

BEACON RAYS

A STUDY ON QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS



“WHAT IS REALLY NEEDED TO MAKE DEMOCRACY
FUNCTION IS NOT KNOWLEDGE OF FACTS, BUT
RIGHT EDUCATION.”

MAHATMA GANDHI

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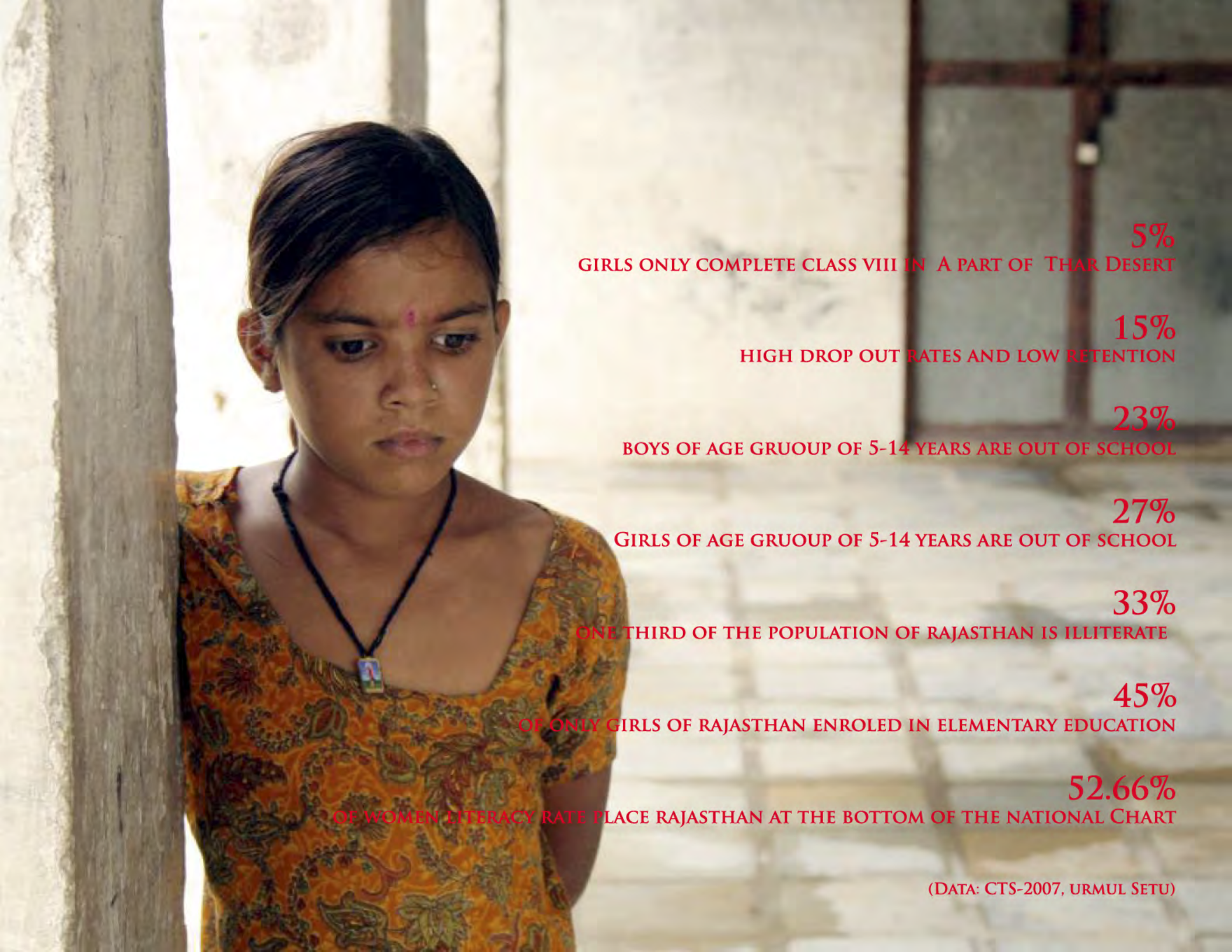
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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

BM	BAL MANCH
BEEO	BLOCK ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OFFICER
BRCF	BLOCK RECOURSE CENTRE FACILITATOR
CBO	COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATION
CTS	CHILD TRACKING SURVEY
DIET	DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
DEEO	DISTRICT ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OFFICER
ECCD	EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT
IEC	INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION
ICDS	INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCHEME
KPM	KISHORI PRERNA MANCH
KGBV	KASTURBA GANDHI BALIKA VIDALAYA
LWF	LEARN WITHOUT FEAR
PRI	PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS
PU	PROGRAMME UNIT
SMC	SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SDMC	SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SSA	SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAAN
TLM	TEACHING LEARNING MATERIAL
VEC	VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEE



5%

GIRLS ONLY COMPLETE CLASS VIII IN A PART OF THAR DESERT

15%

HIGH DROP OUT RATES AND LOW RETENTION

23%

BOYS OF AGE GRUOUP OF 5-14 YEARS ARE OUT OF SCHOOL

27%

GIRLS OF AGE GRUOUP OF 5-14 YEARS ARE OUT OF SCHOOL

33%

ONE THIRD OF THE POPULATION OF RAJASTHAN IS ILLITERATE

45%

OF ONLY GIRLS OF RAJASTHAN ENROLED IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

