

# Samuhik सामूहिक पहल Pahal

A Journal of Our Collective Action

September 2021 | Vol 2 Issue 01



Learning Begins at Home

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# Uncovering the Potential of Nature Learning at Home

Roshni Ravi and Vena Kapoor

Since 2018 the Nature Classrooms project has been working closely with schools and educators to connect learning to the natural world. We develop user-friendly nature learning resources that are age appropriate, locally and culturally relevant and encourage children to engage with nature through hands-on and inquiry-based learning. These resources correspond to existing primary school Environmental Studies (EVS) curricula and can be integrated into classroom teaching. In addition, we conduct capacity building workshops for school teachers and educators across different organisations.

In the summer of 2020, when the pandemic was making its way through the world, like everyone else our team at Nature Classrooms too, was deeply impacted. Like many working with school communities, we worried about how students, teachers and parents would cope. We had apprehensions about how young children would make meaning of the uncertainty of everything that was unfolding. And finally, we also worried about how we would continue work.

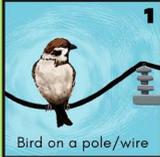
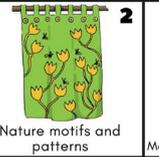
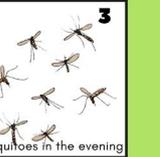
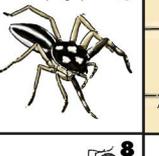
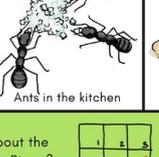
Our work of connecting learning to the natural world across different schools and organisations involved meeting teachers, making lesson plans together, facilitating outdoor-based nature immersion workshops for teachers and so much more that we couldn't imagine doing remotely or online.

We always knew and believed that one didn't have to go far to connect with and experience the wonders of nature. The lockdown forced us to think about how children and adults could continue to engage with and take solace in the natural world as they stayed safe at home.

Out of this, was born a series of simple interventions, processes, activities and games, one of them being an activity that we called - 'Hidden Housemates'.

## Hidden Housemates (2)

It may surprise you, but you don't need to go outside to experience nature! Look around your home, through a window, behind a door or under a flowerpot - find any three down or across and say **BINGO!**

 Bird on a pole/wire	 Nature motifs and patterns	 Mosquitoes in the evening
 Ledges fluttering and falling in the wind	 Jumping spider	 An insect in a sleeping bag
 Cockroaches	 Ants in the kitchen	 House flies

Do you want to know more about the creatures and the plants in this Bingo? Visit: [bit.ly/hiddenhousemates](https://bit.ly/hiddenhousemates)

Produced as part of a not-for-profit initiative to introduce children and adults to nature. To know more, visit: [bit.ly/natureframework](https://bit.ly/natureframework)



**nature conservation foundation**

Tip: No need for a print out! Draw and number it for yourself on a piece of paper!

Hidden Housemates Bingo Sheet

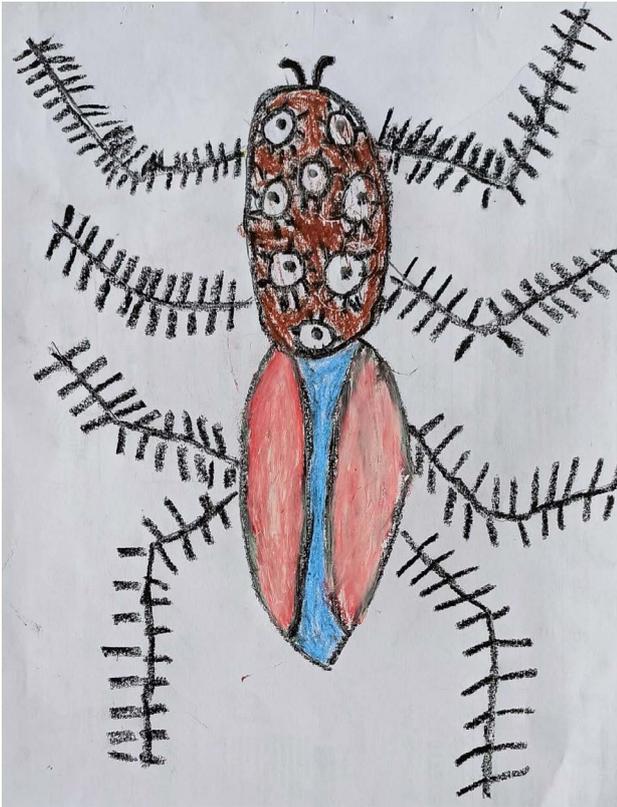
## Nature Connections at Home

Hidden Housemates Bingos are a series of activity sheets (available in English, Kannada and Hindi) that encourage us to explore our surroundings and look for nature beings, images, sounds, smells and textures in and around our homes. The bingo sheets are a way to go on a 'nature' walk inside our own homes, spaces and discover surprises in different nooks and crannies.

Teachers from the Fig Tree Learning Centre in Silvepura told us about a student who found a way to connect with spiders in their home

- first through the bingo and then by using the activity prompt to imagine themselves as spiders. *“Imagine if you had 8 eyes, 8 legs like a spider. How would your life change? Make a drawing or make a story.”* the prompt said.

We share with you one of the stories by a middle school student (originally in Kannada):



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Kannada Bingo sheet + Student drawing

*If I were a spider...*

*“I am a spider, when I am outside I build webs on a tree and inside the house I build webs in corners. I have 8 legs and each leg has small hair all over. The colours on my body are blue, pink, brown and black. One lady moved me with a broom while cleaning and I had to go outside and sit on a branch, creeper. Sunlight fell on my body and I felt happy so I stayed there, in the evening when the clouds turned black, the clouds made noise ‘dum dum’. I felt very scared because when I was inside the house, I had not heard this noise.*

*Suddenly, it started raining and my body got wet and I got a cold! I was shivering and went*

*back to where I was inside the house, built a web and slept comfortably.”*

In the emerging context of restricted movement as a result of the pandemic and increasing time that students and grown-ups spend at home it is crucial to explore different ways in which we can continue to explore and stay connected to our surroundings.

One way is to experience and see with fresh eyes the spaces and surroundings we’ve been occupying. It is amazing how much one can discover with each walk in and around one’s home, just like the student who wrote about spiders with such empathy. We share our homes with many creatures and plants and noticing them with more focussed attention can help us learn and grow in new ways.

### **Why Nature Learning?**

We believe that learning about nature and spending time connecting with the natural world is as essential for young students (and adults) as early literacy or numeracy. There are numerous studies from the Global North that highlight the role of meaningful and deep bonds with our immediate natural world for our physical and emotional health and well-being.

At Nature Classrooms, we hope that as adults in teaching-learning spaces, we can foster love, empathy and curiosity for the natural world in young children.

We do this through long term engagement with primary school teachers and development of age-appropriate and contextual nature learning resources that can enrich existing environmental studies curricula.

For more than a year, young children have been home and away from schools, teachers and their peers. As people and organisations interested in children’s learning and growth we all carry a collective responsibility at this time of crisis.



flour to the stray moth that flies in to the lit tubelight. All these can become topics to ask exploratory questions around, to observe, to take delight in and to get young children to empathise with by using storytelling as a tool just like the students did for their spider friend.

*A year round exploration-* as the months go by, look for how things change in nature. The weather, the trees, the insects and birds you see. There is so much that we often assume about the plants around us. During a visit to a local school that had an Indian Almond tree in the compound, the teacher stated that *all* leaves are green. However, one student had keenly observed the leaves of the almond tree in the school compound and pointed to the multi-coloured hues of the leaves - yellow, orange and deep red in the canopy.

Festivals and local practices often have a lot of nature stories and connections that

children enjoy exploring. Reflect on your life and childhood to see what anecdotes you can share with children.

Is there a special encounter in the outdoors you recall with vivid details? How can you use that to encourage the children around you to embark on their own nature journeys?

### Learning Together: Role of Grown-ups

Who is a nature educator? Can parents, grandparents, older siblings and other grown-ups in a child's life play this role?

An interested and enthusiastic grown-up who is willing to learn and discover their surroundings is probably the best kind of facilitator for an exploration of the natural world.

To begin, one doesn't need to know the names or very much about how things work in nature. Just plenty of curiosity, and a willingness to wonder and ask questions!

## Serendipitous Encounters

A nature walk or just time spent observing a tree in your neighbourhood can be filled with surprises. How can we learn from these surprise encounters in nature?

Unexpected visits by different creatures or observing a fascinating natural phenomena unfold can hold immense potential for discussions and learning.

A pair of skinks that had made their home near the compound wall of a school we work with provided one such opportunity for us. As the skinks moved around the concrete floor and basked in the sun, some children watched and followed asking questions and making observations. They noticed the colour and patterns and the number of legs, the tail and mouth.

This encounter was not part of our lesson but was a great opportunity to talk about skinks and even other reptiles as children asked how skinks were different from snakes. Children shared anecdotes and stories, bringing the classroom alive with their own lived experiences. A brief encounter on the school grounds had so much to offer: a chance to listen to and value observations while simultaneously creating opportunities for new learning.



SerendipitousEncounters\_Skink



Colours in Nature Wheel

### Planting Pollinator-Friendly Plants

Try and grow a diverse set of plants in areas you have access to - no space is too small. Keep plants in small pots, old bottles and containers, old vehicle tyres or even worn out shoes! Plants that are diverse in shape, size, colour and include shrubs, herbs, grasses. This diversity of plant life will attract a lot of insects, spiders and even birds that children can observe up close.

**Roshni Ravi** is an educator interested in conversations that lie at the intersection of nature, mental health and teaching-learning. She loves long walks, birdsongs and getting lost in picture books. She currently works as Project Coordinator at Nature Classrooms, Nature Conservation Foundation.

**Vena Kapoor** is the Senior Programme Manager at the Education and Public Engagement Programme at Nature

Conservation Foundation in Bangalore. She is an Ecologist and Nature Educator and heads the Nature Classrooms project.

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# Children with Disabilities Adapting to the Reality of COVID-19

## Accessing Quality Digital Learning While Trying to Stay Healthy and Alive

*Diana Vincent*

The issues faced by children with disabilities regarding their education, health, hygiene and nutrition have been acutely amplified by challenges during the current Covid-19 pandemic. This is compounded by the need to equip parents in identifying the challenges faced by these children who need extra care to tide over this crisis. In this context, Fourth Wave Foundation has tried to ensure that children attending our centers do not drop out of the learning process. They have managed to achieve age-appropriate social and learning skills with a well-planned calendar for continued care, dedicated therapy and individualised education plans.

