

Pratichi (India) Trust

**Fifteenth Annual Report
April 2013 to March 2014**

A-708, Anand Lok, Mayur Vihar – 1

Delhi -110 091, India

Telephone / Fax: 011-22752375

Website: www.pratichi.org

Trustees

Amartya Sen	Chair	Lamont University Professor of Economics And Philosophy, Harvard University, USA
Antara Dev Sen	Managing Trustee	Editor, <i>The Little Magazine</i> , Delhi, India
R.K.P Shankardass	Trustee	Senior Advocate, Supreme Court, Delhi, India

Advisors

Emma Rothschild	Director, Center for History and Economics, Harvard University, USA
Jashodhara Bagchi	Academic, Kolkata, India
M.S Swaminathan	Chairman, M.S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, India
Nabaneeta Dev Sen	Academic and writer, Kolkata, India
Pratik Kanjilal	Publisher, <i>The Little Magazine</i> , Delhi, India

Address

A-708, Anand Lok, Mayur Vihar – 1, Delhi -110 091, India

Telephone / Fax: 011-22752375, Website: www.paratichi.org

AIMS

The aims of this organization are:

- To promote education, with special emphasis on basic and primary education.
- To facilitate education and healthcare for the needy, especially girl child.
- To pursue humanitarian causes and charitable activities, and work towards social equality.

Activities of Pratichi (India) Trust 2013-14

Introduction

The Pratichi (India) Trust initiated its journey in 1999 as a research institute dedicated to the cause of education, health and gender equity. Chaired by Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen, the Trust had been founded with a part of his Nobel Honourarium. Since its inception the Trust has worked extensively in West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha on diverse aspects related to the delivery of public education, health and nutrition initiatives. Of late, Himachal Pradesh and the north eastern states of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura have also been brought under purview of the Trust's research activities (See Section 1.1a). Research on delivery of primary health and education facilities in Jharkhand and north eastern states has also been completed successfully. In 2011, the Pratichi Institute was established to broaden the span of the Trust's research activities. Since then, Pratichi Institute has displayed remarkable acumen in analyzing the primary education and public health scenario of West Bengal and Bihar. Apart from research, there has been a major educational intervention in Primary schools across West Bengal in the form of Reading Festivals. Partnered with CRY, a leading national level NGO, Pratichi Institute has been working consistently with 128 schools in Birbhum (See Section 1.2). Besides, the Institute has built up a committed and enthusiastic band of teacher-volunteers across the state who single-mindedly pursue the cause of quality education (See Section 1.8a).

Besides research activities, Pratichi runs a school in Jagatsinghpur, Odisha for underprivileged children and conducts literacy drive, healthcare delivery and awareness programmes in neighbouring villages (See Section 2).

In Himachal Pradesh the project 'Education through creation' takes into its fold underprivileged children, children from marginalized communities working as child labourers and aims to enroll

and retain them into formal schools. This academic mainstreaming activities is carried out through reading, creative writing, drawing and collection of local folk tales (See Section 3). Working on a wider scale in Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Tripura is on Pratichi's agenda.

In this course, Pratichi has built up academic partnerships with organizations like the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata (IDSK), Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), Patna and others. Interactions are on with the University College of London and some other international academic institutions. It has also been partnering with UNICEF, CRY, and Government of West Bengal and other important social sector functionaries.

This report details the research interventions and activities of the Trust in the year 2013-14.

1. The Pratichi Institute

A concise statement on Pratichi Institute's research and activities during the period of 2013-14 has been detailed out below.

1.1 Research Studies

1.1a Status of Elementary Education in Eastern India

Pratichi collaborated with UNICEF on a research study aimed at assessing the status of elementary education in five states of eastern India: Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Odisha and Jharkhand. The principal aim of this study was unearthing and interlinking of different interactive factors and institutions that influence the delivery of elementary education in these states. Adding to it, the study endeavoured to discover the unrecognized instances of individual achievement on the part of the teachers and school/education personnel which add quality to the public education delivery. This exercise included several discussions with individuals and groups about the pitfalls of the education system so that they could be addressed as and when the problem arises. The study was initiated with detailed review of literature and available data from

District Information System of Education (DISE), Census and other sources. It was followed by meetings with state government officials from each of the states.

