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Role of community in enhancing the learning level of Government school Children: My experience in Mayurbhanj district, Odisha

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ABSTRACT

A report: How the relationship between community and school played a big role in enhancing the learning level of children in Government schools of Mayurbhanj in the state of Odisha, India. The current scenario depicts the non-association of schools with communities. In order to build a strong relationship between schools and communities for an overall development of Children aged between 6 to 9 years, CARE India during its intervention in Mayurbhanj district initiated some actions to bridge the gap between school and community. The results mentioned in this paper are quite visible in the community library study report prepared by CARE India.

Keywords — Government school Children, Learning level, CARE India

1. INTRODUCTION

With the passage of time, it has increasingly been felt that the relationship between school and community is inevitable. Development of school without the involvement of the community is like a day dream. Community participation accelerates the school development process. The proper utilization of resources available in the communities can be beneficial for increasing the learning efficiency of children to a greater extent. The current scenario depicts the non-association of schools with communities. In order to build a strong relationship between schools and communities for an overall development of Children aged between 6 to 9 years, CARE India during its intervention in Mayurbhanj district initiated some actions to bridge the gap between school and community, which are as follows.

- It was realized that 95% of the villagers were illiterates but they were very rich in oral culture. They had full of resources like stories, songs and riddles in oral forms. The old oral stories, songs and riddles were collected from the villages through story telling festivals. The objective of collecting these stories was to revive the Adivasi languages from being extinct and to bring their culture to the classrooms in the form stories. Some interesting stories were collected from the community. These were brought to the written form by young children of their village. These stories were again scrutinized and examined by a screening committee formed by CARE INDIA. The committee consisted of pedagogy experts, writers, illustrators and editors. Special care was taken to avoid the stories on violence, Gender discrimination, castes and religion etc. After a thorough examination and edition these were made Grade and age specific. With the consent of the pedagogy experts, nearly 10 types of monolingual and bilingual books were published. Later on, the books were distributed to the Community libraries and adjacent schools as supplementary reading materials for tribal and non-tribal children. These books helped the children in developing the Decoding/Phonics skills of early grade children.
- Some senior most people of the villages were invited to the schools to tell small and interesting stories to the children during the language classes. These were useful to bring the traditional values and beliefs of the communities to the classroom and to enhance the listening comprehension and speaking ability of the children in both tribal and state languages.
- The community members were trained on the basics of early reading skills, which helped them know the exact learning level of children. This also made them able to ask the teachers about the teaching methods for their children.
- Through the community meetings some bilingual word charts. Pictionary chart, dictionaries, Instructional charts were developed and distributed to schools for their use by the school teachers and children.
- The parents were encouraged during the meetings to ask their children about day to day classroom practices and to purchase and develop story books for children.

- The Cluster Resource centre coordinators and the teachers were invited to the community libraries to share their views and suggestions for the benefit of the children.
- Some community libraries were established in the villages

During our 4 years' project period, 50 community libraries were established in 50 villages for linking the communities with schools. Separate meetings were conducted in the villages and the objectives of the community libraries were shared with the villagers. The villagers agreed unanimously to establish libraries in their respective villages. They provided a room at the centre place of their villages. CARE India supported the libraries with necessary accessories and some relevant and useful books appropriate for all category people of the villages. An inaugural ceremony was organized in each village to spread and disseminate the message to other villages too. Initially, it was difficult to run the libraries regularly. Keeping this in view, one library educator was nominated in each village with the consent of the villagers to run some activities in the libraries regularly. Trainings were organized for the library educators on the management of library activities at a regular interval. In course of time, it was noticed that the library educators were not able to devote time for the libraries. As a result, a consensus was taken to engage the Educated Kishoris of the villages on a rotational basis to run the library. They were also trained in the similar way. A guideline was also prepared by the villagers in each village for the smooth management of activities in the libraries.

2. STEPS TAKEN BY CARE INDIA

In order to bring a reading culture in the villages, the following steps were taken by CARE India in the community libraries.

- Stories were being told by the villagers to the children on a rotational basis.
- Bilingual books. Charts. Dictionaries, Instructional charts and Pictionary charts were prepared by the children with support from the elder people.
- These developed books were being used in schools by the children as well as by the teachers.
- The Kishories organized role plays, thematic drawing, painting, storytelling, story writing, and different reading activities for 2 hours with the early grade children on every Saturdays and Sundays.
- In the beginning, there was less participation of the women in library activities. But, the management of libraries by Kishorie groups gradually increased the active involvement women to a larger extent. They read the story books. Medicinal books and books on women empowerment in the libraries and shared with their children. This, in turn encouraged their children to read more. The books on Ayurveda helped them in experimenting the locally available herbs and plants for curing certain diseases.
- The availability of age appropriate books encouraged the villagers to take the advantage of them. They also inspired their children to read the books of their standard.
- The display boards at community libraries portrayed the pictures and writings of the children. This prompted the children to write more.
- Weekly storytelling festivals made the community closer to the libraries and their children.
- Regular issue of story books to the children's home also grew the interest of the elders to read.

The blending of youth and experience gave the libraries a different shape. These libraries were used as the common meeting place for the people. Gradually, the libraries became the epitome houses of the villagers. The leadership trainings organized for the Kishories also bore fruit at last. This helped them to be at par with their counterparts. The participation of Kishories in civic activities such as celebration of International literacy day, Language day, cleaning campaign, storytelling festivals and annual sports persuaded them to come out of the 4 walls of the house and to develop their inherent skill to the fullest extent. These activities slowly minimized the gender gap and created a learning environment not only in the villages but also in schools. The results are quite visible in the community library study report prepared by CARE India.