputation	53	36	SMC/Parents	BSA
31	Regularity of teachers	28	23	SMC	Tehsil
32	Mid-day meal regularization	45	29	SMC	PRI

Note: BSA: Basic Shikshak Adhikari, PRI: Panchayati Raj Institution and SMC: School Management Committee.

Table 2: Impact Numbers of Establishing Community-Based Grievance Redressal Mechanism Project

Indicators	Numbers
Enrolment of out of School Children	4155
Attendance:	30%
Improving Infrastructure and Other Facilities	
Boundary wall (Repairing and construction)	57
Kitchen garden	11
Hand pump	79
RO (Reverse Osmosis)	2
New hand pump	62
Repairing taps	133
Toilets repaired	363
Electricity	207
Solar panel in school	3
Electricity equipment	80
Computers	1
Ramp	66
Kitchen shed	10
Mid-Day Meal Regularized	275
Teacher Deputation or Rationalization	
Rationalization of teachers	36
Applications registered for deputing teachers	53
Number of cases registered	1867
Number of cases solved at the local level (Panchayat/Block/Tehsil/District)	1577
Community Contribution for School	
Plantation	89
Fencing	54
Levelling of ground	31
White wash	114
Playground	8
Road repairing	17
Meena Manch	
Number of Meena Manches formed or functional	608
Community meetings' details	1369
Parents meetings' details	1587
SMC meetings details	4498

Convergence with Block and District Level Elementary Education Departments

District level convergence helped connect with the district elementary education department with CSOs, activists and SMC members, with a focus on RTE and establishing the grievance redressal mechanism. Such meetings enabled a dialogue between community members, SMCs and the district administration's functionaries which

helped create good coordination between different stakeholders for the establishment of establishing of grievance redressal mechanism at the local level.

“Tehsil Diwas” in School Grievance Redressal Mechanism

Tehsil Divas is a forum for the citizens to register their complaints. In order to track all the received complaints a complaint registration system for all the complaints received at Tehsil Divas. It has been observed that at present scenario local people used to visit various departments to seek solution of their grievances, they used to visit frequently their district offices or state offices with a hope of solution. They faced lot of problems and it takes long time to get solution for that the image of local authority getting down. In order to redress public grievances, district administrative officers organize Tehsil Diwas programs at different places across the district. With the objective of good governance Tehsil Diwas has started at district level on a particular date (every month first and third Tuesday) which can also help establishing a direct communication between ordinary citizens and officials. Grievances are tried to resolve on the same day at Tehsil level with the presence of DM/SDM or other related officials. If not within 7 days grievances need to be solved, for any complicated issues it may take 15 days. If the applicant is not satisfied with the solution then DM will do close monitor of the issue and will take necessary steps.

Tehsil divas forum was used under the community based grievance redressal mechanism project. SMC/PRI and community raised their voices at Tehsil Diwas related with education.

State Level Grievance Redressal Mechanism

The Right to Education Act holds that at the state level, the body to which grievances can be filed is either the State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) or the Right to Education Protection Authority (REPA). In Uttar Pradesh, it is the Uttar Pradesh State Commission for Protection of Child Rights that deals with issues relating to the implementation of the RTE Act.

SCPCRs are established in each state as per the provisions of the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, to protect, promote and defend child rights in each state. The Commission consists of a chairperson and six members who are well versed in child welfare. One member of the commission must be a woman. The state commission is required to submit an annual report to the state government

as well as special reports when an issue needs immediate attention. The SCPCR functions as an independent body that has powers to investigate into any case that deals with complaints relating to violation of the RTE and child rights.

The SCPCR is set up as a help line for children which is accessible through letter/telephone/SMS and which acts as the forum for aggrieved child or guardian to register complaints against violation of the rights of children under the Act, in a manner that records his/her identity but does not disclose it. Initially the complaints are registered at village level by the School Management committee to the Village Education Committee/Gram Pradhan. After the decision of the Village Education Committee the appeal goes to block level officer, Assistant Basic Shiksha Adhikari and then District level to Basic Shiksha Adhikari under section 10 for rural areas and 10-A for urban areas. All the complaints are monitored by Uttar Pradesh Basic Shiksha Parishad with prompt and transparent action on line mechanism. Under the Community Based Grievance Redressal Mechanism project, we have registered 322 cases to SCPCR from districts.