Fourth Wave Foundation's 'Nanagu Shaale' program, which works with children with severe disabilities, now tries to ensure that children who had made considerable progress over the last five years do not fall through the cracks due to the digital divide.

While the first step for our child-centric approach was to facilitate online learning, we prioritised teachers making weekly visits to the childrens' homes for physiotherapy and other medical assessments. This decision was taken as a response to demands that came from the parents through the grassroots level.

The Nanagu Shaale program has worked to ensure that children do not fall out of the care and therapy process during the pandemic, by ensuring that doctors and therapists

attended to them via remote consulting. To prevent children from regressing and to help them maintain their journeys on the educational learning curve, all teaching programs moved to the online mode by ensuring remote connectivity and dial up facilities for each child. These focused efforts helped maintain the health, nutritional and educational link with each child within our programs. We also tried to equip parents on identifying the problems of these children and in managing their mental stress, tensions, and confusions.

### Children with disabilities are vulnerable sections who will take longer to get back to school.

Our second step was to meet the challenge of connectivity and content delivery for learning. FWF's primary focus has always been to work with the most marginalised children with disabilities in remote rural areas. Due to fewer priorities given by educational providers to issues that may support children with disabilities - especially with curricula, teaching and learning materials, and inclusion - they have difficulties accessing education.

Children in rural, remote and vulnerable communities are among the most marginalized groups, regardless of existing challenges within the educational and schooling system. The connectivity challenge

was addressed over a period of six months by working in coordination with various groups who enabled gadgets, laptops and internet access.

## Our learnings should help us build more inclusive educational approaches

Our third step was to face the contemporary reality of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) regarding meeting their health, nutrition, hygiene, survival and medical needs. A majority of our children belong to homes where parents have fallen out of work as daily wage employees and farm workers, or have returned back from urban construction and labor markets.

We had to address the situation of families going to bed on an empty stomach without food. The team has to prioritize and work towards ensuring that food and ration kits for the households was provided during the toughest part of the lockdowns.

During the last and the current academic year, FWF has focused its efforts on two key stakeholders. The first is that of parents and caregivers struggling to keep the family together. The second is that of teachers and school management who have had to face the challenges of delivering their continued services to CWSN in this home-bound, hybrid learning environment.

We facilitated this transition through many different kinds of initiatives. We moved from school-based teaching to an online, hybrid mode of teaching accommodating all learning difficulties and inclusion requirements of children. We were faced with the challenges of connectivity and access to technology for each household to enable access to teachers and learning content.

We tried to educate parents and other stakeholders on a priority basis about coping skills to deal with the impact of the

pandemic. We helped them maintain routines to ensure that plans are in place for constant support and assistance for CWSN to continue learning and physiotherapy.

We created new work routines to accommodate and support teachers and other players to ensure that distance learning platforms are safe and accessible to our children. We trained teachers for supporting children remotely and in inclusive education programs for all segments of disabilities.

We also developed and deployed monitoring mechanisms for teachers so that they can be aware of the changing behaviors of the CWSN under these difficult conditions, help parents cope, and ensure that children did not face any form of verbal, physical or sexual abuse during these tough times.

Children with disabilities are vulnerable sections who will take longer to get back to school. Uncertainty remains as to when schools might reopen. Ensuring safety of CWSN is a challenge given their requirements, and the lack of basic amenities of fresh water, toilets and sanitation facilities in our schools.

Fourth Wave Foundation has been working with the Government to manage the current challenges and address the barriers faced by children. This crisis also presents a unique opportunity for the education and disability sectors to come together to design and implement child-focused, disability-inclusive, COVID-19 responses and recovery programs.

Our learnings should help us build more inclusive educational approaches that ensure all children including CWSN have access to educational and learning environments now and in the future.

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# Home-based Learning: Challenges and Opportunities

*Ria Banerjee and Riti Mukherjee*

**S**eventeen months, almost two academic years slipping by, and here we are, still in the middle of a pandemic, juggling with ideas to connect with children. We faced the undesirable but inevitable consequences of prolonged school closure, e.g., children being promoted to the next class without attending a single day of school. As we slowly settled into the new normal, innovating and experimenting at every stage, we constantly kept ourselves asking questions about what worked and did not, the role of technology, the validity of expectations around children acquiring new learning and skills at home and in situations where they are not likely to get much guidance.

We also wondered whether the objective of home-based learning be kept confined to maintaining pre-existing learning levels or should we attempt to teach new concepts and skills? For children without digital access, worksheets were the only means. How far can worksheets play the role of a ‘teacher’? This article aims to reflect on

these questions from Vikramshila’s various engagements with children in different settings within the age group of 3 to 10 years.

In June 2021, the Union Ministry of Education released ‘Guidelines for parent participation in home based learning during school closure and beyond’. These guidelines emphasized the need for parents to create a safe, engaging and positive learning environment for children, and to have realistic expectations from them. It places parents in a pivotal role to support their children’s well-being and to ensure continuity of learning. “Home is the first school and parents are the first teachers.”

As good as it may sound, we realized there are several pitfalls to it. How far can we burden parents in these times of extreme stress, vulnerability, uncertainty, and income and livelihood loss? Access to or lack of a digital device was undoubtedly a major issue. But there are other factors influencing parental involvement as well.



Vikramshila

We developed home learning packages in four different states - West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, for 3–6 years old children. These consisted of an illustrated calendar and audio and video resources to support parents in facilitating activities with the minimal resources available at home. This learning package is being disseminated through ICDS officials and frontline workers.

These have also been uploaded in the departmental website from where anyone can have free access. Parents receive a package on a weekly or fortnightly basis through the Anganwadi workers who have created WhatsApp groups with parents who come to their centers to pick their packages up. In the absence of smartphones or internet with parents, relatives or neighbors are sent with the packages to share these with the parents.

## Parents need to be supported adequately to be able to play the role of a ‘teacher’ in the formal sense.

A dipstick study conducted by us in Maharashtra showed that on an average, even the most enthusiastic parents could spend only about half an hour to one hour daily to support their children’s learning due to lack of time. These were fairly simple learning activities meant for preschoolers (3 to 6 age group) that could be conducted using available materials at home and needing no additional expenses. In spite of that, parents needed support, demonstrations and counseling to feel confident to take on the role of a ‘teacher’ at home!

For children in primary classes, we took a different approach - we sent them stories and encouraged them to draw pictures. We gave them ideas on simple craft activities, yoga, gardening, and some worksheets to



Vikramshila

work on – mostly focusing on basic skills and concepts. Getting parents involved in the process was the next step. For this, we first decided to hear them out so as to unburden them - of their expectations, difficulties and challenges.

Gradually, we gave them simple responsibilities - to talk to their children about their feelings, to encourage them in whatever they were doing and making sure that children were sending back their homework on time, and if possible to share pictures on WhatsApp. To bridge the digital divide, we started setting up makeshift centers on whatever space was offered to us by the community – rooftops, balconies, porches, empty shop fronts, public parks, verandas and clubs in cramped urban settings, and courtyards and open spaces in rural settings where community blackboards were painted to provide access to more children.

We were busy working on a ‘readiness and recovery’ package anticipating school reopening when the second wave struck and



Vikramshila

we realized that this was going to be long-term and recurrent.

The readiness and recovery package was appropriate in a school setting, where the teacher was there to provide the required guidance and support. It would not work as well in homes with low levels of literacy and very little resources to support or stimulate children to learn the basics of literacy and numeracy.

In the worksheets that we designed, we decided to keep things simple, giving pictorial cues, lots of repetition and scope for practice, and focused on just a few key learning outcomes to keep children engaged and connected. Attempting any kind of 'grade level competency' was out of the question.

We got the worksheets field tested in low literacy settings, and were reassured with the positive response. Our target was to get both parents and children interested in the learning tasks, with an underlying assumption that this would perhaps help parents to raise their threshold levels along with their children.

Since home-based learning is now a national focus, we need to be extra careful not to pass on the onus or burden of learning on

to parents. Parents need to be supported adequately to be able to play the role of a 'teacher' in the formal sense.

Teachers should form support groups of parents to provide guidance at every step to address their sense of inadequacy and low self-confidence. Any home learning program has to keep this broader perspective in mind.

**Ria Banerjee** has been working in Vikramshila for over 5 years. She supports education programs at the organization spanning across the thematic areas of early childhood, early language learning and libraries.

**Riti Mukherjee**, with an experience of 10 years, has worked extensively as a senior trainer in Vikramshila's early childhood education interventions, both with Departments of Social Welfare and Department of Education, and early language learning across multiple states and contexts. She also leads the learning support intervention in communities of Kolkata.

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# Putting a Child on a Path to Lifelong Learning

*Nisha Subramaniam*

*“Can you hear me?”“*

*“Can you go on mute please?”*

*The cooker whistle goes off*

*The calls drops; connects back again*

This is the everyday of online and home-based learning. Behind the scenes, we know that the mother has wrapped up house work, set up learning materials for the day, moved the children out of bed, and managed to prop them up in front of the screen. This is a typical day in a household that is currently supporting a student to learn from home, in rural Cuddalore.

In response to schools shutting down in the pandemic since March 2020, Kanavu started a home-based learning program ‘Kathir’ with a vision to ensure that continued learning opportunities are available for as many children as possible. Simple learning tasks are designed and sent to parents through WhatsApp.

Teachers support parents and students with calls and follow up messages sharing feedback on students’ work. Very quickly, it emerged to us clearly that ‘parents as partners’ was a key to moving forward on home-based learning. What also shone through was that we can’t aspire to replicate a classroom learning experience at home.

## **Possibilities Opened up at Home**

At Kanavu, we work with a vision that one’s circumstances shouldn’t dictate one’s destiny. This pointed us to possibilities that existed within the circumstances that our students from remote villages were in. Sea shells and stones around the home turned into math kits, open spaces around homes

with sand became sand pits to practice writing alphabets, cloth bags and objects around the home became mystery bags to build stereognostic sense in children.

Activities pushed children to have conversations with parents to create a family tree or an emotion map of how the family was feeling through the pandemic.

