

# WEST BENGAL PRIMARY TEACHERS' WORKSHOP

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

## ABPTA AND UNICEF KOLKATA

Aside from empirical researches, health the Pratiche Trust has also been engaged in dissemination of research findings and generating public debate and discussions on the issues of education. In this course of “practical” intervention it has found and utilised the scope of expanding collaboration with various organisations, important among which are the teachers’ unions. In 2010-11 this collaboration made a successful attempt of generating a wider discussion on the Right to Education. The effort, however, did not confine it only to “deliberation”; rather the unions showed interest in taking up some substantial works into their fold of activities. The process resulted in organizing a workshop to discuss and finalise a programme, titled “Improvement of Schooling”, to be carried out by the members of All Bengal Primary Teachers’ Association (ABPTA) that organised the meeting in collaboration with the Pratiche Institute. Held on 17 September 2011, at Kolkata the workshop was attended by 119 teachers from across the state; some academics, representatives of UNICEF and government officials. After a thorough discussion of a concept note presented at the meeting the participants resolved the following programme:

- School toilets
  - Should be used regularly by the children
  - Should be cleaned after use for the next child’s use. A good way to ensure this might be for the teacher to invite parents/guardians and interested residents of the village to join a clean-up drive at school. The necessity of a separate toilet and its role in drastically reducing the dangers of water-borne diseases must be made explained.
- Washing hands before and after the mid-day meal, cleaning one’s plates and bowls, throwing leftovers and remains at a particular place etc. are important lessons.
- At every school
  - There must be wall magazines, which must be changed every month.

- Arrangements to paint pictures on the walls must be made. Efforts must be made to make the schools an attractive place.
- Emphasise the need for writing. Try to schedule short nature trips for children and ask them to write about it. Children will enjoy such trips, and it will encourage them to write.
- Organise weekly literary meetings or cultural events, keeping in tune with the local culture.
- Establishing a relationship with parents and local public. Since most teachers return home to cities or urban areas at evening, and most parents work during the day, this is a difficult to schedule. But it is vital that teachers arrange meetings at least once every 15 days, if not weekly. Discussions about nutrition and health, and inviting the local health worker or I.C.D.S worker and build up an environment of awareness.
- Make the school ground attractive. This will be done by the children – the teachers' role will be to encourage and help them. Additionally, those schools that have some land should plant various fruit and vegetables, which can feed children in the immediate future.
- Discuss new teaching methods, the influence of private tuition et al with parents/guardians. The science of learning is not merely the educator's domain – it should be shaped by contributions from a wider public.