52.66%

OF WOMEN LITERACY RATE PLACE RAJASTHAN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE NATIONAL CHART

(DATA: CTS-2007, URMUL SETU)

Picking effort to end the slacks

7.16 LAKH GIRLS ARE OUT OF SCHOOL.

4.14 LAKH GIRLS HAVE NEVER BEEN TO SCHOOL.

12.1 LAKH CHILDREN ARE OUT OF SCHOOL.

33%, i.e. one-third of the population of Rajasthan is illiterate, even today. The women's literacy rate of 52.66% places Rajasthan at the bottom of the national chart. The gross enrolment ratio at the elementary level is 115.63%. The percentage of girls in total enrolment is 45%. While there are evidences that gender-gaps are closing at the primary level, the gender-gaps at the upper primary level continue to pose a challenge. Besides inclusion of children from the marginalized community is still limited.

In the last two decades, Rajasthan has seen major growth in the numbers of schools enrolments increasing. The government along with a thrust from the civil society has been making efforts to improve accessibility to schools, to ensure all children, despite caste class or other barriers reach school. However, the learning levels have been reported to be very low with 50 % children in grades II-V not being able to read even grade I level books. The primary schools more or less meet the norms of reach within 1 kilometre radius of habitation, but the upper primary and higher secondary schools still remain difficult to reach and

access. The quality of teachers and their commitment is under public scrutiny. The quality of teaching-learning material is either not present at all or is not sufficient and in accord to all grades. Amidst this, children's retention is at its lowest and corresponds directly to their interest and involvement in school.

However, the picture is not all dismal. With the implementation of the RTE Act and the multi-pronged spread effort in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan and the department of education, government of Rajasthan, have been showing in some much needed promises for change. More schools, infrastructure and basic facilities are being provided. Inclusive learning for children with marginalised backgrounds and children with disabilities is brought into place. More teaching-learning material and larger number of books have been provisioned for all government schools. The number of teachers and their exhaustive trainings are being conducted. These changes at the policy levels are quicker than their counter implementation all across on the ground. This creates a gap and the children suffer.

The community's attitude is fast changing. People, especially the young adults – now parents – more concerned with the facilities of education available for the children. They understand the necessity of education better and are forthcoming in taking ownership towards the functioning of the schools. However, this phenomenon is no universal and there is still seen a slack in the perception of the community towards education. This, however, needs constant external fortification with thrusts of awareness and understanding.

Urmul Setu has been making one such effort in the region of the Desert. It has been strengthening and monitoring the functioning and quality of education in the Bikaner district. This study aims to understand the programme, its interventions, and impact on the quality of education, its accessibility and its further absorption and adoption in the society.

As per Child Tracking Survey, 2007, Urmul Setu



1. Patriarchy: a challenge in girl education, 2. Changing attitude

Sketch of Rami Bai Bigga, A community member of urmul work area represent the attitude of community's now due to awareness of importance of girls education in society

Education and its Challenges



To understand the programme, its course, its design, and its process and therefore, to accord its impact, it is necessary to understand Education and its challenges given the background of the region. Rajasthan is amongst the lowest in literacy in the country and the western region of Rajasthan – that corresponds as the Desert – is amongst the lowest in the state. The society, rooted

deeply into feudalism and patriarchy, has been amongst the slowest in its adoption of mainstream education (especially in the rural and remote areas). Formal education, for a long time, had not been considered an important aspect of living and lifestyle. Education for girls was not even the slightest of consideration while for boys it was a matter of alternate 'means to livelihood'.

The following enlists a few of the challenges that arrest the pace and expansion of education in the region:

- 23 % boys and 27 % girls in the age group of 5–14 years are out of school according to the Child Tracking survey conducted by Urmul Setu.
- Low retention and drop out rates are as high as 15% (Baseline 2009–10 (Annexure 2).
- Only 28% girls are enrolled in primary schools
- 5% girls enrolled in Class VIII
- Poor learning levels of children.
- Seasonal migration is High. Children move with their parents to Dhanis twice a year (at least) for periods extending to 3–4 months, affecting the course of studies deeply and in many cases cause dropouts (especially in case of girls).
- Presence of full-fledged government primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary schools emerged as the most pressing need (educational needs assessment study)
- The distances of schools, (especially upper primary, secondary and higher secondary) at huge (sometimes as high as 15 kilometres) making it impossible for children to commute to school.
- Girls drop out of Higher education largely due to the distance to be travelled everyday to school.

- School environment is not child friendly
- The infrastructure at schools is inadequate. Facilities for teaching science, English, mathematics in higher classes not available, facilities for toilets, drinking water, electricity is very poor;
- Schools lack playgrounds and play materials.
- The number of books available to children (other than the prescribed curriculum) is extremely limited. The concept of Library is non-existent.
- In the absence of female role models, very few female teachers, education for girls is seen to have no significance in her roles as an adult.
- Poor teacher–child ratio, absence of child appropriate pedagogy, high teacher absenteeism, multi–grade classes; Lack of trained teachers; corporal punishment induces fear which in turn affects attendance of the child and learning (study conducted by Plan in 2006)
- Poor accountability of the school and the teachers to the community
- Poor coordination between the Panchayat and the schools due to dysfunctional Village Education Committees/School Management Committees;
- Poor coordination between ICDS centres and schools. It hinders smooth transition of children from preschool to school



Response?