A task like this provides an opportunity for the child to pick up and practice a variety of skills like asking questions, labelling emotions, organizing information and presenting it clearly. Learning was designed to maximize possibilities of resources and people that were at home.

**No external help or training but a successful partnership between the teacher and the parents and their investment ensured the learning continuity of this child.**

## **What’s Happening Beyond Pencil and Paper?**

The attempt to not ‘replicate’ what happens in the classroom, but to go beyond that and explore the true meaning of education - which is to assist self-discovery, led us to think of what happens beyond pencil and paper.

Understanding child development at different ages was a great starting point to design activities that promote holistic learning for a child. So, what is happening across different age groups of children?

## The Kindergarteners

The tiniest of all, most of these children haven't been to school yet. Learning is best facilitated by the primary caregiver for children in this age group. We chose to create content for parents and not for students. Videos are designed for parents to set up activities for students to explore concepts like light, heavy, sinking and floating. Children go through a series of activities to promote growth across the domains of cognition, linguistic abilities and logic. From sorting colors and counting objects at home, simple activities are designed keeping in mind what could happen at home.

Parents themselves enjoy activities like blindfolding their child, sharing a spoonful of food item with a variety of tastes, and the child guessing the food item and the taste. As educators, we also see how activities like these are so much better, accessible and holistic when done at home. It nurtures the relationship between the child and the parent, in a new context of learning about the world with their primary caregivers.

## The Primary Grades

This is an age group that is curious, needs guided explorations and are semi-accessing the phone, watching videos themselves, weaning off parental support. Content is designed for children to explore materials around them as art materials, as props for little dramas they record and send.

Concepts such as mixtures are taught by children making lemon juice, with an invitation to share it with loved ones. With upper primary and secondary grades, homebased learning has opened up an opportunity to build awareness of themselves, through targeted 'social and emotional learning' reflection questions.

The online paradigm has pushed students to articulate their thoughts - sharing it as audio notes or written pieces. We have teachers

share how they are seeing new facets of students - a rather shy child in school is the first one to finish the tasks; a child who struggles with written work is a star across tasks involving audio notes.

## The Secondary Grades

These, we observe, are students who have been the hardest to reach and have online learning capture their imagination. Pre-adolescents and adolescents have accessed content through videos - teachers supporting them to get into a rhythm and routine. Students in these groups have been the most vocal about expressing resistance to learning from home.

**Story time is emerging as a favourite for upper primary students - facilitated by an external educator who brings in a great deal of experience in literacy.**

Parents have struggled to keep students motivated. This group of students have needed a lot of one-on-one talk time to problem solve for home-based learning. With systemic pressures of syllabus completion, exams and bridging the learning gap that exists, moving from paper and pencil to real-life learning has been challenging.

What it has looked like, is holding circle time discussing about their dreams and aspirations for the future, and holding synchronous Zoom meetings that help students to come together and meet their teachers and peers. One-on-one interactions have strengthened bonds between teachers and children. These have enabled the teacher to understand barriers that are holding the child back.

We observe teachers design specific skill-based worksheets or work with parents to support the child to learn. Differentiation to bridge a learning gap in higher grades is

a huge challenge that this current manner of learning is paving the way for. Google forms have supported differentiated literacy assessments- splitting students by levels and assessing growth on the same. Individual calls for reading fluency has been supporting growth, along reading fluency levels.

## **We Teach; But What Are They Learning?**

This is a classic question that all educators ask themselves - children learn over and above what is being taught and how do we capture what a child is learning? The online paradigm has created opportunities for students to share their learning through photographs of articulated thoughts, audio notes, sharing videos and completed online worksheets or forms.

In our experience, we found that worksheets were too simplistic a tool to assess learning in an online paradigm. This has pushed us and our team of teachers to design different ways to capture what the child has learnt. Getting students to create process videos for how an experiment is done, for instance, has been a great way for us to assess what the child has understood, and if the concept is clear for her. Building simple rubrics has helped teachers in evaluations.

When we taught simple rhythms using materials at home to make music, we had an opportunity to enjoy the music made, while also looking for a sense of rhythm in children and a bit of the math in it. Bringing a variety of tools like sharing reading assessments over WhatsApp, teachers doing one-on-one calls to listen to students reading, has improved accuracy of data for languages.

## **What Technology Has Enabled**

What started as asynchronous learning (where material is sent to the student and they learn at a time that is convenient for them) only, today has moved to a blended learning experience of synchronous (timed online classes over Zoom) and asynchronous

learning packets. Younger children attend online Zoom meetings where their teachers are facilitating phonics lessons.

**The online paradigm has created opportunities for students to share their learning through photographs of articulated thoughts, audio notes, sharing videos and completed online worksheets or forms.**

Assisted by parents, who themselves are learning to operate a smartphone for the first time, this has been a huge step forward in creating a connection between teachers and students. Parents also set up learning materials like flash cards and sand boards for students to access during classes. Story time is emerging as a favourite for upper primary students - facilitated by an external educator who brings in a great deal of experience in literacy.

This is yet another window of opportunity that technology has opened for us - students in remote villages are able to access read-alouds and an opportunity to critically engage with stories. This is also serving as a model for teachers who are on the call, who are picking up pedagogic practices for teaching literacy. Technology has also opened up gamified learning, opportunities for quizzes and online events to open up for children in rural areas.

We hear stories about a parent choosing to enable learning for five other students in the same village. Similarly, we see teachers inviting children home to access technology, ensuring learning continuity for them.

## **Where Technology is a Barrier**

Ensuring a student learns continuously despite the pandemic needs more than

technological fixes. It needs invested parents, teachers to support consistently, families to prioritize recharge, and infrastructure support like network and electricity for devices to be charged. Homes with more than one child studying makes it a question of which child's learning is prioritized at any given point of time.

It is a struggle for all these factors to be in favour of the child and to ensure that there are enough learning opportunities every day. Students with no access to a device or without network coverage, will be at a very different place when school reopens. Keeping them motivated to come back to school and not drop out is a huge challenge for teachers who are in touch with them through regular phone calls.

## Realizing the Purpose of Education

It was a day when teachers were at school setting up some resources for the new academic year. This is when a couple walked into the school office and asked to meet the teacher. They'd brought their phone along.

Ganga Miss, the class teacher, shares that this student was unable to join Zoom classes despite having a phone because there was an issue with its mic. She, who herself was new to handling technology, asked the parent to bring the phone to school. Within a matter of half an hour, after troubleshooting with various settings, the team of teachers solved the software issue. The parents happily returned and the child continues to engage in classes henceforth.

No external help or training but a successful partnership between teachers and parents, and their investment, ensured the learning continuity of this child. Even for students who have access to a device, who watch videos and access tasks, we see that learning happens in the interactions between the parents and the child and between the latter and the teachers.



Kanavu

One cannot imagine that learning happens when a child watches a video or completes a worksheet based on seeing a video. Technology enables learning through information transfer. This can't be confused with technology becoming the primary site of learning. Depth in learning happens when it is facilitated with thought.

The challenge lies in designing opportunities for interactions to be meaningful, enriching and leaving the participants with renewed energy to do more of this, in the remote paradigm. In doing this, we are able to fulfil the purpose of education - which is to put children on the path of being lifelong learners, irrespective of their circumstances.

**Nisha Subramaniam** has 11 years of experience in the social sector with interests in elementary education, gender and leadership. She is a co-founder of Kanavu, currently leading efforts in education and community development in rural Cuddalore, Tamilnadu.

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# From Caregivers to Educators

*Atul Gaikwad and Mukta Navrekar*

**W**hen one sees little kids, holding their mothers' or grandmothers' hands, walking through narrow, potholed roads in slums, no one needs to explain that they are going to Anganwadis. Various studies have highlighted the importance of early childhood education (ECE). Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 at the global level, and Early Childhood Care & Education Policy and New Education Policy at the national level have stated the priority of ECE for overall development. In India, the ECE service is majorly provided by Anganwadis run by the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme of Ministry of Women and Child Health. We at Better Education Lifestyle and Environment Foundation (BELIEF) - a budding not-for-profit organization working in the domain of ECE in Pune - aim to strengthen ECE services in Anganwadis by undertaking capacity-building of all the stakeholders involved.

## Parents: An Important Stakeholder

While working with teachers and children in Anganwadis, we realized the importance of engaging with parents. ECE is one of the six services in Anganwadis. Other than ECE, Anganwadi workers have to do other things as well, which at times assume priority. In a survey in one of the regions of Pune city, we found that only one out of 26 Anganwadis has its own building. All the other Anganwadis run at rented spaces allotted on an hourly basis.

Engaging with children in the 3-6 years age group, with these limitations stemming from the lived realities of Anganwadis, becomes a herculean task. However, children in this age group spend most of their time with parents. So, empowering parents to create learning opportunities at home becomes an important step in improving the quality of education in this important phase of a child's learning trajectory.

**But we definitely want to create a culture of ECE at home - a culture that puts more efforts into learning right from the beginning, makes parents aware of how and what children learn...**

## Parents' Engagement: BELIEF's Approach

BELIEF has been engaging with parents of 3-6 years old children much before the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Over a period of around two years, this initial engagement has emerged as a program named 'Parents as Teachers.' Looking back, we see that this program has organically gone through different stages and will be evolving in its structure for some more years. In order to

### Parents as Teachers (PAT)

PAT is a program to build the capacities of Parents to conduct ECE activities at home with readily available materials. We create digital content for parents and send it daily through WhatsApp. The digital content is nothing but a set of simple instructions (sometimes supported with photos or videos) for conducting an ECE activity at home. It is expected that parents go through the content, understand the process involved and conduct the activities with their children.

understand the process, let us categorize it into the following stages.

## Stage 1: Inform

Initially, mothers of some children used to sit in the Anganwadis and chat with other mothers. This had become a daily chore for most of them. There was no set time to bring children to the Anganwadi. Thus, it was very difficult to plan for the sessions. We realized that parents in the slums are concerned about elementary education but are not well informed about ECE. We started engaging parents through different activities.

**Parents Meetings:** We began our engagement with parents by conducting meetings. Anganwadis in urban slums have their own problems. We took this opportunity to share these problems with parents and explained to them the concept of child development in a simple language. We developed communication material for the same. Parents' feedback raised our enthusiasm. Many parents expressed the desire to learn more about ECE. Therefore, we decided to arrange such meetings frequently.