The report has also specifically pointed out some of the gaps in the education system and their inter-district variations. The project started in September, 2012 and the report was submitted to UNICEF in February 2013.

The main findings of the exercise are:

- States like Mizoram and Tripura had been successful in implementing public elementary education system to considerable extent but Jharkhand and Odisha had a lot to catch up with.
- Tripura displayed remarkably well planned, functional public education system. The primary reason behind it seemed to be the state's active intervention in ensuring and using the dedicated fund.
- Mizoram exhibited significant community participation and teacher resource which was a constant support to the public education system.
- Odisha's highlight was its school inspection system called Samiksha which in the long run ensures quality to the system.
- It was noted after the analysis of the secondary data that proper implementation of the RTE act seemed essential since it addressed the inequities that cause the discriminations in performance of various districts within the same state. Tied to the discriminations and inequities, lie the limitations and the constraints of the system like difficulties that lay in the way of resource allocation, lack of rationalization in resource allocation and improper usage of existing human resource, of each state which the report explored minutely.

1.1b Evaluative Support to the Mid-Day Meal Programme

The Evaluative support of Mid-day Meal Programme prepared for the Department of School Education, West Bengal was based on the analysis of field level processes and outcomes of 400 primary and upper primary schools in Malda, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri and Kolkata. This report brought into light some of the strengths and deep seated weaknesses that continue to run through the system.

The literature study and questionnaire preparation for the report was initiated in November, 2012. The final report on 'Functioning of Cooked Mid-day meal programme: Report on monitoring of the programme in Malda, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri and Kolkata' for the Directorate of School education was duly submitted in October 2013. The report has been uploaded on Pratichi's website.

The study highlighted the following findings:

- The quality of the meal served to the children positively compliments the overall performance of the school.
- The report confirmed that the children with poor socio-economic background became the worst victims of the delay in launching the programme. In other words, it was the section that deserved most was found to be the most neglected.
- The problems detected by the survey pointed out at the scope and urgency of major improvements in many areas including ensuring regularity in transferring funds, bettering the quality of ingredients used for cooking and so on.
- Unless the meal was seen as an integral part of schooling it would be bound to encounter one or other problems; education being an equity enhancing achievement essentially requires its process to be equitable.

1.1c Research and Action for the Implementation of the Right to Education Act 2009 in West Bengal

Though the 2011 Census showed considerable improvement in West Bengal's educational scenario, there continued to remain some nagging inter district disparities that steadily hindered the progressive outcomes. With these findings in the offing Pratichi, in collaboration with UNICEF, conducted a comprehensive study in the five educationally backward districts of the state, namely, Purulia, Bankura, Uttar Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad. This study was aimed at developing a clearer understanding about the lapses in the implementation of the RtE Act and working out potential solutions for it. The project embraced the opportunity of empirical study as well as public discussion forums like a number of teachers' workshops and parent-teacher meetings in the districts.

Some of the main points found in the study are given below:

- Necessity of rationalization of resource allocation is the foremost requirement for proper implementation of RTE in every school.
- There is also a dire need to bring about orientation changes within the teachers, officials of the education department, other state functionaries and the public in general regarding delivery of education.
- Interesting and revealing set of facts that came forth stressed strongly in favour of mid-day meal which had positive influence not only on enrolment and attendance but also on overall schooling process.
- Components like classroom experiences, teachers' relationship with the students and degree of motivation, teaching-learning methods, accessibility of the school, availability of toilets, proper resource allocation, well placed supervising mechanism and community participation contribute significantly to the children's coming to school and receiving quality education.

1.1d Status of Child Protection in Juvenile Justice Homes in West Bengal

A study was undertaken to find out the status of child protection in Government and NGO run Juvenile Justice Homes in West Bengal in association with the Railway Children with the support of Department of Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal. The study aimed to address the lack of information about the children who live in the Juvenile Justice homes in West Bengal in terms of their identities, health condition, and access to education under Right to Education Act, protection, participation, and system of reunification with respective families, follow up after reunification with families and aftercare facilities. The study was conducted over a period of about six months, covering 15 homes (9 Government run and 6 under care of NGOs) across the districts of West Bengal.

The report was submitted to the Department of Social Welfare in January 2014.

