



Insights on Education among the Urban Poor - A Case Study of Bhopal

**Status of Education in Bastis and
People's Perceptions of Formal Education**

2013



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Preface

In the present world structure, universalisation of elementary education and the idea that 'all children should be in school' has influenced and guided most of us working in the fields of development and education. The concept of 'formal education' has become so ingrained in society that it is now seen as a child's right, and the non-fulfilment of this right amounts to a violation. But what does this education offer to the people who have come to believe in this system or have become subsumed by it, even though they may have not experienced it directly?

In Muskaan, we have been working in the area of education among the urban poor in slums (bastis) of Bhopal city (Madhya Pradesh) for several years now. We have been working with children who are out of schools, some who have never been to schools, others who have dropped out at different points during their years of growing up, and many who are in schools with ongoing 'school experiences'. Many a times, we have been asked about the education situation in the city, but it was not possible for us to give one answer that applied to the diverse population groups who are all a part of the 'urban poor'.

Over this period, we have also come to the conclusion that there is an 'education' that caters to and is experienced by the middle class, and it works for the middle class by and large. But it is not empowering for the working classes (though it may work for some individuals here), and at the most it is a supporting structure for the economic mobility of some. We have also observed that the physical distance of schools does not have very much to do with the course of education for the majority of children in this city. These experiences in Muskaan have raised many questions and doubts, and we felt that one of the best ways to get answers was from people themselves.

Through this study we have tried to understand in concrete terms how the concept of 'education' translates for people. Therefore, this is thus also an attempt to explore the interface between deprived communities and the promise of education, and to understand and put forth people's own perspectives and experiences with the formal school system.

This study focuses on understanding and documenting issues within the people's framework. It does not look into the provisions of the Right to Education Act, 2009 or explore its reach or implementation. It must be pointed out here that the Act has so far been implemented only in the clause referring to private schools, and has not yet brought about any changes at the school and community levels. The responses to various aspects of schooling and education covered in the study can be interpreted as reflecting the status of the provisions of the Act.

We hope this study meets the need of bringing qualitative and quantitative information about the education scenario of the urban poor, through the voices of parents and children.

Summary

Urban poverty and the way it manifests itself in various spaces including formal education is a complex interplay of various factors. There are many differences between groups within an urban population that tend to get masked when looking at the average data of cities, even when the disparity between the socio-economically well-off population and the marginalized ones is very high in all aspects of life.

Within the models of 'modernization' and 'development', it has been accepted that the formal institution of a school is desirable for all. This study looks into the status of formal education among the urban poor, people's experiences with formal schooling, and their expectations from and perceptions of the roles of education and schools in their lives. The study has been carried out in a cross-section of urban poor living in the city of Bhopal. The

communities were selected keeping in mind critical attributes of urban poverty so as to be able to capture the existing range of realities and views. A total of 228 adults and 164 children were interviewed from 18 slum sites.

Status of Education – It was found that only 63% of children (6 to 18 years) among the urban poor were going to schools. While 21% had dropped out, 16% had never been enrolled. The situation was better when we looked at only the age group covered by the RTE, of 6 to 14 years. However, even that was far from universal coverage with 16% of boys and 12% of girls in this age group not being in schools.

Of the school-goers, a total of 58% of the children were studying in government schools and the rest in private schools.

The percentage of children going to a government school increased with the classes and by class 11th-12th, 80% of the children still continuing with schools were studying in the public system. The choice made by parents to send a child to a private school was driven by their concern for a better quality of education; they said they felt the need to build a strong base for their children in the early years of schooling, which they felt would not be possible in the government schools.

There was no significant difference in the overall enrolment and drop-out of girls as compared to boys. But the proportion of girls being sent to government schools was distinctly higher, with 67% of the girls in government schools against 42% of the boys. Also, in the discussions with the people interviewed for the study, a patriarchal attitude against the education of girls in terms of questioning the need for girls to study, fear for their safety, unacceptability of education for girls within the social norms kept coming up.

During this study, it was important to identify reasons for children not being in schools, given the overall environment of compulsory and universal schooling. Lack of secure living conditions was a clear reason for parents not being able to take the decision of sending children to schools. Financial problems at home also impacted the course of the children's education. The need to send children for tuitions in their senior classes to ensure learning added to the costs borne by parents. Some interviews also brought up the futility of gaining education beyond literacy skills, as the people felt that it does not

provide any real learning. The processes within the schools were also mentioned as reasons for children dropping out of schools. Corporal punishment and the inability to learn in spite of spending several years in schools have worked as a big deterrent to creating a sustained interest in acquiring formal education.

Expenditure on Education – Almost all parents had to spend money on the education of their child, irrespective of the class the child was studying in, or the school s/he went to. 72% of the those parents interviewed spent money on school fees. The amounts ranged from Rs. 50 to 200 per child per month. One third of the families were sending their children for tuitions, costing them between Rs. 30 to Rs. 200 per month. Expenses on uniforms, books and stationery further added to the costs. The study showed that about 40% of the families spent up to Rs. 1000 each year, but another 40% had spent more than Rs. 2500 per year on their children's education.