In one of the Anganwadis, a local resident was using this space for storing his old

furniture, as there was no space left in his house for the purpose. Technically, this space was owned by the government. We tried to convince the relevant person for removing the furniture; but he did not cooperate. But, when we conducted parents' meetings in the same space, and shared the problem with them, they convinced that person to move his furniture and freed up the space for children.

**Exhibitions:** We organized exhibitions in Anganwadis to showcase the teaching-learning resources available in the Anganwadi. We observed parents taking interest in understanding free play materials, pre-numeracy activities, language development activities, print-rich environment, etc. During our book exhibitions, parents were often seen browsing through children's literature or reading out books to their children.

**Parents' WhatsApp Group:** BELIEF's field coordinators (Shikshan Sathis) conducted a small doorstep survey in the community and took the parents' consent to form a WhatsApp group. The objective of forming this group was to involve parents in ECE.

In the WhatsApp group, we used to share important highlights of activities conducted



in the Anganwadi along with their role in child development. We used to have display boards in the Anganwadis, where we would publish the work done by children.

We started appealing parents to visit the Anganwadis to see their children's work, and to appreciate it. Gradually parents started visiting Anganwadis to see how their child was doing. We shared the children's progress notes with parents as well.

**Learning in a group of peers by sitting in the Anganwadis, has ample advantages in the development of a child which simply can't be replaced by home-schooling.**

### Stage 2: Involve

After the arrival of the COVID-19 Pandemic everything changed. We had to stop our on-field implementation. Anganwadis from then have not yet started. After some days of enforcement of the first lockdown in 2020, we started talking to parents and shared the idea of conducting ECE activities at home. The efforts taken to inform parents about ECE paid off well. Parents unanimously liked the idea and shared their willingness to take part in the Parents as Teachers Program. We were concerned about two things. First, parents may not be able to comprehend complex written instructions. Second, they may not have any teaching learning material at home.

Hence, we designed activities for child development using materials readily available at home. We started adapting lesson plans created for Anganwadi teachers, so that these can be used by parents. We shared content like songs, stories, lessons on language and math, art, etc. through WhatsApp in textual and audio formats. Parents started conducting these activities and sent us videos or photos.

But soon, the slum became a COVID-19 hotspot and suddenly the count of patients reached 350. A majority of families shifted to various COVID centres. We paused our Parents as Teachers Program at the time, and started focusing on counselling and mental well-being of residents. We also managed to provide some ration to the families as lockdown was being extended again and again; there was no steady source of income to fulfil daily needs.

Once the situation came under control, the PAT Program was resumed. This program is now being implemented with parents from 20 Anganwadis. We realized that Anganwadi teachers have been using this content for other children whom they know in personal capacities.



BELIEF

### **Challenges and Learnings**

The program, in its current form, depends on digital technology. Looking at the digital divide and unequal access to education, are we really catering to the needs of marginalized communities? The answer is obviously in the negative.

We need to evolve tested, contextualized solutions to provide quality education. Those who don't have meaningful access to the digital world cannot be left behind. We are thinking of incorporating such parents in the program through another approach.

Involving parents in children's education cannot guarantee that parents continue the program. If there is only one smartphone



BELIEF

shared amongst 2-3 siblings at home, the access to the device is given to the older child. Parents are not trained teachers. They struggle a lot while conducting activities.

Generally, the curriculum is helical. We build concepts on one another. In such situations, parents cannot skip some foundational concept and try building the higher order concept. Such challenges, both technical and non-technical, will emerge when we take a deep dive into this domain.

But it is important to note that, we must not think of the PAT Program in isolation. Parents are just one set of stakeholders in Anganwadis. Unless we involve everyone and orient them on the overall objectives, the situation will perhaps not change much.

Learning in a group of peers by sitting in the Anganwadis, has ample advantages in the development of a child which simply can't be replaced by home-schooling. Preschools play a vital role in the socialization of children and in making them ready for primary schooling.

We never intended to bypass preschool education by the Parent as Teacher Program. But we definitely want to create a culture of ECE at home - a culture that puts more efforts into learning right from the beginning, makes parents aware of how and what children learn, builds their capacities for teaching the basics of ECE, and redefines parents' roles from caregivers to educators.

**Atul Gaikwad** is an elementary education professional. He has worked with students, teachers, and teacher educators for improving foundational literacy and numeracy.

**Mukta Navrekar** is a development professional who is passionate about the environment and organizational development. She has been involved in various rural development initiatives, and is also an announcer at All India Radio.

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# Learning During COVID Times

*Samuhik Pahal Team*



## Bringing Education Home

Teachers from Gubbachi Learning Community supported 35 children from a community with no access to running water and electricity in Bangalore. The teachers decided to take the learning to their homes as there was no way these children could take online classes. The teachers found innovative ways to introduce math concepts to children, using the material around them. They would then leave them with worksheets to continue the practice. Gubbachi Learning Community is a nonprofit working for the educational inclusion of out-of-school children in the city of Bangalore.

## Making Online Learning Fun

Makkala Jagriti offered various webinar sessions to parents and children on how to make learning easier by producing basic learning resources that can be found simply around the house. Mohammed Ismail from Hale Sampigehalli Anganwadi has been practicing his everyday activities with his mother over YouTube sessions.





## Teamwork, Makes the Dream Work

Thanujitha lives in Anjanapura, a suburb located in Bangalore. School closures due to the pandemic had affected Thanujitha's regular education. Bangalore-based Makkala Jagriti, which provides safe and friendly spaces for children from marginalized communities, has been sending out everyday activities to Thanujitha to ensure that no barriers affect his learning continuity. His father, Lokesh, a factory worker, has also been taking out time to support his son.

## Learning by Doing



(Left) Children from Gubbachi reuse waste to create projects designed to help them learn how to be socially responsible.



(Right) In a Gubbachi EVS class in Bangalore, Grade 5 children look on intently as their teacher demonstrates the concept that air has weight. This abstract concept was made concrete through demonstration.



## A Breath of Fresh Air

Working in community spaces has also meant that restrictions on location do not bind daily activities like circle time for Gubbachi. Here children from the Kariyammana Agragara community enjoy their daily circle time and rhymes out in the open under trees.

## Healthy Body, Healthy Mind



Various studies show that malnourishment has a direct correlation with children's ability to focus on learning processes. Children attending Gubbachi's classes at Sulikunte Dinne received a boiled egg, a banana, and a Nutribar. Gubbachi also served lunch (from Adamay Chetana) to the children in the absence of the Akshay Patra meal.

## Teachers with Resilience



Nalina, a bridge teacher, does a Read Aloud with her students in one of the sheds used by Gubbachi teachers for daily sessions at the Kariyammana Agrahara community. Since these sheds were not secure enough, teachers had to carry materials every day in their backpacks. In January 2020, there was a sudden increase in children wanting to join Gubbachi's bridge program in the Kariyammana Agrahara community. Housekeeping jobs in the area seem to have been a big draw for many families.

## Support from Volunteers

Through the pandemic, volunteers continued to teach the children. In this photo, a volunteer tutors children for the NIOS Grade X Examination.

The Gubbachi ProActive program was initiated in 2018 for preadolescent migrant children who are at risk of dropping out of school. This program is designed for small learning groups at different levels of learning.



## Community Learning



Online classes were not an option for children of construction workers and daily wage earners. Parents helped identify places near their homes for children to take the classes undisturbed. Seventy-five children in classes 1-3 in Kodathi GHPS were divided according to their location. Gubbachi teachers met them near their homes and helped the children continue with their lessons.

**Photo Credits:** Gubbachi Learning Community and Makkala Jagriti

# Rediscovering Learning at Home with Parents and Teachers

Excerpts from a Conversation with Sangeetha Raj

*T Shivanand*

*The pandemic has revealed the critical need for actively reimagining the home front as a space for learning. This time has called upon us to build active understanding and inclusion of parents in children's learning and schooling.*

*In this conversation between educators Sangeetha Raj and Thejaswi Shivanand, we try to capture some aspects of the home learning space and its relationship to school, and teaching in schools.*

*Sangeetha shares her experience and thoughts from a long career working as a school teacher, home schooling parent to two children, and as a teacher educator. Sangeetha and Thejaswi were colleagues at Centre for Learning School for two years.*

**T**Shivanand: You have had an unusual trajectory as an educator working with a range of educational settings. Can you please briefly share your journey with us?

**Sangeetha Raj:** I began my work with a fellowship from CRY (Child Relief and You) that supported me to work at Kanavu School for adivasi children in Wayanad.

I then shifted to Bengaluru and worked at the Pottery Town School which caters to children of low income parents in the Pottery Town area before joining Centre for Learning School as a teacher in 2000.

I taught English and Social Science in middle school and History, English Language and Literature in high school for nine years. I took a break from school teaching in 2009 to home school my children.

**TS:** Why did you shift to home schooling even though you were already working in an alternative school?

**SR:** My children were very young and the school was located away from Bengaluru, where I had my home. This involved a lot of commute and staying away from them for several nights in the week. I felt that home schooling was the best way ahead where I could spend my time with them as children and be involved in their education.

**“A child who has strong skills in reading, writing, comprehension and math can pick them up easily even when there are gaps.”**

**TS:** How long did you home school your children?

**SR:** I felt I could support the children up to the tenth grade at home and then they could attend regular schools for eleventh and twelfth grades.

In 2016, the Skylight School, an English-medium school for underprivileged children run by the Annasamy Mudaliar Trust, Bengaluru approached me to work with their teachers and I worked with them for four and a half years until earlier this year.

**TS:** Is home schooling radically different from attending a school?

**SR:** We learn language, knowledge of the world and social interaction from our parents

and other adults in our life right from birth through early childhood. In that way, parents, close family and neighbours are our first teachers, or rather, educators who help us navigate our initial exposure to the world. A home schooling parent can extend this process into the years where a child would have otherwise been in a regular school.

**TS:** Does home schooling mean children can choose anything they would like to do, whenever they would like to, and for a length of time determined by them?