The study brought to light numerous interesting and, at times, somewhat disturbing findings:

- It was found that contrary to Government Directives, in all government homes the children categorized as Juvenile in Conflict with the Law (JCL) and Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) were kept together. Further, the JCLs were kept confined to

their rooms and were not allowed to avail basic opportunities of schooling or vocational training.

- The plight of the girls, who had been detained at homes for under-age marriages, was difficult as well as unbearable.
- Around 24 percent of the JCLs in these homes were from Bangladesh. These children involved in the lengthy Government procedures for repatriation were being forced to stay away from their homes and families.
- Although restoration and social rehabilitation were the prime objectives of every home, in most of the cases, the efforts directed were inadequate.
- While the CNCP regularly attended school and pursued education, the JCLs were either given informal education or left without their educational needs attended for.
- Health check-ups for the children were conducted at irregular and infrequent intervals.
- The authorities blamed the irregularity of fund disbursement and shortages of financial allotment for these shortfalls which bear their effect on the resident children. Finally, an absence of well trained and child friendly workers was a common detrimental feature in most of the homes.

1.1e Essential Health Care Programme

The Essential Health Care Programme, an initiative of the Paschim Banga Sarva Shiksha Mission and UNICEF, Kolkata invited Pratichi as its research partner where the hygienic initiatives of 50 schools of Malda, Purulia and Jalpaiguri were documented, analyzed and studied. As part of this initiative UNICEF, Kolkata in collaboration with the Pasachim Banga Rajya Sarva Siksha Mission (PBSSM) proposed to try out a package of activities, named Essential Health Care Programme (EHCP), in a number of schools in selected districts with a view to identifying and institutionalizing practices that would best address the key bottlenecks against good health indicators among the school-going children of the state. The report was submitted to UNICEF in December, 2013.

Some of the major findings of the report are:

- Water facility inside school compound was available in 95 percent of the surveyed schools, however, only 75 percent of the schools reported to have adequate quantity of water.
- In 33 percent of the schools with effective availability of water, children reportedly faced difficulty in accessing the source of water. Arrangement of washing hands with soap was available in 87 percent of the schools, but, supply of soap was uninterrupted only in 77 percent of the schools.
- While, practice of washing hands with soap before *meal* was found in 88 percent of the school, only in 32 percent of the schools all the five stipulated steps of proper hand washing was reportedly followed.
- The survey found major inter-district variations, particularly between Purulia and two other districts. While in both Malda and Jalpaiguri number of schools with sufficient availability of water was more than 80 percent, corresponding figure for Purulia was only 50 percent.

The midline follow up programme, carried out by the Pratichi Institute's team, which was entrusted to document the process, included a survey of 10 schools from each of these three districts to ensure the continuity of the hand washing practice and the level of awareness about the basic hand hygiene.

1.1f Analysis and documentation of the Utkarsha Abhiyan

Improving the standard of education delivered in the schools in the Government sector, requires, a set of interventions, namely, sufficient and appropriate engagement with teachers, parents and community members on the issues of quality of learning, external evaluation of level of learning of the children and sufficient academic monitoring, which would generate wider public awareness on these very important issues. In this context, a process of assessment was taken up by the Department of School Education, West Bengal and The Paschim Banga Sarva Siksha Mission. Pratichi Institute was invited to facilitate analyzing and collating the data collected by the Department. The title of the exercise, "Utkarsha Abhiyan", literally means "Campaign for Excellence". The assessment was carried out through 247865 observations made among students of standard 3 and 4 selected from 13,002 (26.1% of the total) primary schools across the state.

The evaluation was done on the proficiency in three major fields of learning, namely, reading, writing and numeracy.

The report was submitted to the Paschim Banga Sarva Shiksha Mission in March, 2014.

Some of the findings are provided here:

- The average enrolment per school was recorded to be 111 (ranging between 67 and 173).
- The data show large inter-school variation in this regard. District wise variations in the rate of attendance were also observed.
- In more than two-third of the schools the PTR was reported to be below 30. Serious teacher shortage was observed in Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and South 24 Parganas.
- Female-male ratio in each component was found to be adverse towards the girls; and, as the exercise progressed from the perceived easier component of reading to the perceived difficult components, namely, writing and mathematics, the number of girls selected for the test declined.
- The girls performed better than the boys in the actual test.
- It was found that performance of numerical skill (77 %) was fairly better than reading (66 %) and writing (68%); ability to read fluently was found to be the weakest area.