These challenges, mentioned afore, are being addressed at been multi-levels and in a multi-dimensional approach. The scenario has been changing and changing rather rapidly. More boys and a substantive number of girls are being educated. Spaces for gender equality are gradually opening up. The newer generation understands the importance and need for education. Given the backdrop of the rapid change in markets and its processes, the infiltration of technology—like mobile and television, and the growing government efforts in primary and basic amenities, education has gained momentum and is rapidly being adopted.

There have been multiple responses to the address the challenges faced in the sphere of Education, its expansion and adoption in the region.

Right to Education

The Government of India is making vital changes in the sphere of education. It understands the importance of education, most importantly the quality of education to be provided to each child. To achieve the pledged millennium development goal of achieving elementary education, in 2009 Act Right to Education was passed in the parliament, ensuring each child is guaranteed education.

The Act guarantees free, compulsory and inclusive elementary education, community participation and accountability, school accessibility and all basic facilities. It focuses on the continuation and retention of dropouts and has special arrangements to support their education, especially for girls.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan

SSA is an Indian Government programme aimed at the universalization of elementary education "in a time bound manner". It began in 2001 with an aim of education for all. The key objectives of the programme are:

- Open new schools in areas, which do not have them and to expand existing school infrastructures and maintenance.
- Address inadequate teacher numbers, and provide training a development for existing teachers
- Provide quality elementary education including life skills with a



special focus on the education of girls and children with special needs as well as computer education.

- SSA has been working to improve both, accessibility to school as well as the quality of education.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas:

The KGBVs have been introduced as a special intervention to address the issue of girls' education and drop out. It has been designed to bridge the gaps in education of girls, especially those girls who are dropouts or those who have never been to school. These primarily address these recurring issues in the rural, marginalised and deprived communities.

The KGBVs are residential bridge schools, where in the girls are enrolled to provide age appropriate education till class eight (upper primary education). Its role is to prepare the girls to school till class eight and then motivate them to continue with higher education; to ensure girls get an opportunity to understand the chances education can enable for them.

These interventions are elaborate and carefully designed to address major challenges in education. However, some of these responses are still in their initial stages of implementation while some are centralised homogenous schemes of the government being channelized down into the region. The schemes are more or less operating in silos and do not address some unique features specific to region, class, group, etc. The schemes, though carefully drafted fall short at the implementation level due to their enormity. In silos, the many responses fail to address the challenges comprehensively.



Working with the community, Urmul understands that the most essential aspect for long-term and meaningful development is the youth of the community. Witnessing the gaps in the reach and implementation centralised schemes, many interventions have been carefully designed to mould the youth in a positive direction. It has been endeavouring to strengthen the youth and build its capacity to help them make better-informed decisions and lead towards community's progress. For this, education – formal and informal – is the prime effort made by Urmul.

Urmul in collaboration with Government of Rajasthan, in 1988, took over the management of dysfunctional government schools and establish more in communities where no facility of education existed (under the Shiksha Karmi Project). These schools functioned as models and school enrolment improved significantly and approximately, 9000 students from 60 schools received quality primary education through these schools. Urmul had also been the implementing partner of the state level Lok Jumbish project under which comprehensive work was undertaken for primary and middle level education revival.

To promote girl's education and provide an opportunity to adolescent girls, who had never been to any school or had dropped out, Urmul designed and implemented, Girls' Education Residential camps for over 15 years. Over 15000 girls received primary education and as much as 45 % of these girls joined the mainstream education. Urmul Setu initiated and established non-formal education

centres (evening schools) at community level for those children (9-14 years) who could not attend regular schools due to various reasons like domestic, agricultural & household work. Over 3000 boys and girls were enrolled in these 125 centres and 86% of them joined the mainstream education thereafter. The schools were primarily managed and facilitated by the community.

With increasing enrolment in school and increased efforts of the government, the running of non-formal school centres has been replaced with that of strengthening the government run education



10 GM School children forum

centres and schools under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan with a rights-based approach. The special focus has shifted on quality of education – teachers, trainers, Teaching Learning Material, etc. for better education. It has been enabling direct dialogues and redressal based forum for teachers, DIETS and SDMC, Block and District Education Officers and the community to discuss

programmes and policies.

Urmul is continuing with its efforts at organizing village education committees and building their capacity to ensure quality education for all children. It ensures active community participation towards children's issues and rights. Children's Manch or forum at the village level, advocates directly with the duty bearers, for better education. Urmul's objective is to bridge the gaps in the larger picture. It aims at enabling a space for dialogue to interject the two ends – community and the service.



Model Schools :Urmul Setu's role, involvement and initiation

A school is a place where an environment conduces children to exercise their imagination build on their capabilities, hone their strengths and channelize their weakness. Here, a child learns and prepares for a better future for him/herself and the community s/he belongs to. A school promotes and exercises no biases, be it of gender, class, caste or simply marks of the student. It is a place where a child learns to make, maintain and cherish relationships with his/her peers, elders, teachers, and parents. A school provides

each child the right to education, to learn and to discover and develop. Ensuring that every child has the right to school is the motto at Urmul. It makes efforts to safeguard each child's right and ensures his/her opportunity to receive quality education. In its long association with the community and various in depth studies at the ground level brought afore the fact that schools, unfortunately do not (are unable to) provide for the needs of the students. The reasons for this varied from school to school and from place to place.