Capacity Building of PRIs and SMC members on RTE and the Grievance Redressal Mechanism

The project strengthened the capabilities of SMCs in the intervention schools. SMCs worked for the establishment of the grievance redressal mechanism at the panchayat /local level for resolving issues at the panchayat/local level. PRIs and SMCs worked together with block and districts representatives.



Training of social audit team at the Block Resource Centre, Nichlaul, Maharajganj district, before conducting social audit in schools

Improving School, Classroom and Learning Environment

The school should provide a healthy, safe and protective environment for children's emotional, physical and psychological well-being, including the classroom, playground, provision of drinking water and sanitation facilities. The school infrastructure must be accessible for all. Children should feel safe and secure especially the children with disability and children in different circumstances. School building and classroom should be cleaned, clean drinking water should be available and there should be separate and functional toilets for boys and girls, healthy and nutritious food under mid-day meal scheme, access by roads, which are free from danger and harassment, especially for girl child, from their homes to schools. There should be no discrimination against any child, with special priority should given to children from marginalized communities, so that every child feels equal and participate actively. There should not be any physical, verbal and emotional punishment in classroom. The learning environment should be conducive to child-centered learning/teaching activities and with materials that promote active, creative approaches to learn in a joyful classroom environment.

Under the *Establishing Community Based Grievance Redressal Mechanism Systems* project, advocacy on the Right to Education Act and its various provisions including providing grievance redressal mechanisms at the local level was done. Training and advocacy were also used to create awareness about the roles and responsibilities of SMC members. As a result of these efforts the following changes in the school and its learning environment have been achieved.

Subject wise study has started after the appointment of a teacher

The primary and upper primary schools in the Barvashalikram gram panchayat, Siswa block, district Maharajganj are situated in the same premises; 165 children

are enrolled in these schools which have one teacher and two anudeshaks. There was no teacher for Science and Maths. With ActionAid, UNICEF and Musahar Seva Sansthan's (MSS) support, a meeting was organized among SMC members, school teachers and PRI members. They discussed the issue of lack of teachers along with the roles and responsibilities of SMCs, teachers and PRI members. SMC and PRI members were invited for a training program on strengthening the grievance redressal mechanism. Following which, SMC members filed an application for the appointment of a teacher in the panchayat; the application was also given to the Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA). As a result, BSA appointed a teacher for Maths.

After a long struggle by SMC members, MDM has been restarted in school

MDM was not being cooked in the primary school in village Fatakdauna, gram panchayat Madhvaliya, block Siswa, district Maharajganj since December last year. Many applications were filed from the block to the district level by SMC members but nothing happened. The gram pradhan asked school teachers to enroll the maximum number of children who were denied MDM. The SMC members met the gram pradhan and asked him to make provisions for cooking MDM in the school. SMC members told the



Inauguration of enrolment camp by Gram Pradhan in Tendua village, Siswa, Ballia district

gram pradhan that MDM was the children's right and the expenditure for this was borne by the government, therefore he did not have the right to stop cooking MDM in the school. The gram pradhan was also told by SMC members and other villagers that if he did not get MDM food regularised in the school then they would boycott him for the post of gram pradhan. Following this warning the gram pradhan made arrangements for cooking MDM in the school; cooking started on 25 July 2017.

Enrolment has increased after awareness rally

There are 145 children enrolled in the upper primary school in village Sohta, gram panchayat Basdila, block Siswa, district Maharajganj. An awareness rally on the importance of education was organized by MSS and meetings were held with SMC members, parents and school teachers. In the meeting the villagers were told that government school had been made for their children and that they were being exploited by the private school in terms of expenditure on books, dresses, ties and belts. The teachers of private school were not more educated than government school teachers. The villagers were also made aware of the importance of education. As a result of all this six children in Class 6 and three children in Class 7 shifted from the private school to the government school (See Box: Shift From Private to Government Schools).



An enrolment camp to increase enrolment ratio in elementary schools of the primary school and upper primary school of Banjari Patti, Nichloul, Maharajganj district.

A total of 1149 children shifted from private schools back to government schools - 658 girls and 491 boys. The table below reflects the district wise distribution of enrolled children.