**“This relationship of mutual trust and support, especially during times of need such as now, is critical in bringing parents on board, in discussing the role of the adult in the learning journeys of their children.”**

**SR:** Home schooling parents across the country have taken different approaches to tackle the learning needs of children. Over the years of home schooling, I had a schedule for my children which involved engagement with language and math skills along with content across different subject domains. Reading, writing, numeracy and art were all part of the learning opportunities on most days, with sports and music in the week as well. Other adults were also a part of this journey in supporting the children. In each learning situation, there was space for the children’s curiosity, and questions to gently guide the lessons going forward. But I had a structure, and an awareness of their learning levels. I anticipated and researched material needs in terms of books, worksheets, and media to support their learning.

**TS:** With the pandemic hitting us badly over the past two years, it seems like home

schooling could become the reality for us all, with schools being shut and parents being at home for extended periods of time during lockdowns. Many of our partners are tackling learning in the home front for the first time, and have found it challenging to navigate the space. Can you please share some insights from your years as a home schooling parent, and working with the teachers at Skylight School, that can help us understand this challenge?

**SR:** Hmm, you know, parents are often left out of the equation in regular schooling. Many of the parents of children at schools such as Skylight and many government schools in the area are daily wage workers or in similar jobs, where often both parents are out of the home for work during the day.

Their aspirations are for the upward socio-economic mobility of their children, and so their focus is high marks or grades in the tenth board exams. While this is understandable, the question then becomes how do we enable child-oriented learning that builds life skills, learning skills and exam skills? Since the mad rush nowadays is almost exclusively towards exams, the energy for a real education is lost and the opportunities for learning are squandered along the way.

**TS:** What do you feel is crucial to the involvement of adults, whether teachers or parents, in learning contexts to move away from this focus away from exams?

**SR:** Often enough, exams are an end that justifies the means. So, there should perhaps be a shift in the adults’ perception of learning itself. In my experience of working as a teacher educator, I have seen that many adults, perhaps most, haven’t had positive experiences of learning. They often reproduce teaching approaches they have experienced as children, which has extended into university education and formal teacher education, where text books are blindly read through in class and notes dictated,

memorised and reproduced in exams. If they are not empowered to be autonomous learners, how will they be effective teachers?

**TS:** Are you saying that supporting teachers (and parents) in experiencing the process of learning is key to transforming learning in schools and homes?

**“In an ideal world, the adult should first experience the learning process where they look at a question, or a situation and try to navigate the process of finding answers.”**

**SR:** What I’m trying to say is that teacher autonomy, or rather adult autonomy, is key to shaping learning situations with children. As a home schooling parent, I experienced this autonomy on a daily basis. My approach with learning at home had a structure, and within that structure I chose the learning material that was needed and appropriate for the situation.

If it were a Math class around fractions, there was enough exciting material and approaches already developed, so I didn’t reinvent the wheel. I researched and adopted the material that was most suited for the class - they were available in libraries and on the internet. I also made my own worksheets, but I could decide that this was what was needed, based on the availability of material in other sources while assessing the need of my class. This experience of autonomy was important for me in supporting the learning processes of my children. I had the same experience of autonomy while teaching at CFL.

**TS:** How did you support teachers in your role as a teacher educator to develop autonomy and ownership of their classrooms?

**SR:** When you think of schools where you are looking at large classrooms, may be it

useful to start from the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005. The learning levels and skills in the NCF are very sensible and thought out carefully.

If a teacher is able to move away from the sole dependency of textbooks and be empowered to be able to choose from a wide-range of teaching learning materials, then that would be wonderful. I worked closely with teachers to help them map skills needed to learning levels of individual children, and in helping them identify suitable materials.

It is not only a question of providing access to the material, but also learning the ability to sift through a lot of material, and come to a set suitable for the needs of the class.

At some point teachers can create their own repositories as well, sharing material and approaches with each other. And this can be done for different sized classrooms with children at different learning levels and mixed language backgrounds.

In addition, there needs to be time made available in the daily time table for a teacher’s preparation for class. All these changes take time, of course, and gentle persuasion.

**TS:** How do you manage to persuade teachers who already have heavy workloads and work under pressure to complete the syllabus for the annual exams?

**SR:** That is exactly the tension. When we shift the focus from ‘completing the portions’ for annual summative exercises like exams, and encourage the true spirit of continuous evaluation, time will open up to look at children’s needs. The mad rush to complete content will have to stop.

Children live in a complex environment where they face different stimuli at home and school, interactions with parents, extended family, neighbours and peers. All these influence the readiness of the child towards learning situations at school and home. So,

we can't plan the learning process without awareness of these influences and have arbitrary short term tests and exams that neither allow for a child to learn effectively nor the teacher to support the process sensibly.

**TS:** How do you link awareness of learning and autonomy and extend this from teachers to parents?

**SR:** I had experienced autonomy as a home schooling parent, and as a teacher in an alternative school. So, I could see that this applied in any situation. In an ideal world, the adult should first experience the learning process where they look at a question, or a situation and try to navigate the process of finding answers.

When said like this, it feels like we do it all the time in our lives as adults. But we forget that it should be core to any learning exercise. Why should a classroom, whether at home or school be any different, whether with two children or thirty?

Unless the difference in a learning approach is understood by the adult as not only a 'fun' experience but primarily as an empowering and deeply engaging activity, the adult is most likely to object, going back to their only reference to learning – conventional schooling.

**TS:** Given that many parents are not trained as teachers, and that they may not be able to spend much time with their children given work constraints, how do you foresee involving them in children's learning?

**SR:** This may involve many steps. One, you need to be invested in the community of parents who send their children to your school.

This relationship of mutual trust and support, especially during times of need such as now, is critical in bringing parents on board, in discussing the role of the adult in the learning journeys of their children.

It is important for all parents, and especially parents from low income backgrounds, that the advantages of alternative learning approaches be made visible. You could use opportunities like parent teacher meetings, health camps or ration distribution drives as opportunities of contact for parents to be introduced to their children's learning process and speak with them, listen to their concerns, and express your thoughts on the learning process. It has to be a dialogue, involving listening and sharing.

It is often assumed, understandably, that unconventional education comes at the cost of good grades and eventually compromises chances at employability. The parent must feel assured that this education will only enhance their abilities.

In any case, there are no simple solutions to these issues. Greater awareness and acceptance from government education systems and private schools alike can perhaps hasten acceptance from parents, and, therefore, from society.

**TS:** How does experience of learning transform parents as teachers?

**“I have seen that many adults, perhaps most, haven't had positive experiences of learning.”**

**SR:** Learning transforms everybody! How can we as educators involve parents in a *transformative* learning experience? I don't know. This is a question we need to address to society. In the meanwhile, what we can do is delink daily learning from exams that come many years later. In my experience as a parent educator and school teacher, the skills for children appearing in a performative exercise such as a board exam can be learnt separately closer to the exam. The core skills of reading, writing, comprehension need to be supported in learning situations. Teachers

do that in school while covering content, and parents can support skills at home. They don't have to take responsibility for content.

**TS:** A recent informal survey revealed learning losses in children during the last two years of the pandemic.

**SR:** It is very likely that this involved losing skills. A child who has strong skills in reading, writing, comprehension and math can pick them up easily even when there are gaps. But since the focus is usually on content memorization, many opportunities are lost in keeping skills alive. Parents can be involved with this in a big way at home. Interesting worksheets with graded complexity can be provided to parents that allow them to ask the 'why' questions in addition to 'how' and 'what'. We may have to reimagine worksheets and activities to make this simple and easy for parents to participate in this process.

Once they are convinced that supporting a child's learning at home is not onerous and may not involve a large investment of time, it

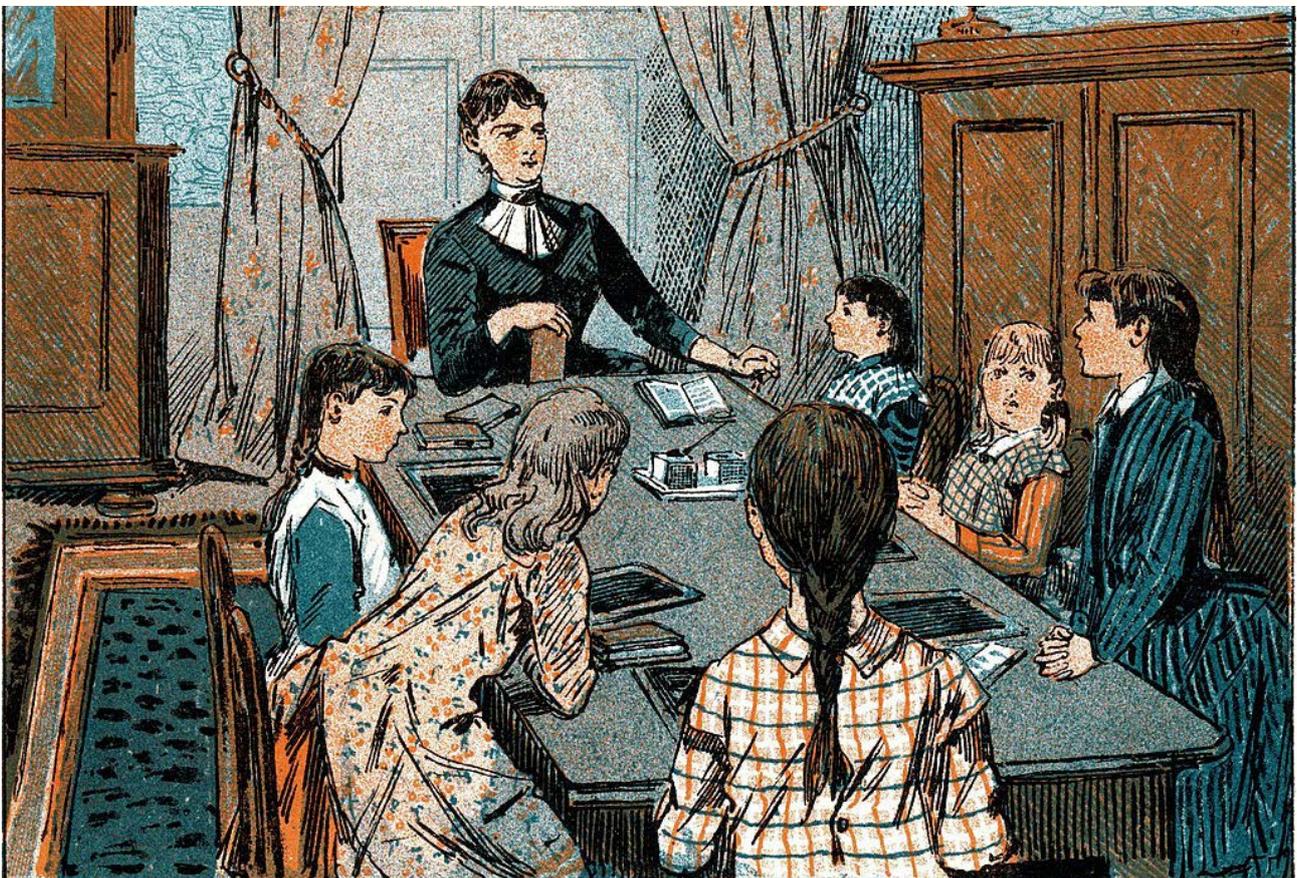
will be potentially transformative. In addition, we need to keep revisiting the need for separating learning from board exams, and bring parents around to the understanding that monthly tests and yearly exams are not a stepping ladder to success in board exams. You can still keep a commitment to working towards a board exam in the tenth or twelfth grade without making it a nightmare for children, parents and teachers alike.

