

Setting up of Pratichi Teachers' Resource Centre in partnership with Cry at Santiniketan

In its decade long journey the Pratichi Trust has gradually expanded its interventions to achieve the goal of attaining equitable elementary education (and health) for all. Beginning in May 2001, with an empirical research on the delivery of primary education in West Bengal, the research team set up by the Trust carried out a number of field enquiries, which helped generate public debate and discussions on the issues of primary education, child nutrition, public health, and policy changes required to achieve them. The Trust has simultaneously organised public discussions with parents, teachers, members of the administrators, academics, and other members of society. In this course it has established a strong relationship with teachers and teachers' unions, and initiated collaborative projects with them, particularly on the Mid-day Meal and better schooling practices. The collaborations were extended further with partnership of government authorities, such as the District Primary School Council (DPSC), Sarva Shiksha Mission, and international agencies such as the UNICEF and Child Rights and You (CRY).

The collaborative effort of improving schooling systems took an effective route in Birbhum, where the Trust, in partnership with CRY, has been working in 100-odd primary schools, documenting newer initiatives in education. In the course of this study, we have discovered excellent leadership qualities in many teachers, along with a steadfast dedication and innovative deliberative capabilities. On the other hand, we also found, during our interactions, that most of them felt constrained by their immediate circles. To develop their potentials to the full, and encourage others to do so, they needed a platform of wider interaction, both amongst their professional peers and society at large, particularly researchers and policy makers. The teachers' resource centre, set up in partnership with CRY at our Santiniketan project office, aims at becoming just such a platform which will initiate and nurture creativity and new ideas aimed at improving primary education.

The inauguration of Centre took place on 31 October 2011, at 4PM. It was attended by primary school teachers, some secondary school teachers, and former chairperson of the DPSC and current adviser to the Pratichi Institute Gautam Ghosh, amongst others. Despite her very busy schedule, Ms Antara Dev Sen, Managing Trustee of the Pratichi (India) Trust found time to

attend the function. The event culminated in an open conversation amongst participants about the expectations and effective functioning of the Centre.

The centre will begin with the following goals in mind:

1. Regular meeting of the teachers to share experiences. Gradually these meetings will be organised at the cluster levels.
2. Meeting between teachers and others for carrying forward academic discussions on education and other developmental issues.
3. The Centre will provide the teachers and others interested in educational activism reading and other materials on various aspects of education, health, nutrition, etc. A library is being set up for this purpose.
4. Teachers will start writing their experiences, which will be published by the Centre for larger audiences.
5. Teachers will be provided with professional support on research and documentation.
6. Some study-visits for the teachers, inside and outside the district, will be conducted by the Centre.