- Each village and its school is unique and has specific problems unique to it.
- Every parent wants his child to be educated for a better future.
- Girl's education has seen a considerable rise because of various efforts by Urmul, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, etc. However, there is still scope for betterment in this direction.
- Government-run schools are the only option available to education,

even today, for the poor, deprived and marginalised communities,

- Government facilities and services no longer enjoy the confidence and trust of the people in villages. People believe them to be corrupt, biased and opportunistic

Despite all the efforts with the community and the authorities, the quality of education made available in this region is very low. The education department has made no concrete revisions in policies, whatever revisions are made they are confined to paper and lack in implementation. Student-teacher ratio is still high, schools are dysfunctional due to non-availability of teachers; sanitary conditions remain poor with no separate toilets for girls. On the other hand, the community though now more open, still is sceptical of education, girl's education in particular. Urmul is continuing with its

efforts at organizing village education committees and building their capacity to ensure quality education for all children.

With an understanding of this, Urmul has been making efforts in direction towards developing model schools of the existing and new government schools. Under the programme, Urmul will adopt 60 government primary schools to facilitate and ensure an environment to learning with basic infrastructure and facilities is made available. Since 2008, Urmul has been working on setting up of model schools in the block of Lunkaransar in Bikaner district and Sardarshehar block of Churu district. It has been mapping schools through a baseline survey. Understanding in depth the current situation and devising a plan appropriate to suit the specifications of each selected school. It acknowledges that quality education is dependent on the interaction amongst the three stakeholders – School teachers, students and community. Basing on this, it has strategized the criteria of the programme:

- Benchmarking the school, its academia and its facilities against a self-developed evaluation scale
- Trainings for capacity building for monitoring and evaluation of the community
- Regular Meetings and workshop for the capacity building of Teachers.
- Children's Forum, Seminars, workshops and trainings for children
- Devising a school welfare plan with children and teachers
- Linkages and working in cooperation with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan and department of education

Approaches

The Programme for education will focus on ensuring that all children in 6–16 years of age in programme areas are enrolled in schools and complete 10 years of education. Urmul looks to mobilise communities to map 'out of school' and 'dropout' children in their village and facilitate their enrolment in the schools. The communities will be geared to undertake the following:

1. Monitor the enrolment and regular attendance of children in schools.
2. Dialogue with parents not sending their children to school.
3. Undertake steps in their capacity to support enrolment and regular attendance of children, and
4. Address any factors that are leading to social exclusion, through community engagement and mobilisation.

Key Indicators

- Schools with functional SMCs
- Number of Schools with a School Development Plan
- Number of children receiving scholarships and provisions as per schemes of the government (gender, caste and ethnicity disaggregated information)
- Numbers of teachers who monitor the performance of students in school



Strategy

School Environment

The environment at the school needs to be child-friendly only then will the children be interested in attending school. The learning experiences should be positive and inviting. The children need to feel comfortable at school and there must not exist any fear, aversion or reluctance of any sort in the mind of the child towards school. It is extremely necessary to sensitize the teachers and ensure they adapt and adopt child-friendly policy. All teaching learning material should be in accord with this. Co-curricular activities should be incorporated in school, like library, sports, planting trees, etc. that inculcate values in the children at the same time enhance their experience and learning. The physical environment should also be conducive to learning. The place should be hygienic, neat and clean. All basic facilities, like drinking water and clean toilets should be available.

Advocacy for Reform

Advocacy of the RTE, its provisions, raising awareness and clearing misconceptions is primary criteria of the programme. Advocacy at four levels is important. The programme will continue to advocate with

- 1) Authorities and Office Bearers
- 2) School Management Committee



- 3) Community and most importantly,
- 4) children.

Various campaigns are carefully thought of and designed to suit each section and its various sub-sections. Combinations of these campaigns are organised to create a platform for the interaction of the various stakeholders.

Strengthening SMCs

SMCs and its importance is strongly recognised and therefore various activities are oriented towards the strengthening of SMC to build in stronger accountability at the levels involved – the community, the school management and the Panchayat members.

Adapting SIP Framework

Government schools are set along the Strategic Implementation Plan framework. These schools are used to demonstrate the do-ability and impact of recommended approaches to the government and viability for replication at scale. These schools specifically work towards reaching the excluded groups, i.e. girls and the marginalised. **Urmul has been making efforts to draw visually challenged children to schools for inclusive education. A specially appointed Braille instructor supplements the child's weak areas and brings him/her at par with others.**

Foundation years –integrating ICDS

ECCD is approached as a programme for holistic development of children under the age of six years. Working closely with the ICDS is essential for improving the foundation years of the child, especially school readiness component. Community will be sensitized through IEC in importance of early childhood education and will be encouraged to send children to the Anganwadis. 25 model Anganwadis (new Anganwadis adopted) to strengthen the school readiness component through teacher training in child friendly pedagogy and use of creative TLMs.

Children's clubs and forums

Children's clubs are strengthened to bring issues of quality education to the forefront during formal and informal interface with community and other duty bearers. Social issues, which affect education, are raised and probed for pragmatic solutions. The clubs focus primarily on – eliminating child marriage, child protection/safe schools and quality education.