1.1g Situational Analysis of Secondary Education: Access, Participation and Nature

Pratichi Institute in association with UNICEF, Kolkata carried out a study on the Prospect and challenges of Secondary Education in West Bengal. The findings of this situational analysis were disseminated to UNICEF, researchers, teachers, educational officials in a workshop on December 7, 2013. The report has been uploaded in Pratichi website.

The situational analysis showed:

- Participation of youth in vocational courses was found to be poor; sadly, girls lagged far behind in this respect both quantitatively as well as qualitatively.
- Though 80 percent of secondary students pursued free education against 48 percent in the country, expenditure in private tuition in general in West Bengal was very high, that

made the average per capita expenditure in secondary education in the state 44 percent higher than the national average.

- Overall participation in secondary education had increased in recent years though a huge amount of enrolment was wasted during the transition from standard 5 to 6 and from standard 9 to 10, with better proportion of girls participating in such examination.
- Lower ratio of upper primary schools to that of primary schools was another concern, as a large portion of students of upper primary level drop out due to non-availability of schools and of facilities therein. The rural areas of the state lacked upper primary as well as secondary schools in a far greater extent compared to the urban areas.
- Facilities like laboratories, libraries, classrooms etc. were found to be insufficient; opportunities related to co-curricular activities and availability of hostels are poorer than expected.

1.2 Pratichi-CRY Project

Pratichi's collaboration with CRY is now in its fourth year. The project directed at Documenting the Schooling Processes and Changes and Initiative for School centric Development functions within 128 primary schools located in 8 Gram Panchayats [Ruppur (Bolpur-Sriniketan Block), Bilati (Illambazar Block), Kendua (Suri-2 Block), Kariddhya (Suri-1 Block), Bhurkuna (Suri-1 Block), Tantipara (Rajnagar Block), Barshal (Rampurhat I Block) and Kusumba (Rampurhat I Block)] in Birbhum. The project has played a significant role in improving the functioning of the school, developing teacher potentials and building meaningful liaison with the community and local Government agencies at large. After having worked in close association with a number of primary teachers for a long time, the project now enters a new phase.

Teachers' Resource Centre

The most important achievement in this phase was the establishment of a teacher resource centre at Pratichi Shantiniketan office. The teachers of primary schools in Birbhum who have been working with Pratichi for quite some time, having organized and participated in Reading Festivals and Annual workshops have voluntarily proposed to build up a teachers' network which would serve as a sharing platform for them and spread the message of joyful learning far and wide. They have proposed to orient other teachers and spread the message of quality education in far flung areas. The teachers' resource centre has 49 enrolled primary teachers in its fold. The teachers meet at regular intervals and, with the help of Pratichi, organize workshops. These workshops are not merely verbal exercises but also interactive and networking forums where the teachers can voice, discuss and find solutions to their problems at hand.

The Reading Festival

The reading festivals started afresh in a few schools. The programme stretched for three days, the first two days were used for promoting wall magazines in the participant school. The festival began with an introductory session, then the students were divided into groups. Each group was provided with one set of puzzles made with charts and cards. This activity helped the students learn about team work. Next, the students were provided with separate story/feature books for reading. In sharp contrast to their school text books, these books were full of stories and coloured pictures, The bright colourful illustrations appealed the children greatly. The children picked up books of their own choice, which, they were to take home to read, after the event was over. Story reading session, dance and musical performances by the students were held. After lunch a few students read aloud a small passage from his/her own book in front of an audience. Encouraged by seeing their peers, a few other students came forward and tried to read as much as they could. Lastly each child shared their experience by writing on a piece of paper. Feedback given by the teachers was encouraging and enlightening for futures ventures.

Subsequent teacher-parent interactions following the festival have now become a regular feature within communities which helps in critically assessing the reading and writing skill of every child. After every reading festival the teachers of the participating schools assess the academic progress of each child and the results are shared with the parents by the teachers. Around 350 children's academic assessment has been shared in these interactions.