In-depth interviews showed that it was not easy for people to pay these amounts. While the bulk of a family's earnings were spent on food and health care, parents were continuously cutting down on all kinds of basic requirements and/or finding extra jobs to be able to pay for their children's education.

Parents' Involvement in Children's Education – In urban poor communities and for parents from these backgrounds, the concept of children being educated is not a family norm. Making 'education' part of children's lives was a conscious decision made by them and one that was

carried out daily. Bearing the expenses of education also showed their commitment to education. The study further showed that in almost all households, someone from the house would visit the child's school over the year, for various reasons. It was also clear that the mother played a bigger role in this.

The study also showed that the tradition of giving respect to the teacher and the educated class as a whole alienates the majority of people from impoverished backgrounds, within school spaces. There was limited information about a school committee of any form amidst the parents. Only 10 % of the parents who had children in government schools knew of the existence of this committee.

Perceptions about Education – The study showed how and what people associated with 'being educated'. Being able to read and write has its many practical uses, which people stated would be of practical help in their daily lives. Examples of needing literacy for writing down an address or in banks, courts and other such situations came up. There were many people who were able to connect education to what they were currently doing, and felt that education would also be helpful in their current jobs. For instance, there were examples of a skilled driver needing basic literacy for a job.

Besides these practical spaces where people felt the need for education, many voiced the hope that education would free their families from a life of constant revilement that they receive from various quarters every day. Education was perceived as being able to bring in something

different from the present. For many, it was a symbol of progress. Having to ask someone to read things out for you is a discouraging experience, because there is an attached sense of 'being less' than the other. The interviews also showed that 'formal education' has been interpreted as a change in culture and mannerisms. In many, different words it came up that the way one behaves, sits and functions all change with education. Having been subjected to disdain from the 'progressed', there is a feeling of self-denigration and an aspiration to these ways.

A person's confidence was also associated with his/her education. This has obviously been a learnt response based on the exchanges with the 'educated'. In the interviews, people said that if their child studied, 's/he will not be subjected to other people's teasing. The child will not feel scared of everything, as we do.' The interviews also showed that it was widely thought that to some extent education would bring a sense of control over their circumstances, in contrast to their existing situations, where the course of their lives was defined by external factors.

Expectations from a School – Over and above everything said by the parents, a voice was constantly heard saying that any school where 'teaching' and 'education' is taking place is a good school. In different voices, parents placed importance on the relationship between the teacher and the child, specifying that the teacher should not be biased against the poor. Some parents astutely described that greater value should be assigned to occupational skills as a part of the institutional curriculum. They expect holistic

development, voicing the need to integrate mental development and livelihood skills / physical work, sports and art. The government provision of free textbooks and uniforms has helped in taking a big load off people's heads and was appreciated. A separate, functioning toilet for the girls was considered compulsory in girls' schools.

The children's section in the report deals with the responses of the children to various questions. Here too, we saw that the expectations from a school were guided by the experiences of school life. The responses showed that the concept of a school has become narrow in its scope, and so have expectations from a school. As much as the children recalled positive exposures in the school space and felt that these should become part of the norm, they also clearly voiced their negative experiences and stressed that such behaviours or situations should not arise in a school. One of the greatest concerns the children had was about understanding what was being taught. The children's responses reflect that children have ways of assessing when they are learning or not, and what the problems in the teaching methods are. When asked what kind of education a school should provide, many children spontaneously spoke of the teaching methodology and material, as well as about interactions and attitudes in the classroom.

Children also expressed the need for free expression and space for being themselves. Many children clearly said that they should not be punished in schools for simple things, such as talking. Children from very vulnerable communities

who face discrimination from different quarters were also very articulate about the prejudices they have to face, and felt that schools should teach children how to behave with those different from themselves. The infrastructure requirements were very simple – fans, benches, toilets. The minimum infrastructure requirements strongly reflect the unequal opportunities within education. Children also felt the need for a safe play space; coming from slums, they lack play space in their homes or outside them.

Relationships in School – The study explored relationships that played out in school. It was found that almost all the children had at least one friend in their school. However, these friends were mostly from their immediate neighbourhoods. There was a lot of discrimination among the children - they often behaved badly with the ones who were 'socially more vulnerable' to them. Many of the schools are co-educational in the city. But, schools were not spaces where children were able to know and be friendly with a child of the opposite sex. Interactions between girls and boys were found limited throughout school life. Girls and boys were taught to sit separately and to not mix with each other physically, at any time.

It was also found that children have a very strong opinion about their teachers, those whom they like or dislike. Their choices are determined by various elements – the way a teacher teaches, the way s/he treats the children, the way s/he speaks to them, whether s/he gives a child attention, and quite significantly, if s/he hits them. It was also found that their like or dislike is clearly a reaction to a specific teacher, and is

usually not a school-level phenomenon.