“Environment is our responsibility”

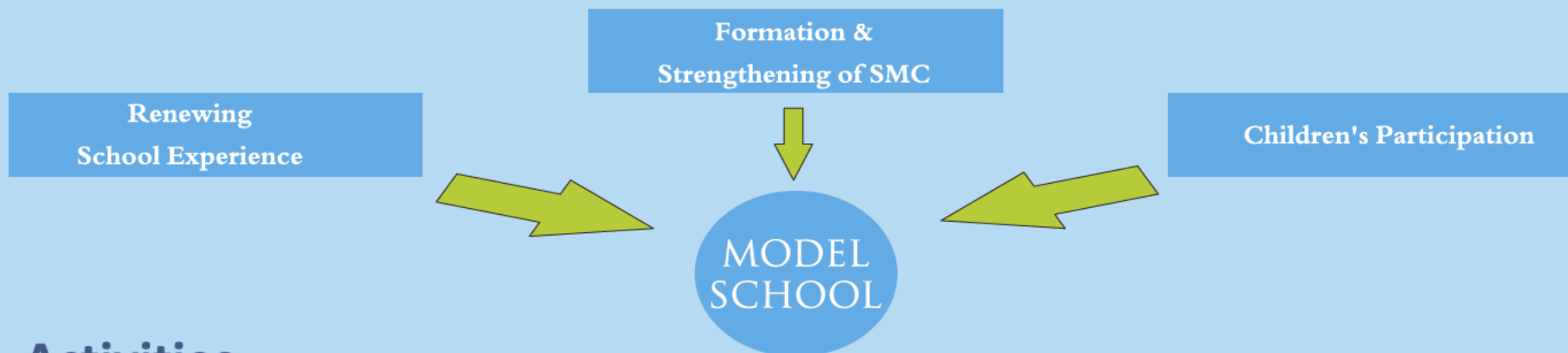
Students of Binjarwali have self-proclaimed this responsibility on to themselves. The children are very cautious and sensitive to the environment and consciously monitor all their activities to ensure no harm is caused to 'their' ownership. This commitment is rarely seen in adults but here the children make efforts to keep their surrounding clean, healthy and pollution-free.

Trees clustering in at close distances make Binjarwali stand out amongst the villages in the desert. This is only because the children have not only planted trees in the school but also at their own homes and village common lands. Gajanand asserting this attitudinal transition says, “After the first training on environment, we pledged that we would plant trees and always take care of them. We have kept our promise and planted trees at home and at school. We all take care of them. Now our village looks nice and green.”

Gajanand is a member of the bal manch in the village and they weekly meetings where discourses and discussions on various environment issues have a special focus. This Bal manch actively participates in all functioning of the school. The Bal manch has sub divided itself into five core committees- water, food, sanitation, environment and morning assembly- and is responsible for all activities under the core. The Bal manch also operates as a small self-help group, where all members of the group contribute a small sum (whatever they can afford or any prize money they earn) that they spend on any requirements of the school or on environment issues only. They call this their Bal Bank or children's Bank.

The SMC and Panchayat, along with the Bal Manch, regularly participate in the functioning of the school and its close monitoring. The SMC is aware of its roles and responsibilities and carries them out with much determination. It extends itself to contribute through a community-generated fund to the school. Any issue requiring immediate attention and financial assistance. Recently, the SMC had fans installed in all classrooms through this fund. The School, SMC, Panchayat, Students and the community, at large has been playing a responsible role in the functioning of the school and providing for education. With 90% regular attendance, the school is one of the better performing ones in the region.





Activities

1. Renewing School Experience

a. School level Training of Govt. teachers on TLM Books.

10 trainings were conducted at school level to provide 30 govt. school teachers with appropriate teaching techniques and build their capacity to teach subjects like English, Maths and science in easy & child friendly manner. During these 2-day training, the teachers learn the teaching techniques and to prepare TLM on the mentioned subjects based on TLM books. These training help teachers to build their capacity in imparting lessons of these subjects in easy manner thereby improving the quality of teaching in govt. schools, improving learning level of children, in reducing corporal punishment & in creating child friendly environment in Model schools. These training were facilitated by competent technical agencies

b. Govt. teachers training on positive discipline

Training for Govt. teachers have been organized on positive discipline wherein, 40 govt. teachers participated. This training aimed at providing Govt. teachers with information & knowledge on issues of

positive discipline. The training included sessions on sensitizing govt. teachers on the issues concerning children & ways to manage classroom in appropriate manner without resorting to conventional methods. The training also aimed at encouraging teachers incorporate the learning in their behaviour & practice. The teachers understood the essence of positive discipline. The positive feedback of this was that most teachers began to practice the same, in turn creating child friendly atmosphere in Model Schools.

c. District level Coordination meeting with Educational Govt. Authorities & DIET officials, Participant in networking meeting of Education programme.

Under this coordination meetings have been held with 40 Govt. functionaries (DEEO, SSA, DIET Principal) & Urmul staff. These meetings aim at sharing of progress of educational activities; seek support from govt. officials in improving the quality of education in govt. schools, ensuring proper coordination among various stakeholders & duty bearers. Main focus of discussion pivots on the right to education act. It builds in a rapport with Govt. officials and thereby addressing the issues pertaining to quality education in govt. schools.

c. Block level Coordination meeting with Educational Govt. Authorities & School Head masters.