Quality teaching, community participation, creative teaching-learning methods, infrastructural developments are the watchwords of every meeting and workshop. The teachers of Birbhum had been escorted by Pratichi to Vikramshila (Burdwan) and some Government schools in Jhargram, West Medinipur for 'sharing workshops'. On the field trips they interacted with local teachers and shared information. In another workshop the two Pratichi-CRY publications *Shishura ki Pichiye Pora?*, a booklet about so called "first generation" learners penned by two primary teachers from Birbhum, Moloy Bhattacharyya and Tapas Bhattacharyya and *Kolomkoli*, a children's magazine were released. A national campaign routinely organized by CRY (Child Rights & You), for ensuring children rights in our country was also carried out with gusto. Signatures of teachers, students, officials, parents, were collected as part of this campaign. Since the adult citizens have voting rights, children were endowed with the same responsibility to vote regarding their awareness of rights.

Pratichi played a catalytic role in organizing the post reading festival community level interactions. The reading festivals have successfully provided a platform for the teachers to gauge the reading and writing skills of their children which they share during the community interactions.

Sharing workshops took place at Bhurkuna and Kendua Gram Panchayat in Birbhum. Primary school teachers who had earlier been to Pratichi exposure

tours to Himachal Pradesh shared their experience, learning and views in the workshop.

A survey is being conducted in all the 128 schools in order to review the school's improvement in terms of quality of education imparted, infrastructure, Mid-day meal, hygiene standards, teaching quality, and teachers' involvement, dropout rate and retention mechanism. The purpose of the survey is to identify the changes in school after implementation of RTE, functioning of SSM & UNICEF. Another objective is to make a temporal comparison (between 2010-11 and now) of the functional status of the schools.

1.3 Professor Amartya Sen's visit: Planning of the Health Project

Professor Amartya Sen's visit to Pratichi Institute's new office in Salt Lake, Kolkata on January 3, 2014 was indeed a day to remember. During the official meet with the researchers and other members, Professor Sen set the guidelines for the forthcoming Pratichi Public report. Public health delivery at the grass root level was taken up as the central theme of the project which would include not only the village households, sub centres, public health centres and rural hospitals but Anganwadi centres (as nutritional units), public distribution system also. It was planned that the study would be conducted in stipulated rural and urban areas in Bankura, Dakshin Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri and South 24 Parganas. Following this discussion, preparations were to be made for undertaking the study at the field level in early next year.

1.4 Public Discussion

1.4a Pratichi Annual Workshop 2013

Pratichi's Annual workshop has a tradition of providing a leading platform regarding discussion related to public education and health delivery. Pratichi's 12th Annual workshop held in Shantiniketan was in no way an exception. Pratichi Institute's annual workshop 2013 was held in Malancha Prathamik Shikkhak Shikkhon Prangon in Shantiniketan, Birbhum. There were 200 odd participants most of whom were primary teachers. Secondary and College teachers, college professors, teacher-trainers, teachers from destitute homes, education officials, and elected representatives also formed significant part of the participants. The subject of discussion was "The Quality of education: Ideas and Reality". The workshop was scheduled for two days. The

first day was dedicated to workshop activities. The participating teachers were divided into eight groups each led by a group leader. The groups discussed “Quality of education” from different perspectives and made their presentations at the end of the day. The second day was more of an open forum where the teachers, academicians, member of teachers’ organization and other education officials walked up to share their views, confiding in difficulties, spelling out solutions and generally sharing their vision about the future of their schools and the education scenario in the larger context. The valedictory address was delivered by Professor Amartya Sen. He adroitly summed up the problems faced by the Indian elementary education system and suggested possible solutions to the problem of maintaining quality in primary school education and evaluation system. His speech emerged as an effective and workable turnkey to the bottlenecks plaguing the state run primary education system that had been discussed in the course of the two day long interaction. The focal point of Professor Sen’s lecture was the importance of primary education in the larger context of development and prosperity of the state. The annual workshop report is available in Pratiche website.

1.5 Meetings, Seminars and workshops

1.5a 11th Kolkata group meeting

The Kolkata Group led by Professor Amartya Sen is an annual platform which brings together different development practitioners, policy makers, thought leaders, NGO representatives, academics, journalists, celebrities, and politicians to deliberate on ways of advancing social justice, human development and human security in India. This year the theme of the eleventh meeting was ‘Curing India's Health System: Learning from Asian Experiences’. The programme was organized by Pratiche (India) Trust, Harvard Global Equity Initiative and UNICEF, India on February 17 - 19, 2014.