**TS:** That leaves us with much to think about reimagining the role of the home and school environment in children's learning journeys. Thank you for sharing your ideas and experiences. I'm sure these would help many of us to think deeply and go forward.

**SR:** Thank you for the opportunity to articulate many thoughts that I have had for a long time. I found it interesting as well.

**Sangeetha Raj** has been a school teacher, home schooling parent, and teacher educator for nearly twenty five years.

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<https://commons.wikimedia.org>

### स्कूल बंद होने के दौरान और उसके बाद बच्चों को घर पर दी जानेवाली शिक्षा में माता-पिता की भागीदारी से सम्बन्धित दिशा-निर्देश अनुवाद - अर्चना बहुगुणा



Vikramshila

कोरोना महामारी की वजह से स्कूल लगभग दो साल बंद हैं जिसकी वजह से बच्चों की पढ़ाई-लिखाई पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ रहा है। इसी समस्या को ध्यान में रखते हुए शिक्षा मंत्रालय ने 19 जून, 2021 को माता-पिता के लिए कुछ दिशा-निर्देश जारी किए। ये दिशा-निर्देश घर पर बच्चों के लिए सीखने का समृद्ध और सकारात्मक वातावरण निर्मित करने से सम्बन्धित हैं। इस लेख में इस दस्तावेज में प्रस्तुत किए गए महत्वपूर्ण बिन्दुओं का सारांश प्रस्तुत किया गया है।

यह दस्तावेज मुख्य तौर पर बच्चों के माता-पिता के लिए है। इस दस्तावेज में ऐसी गतिविधियों का संकलन किया गया है जिनके द्वारा माता-पिता अपने बच्चों को घर पर दी जानेवाली शिक्षा में उनका सहयोग कर सकते हैं। इसमें बच्चों के विकास के

प्रत्येक चरण के अनुसार गतिविधियाँ सुझाई गई हैं। इसके साथ ही इसमें बच्चों की शिक्षा को लेकर माता-पिता और स्कूलों की बेहतर साझेदारी से सम्बन्धित महत्वपूर्ण सुझाव भी दिए गए हैं। इसमें जिन महत्वपूर्ण बिन्दुओं को शामिल किया गया है उसके मुख्य अंश कुछ इस प्रकार हैं :

- इसमें स्कूलों के बंद होने के दौरान बच्चों के सीखने में माता-पिता, स्कूलों और समुदाय के सदस्यों की सहभागिता से सम्बन्धित दिशा-निर्देश दिए गए हैं। सहभागिता के बारे में जानकारी को 'क्या', 'क्यों' और 'कैसे' में विभाजित किया गया है, जो सभी माता-पिता के लिए प्रासंगिक हैं, चाहे वे पढ़े लिखे हों या अनपढ़। इसमें ऐसी उपयुक्त गतिविधियाँ सुझाई गई हैं जो सीखने में सहायता करती हैं और जिन्हें स्थानीय

वातावरण में उपलब्ध सामग्रियों के उपयोग से घर पर भी आसानी से किया जा सकता है।

- घर में बच्चों के सीखने के लिए एक समृद्ध और अच्छा माहौल कैसे विकसित करें इस सम्बन्ध में कुछ सिद्धान्तों के बारे में बताया गया है। सीखने की निरन्तरता सुनिश्चित करने में सहयोग कैसे करें इसके बारे में भी बात की गई है, जैसे— अपने बच्चे के सीखने के लक्ष्यों के प्रति जागरूक होना, यह समझ रखना कि माता-पिता ही बच्चों के पहले शिक्षक होते हैं, सीखने की प्रक्रिया को सरल बनाना, बच्चों के साथ निरन्तर बातचीत करते रहना, यह समझना कि बच्चे, बच्चों से ही सीखते हैं और इसके अनुसार गतिविधियाँ करना, बच्चों के सीखने के समय, अवधि, स्थान व वातावरण के प्रति सजग रहना। कामकाजी माता-पिता अपने बच्चों का सीखना कैसे सुनिश्चित करें इस सम्बन्ध में भी सुझाव दिए गए हैं।
- स्कूलों के पुनः खुलने की स्थिति में बच्चों को विद्यालय जाने के लिए कैसे तैयार करें, किन बातों का ध्यान रखें, बच्चों के साथ स्कूल के खुलने के बारे में किस प्रकार की बातचीत की जाए आदि।
- इसमें माता-पिता की स्कूल में भागीदारी को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए स्कूल द्वारा किए जा सकने वाले प्रयासों का उल्लेख भी किया गया है, जैसे— माता-पिता को विद्यालय के फ़ैसलों में शामिल करना, जानकारियाँ व संसाधन उपलब्ध करवाना, बच्चों की पढ़ाई के सम्बन्ध में माता-पिता के साथ निरन्तर संवाद स्थापित करना, पूरे सम्मान के साथ माता-पिता के विचारों को सुनना और विद्यालय से सम्बन्धित कार्यों में उनकी समावेशी प्रतिभागिता को सुनिश्चित करना आदि।
- माता-पिता के लिए घर पर अपने बच्चों की शिक्षा में सहयोग करने और सीखने का समृद्ध वातावरण विकसित करने के कुछ सरल तरीके भी सुझाए गए हैं। इसमें मुख्य रूप से आयु के अनुसार बच्चों के सीखने की प्रक्रिया कैसी हो, सीखने की विषयवस्तु में क्या-क्या शामिल हो, बच्चों के विश्राम का समय कितना हो, बच्चों की पसन्द नापसन्द को ध्यान में रखते हुए शिक्षण कैसे हो आदि बिन्दुओं पर बात की गई है।
- इसमें किशोरावस्था में प्रवेश कर चुके बच्चों के जीवन में माता-पिता द्वारा निभाई जा सकने वाली विभिन्न भूमिकाओं का वर्णन भी किया गया है। इसमें बच्चों की किशोरावस्था के प्रत्येक चरण (जैसे— किशोरावस्था, वयस्कता) के अनुसार उनके साथ की जा सकने वाली विभिन्न गतिविधियाँ भी सुझाई गई हैं।
- वे बच्चे जो किसी प्रियजन की मृत्यु से उपजे सदमे या किसी अन्य प्रकार के तनाव और सदमे से गुजर रहे हैं उनके लिए आर्ट थरेपी का उपयोग करने का सुझाव दिया गया है। इसके



BELIEF

तहत प्रत्येक आयु समूह (3-8 वर्ष, 8-11 वर्ष, 11-14 वर्ष और 14-18 वर्ष) के बच्चों के साथ की जा सकने वाली गतिविधियों का उल्लेख किया गया है।

- माता-पिता के लिए बच्चों के सीखने का आकलन स्वयं करने और शिक्षकों द्वारा बच्चों के आकलन के लिए अपनाई जा रही प्रक्रियाओं का हिस्सा बनने के बारे में भी महत्वपूर्ण सुझाव दिए गए हैं। बच्चों के आकलन की प्रक्रिया बहुत महत्वपूर्ण होती है क्योंकि हर बच्चा अलग होता है और हर बच्चे की सीखने की गति भी अलग होती है। इसमें आकलन के विभिन्न तरीके भी सुझाए गए हैं।
- इस अनिश्चित और कठिन समय में दिव्यांग बच्चों की देखभाल कैसे की जाए, उनके साथ कैसा व्यवहार किया जाए और उनके सीखने को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए किस प्रकार के कदम उठाए जाएँ इसका उल्लेख भी किया गया है।
- इसके अलावा इस दस्तावेज में ऐसे माता-पिता का सहयोग करने की बात भी कही गई है जो या तो बहुत कम पढ़े लिखे हैं अथवा अनपढ़ हैं। ऐसे माता-पिता घर पर अपने बच्चे की शिक्षा में किस प्रकार का सहयोग कर सकते हैं, उनके साथ किस प्रकार की गतिविधियाँ कर सकते हैं इस पर भी प्रकाश डाला गया है।
- और अन्त में, इस चुनौती भरे समय में माता-पिता अपना ध्यान कैसे रखें इस बारे में भी कुछ सुझाव दिए गए हैं।

**अर्चना** पिछले २० वर्षों से वैकल्पिक शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में कार्यरत रही हैं। वर्तमान में समग्र शिक्षा पर कार्यरत संस्थान 'स्पेस फॉर नर्वरिंग क्रिएटिविटी' की संस्थापक एवं सचिव हैं।

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**विस्तृत दस्तावेज यहाँ पढ़ें :** (अंग्रेज़ी में)

[https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/MoE\\_Home\\_Learning\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/MoE_Home_Learning_Guidelines.pdf)

# Nurturing Learning at Home

C Sutar

Access to online learning material and resources has improved over the past couple of years. Many organizations have adapted their curriculum to the web and app mode, improving access to worksheets, books, and art learning materials for free. From the plethora of resources available, a few stand out for the thought behind the materials.

## Indian Context Resources

The website of the 'Teacher Plus' magazine, a forum where teachers can raise their concerns, discuss ideas, and share their knowledge, has put together worksheets in Hindi, English, Maths, Physics, Geography, Social Science from Grade 3 to 12. You may want to visit them here - <https://www.teacherplus.org/worksheets/>. This magazine draws from a large pool of contributors from across India, including persons with experience in varied aspects of education. The topics covered range from primary school teaching to tackling board exams to the place of art and craft in learning, and child development and classroom management.