Coordination meeting of officials from govt. education department & school headmasters are conducted. These meetings provide an opportunity to the school managements to share the progress of their respective schools; put forth their issues with govt. education officials like BEEO, BRCE to improve the functioning of schools. It also analyse the current situation of schools, identify issues & try to find viable solutions through collective efforts. These meetings will greatly help in improving the project objectives.

2. Formation and Strengthening of SMCs:

a. Training of School management committee.

The training aims at building capacity of SMC members to manage and supervise the functioning of Model school activities and for them to take up relevant issues for advocacy with concerned authorities as and when required. These trainings of SMC members help them to develop their understanding on the concept of Model school, RTE, minimum standards/norms for schools, roles & responsibilities of SMC's, LWF, proper school monitoring methods, undertaking meaningful social audits, data collection & its analysis. These trainings help the members to monitor and manage school activities in an effective manner, ensure schools are violence free, drop out students are back in schools, increased enrolment of students in school, improvement in the quality of education & child friendly environment in these Model schools.

b. Capacity building of SMC & PRI members.

The aim of this activity is to provide members of SMC & PRI, a platform to share their experiences & problems faced while working with school management, revisit their roles & responsibilities. It gives them an opportunity to discuss ways to effectively monitor school activities, share actual status of schools of their villages & learn from mutual interaction and sharing. Discussion on RTE is held to review the essential components of the act. A session for Action plan will be prepared to ensure violence free environment, quality education, achieve 100% enrolment & 95% attendance of children in schools. This activity helps SMC members & PRI members streamline their work & ensure right to education Act comes into effect in real sense.

Coercion: No way to teach or learn

The children of Rajasar-Karnisar learn and practice participatory approaches to decision-making and are involved in all activities of the school. The head master is the only teacher appointed for a 123 students in the school. He, along with the para-teacher, ensures all children in the school are educated.

This young head master (all of 20 odd years of age) of the school, is a strong supporter of no corporal punishment and child protection in the school. He confesses that his attitude towards children and their rights was not always understanding and sensitive. He would beat and scream at the children with intolerance. But this changed. After training at Urmul, he understood that for the children to learn coercion fails as an approach and/or method. He says, "You can never force a child. If he understands it with ease, adapts and adopts the what is being said, only then s/he would get a holistic picture and understand the subtle nuances in the kit."

c. Village level Campaigns by SMC members to educate community on RTE Act.

Village level campaigns are organised by SMC members to raise awareness of community members on right to education Act and the minimum standards and norms to be conformed to by schools. These campaigns raise the awareness levels of the community members & stakeholders on the concept, significance of right to education Act, minimum standards/norms for schools and will help in improving the status of enrolment of children in schools, ensure dropout rates is reduced, all children complete their education up to 10 standard, quality education is provided by schools & child friendly environment is promoted at schools.

2. Children's Participation

A child's participation in school establishes not only her/his learning but also the learning of all the other stakeholders involved. With a belief in this, Urmul strongly promotes children' opinions on the schools, its management, the pedagogy followed and the other concerns like infrastructure, learning material, sports material, etc.



Incorporating this into the programme the below mentioned activities have been carefully planned and are meticulously executed.

a. Formation of Bal Manch

Forming new Bal Manch (clubs/forums) at Model schools is an essential activity. 20–25 children from class III– VIII standard are selected on the basis of voluntary interest of a child and/or recommendation from the schoolteachers. These selected children are then oriented on the concept of Bal Club, its significance & need, roles & responsibilities, etc. The children are divided into groups, which oversee & ensure the proper functioning of school activities like cleanliness, availability of drinking water, plantation of trees & watering the plants in school premises etc, and their monitoring This gives children an insight into the management of the schools. It increases their ownership towards the school and also binds them to the responsibility of looking after the school. It equips the children with a power to voice their opinions, issues and also probe solutions for these. It also brings the onus onto the children. They try and ensure that their attendance is 95%. They prepare and fair well in all their examinations in all subjects. The dropout rate falls and more .

b. Bal Sabha of school children on LWF & RTE Act.

Bal Sabhas for children of model schools are organized to develop their basic understanding on the norms of RTE & concept of LWF. The information on RTE & LWF is provided through lectures, discussion, posters, flip charts, documentary films etc. Competitions on essay writing, games, poetry, general knowledge and drawing are organized in 36 Model schools to promote LWF issues.

c. Training of Bal Club members on participation in school activities, child friendly environment & higher education.

Urmul holds trainings for children of Bal club on the issues of quality education, child friendly environment & higher education. These trainings are aimed at developing clear understanding of children on the essence of quality education, child friendly environment & significance of completing education minimum up to 10th standard.

Urmul's staff for education facilitates these trainings. The training sessions include lectures, group discussion to inform the participants about mentioned issues. IEC materials like posters, flip charts & placards are creatively used for better understanding. Participants are expected to actively take part in school activities to ensure they receive quality education, help create child friendly environment at school & complete their education till



10th standard. They are also expected to disseminate the learning among their peers, grow a network and strengthen the activities at school.

d. Consultation with Students of Class V, VIII & IXth to ensure students graduate to next class.

Urmul makes efforts to mainstream all 8+ out of school children to go back to school and continue with education. This is done through group and individual counselling at various Meets, like the Balika Samelan, Bal Manch Meetings etc. The idea is to provide desired and much needed support and encouragement. It is to lay a strong understanding of the possibilities education opens up for them at the two levels, individual and community. Moreover, counselling & support is provided to children presently in class V, VIII & IX to ensure students graduate to next class and to encourage them to continue education.

e. Celebration of special day in schools & communities.

