



# Improving Governance in Schools

## Supporting Head teachers and community participation

In India, government policies promote community involvement in school governance. At primary level the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan<sup>1</sup> and at secondary level the Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan<sup>2</sup> (RMSA) guide schools to form School Management and Development Committees (SMDCs). The government's twelfth five-year plan<sup>3</sup> (2012-2017) highlights the importance of community participation in order to hold teachers and schools accountable. The plan proposes to invest in improving educational leadership and management at all levels with a focus on making better use of data collected in schools to improve student learning outcomes.

SMDCs consist of teachers and community members responsible for ensuring student attendance, improving teaching standards and infrastructure, and strengthening the management and governance of their school. There are many challenges in promoting community participation in school governance, including parental views on education and employment, large catchment areas making it difficult to bring members together, and a limited range of organisations and initiatives supporting secondary education and promoting community engagement.

As part of the Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative (KSPI) with 25 secondary schools in HarDOI and 25 in Sambalpur, Kusuma supports Head teachers and SMDC members to improve school governance and community involvement. SMDC members participate in training and receive support to ensure their schools meet RMSA guidelines. SMDC members in KSPI schools develop and track School Annual

Plans for whole school improvement, which includes securing new furniture, electricity connections and safe drinking water, ensuring that teacher and support staff vacancies are filled, and advocating with district and state education departments on behalf of schools.

Since the launch of KSPI in 2013, 49 Head Teachers have participated in School Planning and Financial Management training and 130 SMDC members have taken part in training to better understand their roles and responsibilities. SMDC members and Head teachers meet regularly to share best practice, solve problems and discuss progress in their schools. Kusuma has helped strengthen ways in which the community can hold schools accountable for their children's education including the formation of parent committees to support and oversee remedial teaching activities before and after school hours.

A training manual for SMDCs developed by Kusuma in collaboration with the Vigyan Foundation was launched in Uttar Pradesh in January 2015. Following the launch, the State government is keen to partner with Kusuma to roll out the SMDC manual and deliver training to SMDC members in government and government aided schools across 74 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Kusuma is committed to improving school governance, working with SMDCs, communities and Head teachers through onsite coaching and support, encouraging the use of school performance data to inform further planning and decision making and to ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

*Active participation of the community ensures transparency, accountability and helps in leveraging the cumulative knowledge of the community for better functioning of schools. Field level research has shown that school functioning has improved significantly in places where communities have been involved actively.*

RMSA Guidelines for Community Mobilization & SMDCs

1. <http://www.ssa.nic.in>
2. <http://www.mhrd.gov.in/rmsa>
3. <http://www.12thplan.gov.in>



SMDC members participate in a meeting at P M Government High School,  
Photo: Sam Strickland

### SMDC member volunteers as school caretaker

The Government Higher Secondary School Majhila in Hardoi is a single teacher school with 87 students. As part of KSPI the school was recently provided with new computers and a generator. The Head teacher was concerned about the safety of the equipment in the school. In consultation with Kusuma, the Head teacher raised this concern with SMDC members.

Mr. Shyamu, a member of the SMDC living close to the school, volunteered to act as temporary caretaker until a permanent caretaker is recruited for the school. Mr Shyamu opens the school each day, maintains the school gardens and guards the school premises. He says:

*"In view of the shortage of teaching and support staff, I volunteered to take care of the school until new staff can join. After participating in training sessions with Kusuma, I realised that as part of the SMDC I have certain roles and responsibilities towards the school."*



Mr Shyamu tending the gardens at Government Higher Secondary School Majhila  
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

### Students and SMDCs working together

The U.G Government High School Gormunda in Sambalpur had a high rate of student absenteeism. The school's student cabinet raised the issue with school staff and the SMDC, identifying a lack of clean water and toilets in the school as the main reason.



The student cabinet meet with SMDC at U.G Government High School  
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

The SMDC decided to explore how clean water and toilet facilities could be made available. With the support of Kusuma, the SMDC approached Mahanadi Coalfield Limited (MCL) and Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) to assist. RWSS has supplied the school with a water connection and MCL has agreed to construct separate toilet facilities for boys and girls. SMDC members are encouraged by this achievement and are engaging more with the school's student cabinet. Surendra Nag, a parent representative on the SMDC, said:

*"I never considered asking external organisations for assistance with school facilities. With the encouragement of Kusuma, the SMDC and school cabinet members have been given the confidence to approach the government and companies with a good level of success. I am now more passionate than ever and believe that our joint effort is needed to help improve the school and reduce absenteeism."*

### SMDCs and parents help bridge learning gaps

Kusuma's Secondary School Readiness Programme (SSRP) aims to bridge the learning gaps of students in 50 KSPI schools in Hardoi and Sambalpur through group activities, enquiry-based learning and study camps. The local community, parents and SMDC members in both districts have taken the lead to encourage student attendance and persuade schools to open during the school holidays to implement the programme.

In Aanchalika High School Tabala, Sambalpur, a parents' committee was formed to support the SSRP sessions. In addition, the committee also reach out to students in neighbouring villages to promote the importance of participating in the sessions. Mr. Munsu Sahu a member of the SMDC said:

*"Some of our children were dropping out of school as they were struggling with the subjects and falling behind their peers. Kusuma has initiated this much-needed programme and we are doing everything we can so our children will benefit from it."*

In Hardoi, SMDC members of the Government Girls Inter College Sandila took the initiative to open their school during the holidays to host the Kusuma SSRP. Ms Chitra Sonkar, the school's Head teacher placed an advertisement in the local newspaper to reach out to parents of students to encourage their attendance. Ms Sonkar stated:

*"For the first time in the history of the school, we will remain open during the summer vacation to help students participate in the SSRP. Without the support and cooperation from my SMDC members and parents it would not have been possible for children to come here during the vacation."*