1.5b 4th CESI International workshop

An international conference on education is a right platform for the purpose of dissemination and exchange of research results involving all these areas and related fields. The Department of Economics, University of Calcutta, as a part of its centenary celebration, hosted this international conference under the aegis of the Comparative Education Society of India (CESI). Three

premiere research institutes of Kolkata – the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), The Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata (IDSK), and the Pratichi Institute – co-operated in the effort of the University. Pratichi’s initiative was spearheaded by a group of primary teachers who read their papers on how they fought with difficult situations like dropping out, language problems, retention of children, schooling in backward area and so on. This was perhaps a unique exercise, in the sense that the grass-roots level participants narrating their experiences before the high echelons of academia. Pratichi researchers also presented research papers on different aspects of education.

1.5c Capacity enhancement workshop

Pratichi Santiniketan unit organized two workshops especially for interaction on different issues related to education. It was expected that these sessions of intellectual churning would enhance the cognitive capabilities of project team members. The first workshop was coordinated by Gopa Samanta, Associate Professor of Geography, University of Burdwan. Ms. Samanta is well versed with the gender issues and initiated the session from that angle and the day was devoted for a critical engagement on the subject.

The second workshop was moderated by Sangram Mukherjee. He described some methods of Qualitative Research like SPSS, STATA). Both the meetings were successful and instrumental in strengthening the knowledge base of the team.

1.6 Talks

1.6a February, 2014

Noted journalist Anirban Chattopadhyay visited Pratichi Institute and delivered a talk on “Individual and Society: Dialogue and Construction”. He initiated the talk with the controversial comment made by Margaret Thatcher in 1987 “There is no such thing as society”. In India, the *thatcherite* policies have been ingrained in the making of several policy decisions. “Individual” has taken a very big role in our policy thinking and the way it is being shaped and implemented. Today Indian policy designing clearly emphasizes on creating connect between the nation and an individual rather on collective effort and societal responsibility. He shared his deep concern about the dominant entry that market has made into our daily lives and how it has made a sturdy impact on the way in which communications are being conducted and relationships are being woven. While concluding he returned to Margaret Thatcher quoting her

“work is not only a means of earning income but is your whole social life” emphasizing that the Iron Woman who had negated the existence of society also had to affirm the role of social capital and the impact of human relationships in the shaping of the nation.

1.6b March 2014

Professor Pranab Bardhan, a celebrated economist and Professor of Graduate School at the Department of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley visited the Pratichi Institute, Kolkata office and delivered a highly informative and inspiring talk. His talk was primarily based on the current changes in the political scenario in West Bengal and the riveting factors that guided this change. The findings were based on a survey of about 2400 households spread across 90 villages in 17 districts of West Bengal. He talked about "political clientelism" as the mainstay between the voters and the elected representatives in West Bengal. He volleyed quite a number of questions from the researchers with utmost ease and etched out a memorable presence within a short expanse of time.

1.7 Publications

1.7a Shishura ki pichiye pora

This booklet deals with the so called “backward first generation learner” in primary schools who according to many teachers continues to impede the general progress. The booklet was written by two primary school teachers from Birbhum Moloy Bhattacharyya and Tapas Bhattacharyya. They eloquently elaborated their experience with these children and revealed how a little understanding and hand holding on the part of the teachers can create a huge difference in bringing them in to the mainstream of education. They have also provided with effective hands on suggestion which would help teachers in managing difficult classroom situations.

1.7b Kolomkoli

This is a through and through primary school children publication. Children from 128 schools across the district of Birbhum contribute their creative writing and artwork to this magazine. This magazine provides a platform so that these children can carve individual creative niches of their own. It is also their initial steps into the world of printed letters.

1.7c Poranor Anande

Poranor Anande or the Joy of Teaching is a collection of primary teachers' writings where they enthusiastically share their experiences of adjusting in an alien school and making the best use of it. The inspirational anecdotes of 5 teachers from North 24 Parganas shows how love for children and motivation can make the impossible happen.