This activity enhances the involvement of the children and the VEC/SMC, the school authorities and parents. This establishes a platform for the children and all other stakeholders to discuss and resolve the issues arising at school.

Urmul started the school in 12 SLD in 1988 and until 2008 it ran under the Shishakarmi project. The school began in a small thatched roof hut. Today, the school has its own building and even has a library and a computer lab for the children and a large playground. There are 5 teachers responsible for 218 children in the village.

The village Sarpanch – Savitri Devi, the panchayat and the community, carefully monitor the school. The school has six classrooms and five masters, lead by the Shikshakarmi master. A petition to appoint a Sarpanch has been due for four years with the District education officer. The school's building is in a deplorable condition. The toilets are locked and the playground is not fenced. The community is much aware and gets together regularly to ensure functioning of the school. The population is dominated by labouring families and they often migrate for work. Even with migration, the schools attendance does not dip below 65–70%. The community understands the importance of school and the active bal manch ensures all children come to school regularly.



Morning assembly: a musical message for the day

The children in the village of Garabdesar start each morning with a song that motivates a change in them, their way of living and in the way their school functions. The children begin their day to “gaon gaon gaon mein” a song that talks about a school is necessary in every village for its development, progress of its people and opportunities for all. The songs fill the children up with the zest and inspiration to be a revered someone, like Ragvinder Singh Rathore – the Olympic gold winner. The dilapidated building of the school and its lack of proper infrastructure do not deter the children at all.



Experience

Urmul has been working with the schools for over four years now. These four years have seen much needed change in the policy as well as a more cooperative attitude by the officials as well as the community at the implementation level.

The initial phase of the programme required enormous efforts at various levels. The coordination with the community the school and the sarva shiksha abhiyaan

- 27 village level workshops of SMC & teachers on school development plan were conducted wherein, 336 members took part.

After training the groups decided to share the responsibilities among themselves and with mutual consent. The group also decided to address some of the issues on urgent basis.

- 10 new SMC were formed in FY11 with 149 members. 10 more schools now have more accountability towards the community.
- 25 village level campaign by SMC to educate community on right to education Act were held wherein, 907 people took part. These campaigns greatly help in raising awareness of the community members & stakeholders on the concept, significance of right to education Act, minimum standards/norms for schools and will

definitely help in improving the enrolment of children in schools, ensure dropout rates is reduced, quality of education, child friendly environment at school and in overall functioning of schools.

- 2-block level meeting with SMC & govt. officials were held. Members of SMC shared & discussed issues pertaining to schools of their villages & tried to find solutions to them. SMC members in gram sabha meetings raised some of the issues.
- 4-cluster level quarterly meeting of SMC members were held to share the issues pertaining to education & school management of their villages. Action plans were drafted to share the issues in gram Panchayat meetings & address the same through advocacy.
- 4 peer review meetings of SMC, BEEO, BRCE, PRI, teachers & PU staff were held at school levels. The meeting provided stakeholders opportunity to revisit their roles responsibilities, list the issues, make action plan to improve the present situation of school.
- 30 internal evaluations were undertaken to assess the learning level of model school children. Action plan was drafted to improve the learning level as per the gaps identified during the evaluation.
- 8-school level training of govt. teachers on TLM book were held wherein, 48 teachers participated in the training. The training will definitely help teachers in

teaching mentioned subjects in interesting & child friendly manner.

- 2 coordination meetings with govt. authorities & headmasters were held in FY11. This activity helped in building rapport with Govt. officials, share & evaluate the gaps and seek their support in addressing the issues pertaining to quality education in govt. schools.
- Urmul Setu's staff was trained on inclusive education. 20 staff members took part. This activity greatly helped staff members clear their concept of inclusion & in sensitizing them towards vulnerable children & families.
- 12 of Urmul staff, SMC members & teachers participated in a State-level Meet on RTE at Jaipur. The participants had an opportunity to understand the concept of RTE in details that help them disseminate the same at community level & also, provide support in implementing the RTE at school level.

Students small savings deposit in children bank.
this fund is used for various culture activity



- 1000 Worksheets were provided in 10 govt. schools. This activity helped in improving the writing skills, analytical skills, develops habit of practicing their lessons and creativity among children. This activity also helped in improving the learning level of the children of Model school.
- 30 school level competitions were held under LWF campaign wherein, 1461 children took part in these competitions.

Children are key to development

“I want children to be well educated so our village progress towards development,” asserts Hemateram, a ward panch of Dheerdhan village. Hematram strongly believes that the only way for any village, community or society to progress is through strengthening the youth of that village, community and society. The risk-taking abilities in the youth need to be harnessed and guided with strength of information, knowledge and principles and for this he has been working towards enhancing school in the village. He personally monitors the working of the school. He often walks into the school and crosschecks the attendance sheet to ensure all children are in school. He has motivated and influenced many parents against forcing they children to quit school. He propagates and promotes the advantages of school, education and the possibilities these can enable.

Under his close monitoring and guidance, the school has an enrolment of 247 children and 7 regular staff. This is amongst the few schools that have lady teachers and regular computer classes. The school has 90 % attendance throughout the year, except for the harvest season in spring when the attendance falls to a low of about 70 %.

