



Transforming lives through education

September 2015



Working in Partnership

Strengthening school governance across Uttar Pradesh

On 11 August 2015, Kusuma partnered with Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)¹ in Uttar Pradesh (UP) to launch a State-wide initiative to strengthen the governance and management of schools. The project aims to promote community involvement and increase the accountability of schools in order to improve the quality of education.

The State Government requested Kusuma's support to partner with RMSA based on the success of work Kusuma implemented with School Management and Development Committees (SMDCs)² and schools in Hardoi in UP. The partnership also builds on a previous collaboration between Kusuma and RMSA to launch a training manual³ for SMDC members in January this year.

The project will strengthen the capacity of 14,500 SMDC members from 971 Government Secondary Schools across Uttar Pradesh. With support from Kusuma, RMSA will develop a pool of Master Trainers to deliver training sessions across the State. An advisory group made up of education specialists and a Kusuma representative will guide the implementation of the project.

The launch featured an orientation programme attended by senior officials including 48 District Inspectors of Schools, education representatives from 72 districts of UP, and 16 Regional Joint Directors and Senior Officials from RMSA. The Chief Guest Mr. Jitendra Kumar, Principal Secretary for Secondary Education in UP, emphasised the importance of SMDCs in improving the quality of education and accelerating school development and wished all those involved in implementing the project every success.

Mr. Vishnu Kant Pandey, Joint Director of RMSA UP said:

“Community involvement is vital for strengthening the governance of secondary schools. The good work of Kusuma in Hardoi with SMDC members and the State-wide launch of the training manual are welcome steps to achieving this goal. We are very happy that RMSA will collaborate with Kusuma on this project to bring a much required focus on community involvement in school governance.”

In India, community participation is widely acknowledged as an important aspect of any education programme. Community involvement is included in the RMSA framework and states that SMDCs should include representation from across communities, a mix of genders and subject experts to ensure that school governance and management benefits from all relevant community inputs.

As part of Kusuma's focus to strengthen governance and improve community involvement, Kusuma supports Head Teachers and SMDC members to plan, implement and track interventions related to their school's development. They participate in regular training sessions and receive ongoing support to better understand their roles, access funds for their school, develop and implement School Annual Plans and identify key priorities to improve learning outcomes for students.



The Joint Director of RMSA UP addressing the attendees at the Launch
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

Kusuma is committed to continuing its work with parents, local communities, SMDCs and Head Teachers through onsite mentoring and encouraging the use of data to inform planning and decision making to improve education outcomes in UP and Odisha.

1. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is India's national scheme for improving the quality of secondary education.
2. School Management Committee Members (SMDC) consists of teachers and community members responsible for the government and management of their school.
3. <http://www.kusumatrust.org/news/monthly-updates/> (January 2015)

Our mission is to facilitate and increase access to education and other life opportunities for children and young people

New inclusive SMDC monitoring tools created

A key focus of Kusuma's work with SMDC members is to equip them with the skills required to perform their roles and responsibilities regardless of their education background and ability.

In July, 115 SMDC members from the Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative schools participated in two training sessions at Kusuma Resource Centres⁴. The sessions provided a platform to discuss what is critical to the delivery of quality education. Participants focused on key areas for improvement in schools, building an understanding of what a 'good school' is, and creating a monitoring and observation tool that can be used by all members.

The monitoring and observation tool will use symbols and illustrations to record findings alongside written text. This will allow SMDC and local community members who may not be able read and write proficiently to be more engaged in the school. Mrs Kanchan Swain is an SMDC member at the Ghosramal High School Naktideul in Sambalpur, who is unable to read and write. She often feels unable to express her views at SMDC meetings and training sessions. She said:

"Though I have been an SMDC member for the last year, I never felt confident in sharing my views at meetings. I believed that because I am an illiterate woman I was not able to contribute to the school development process. But this training with Kusuma proved me wrong and instilled more confidence in me. I now know areas for school improvement and through using the symbols on the monitoring tool I will be able to really contribute and make a difference. I found the discussion on non-written observation indicators very motivating and I have now prioritised using these regularly at my school."

SMDC action improves access to school during monsoons

Each year the approach road to the Government Higher Secondary School Raura in Hardoi suffered from heavy flooding during the monsoons. This made the school inaccessible and resulted in a decline in attendance during the rainy season.

This concern was highlighted as a key priority during the School Annual Planning meeting between SMDC members and the Head teacher. With support from Kusuma, SMDC members decided that they would take responsibility and seek community support. They approached the local Panchayat⁵ and explained the impact it has on students' attendance. As a result of the meeting, Panchayat members agreed to donate funds to the school to resolve the issue. SMDC members personally worked to lay down a new drainage pipe on the road, redirecting the water away from the school and preventing flooding.

"Water logging en-route to our school has created many problems for students and teachers, with most not even attempting to go to school. Together as SMDC members we took responsibility for the concern and with support from the Panchayat have fixed the problem. It gives me immense pleasure to see students & teachers back in school and not having to face the challenge of flooded roads."

Mr Kripal, SMDC member, Government Higher Secondary School Raura

⁴ Kusuma Resource Centres provide free access to educational resources for students, teachers and the local community

⁵ A Panchayat is a local assembly at village, block and district level

Family give back to their old school

As part of their school planning, SMDC members at the Gokulananda High School Batemura in Sambalpur raised concerns about the lack of adequate teaching space. The School had 167 pupils with only two classrooms. SMDC members were unable to secure adequate funds to address this problem.

Mr Debendra Panda is an SMDC member at the school. His family has always felt the importance of being able to give back to the local community with his father previously donating land to the school. Mr Panda approached his brother, an ex-pupil of the school and explained the SMDC's dilemma about lack of teaching space.

Mr. Panda's brother met with the SMDC who convinced him to visit the school. During his visit, Mr Panda's brother witnessed classes being run in the courtyard due to inadequate rooms. He agreed to donate INR 40,00,000 to the school for the construction of an additional building. The construction work is now underway and due for completion in December 2015.

Mr Panda is very proud of his family's involvement with the school and said:

"My brother and I are ex-students of the school and since our school years we've always wanted to do something for the school. I was nominated as an SMDC member two years ago and have been serving the school ever since I retired. When my brother agreed to support the construction of a new building in the school, I was very proud of him. Now, as a family, we really want to improve the academic performance of students."



The new drainage pipe redirecting floodwater away from the school
Photo: Kusuma Foundation