Founded in 1982, Eklavya has made available multiple books in Hindi on Science Modules / विज्ञान मॉड्यूल, Picture Stories / चित्र कथाएँ, Folktales / लोककथाएँ, Poems / कविताएँ, Activity Books / करना और सीखना and many others. Eklavya is perhaps one of the few organizations known for conducting micro-level field-based experiments in education and developing methods and collaborations. Download their books here - <https://www.eklavya.in/eklavya-books-pdf>.

Those interested in exploring material on children's literature can also explore the website of Ektara-Takshila Centre for Children's Literature & Art - <https://www.ektaraindia.in/en/en-publications/ektara-ki-dhun/>. For a collection of activity resources

on art education for all age groups, that are independently accessible without any prior experience of these methods, you may want to visit the website of Art Sparks - <http://www.art-sparks.org/resources.html>.

For resources from government supported platforms, visit <https://epathshala.nic.in/> and <https://nroer.gov.in/> and get access to model textbooks, supplementary material, and digital multimedia materials, in addition to a collaborative platform for everyone interested in school and teacher education.

## Global Resources: Expand Your Horizon

Disability is an aspect of human experience that crosses all boundaries of race, class, and gender, and it leaves a trail in all societies, everywhere. The disability museum collections aim to reveal the rich possibilities and directions disability history offers as a means to study our collective human experience. Browse the website here <https://disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/browse.html>.

The website <https://phet.colorado.edu/> is an exciting resource for teachers with interest in simulation-based teaching. Equally interesting is <https://fossee.in/>, a Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education that promotes FLOSS tools in academia and research. Those looking for high-quality peer-reviewed textbooks can explore <https://openstax.org/>, which aims at improving educational access and learning for everyone by publishing open-license books.

The Global Digital Library (GDL) has been collecting existing high-quality, open, educational reading resources and making them available on the web, mobile, and print for over three years. A unique aspect of this platform is that it offers books in 76 languages. To explore their rich learning archives of 6000+ books, visit <https://digitallibrary.io/hi/>.

# Learning Begins at Home

*A Maggu*

*How do we ensure that children do not drop out of school? How do we ensure that their learning levels do not get affected? What resources could we arrange for the children to continue with their learning? Shall we look at adopting digital solutions? Who in the community or the family could support children with their activities? How do we make learning enjoyable for children?*

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic paused the work of organizations delivering quality last-mile learning to children from underserved communities. To ensure that such children do not lose out on the progress made before the pandemic, such organizations have had to rethink their approaches. Organizations working in varied geographies with marginalized communities adapted to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

In this context, it is difficult to imagine geographies and communities more remote and marginalized than those comprising of

the leftwing extremism affected areas of Chhattisgarh.

## **Facilitating Home-Based Learning in a Remote, Conflict-ridden Geography**

Since 2015, Shiksharth, a not-for-profit organization has been working towards improving the quality of education of children from tribal communities in this region. For the past few decades, a vicious cycle of violence has forced children of the left-wing extremism conflict-affected areas of Chhattisgarh to remain trapped in intergenerational trauma, poverty and poor access to opportunities. The pandemic further exposed these children to additional vulnerabilities.

Neeraj Naidu, Child Engagement Lead at Shiksharth says, “At the beginning of the pandemic, there was faith reposed in digital education technology solutions. However, in the areas that lack required digital infrastructure - access to network, internet,



Shiksharth

Children Building Using Wooden Blocks at Turkapara Learning Centre, Nilawaram

devices and electricity, the adoption of such solutions seemed like a distant dream.” Initially, the state government launched a state-level educational virtual platform named ‘Padhai Tuhar Dwar’ (Education at Your Doorsteps). However, due to the abysmal digital infrastructure, this initiative saw poor participation from the children in this region.

The Shiksharth team developed offline learning kits comprising of worksheets. These kits focus on ensuring that children practice key literacy skills in a personalized and engaging manner without the help of a teacher. The approach was not to teach any new concepts to the children. Instead it focused on minimizing the widening learning gap created by school closure. These kits have content and resources developed by Shiksharth and have been shared by different organizations on the internet. The kits focus on supporting foundational literacy and numeracy skills of children.

These offline kits are grouped for students into three grade levels - level one catering to grades one to third, level two catering to grades fourth and fifth, and level three catering to grades sixth to eighth. Each level consists of 5–6 kits of about 50–60 pages each. These offline kits do not focus on addressing textbook-based syllabi, but on fundamental objectives of the school curriculum. These were complemented with multi-disciplinary contextual projects catering to development of relevant skills and foundational literacy and numeracy.

These projects are facilitated by community volunteers. The organization, to ensure sustainability of its initiatives, takes inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of encouraging the community to take ownership of its institutions. In the wake of the pandemic, multiple restrictions were imposed on the entry of outsiders in villages. Communities were encouraged to take responsibility for their children’s

learning process. Young volunteers from rural communities stepped up to coordinate with Shiksharth and ensure that children in their neighborhoods continue to do the activities from the offline kits. Some volunteers formerly performed odd jobs in the cities.

Neeraj adds, “Some of them were earning a better salary in the cities than the modest compensation we offered. They decided to volunteer in their communities. The youth believed that the children deserved better learning opportunities. Moreover, working for children of their community motivated them to continue.” It might be too early to assess the impact of the offline kits on the children’s learning. The team is optimistic that there will be an increased level of engagement by the students when they return to school.

Whereas offline kits provided the backbone of the home-based interventions of Shiksharth, other organizations in different contexts have innovated with hybrids models combining both offline and online components.

## Minimizing Learning Loss with Hybrid Models

Simple Education Foundation (SEF), an educational non-profit that majorly works in Delhi and Uttarakhand, is one such organization. Founded in 2013, SEF is driven by the belief that every child deserves access to quality education, regardless of their social and economic background. With over 65% of children in India still going to government schools, the team works to design and implement holistic school transformation



Distribution of Ration Kits

programs that aim to strengthen government schools.

Under the Simple School Project's whole school transformation model, they are working with three schools under the South Delhi Municipal Corporation. To bring about sustainable school transformation, the organization engages with stakeholders who directly impact the life and learning of children - parents, teachers, and principals.

In March 2020, the pandemic started posing challenges to the project's progress. Parents of the children enrolled in these schools were daily wage migrant laborers. With the imposition of lockdowns, their livelihoods were jeopardized. Many of them decided to return to their native villages. The families were struggling to make ends meet. Initially, SEF focused on ensuring that the families get the ration support offered by the government and extended well-being support as well.

### Thirdly, the team realized that it was important to not solely rely on digital solutions and opted for a hybrid model.

Across the country, learning remotely using digital platforms was gaining traction. However, it was challenging to blindly adopt it. Prerna Kalra, Associate Director, Simple School at SEF shares, "The children belonging to low-income backgrounds faced additional challenges. Some of their families did not have smartphones, steady network coverage, or adequate internet recharge. A few families had migrated back to their homes in villages. It got difficult for us to contact the children. The team had to revisit its strategy."

Firstly, the team recontextualized their curriculum to suit the digital medium. Technology now gave them the opportunity to share their responses in writing, drawing or using voice notes. Since many of the children

were first-generation learners and in primary grades, SEF focused on making bilingual content that was easy for the children to comprehend. The activities and concepts that were shared on digital medium with parents focused on activities that centered on well-being. For instance, activities on gardening and those that helped them practice gratitude were given.

Prerna adds, "We ensured that the activities did not pressurize students to develop an unhealthy competitive spirit. We gave activities that provided opportunities to children to express themselves and share, engaging with their siblings and parents."

Secondly, the team had to prioritize aiding all the stakeholders to embrace digital solutions. To familiarize teachers with digital platforms and their functionalities, SEF conducted training for teachers, and the teachers further reached out to parents. To bridge the digital infrastructure gap, SEF helped families get mobile tablets.

Thirdly, the team realized that it was important to not solely rely on digital solutions and opted for a hybrid model. After the lockdown eased, parents were encouraged to visit schools weekly or fortnightly to collect worksheets for their children. The SEF team and teachers helped parents with their children's doubts.

Fourthly, SEF was aware that parents need to be nudged to remain committed to learning processes of their children. They were requested to help children with their activities and attend school management committee meetings conducted online or in person. Parents who showed exemplary interest were lauded on WhatsApp groups and in meetings.

Jyotirmaya from SEF shares, "Since many of the parents have barely finished primary or middle school, they were hesitant to confidently guide their children. Many a

times, parents accompanying their children to school would have correct understanding of the activity, but still wished to confirm it with the teachers and our team. We always encouraged the parents to not hesitate in helping the children in their learning.”

The second wave of the pandemic wrecked havoc in the children’s lives as some of them lost their parents to COVID-19. Some of the parents working as daily wage earners yet again lost their livelihoods. Although the possibility of a third wave of the pandemic looms, SEF is committed to ensuring that the learning loss of children is minimized.

Organizations such as SEF have tried to innovate to ensure that the learning journeys of children they have been working with continues. But those educational non-profits who used to directly intervene in other learning spaces such as the playground or in libraries in schools and institutions, have had to rethink their strategies substantively.

### **A Time for Pausing and Consolidating**

Adhvan, a non-profit that conducts regular library sessions in Child Care Institutions

through its Library Program, is one such organization. These institutions house children till the age of 18 years, who have been declared as ‘Children in Need of Care and Protection.’ These children are either orphans, or have been victims of abuse; often they have been abandoned, or have experienced other kinds of trauma and exploitation. Children’s Homes are residential institutions responsible for fulfilling all their physical and emotional needs. The Adhvan team began the initiative with two children’s homes run by Maharashtra State Women’s Council, namely Asha Kiran and Asha Sadan Rescue Home in Mumbai.

Megha, Founder of Adhvan Foundation, discusses the condition of children in Asha Sadan, “Children in these homes are confined to the four walls of the institution. Their days are arranged with fixed schedules where they have no autonomy to make their decisions. For instance, if the children are scheduled to have a meal at a certain time, even if they get hungry before the time, they would not be served any meal. It would not be fair to blame the administration of these institutions, as they are managing with scarce resources



Adhvan

Free Reading Time in the Library

and their staff is severely overburdened. But these children live within the confines of rigidly built structures.”