This activity greatly helped in sensitizing teachers on the issues LWF & in creating child friendly environment at schools.

- 10 new bal manch were formed in govt. schools.
- Training for children of model schools was conducted on TLM book wherein, 35 children from 7 schools participated.
- 10 Internal exposure visits for bal club members were organized. Children observed and learnt the best practices being followed at schools visited and decided to incorporate them in their schools.
- Process documentation of 15 model schools was undertaken which provided PU with a complete document on Model school which will help us showcase the achievements made by Model schools & also provide a base for drafting future work plan to achieve the objective of realizing quality education for children of our project area.
- Sports materials & learning materials were supplied in 60 model schools, 2 DIET colleges & 5 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya.





Way Ahead: Recommendations

Urmul has been working to bridge the gaps between the system and community to facilitate smooth functioning of schools and provide better education to children. It has been working to facilitate improved access to quality education, enhanced quality of classrooms and increased transition to higher levels of education. Various interventions have been designed and implemented, over these years. Many showed positive outcomes while there are still areas that need specific attention at policy,

implementation and capacity building level. However, at large, all these interventions and the experiences coming out of them make a wide and valuable repository of experiences. These are important to learn from and share amongst the peers for effectiveness, success and learning mapping.

The course of the programme has brought afore a few prerequisites in the region for effective implementation of technique to strengthen early childcare, and development.

- There is an urgent need to appoint adequate number of teachers at schools. Vacancies and deputation of teachers, overburdens those present at the school. This impacts negatively upon the performance of the teachers and they do not put in the required effort in teaching and grooming the children.
- The lack of women teachers in schools discourages girls' attendance in school, especially in higher classes. The district officials need to be made accountable to answer these gaps and take immediate remedial actions.
- The TLM and the sports kits provided are of excellent quality and had a positive impact on children where it was extensively used.

However, at certain schools it was noticed that the TLM and sports kit were kept out of reach of children. The teachers did not encourage their use instead found the use cumbersome and an extra burden on themselves. When questioned the teachers claimed to be using them but the interaction with students noted otherwise. This attitude of the teachers needs to be checked. The teachers need to be oriented more rigorously to understand their responsibility in providing a positive and holistic learning experience to the children.

- The library books and computers have been installed in some schools. However, in some places these are out of reach of children. In case of computers, some places do not have a computer teacher and therefore cannot be accessed.



- There is an immediate and paramount need to strengthen the SMCs into accepting a wider role in the functioning of the schools. The selection criteria and process needs to be executed well – it has been noticed that at some places the SMC members had been selected randomly without taking into consideration either their willingness or potential. Urmul should be involved in the selection of the SMC. More aware and literate (wherever possible) people should be selected as the members of the SMC

- The SMC members need to be oriented well towards their roles and responsibilities as a SMC member. They should have in depth understanding of the SMC, its role and the essential part it plays in the school functioning. It had been noticed that few SMC member, even after training and orientation, failed to understand their roles.

- The Panchayat member should be trained more intensively. The

PRI is responsible for the functioning and monitoring of the schools. But, PRI members do not involve themselves into proper monitoring of schools; this causes a slack in the performance of the teachers and the school.

- Quality education training of the staff is essential. Especially for the new staff. The gaps in the understanding disseminates into the community along with the necessary information.

- There is a unbalance of ratio men and women staff. More women staff needs to be appointed so as to strengthen the interactive with children, especially with adolescent girls.

- The Urmul staff needs to be trained on School Management and scheduling so as to better understand the loopholes in the existing scenarios as well as facilitate the teachers at the field level with better management technics.





Urmul Setu

Urmul Setu is a member of Urmul network of organizations, working in western Rajasthan. For twenty-five years, Urmul has been innovating approaches for inducing community driven development by devising and sustaining programmes in the harsh and inhospitable Bikaner district in the desert

Urmul Setu's endeavours focus on drought mitigation and disaster management, livelihoods, women empowerment, child rights, early childcare and development, improving access to basic amenities, with priority emphasis on food, fodder and water. Developing capacity of the community is at the core of all the efforts. We work towards strengthening faculties of the marginalized factions of the society, primarily women and children. All efforts are guided by spirit and trust that rests in people's capability to steer in the much-needed socio-economic-cultural change. Urmul Setu adopts a full throged approach to provide for holistic development. Working across verticals ranging from INGOs, Governance, Self Help Groups and civil society organizations, we work at multiplying touch-points and thereby, their confluence; driving the community toward Rights-based development.



Plan India

Plan in India is part of Plan International, one of the world's largest community development organisations. Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies, which respect people's rights and dignity.

Plan India is a child centred community development organisation. For over 30 years, Plan and our partners have helped communities throughout India to help themselves, so that children have access to their rights including the right to protection, basic education, proper healthcare, a healthy environment, livelihood opportunities and participation in decisions which affect their lives. We encourage children to express their views and be actively involved in improving their communities. Plan India currently works in 11 states in India and has impacted the lives of over a million children.

Plan India is committed to the principles of child rights and equality, and we work to develop the capacity of civil society to meet their own needs by replicating successful development models. Plan is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations.

TO APPLE
TOMATO
EAT CATS
EAT EYES
VAN EEE
CAD MASH
STOP
SHOES
SOON
NEST
ONE
PEN
MA



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