1.7d Pedagogy in Practice

Published in the context of CESI seminar this booklet is a collection of teachers' writing who share their experiences through short write-ups. The booklet explores and documents the knowledge, skill and practice of primary teachers from remote nooks of West Bengal who have battled tricky situations and found hands on solution to create child friendly environment in their schools. Their success stories can provide inspirational solutions not only to fellow teachers, but also to researchers, officials and policy framers dealing with pedagogy.

These apart, Pratchi researchers have contributed to journals like Economic and Political Weekly and newspapers like Anandabazar Patrika. They have also contributed chapters in academic books.

1.8 Other activities

1.8a Formation of a band of Teacher-Volunteers

The Reading Festival, which had earlier generated considerable enthusiasm among the children and the teaching community in Birbhum, enters a new phase now. The poor reading and writing skills of primary school children has been a concern for teachers for a long time and many of them who have been actively involved in the reading festivals nurture a feeling that perhaps a solution lies within it. The first move was made by the teachers themselves. A group of teachers from Swarupnagar circle in North 24 Parganas visited some reading festivals in Birbhum bearing all the expenses themselves. They primarily wished to learn something new, something better for their students. Inspired by what they saw, the teachers conducted these festivals in their own schools where they invited some fellow primary teachers from far flung Dakshin Dinajpur. The festivals gradually spread through the length and breadth of the state spearheaded

by these teacher-volunteer themselves. Besides Birbhum, reading festivals have been organized in schools at Swarupnagar, Naihati, Raigunj, Hili and Jhargram where students, teachers, education officials and parents have participated with great zeal. The teacher volunteers have further plans of taking this education crusade further on to bring more and more children, teachers and community members under its fold. Besides encouraging the children to read and write, the reading festivals help the teachers to assess the level of their understanding and achievement. The children are introduced to the world of books which would instigate them to read and think beyond the confines of textbooks. The teachers' networking and sharing of experiences and resources help them overcome the day-to-day problems they face while running the school. Above all, reading induces a positive influence and sense of refinement within the community at large. This building up of a band of dedicated and eager volunteers provides the reading festivals with a momentum which makes it both sustainable and replicable.

2. Pratchi Odisha Project

Introduction

In 1999 Odisha was hit by a devastating super cyclone creating havoc in remote, underdeveloped pockets of the state. Ersama block in Jagatsinghpur district happened to be one of the worst sufferers in this calamity. The notion of proper school education for the child-victims of the super cyclone affected community was practically nonexistent. A handful of the children went to distant schools which were almost 10km away and the rest had no other option but dropping out due to lack of transportation facilities. At this bleak juncture, Pratchi (India) Trust acting upon the request of the community decided to establish a school for these suffering children with the aim of imparting quality education especially for the underprivileged children of the minority sections.

The school began with six children. Along with quality education, the school put to an end the difficulty of covering a huge distance everyday to reach school. As the number of children continued to grow steadily Pratchi School began looking at ways in which more children could be catered to without compromising on the individual attention that each child needed. The medium of instruction is English and the school follows CBSE syllabus. Despite the lack of

Government support the school makes it a point to provide mid-day meal to every child to ensure better nutrition. Monthly health check-ups take place regularly and timely initiatives like distribution of ORS powder during the heat wave are routinely followed. The school does not charge any fee from the children who come from economically or socially disadvantaged sections of the society. For the others it is a small sum of Rs.10 a month.

2.1 The Pratichi School

The school which began its journey with 6 children now has 91 students in its rolls. The school functions till class eight. Many of the children travel from the vicinity everyday to attend their daily classes. Quality education, nutritious mid-day meal and interesting co curricular activities make the Pratichi school a child friendly place. The teachers make it a point that their pupils participate in Science exhibitions, yoga classes, an annual excursion and library activities. The community members, parents and VEC members provide useful support to the school. There are 5 volunteer teachers working under the guidance of the Head Master. The non teaching staff comprises an attendant cum driver and 2 mid-day meal cooks.

The school has a library of 416 books and the children are always encouraged to borrow books. The school also helps the economically disadvantaged children by providing them with required textbooks.