To create spaces that allow children to freely express themselves and develop agency, Adhvan facilitates library sessions with them. These sessions focus on fostering a love of reading, supporting literacy and language development, and building key life skills.

Yasmin who works as a facilitator of these sessions says, “In our sessions, we use interactive techniques to enhance problem-solving abilities and proficiency in foundational literacy and numeracy. If we discuss a story, we ask children to share what they think about the characters, their actions, and reflect on how they would have acted in similar circumstances.”

The pandemic did put a pause on the work of Adhvan. Guidelines of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015, put the onus on the administration of children’s homes to ensure well-being, facilitate the development of identity and provide an inclusive and enabling environment. Consequently, to ensure the safety of the children, the homes did not allow any visitors. Asha Kiran closed its doors to the street children it served during the first lockdown and plans to reopen when schools reopen. When the lockdown restrictions were lifted after the first wave, Megha tried reasoning with the administration of Asha Sadan; she had to wait till October 2020 to resume library sessions with the institution’s children.

In the beginning of the pandemic, she had insisted that the children be allowed to issue books from the library and have some reading time during the day. The authorities, citing a shortage of staff to manage these activities, and the possibility of books getting misplaced or spoilt, refused to help. Megha adds, “We advocate for open libraries where children can browse and read any book they like, whenever they like. Despite providing the books for the Library and reassuring the

institutions that we are willing to risk having books lost or damaged and that this is a small price to pay for the tremendous benefit of children having completely barrier free access to books, old patterns of functioning within institutions are hard to change. In our absence, they refuse to allow children access to the library.”

**“We always ensured that the parents or elders who accompany the children were trained regularly too.”**

- Dr Shital, AWMH

The second wave again put an abrupt pause to the activities as well. Megha shares, “The children at Asha Sadan spend all their time locked up in the Home. The school and the Home are located on the same premises. It gets suffocating for them to not be able to freely interact with anyone. To ensure children continue on their learning journeys, Adhvan requested the administration of Asha Sadan to allow the children to write letters to the Adhvan team so that they could stay connected. Due to resource constraints, the institution’s staff had been unable to facilitate digital solutions or simpler library interventions through telephone calls. So we thought exchanging letters wouldn’t burden the institution and would enable us to continue to support the well-being of children. The administration agreed but with a caveat that each letter would be read by the administration before it gets posted.” Megha sensed that the children would not appreciate this breach of privacy, and did not go ahead with this initiative.

Adhvan is trying to creatively respond to these challenges. Apart from its ongoing work with Asha Kiran and Asha Sadan in Mumbai, it is exploring collaboration with another children’s home in Mumbai, and has already finalized talks with one in Odisha. The organization is ready to leverage digital media to reach out to more children.

Unlike Adhvan and similarly placed organizations, for other non-profits who traditionally have had to work with caregivers of children, the pandemic has opened up new spaces and opportunities for deepening their collaborations for home-based work with families. This of course has come with additional challenges as well.

## Empowering Families to Facilitate Learning

AWMH is one such organization that has responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic creatively, by consolidating the work that it was already doing. AWMH works towards bringing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities into the mainstream of society, and enabling them to live independently with confidence, self-respect, and dignity. It follows a community-based rehabilitation approach and focuses on a multitude of activities such as creating awareness, prevention, early detection, early intervention, pre-school stimulation, vocational training and economic rehabilitation, social security, self-advocacy, and counseling and guidance.

Early intervention includes a treatment pathway that could remedy existing problems or prevent their occurrence. The practitioners at the centers are well-trained, qualified and experienced, comprising of Special Educators and Occupational Therapists. AWMH runs one of India's biggest early intervention and research projects, with 5 clinics located all over Mumbai and its suburbs. These clinics provide services to infants and children in the age group of 0-6 years.

The practitioners develop an individualized therapy plan that addresses the requirements of each child. The plan focuses on physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional development, and sensory and adaptive development. There are short-term and long-term goals planned for each child. Responses to therapy are monitored

periodically; and if required, the course of therapy is modified. Family members, especially parents, play a key role in the therapy of each child. Since the children are young, they preferably need an adult who looks after their therapy process. In some cases, there are elder siblings too who volunteer to help.



Guided Virtual Speech Therapy

Dr Shital at AWMH explains, “Firstly, we explain to parents about the diagnosis, and the nature of support their child would require. Parents need to be made to understand the challenges their child is facing. During our remedial or preventive therapy, we ensure that parents are aware of the impact of short-term and long-term goals. Every step of the way, parents need to be informed and taken into confidence. We have seen that parents who understand the plan tend to commit whole-heartedly to the treatment of their children.”

In the wake of the pandemic, AWMH altered its approach. They adopted online channels of communication and audio/video calls to reach out to the children and their families. Shital adds, “We always ensured that the parents or elders who accompany the

children were trained regularly too. When the pandemic hit, it did not get challenging for us to continue with the treatment for the children. For instance, if a child is facing problems of spasticity, to improve physical development the parents would be asked to help children practice grasping materials such as a bottle, a ball, or even a bowl. We were happy that during the pandemic, parents were able to step up and continue with the exercises.”

**Putting children’s needs at the center of our concerns, having a collaborative approach toward their caregivers, being open yet agnostic to technology, and quick, creative organizational adaptability seem to be all part of this process.**

During the pandemic, the professionals continued actively following up with families - the status of each child based on goals and achievements was assessed and updated. The online therapeutic and special education training for each child was charted out by the team at AWMH. Parents were explained how to carry out activities through online medium. To encourage the participation of families, regular video conferencing is conducted; when required, one-to-one counseling support for parents is provided. Therapeutic sessions are held through videos that are closely monitored, and some are recorded for peer review.

Videos developed by National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities on how to conduct home-based therapy were shared with parents. Tutorials by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and the World Health Organization

(WHO) were made mandatory for the staff in charge of extending digital support. The promising progress made by embracing digital solutions encouraged the AWMH team to reach out to children in remote villages of Wardha.

### **In Conclusion**

As the experiences of the four organizations we have discussed here shows, there is no simple formula for facilitating robust home-based learning opportunities for children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Putting children’s needs at the center of our concerns, having a collaborative approach toward their caregivers, being open yet agnostic to technology, and quick, creative organizational adaptability seem to be all part of this process.

Home can exist in varied forms - for some, it could be their neighborhood in the village, for others it could be a rescue home. But its role in maintaining the well-being and development of a child remains insurmountable. In the wake of the pandemic, expectations from care-givers in home-based learning got charted out.

With schools reopening, we have to re-imagine their role. In the future, for the holistic development of children, it would be important to ensure the involvement of their care-givers in their learning processes. A system that acknowledges the role of care-givers and capacitates them to support children’s learning should be encouraged. After all, the journey of learning of each child begins at home.

**You can reach out to the organizations featured in this story at:** [Shiksharth-info.shiksharth@gmail.com](mailto:Shiksharth-info.shiksharth@gmail.com) , [Simple Education Foundation- connect@simpleeducationfoundation.org](mailto:Simple Education Foundation- connect@simpleeducationfoundation.org), [Adhvane-meghadh@gmail.com](mailto:Adhvane-meghadh@gmail.com), and [Association for the Welfare of Persons with a Mental Handicap in Maharashtra \(AWMH\)-awmhmaharashtra@gmail.com](mailto:Association for the Welfare of Persons with a Mental Handicap in Maharashtra (AWMH)-awmhmaharashtra@gmail.com)

## Letters to the Journal

“We feel very connected and part of the larger community through this journal. I never believed that we could get so many ideas to deep dive down, learn, use and experiment. Each issue of the journal has been special and reader-friendly connecting to the field as well as philosophy. My gratitude to the ‘Samuhik Pahal’ team for continuing this and hope this can take a long way to our journey.”

- **Malaya Padhan, Patang, Odisha**

“It has been fascinating to read ‘Samuhik Pahal’. It invigorates you to think about so many people engaged in a journey that I have also been on at some time. It is fascinating to realize that there is so much to learn from the passion, experiences, and analyses of the people on the ground.

It repeatedly makes me realize the importance of writing and sharing. And when I write it gives me a sense of purpose, and forces me to reflect over the experiences and in that process discover thoughts that were lying buried and by uncovering them I understand my experiences better. I wish there was such a forum when we were beginning our journeys and where we could pen our thoughts and re-reflect on them.

- **Hridaykant Dewan, Azim Premji University**

“I thoroughly enjoy reading ‘Samuhik Pahal’ - in fact I wait for the mailer to arrive and amongst all the other work, I make sure that I go through the content page and glance through the articles as soon as it arrives. The themes that have helped me the most as a lead for teacher capacity building, and overall for my organization’s development, have been the issues on Experiential Learning, Capacity Building for Civil Society Organizations, and Well-being. In our work, a lot that we learnt from the April Issue on Democratizing Education through Learning Centers - we

were able to translate it to our context as well.”

- **Prapti Bhasin, Aafaaq Foundation, Himachal Pradesh**

“I have glanced through the various ‘Samuhik Pahal’ articles and while I have not read each with full attention, there have been words, sentences, and paragraphs that have caught my attention and made me dwell on the richness of their depths. In such moments I have silently admired the effort that goes into ‘Samuhik Pahal’ and have felt inspired to continue to let the current intensity of action merge into the equilibrium where the feedback from reading becomes just as immediate.”

- **Arjun Trivedi, Karunar Kheti Foundation, Assam**

“Two ‘Samuhik Pahal’ issues stood out for me. The first one was on Rethinking Capacity Building for the very different and rich approaches that were shared by different organizations. The other issue that touched a deep chord was the one on Well Being During the Pandemic - a felt need by most of us due to the pandemic, either for ourselves or for our team members.”

- **Nomita Sikand, Gubbachi Learning Community, Bengaluru**

“When we launched ‘Samuhik Pahal’ a year back, we did not anticipate it would be received with so much enthusiasm. Education is a complex domain where collective engagement is an imperative for progressing on the various challenges of quality and equity. I’m sure ‘Samuhik Pahal’ will play a very meaningful role in this regard going forward, as it builds on its learnings of the past year”

- **Narayan P S, Managing Trustee, Wipro Foundation**



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