Sl. No	District	Enrolment		
		Girls	Boys	Total
1	Maharajganj	549	412	961
2	Ballia	109	79	188
Total		658	491	1149

SMC builds approach road to the school with the help of children

The primary school in village Banjari Patti, gram panchayat Girhiya which is approximately 12 km from the block headquarter in Nichlaul, district Maharajganj had a boundary wall, toilet and approach road which were in a very bad condition. In addition, cleanliness in the school was another major issue. In the rainy season students faced a major problem as there was no road for the students to reach the school as all the approach roads got inundated. SMC members filed an application with the gram panchayat for construction of an approach road to the school. The gram pradhan took action and got the road constructed within months. The application was filed by SMC members under the leadership of the president Rajesh Kumar. The toilet and school premise are also being cleaned regularly. The attendance has increased and even more importantly, SMC member are monitoring the school on a regular basis.

Neha moved from the private school to the government school

Neha, 15, from village Laxmikhur, block Nichlaul, district Maharajganj was studying in a private school in Nepal. Neha's parents participated in a meeting organized by MSS and learnt about the qualified teacher in the government school and also about facilities such as a school dress and game material being provided to children. Neha along with others moved to the government school. Earlier there were only 14 to 15 children in the government school but thanks to the awareness that was generated now there are 42 children in the government school.

School infrastructure improved

The upper primary and primary school in gram panchayat Badhaipurva, block Nichalual, district Maharajganj are located in the same premises. The boundary wall of the school was broken as were the gate, toilet, approach road to the school and the hand pump. SMC president Sirmala Devi and members Kalawati Devi and Sumitra Devi prepared an application for improving the school infrastructure and gave it to the gram pradhan. As a result the hand pump, toilet, boundary wall, boundary wall gate and approach road to the school have been repaired.

SMC president emerges as an active leader

Maan Singh, 30, is president of the primary school, Shitlapur SMC. In Shitlapur gram panchayat the primary and upper primary schools are located in the same premises approximately 12 km from block Nichlaul, district Maharajganj. The school toilet and boundary wall were broken, there were no mattresses available and the school did not open on time. The president of SMC, Man Singh and SMC member Rajesh filed applications from the gram panchayat to tehsil and district levels on repairing this infrastructure. The toilet has been renovated as have the boundary wall and gate. Mattresses have been arranged for the children and the school opens on time.



School Management Committee federation members giving an application to the District Development Officer of Maharajganj district demanding for infrastructure development, teacher deputation and quality education in elementary schools

Drinking water ensured for children

The upper primary school in gram panchayat Chatiya, block Nichalual, district Maharajganj did not have proper drinking water facilities. There was only one hand pump which did not work properly. SMC members raised this issue and prepared an application for reboring the handpump. The application was given to the gram pradhan with a copy to BSA. The hand pump has now been repaired.

Gram Panchayat constructed a toilet in a school

Primary school Rudrapur, gram panchayat Pipra Bazar, block Siswa, district Maharajganj did not have a toilet. Many of the 64 girls enrolled in the school did not attend classes regularly because there was no toilet. A MSS staff member told the SMC members that the gram pradhan was responsible for constructing the toilet. He motivated the SMC members to file an application for a toilet. With a new toilet attendance has improved.

Clean utensils ensured in school

There are 103 children enrolled in primary school Naturi, gram panchayat Karmahi, block Siswa, district Maharajganj. These children got their own plates MDM as the cook did not clean the school's plates properly as a result of which they fell ill. The SMC decided that the plates will be cleaned by surf every day in the presence of a school teacher, SMC members and children.

Activation of SMC has improved facilities

The primary school in village Chanda, gram panchayat Chanda Gularbhar did not have a proper playground and in the rainy season it got waterlogged, the toilet was not cleaned and there were no plates for MDM or mattresses. More importantly, teachers were not coming to the school regularly. SMC members decided to monitor the school to ensure teacher attendance. They also prepared an application and gave it to the gram pradhan who got the school plates for MDM, got the toilet repaired, ensured mattresses for the children and also got the playground leveled. The activation of the SMC ensured these improved facilities.



Community meeting with parents on RTE at Chakia, block, Ballia



School Development Plan formation at Paraggpura, Nichloul, Maharajganj district.

Efforts by SMC have improved school facilities

The primary school in Chakiya, gram panchayat Majhauwa, block Siyar, district Ballia had a broken boundary wall, no kitchen shed for cooking MDM and no proper cleaning of the toilet because of which attendance was very low. NBNVS staff members held discussions with school teachers on these issues and they decided to call the gram pradhan for a meeting and discussing these issues with him.