The Activities

- Workshop with teachers and project directors was organized on imparting of quality education.
- Meeting with VEC members, managing trustee and project director was conducted. Issues about construction of midday meal kitchen and appointment of cooks were discussed in detail.
- Parents'-teachers' meeting was held where issues on quality education, mid-day meal and admission were discussed.
- Health camp was organized for students with a visiting doctor in attendance. The medicines prescribed for students were procured by the school and distributed.

- The children and the teachers picnicked at Nandankanan and enjoyed a day out in the zoo.
- VEC meetings were held on a regular basis where issues concerning the schools were discussed with utmost importance. Scaling up of school's infrastructure, students' welfare, appointment of new teachers were some of the principal concerns that came into the limelight.
- Independence Day, Republic day, Annual Sports Day, Teachers' day and children's day were celebrated by children and teachers with equal enthusiasm.

2.2 Literacy Programme and Community Centre

The literacy programme was conducted in the community with an aim to empower rural women through education. The plight of most rural women has been dismal since they have to face numerous physical hardships like collecting firewood, fetching drinking water, looking for fodder to feed cattle, farming on their meagre land, working as laborers on other's farms, taking care of children and completing household chores. Studies have confirmed that female literacy has a significant influence in improving social and economic status of women. But female literacy rate is woefully lower than that of male. Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in schools and many of them drop out mid way. The dropout rates of girls are usually more because their parents are interested in engaging them for helping hand in their home.

The Pratchi Trust, Odisha conducts a literacy programme in the remote villages of Ersama Block. It was observed that the members of the community found it difficult to deal with Bank and the Panchayat Office. The Pratchi volunteers came forward to spread literacy among them. As a result many, who earlier provided thumb impression in Bank, are able to operate their accounts. At present a local newspaper is being sent to the community centre located near to Pratchi School for helping the community members to keep themselves aware of the present situation. The community centre also stores books which villagers can read at leisure time. In Samalsahi Village, where majority of the residents are dalits and adivasis, free books and newspaper are provided as a part of community literacy drive. Now Samalsahi villagers are using

the community centre as library. Pratichi is trying to facilitate a number of the villagers to read and write basic Odiya as a part of the drive.

Literacy centres are being conducted in Patna, Ambiki and Samalsahi Gram Panchyat. Many women from this village attend this programme. Regular classes are being conducted by three volunteers.

3. Pratichi Himachal Pradesh Project

Pratichi's project in Himachal Pradesh is called "Education through creation". This project is targeted at underprivileged children. Pratichi built up a liaison with families, schools and local Government bodies. Pratichi's activities in Himachal Pradesh were concentrated in Basantpur, Rohru and three urban centres Sanjoli, Totu and Sadar thana.

Pratichi's activities can be summarized as below:

- The year initiated with publication of two booklets, *Sangam: Lahuli Lokkathayen* and *Bangala Samaj ki Lokkathayen*.
- The field volunteers surveyed 33 households who live in tents near Pabbar river bed. A reading and drawing festival was also organized where drawing books and colours were distributed among 20 children.
- In Sanjoli and Totu, Pratichi unit played an active role in enrolling dropout children into mainstream educational institutions.
- Besides these children, a group of 20 children attended drama workshop and they all were encouraged to collect stories and develop reading materials for their friends. A library was started with 120 assorted books. A group of 20 children was formed who would take charge of the library. A children's group prepared the content and basic outline of the booklet on Rajasthani Banjaras and local stories.
- Pratichi has been involved in a research work involving a particular caste based community called Bangala in Himachal Pradesh. The study specifically focuses on socio-economic condition of such community and effect of modernization in their traditional life style, involvement of children between 14 to 16yrs in skill development training and literacy level of the community especially among parents. The investigation was done in

two phases. In the first phase an exhaustive survey was conducted in the colonies at Tutu and Sanjauli in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. In the second phase a detailed assessment (Education through Creation) was conducted on a smaller sample of students, teachers, institutions and communities.

- The team is preparing for the next year a comprehensive study on the status of elementary education in Himachal Pradesh and has started the ground work.

4. Support for higher education

Pratichi (India) Trust supports the post graduate studies of Komal Kumari, a Dalit student from an underprivileged background in a village in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. She is the youngest of five brothers and sisters, and the first of her family pursue University education. Pratichi continued the support for this bright, shy girl trying to complete her studies in spite many hardships.