



Transforming lives through education

February 2014



Education for All

Teaching reform and targeted interventions needed

In January UNESCO published the 'Education for All' Global Monitoring Report 2013-2014¹. Fifty seven million children are failing to learn throughout the world simply because they are not in school. An education system is only as good as its teachers and unlocking their potential is essential to enhancing learning and education outcomes. Evidence from the report shows that education quality improves when teachers are supported and it deteriorates if they are not. Governments must step up their efforts to recruit an additional 1.6 million teachers worldwide and identify strategies to ensure the best teachers reach all children and provide them with a good quality education.

'Education for All' argues that the most important reforms that policy makers should adopt to achieve equity in education include filling teacher vacancies, training teachers to meet children's learning needs, getting teachers to where they are needed most and preparing teacher educators and mentors to support teachers. The Kusuma Trust (The Trust) is supporting 25 secondary schools in the district of Sambalpur in Odisha and 25 secondary schools in the district of Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh, with professional development for teachers, capacity building for Head teachers and learning materials and resources for students.



Students in a maths lesson at Gokulananda High School, Sambalpur.
Photo: Sam Strickland

Pratham Education Foundation published the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)² detailing findings about the state of education in rural India, which accounts for around 70% of India's population. The study reported a steady increase in private school enrolment and private tuition from 2006 to 2013, and an improvement in school facilities. Students in private schools score higher than their counterparts in government schools. This could be due to educated parents, home environments and extra years of schooling compared with students in government schools, and not simply reflect the actual effectiveness of private schools. Private tuition also contributes to better performance. The study concludes that India has a learning crisis that can be improved with targeted interventions and more effective use of existing allocation of resources.

Another study, The Andhra Pradesh School Choice Project³, investigated private versus public education by providing children who were enrolled in free public schools with a voucher to attend a private school of their choice and then tracked learning outcomes for four years. Random selection ensured that treatment and control groups were identical on socio-economic factors and previous school experience. The study found that private schools are worse than government schools on input-based measures of teacher quality, but that they do much better on measures of teacher effort. Private schools were more productive (lower cost per student) as they delivered equivalent outcomes as government schools in Telugu and Maths even with less instructional time, and used the extra time to deliver better outcomes in other subjects (especially Hindi).

"Research is central to the Trust's strategy. By working closely with partners, including Pratham in India, we carry out research to understand access to secondary education and evaluate education outcomes."

Dr Balwant Singh, CEO, Kusuma Trust UK

¹ www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2013

² www.asercentre.org

³ www.povertyactionlab.org/publication/aggregate-effect-school-choice-evidence-two-stage-experiment-india
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Our mission is to facilitate and increase access to education and other life opportunities for children and young people

Classroom micro-innovations

The first Kusuma Teachers' Innovation Conferences were held in January at the Kusuma Resource Centres (KRC) in Sambalpur and Hardoi. The events were delivered in partnership with STIR Education, an organisation that helps improve the quality of education by empowering teachers and head teachers to lead improvement in classrooms with 'micro-innovations'.

48 head teachers and teachers in Sambalpur and 40 Head teachers and teachers in Hardoi took part. The main objectives were to identify micro-innovations in classroom practices, external factors affecting the quality of teaching, teacher accountability and parental and community engagement.



Teachers participating in the STIR workshop at the KRC, Sambalpur.
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

Teachers were introduced to micro-innovations that they could implement in their schools and were encouraged to identify and record their own innovations. Micro-innovations discussed ranged from parental involvement in student tracking to improve school retention and attendance rates in class, filming teachers for self assessment purposes, teaching Maths using real-life data collected in the community and a student letter box in the classroom for students to post letters to their teachers to improve their writing ability.

Following the workshops, participants shared the innovations with other teachers as part of STIR Teachers' Innovation Network. These micro-innovations will be shared in schools, among teachers and head teachers across India.

“Kusuma is collaborating with STIR Education to harness innovative and effective school activities and classroom practices to encourage more teachers and schools to use these.”

Pankaj Vinayak Sharma, Country Leader, Kusuma Foundation

Local communities play their part

Local communities in Sambalpur have started to take more initiative in supporting schools to perform better as part of the Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative (KSPI).

Volunteer teachers have been recruited from local communities to teach in schools across the district, and this has had a positive effect - reducing class sizes and increasing community engagement. Volunteer teachers have spoken with families in local villages to encourage parents to send their children to school. This has had a multiplier effect - parents talking to other parents to do the same. School Management and Development Committee (SMDC) members and Head teachers in schools with volunteer teachers have reported that pupil attendance in their schools increased by 15%.

Schools such as Paramanpur Girls High School have also recruited volunteer teachers independently. The school had struggled to recruit a Hindi teacher and students were unable to learn Hindi, instead having to opt to learn Sanskrit instead. Most students found it difficult to learn Sanskrit and did not perform well in examinations. SMDC members appealed to the local community for a volunteer Hindi teacher. In response, the community identified a trained and qualified volunteer teacher to teach Hindi, enabling the school to offer Hindi classes to students.

Community involvement has also played a part in improving school facilities. Talab High School had no access to safe drinking water in the school premises. There is a well near the school, which is open and dries up during the hot summers. As part of their KSPI plan, the school prioritised a water tank. At the same time, the SMDC raised funds for the renovation of the well from the Panchayati Raj. Now the well has been renovated and water is stored safely in the tank for children to drink on the school premises.



A volunteer Hindi teacher recruited by the local community at Paramanpur Girls High School, Sambalpur.
Photo: Kusuma Foundation