Approach road to school has increased attendance

Approach road and boundary wall for the primary school in Malera, block Siyar, district Ballia were major issues faced by the school. The road got inundated and water logged in the rainy season and so children could not reach the school. The broken boundary wall meant that stray animals came into the school premises. The school head master had asked the gram pradhan to resolve these issues but nothing had happened. NBNVS staff members had a discussion with the school headmaster and he and SMC members decided to meet the gram pradhan who was asked to attend the SMC meeting. However, two months after the meeting nothing was done so the SMC members gave a written application to the gram pradhan.

Toilet constructed and hand pump installed

Toilet and drinking water facilities were main issues of the upper primary school, Sarya Dihubhagat, block Siyar, district Ballia. NBNVS staff members with the support of SMC members organized an open meeting for which the gram pradhan was also invited. Written applications were also given to the gram pradhan and BSA. The gram pradhan got the hand pump installed and BSA got the toilet constructed.

Appointment of Teacher has improved the quality of Education

The primary school in gram panchayat Chawkiyanmod, block Siyar, district Ballia had only one teacher whereas for the 197 children enrolled in the school because of which the children were not getting quality education. The headmaster had approached the education department to appoint teachers but had failed. A letter was written to the BSA but when no teacher was appointed even after two months the headmaster again raised the issue in the SMC meeting and an application was filed at the tehsil divas with the SDM and after 20 days a Shiksha Mitra was appointed in the school but this did not fulfill the requirements of a teacher as it had a large number of enrolled



School Development Plan formation at Upper Primary School Medi Ram Chandrehi, Nichlaul, Maharajganj district

children. Therefore, an application for appointment of a teacher was submitted to the BSA and a new teacher was appointed in the school. Currently, there are three teachers in the school.

School approach road and toilet constructed

The primary school in Piprauli Bada Gaun, block Siyar, district Ballia, had a dysfunctional toilet for boys. The school also did not have a proper approach road. It had a mud road which got inundated in the rainy season. An application was filed with the gram pradhan for construction of a toilet and approach road.

Mattresses, benches and tables arranged for children

The girl's primary school Banhara, block Siyar, district Ballia did not have mattresses, benches and tables for students who sat on the floor. The issue was raised by parents many times. NBNVS got to know about this and SMC members were motivated to ask the headmaster to purchase these things but he wanted the BSA to provide the funds. An application was filed with the BSA and he released the funds.

Separate toilets for girls and boys constructed

The primary school in Bhati, block Navanagar, district Ballia did not have toilets for girls and boys. SMC members filed an application with the gram pradhan for separate toilets but he did not take any action and hence SMC members filed an application with the BSA and the block development officer. Within a week the toilets were constructed.

SMC efforts improve school facilities

The boundary wall of the primary school in Chakiya, gram panchayat Majhauwa, block Siyar, district Ballia was broken. It also had no kitchen shed for cooking MDM and the toilet was not cleaned due to which attendance was very low. NBNVS staff members encouraged SMC members to invite the gram pradhan for a meeting. He took action and all issues have been resolved.

SMCs' efforts improve infrastructure

Lack of a gate in the boundary wall in primary school Sisota, block Siyar, district Ballia meant that stray animals came inside the school; besides scaring the children they also dirtied the premises. NBNVS staff members discussed these issues with SMC members after which they filed an application with the gram panchayat, pradhan and BSA. After a few months the gate was constructed.



New toilet constructed at Bhati primary school with the joint effort of the gram pradhan and SMC members, Ballia



School Development Plan formation in Primary School Mohammadpur Chatiya, Nichloul, Maharajganj district



Community meeting with parents on Right To Education at Chakia, Siyar Ballia

The leveled playground resolved water logging problem

Water logging was a major problem for primary school Sisotar, block Siyar, district Ballia. The playground was not level and the children could also not play in it. An application was given to the gram pradhan but when no action was taken for two months they filed application with the BDO and ABSA who instructed the gram pradhan to level the ground.

Boundary wall constructed

The boundary wall of the girl's upper primary school in Sisauta had collapsed due to which stray animals came inside the school hampering classes. An application was filed with the BSA and action was taken.



School Management Committee members monitoring the construction of a boundary wall at Mansa Chapar, Siswa block Mahrajanj district

Conclusions and Recommendations

The experience of implementing the *Establishing Community Based Grievance Redressal Mechanism Systems* project has demonstrated that it is the community which is the real harbinger of change at both the community level and school level. The community has a significant role in bringing out visible and invisible changes. The intervention from its very outset relied on community-based structures to raise awareness, mobilise people and redress grievances through consistent advocacy and convergences. Bringing the key stakeholders together and bridging the gaps between school and Panchayat strategically worked in tandem to foster the changes and achieve the outcomes.

More significantly, the community and Panchayat partnership relate to the participation of children, families and communities in the management of their local school. This enhanced the dynamic relationship and two-way participation so that schools became community-supported resource centres, and families and communities took up responsibility for mobilising resources for school improvement and played an active role in management. The project demonstrated that communities themselves can play an active part in auditing their schools, identifying building blocks and gaps, and help in improving equity and quality for all children irrespective of any caste and religious affiliations.

The project achieved its desired and designed outcomes in a limited duration and in limited schools. Based on persistent and consistent interventions at the grass root level, key recommendations mentioned below can be foregrounded.

Recommendations for the education department and schools

1. Based on previous experiences and interventions, it is hereby recommended that the State Elementary Education Department should upscale the community-based grievance redressal model in all the elementary schools of the state. The community and the Panchayat may play the key role in proper functioning

of schools leading to an improved school, classroom and learning environment. The State Elementary Education Department may set up a monitoring body and provide support in developing this model at divisional levels.

2. The Community Based Grievance Redressal Mechanism model should be up scaled in all the districts of Uttar Pradesh through which the grievances can be easily addressed and prompt action for its quick solution can be taken. Local authorities such as the Panchayat should take accountability for local level grievance redressal. In this intervention we strengthened SMC and PRI to understand their roles for the better implementation of RTE act in schools. This brings a great result and PRI played important role to redress grievances related with education in schools.
3. The project has enhanced the opportunity among marginalised students across various aspects. Through the intervention efforts we are able make difference in discrimination issues among the SCs and minorities students in schools which is a good learning for ActionAid and Unicef including local partner organisation. Progress was made in addressing discrimination against Dalit and Musahar students in schools. It has showed a notable result in eliminating discriminatory practices among marginalized students such as public speaking and involvement of SCs student in classroom discussions and huge leadership opportunity. This step helps them to boost up their confidence and also to perform well. It has been observed that the SC/ST/Minority students are no longer sitting at the back of classroom and also they are taking part in classroom discussions.
4. Infrastructural facilities like boundary walls around the school, availability of drinking water and ensuring the covered kitchen in the school, ensuring functional toilets for boys and girls in school, ramps and toilets for specially-abled students have been constructed in the project schools to develop schools as child friendly spaces. This initiative helped the students from marginalized community to attend school on a regular basis which has had positive impact in the form of increased attendance, retention in schools when compared with schools not part of the project intervention.
5. The results also show that there is a need for special focus on some indicators like schools having libraries, providing leadership opportunities to SC children, overall reduction in discriminatory practices against Muslim children and paying more attention to the requirements of specially-abled children.
6. Panchayats and SMC have played a vital role in our project schools which has led to a great impact. Panchayat and SMC jointly work to identify the local

issues related with education. Capacity building of SMC and PRI is still needed to monitor the violation of RTE Act in schools. Throughout this this intervention 1718 cases have been resolved at the Panchayat/block level.

7. Panchayat being the primary unit of Grievance Redressal should be strengthened on the lines of RTE Act 2009, so that with collaboration of School Management Committee it is able to not only monitor the functionality of school but also be able to redress the school related grievances at local level and within stipulated time period.

Recommendations for interventions at the community level

Bringing changes at community level also requires breaking social barriers too. Households belonging to the most disadvantaged sections must be taken in to account while designing plans to an improved school, classroom and learning environment. There are major constraints being faced at family and community level which inhibit the participation at large of households belonging to disadvantaged sections. Strategies to engage the community members and key persons from excluded groups should be adopted to improve the enrolment, attendance and retention of the children.

In order to accomplish this;

- Community based structures should be organised to deal with the instances of discrimination based on caste, religion and sex;
- The key persons from community should be identified and enlisted who can promote the education of marginalised communities;
- Youth volunteers should be built to address the system of monitoring the participation of children from disadvantaged groups;
- Involving the participation of community resource persons in providing academic support to children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- The community should be encouraged to file school related grievances in Tehsil Diwas and timely redressal of filed cases should be ensured;
- The community should conduct and facilitate the social audit of schools thus ensuring the participation, accountability and transparency related to school activities;
- The community and Panchayat should prepare the School Development Plan with the support of teachers.

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