Corporal Punishment in Schools – The study showed that 78% of the girls and 94% of the boys had been beaten in schools. It also appears from the study that children of all age groups are beaten and that these are not sporadic incidents or incidents limited to a specific age. The forms of violence found in schools were both physical and psychological, and usually occurred together. Besides being physically beaten, there was also a lot of emotional torture and judgmental words were hurled at the children.

The study further explored the reasons for the violence, the form of violence and the possible mind-sets being developed in the child as an impact of this daily acceptance of violence in the environment around him/her.

Disillusionment with the School – The views of children who had dropped out were not significantly different from those who were still enrolled. They felt similarly violated by the physical and mental violence against them. Both groups also found the schooling similarly mundane and it did not attract them to return to the space the next day. Many children (who were going to school) said that they didn't like coming to school, but were forced to do so. The relationships within the school did not give them a sense of warmth. The interviews with the drop-out children showed that once a child drops out, his/her relationship with the school is completely severed. There is no going back to school and the child is left with a sense of negativity.

Recommendations and Suggestions

– The study brings up several kinds of issues showing the present realities, difficulties within and the aspirations of the marginalized communities of Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims as well as other population groups living in the bastis. People have largely accepted education as necessary for their children, but it remains an unpredictable path for them.

As is evident from the findings briefly discussed above, schools are not delivering what they promise; each indicator of failure can be seen in its specificity, but put together, they reflect the failure of the entire structure and system of education. Schools need to foremost begin with respecting the children and their communities. The schooling years need to be more productive. Children need to be taught the values of justice, humanity and equity.

Schools need to be placed inside a community, to metaphorically and explicitly identify the objectives of education based on the realities of the people. Thereby the content, curriculum, pedagogy and the cost of education and other logistics should also be decided with these factors in mind. The public education system must respond to make this experience of education meaningful for the impoverished.

The education system also needs to plan for the large number of out-of-school adolescents across slums. There is also a need to reflect on how the formal education system can respond to the most marginalized communities within the urban poor.

Chapter 1

Introduction

I. Education within the Urban Poor

In India, in spite of living in a city, the course of formal education for a child residing in any basti (slum) is fraught with insecurity and complex choices. Caste and class continue to pervade all circumstances. Urban poverty and the way it manifests itself in various spaces including formal education, is a complex interplay of several qualitative and quantitative factors. Even within the homogeneous identity of one basti or one city, situations vary. There is a continuing assumption that, given the opportunities available in a city, education is not as bad as in rural or tribal areas. This assumption has been drawn from macro-level quantitative data. The 2011 Census of India showed large variation between the literacy levels in urban (85%) and rural (69%) areas. There are many differences within an ur-

ban area that tend to get masked when looking at data averages from cities, even when the actual disparity between the socio-economically well-off population and the marginalized ones is very high in all aspects of life. Though significant data on the urban poor is not available, the realities of education for the children within this population group do vary - there are children out of schools, children going to schools but still working, and there is also variation in the quality of the schools that these children attend.

According to the Census, anyone above the age of seven who can read and write with understanding in any language is considered 'literate'. Going by this definition, it is not necessary for a literate person to have received any formal education or to have attained any minimum educational standard. The Census data

needs to be viewed with caution for various other reasons. Mehta¹ has pointed out that these data are not based on any real test of literacy and are documented based on the response of any member in a household. Besides the official data on literacy, we have some indications of the situation by looking at the data on the educational level attained by people. For 2001, the following picture emerges where it can be seen that though 65.38 % of the population has been enumerated as literate, only 16.2 % of this group, i.e. 10.6% of the total population has finished 12 years of schooling. Data for 2011 is still not available, but we can safely assume that while the figures may show literacy as having improved, real education has not reached many.

Looking at the situation of education among the socially vulnerable groups including the Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Muslims, it is evident

Table 1 - Literacy Rate & Level of Education in India & Madhya Pradesh (MP), 2001

Literacy and level of Education ¹	India 2001	MP 2001
Literate Population (% of total population)	65.38	55.7
Educational Levels of literate population		
Literate without any schooling	3.6	7.2
Literate with below Primary	25.8	18.8
Primary	26.2	24.4
Middle	16.1	16.9
Secondary	14.1	11.7
High Secondary	6.7	9.8
Diploma / Certificate not equal to degree	0.8	0.4
Graduate and above	6.7	10.7

Source: Census of India, 2001

that irrespective of location (urban or rural) the state of deprivation (including the indicators of education) is quite similar. In urban India, the illiteracy rate was highest within the casual labourer's workforce at 40.7% in 2000.³ The Sachar Committee report (2006) points out that on average, an ST child in India goes to school for a little less than 4 years in urban areas, and little more than 3 years in rural areas. The mean years of schooling was found lowest among Muslim populations (about three years and four months). The report further points out that the educational attainment levels for SC/STs are lower in urban areas than rural areas when considering all levels of education. This clearly indicates that there are many issues beyond physical access to schools that prevent children from studying in them. Less than 2% of this group attains 12 years of schooling.

Within the concept of 'modernization' and 'development', it has been accepted that the formal institution of a school is desirable for all. The government has been trying to ensure that all children are enrolled in schools, by providing a primary school within a kilometre's radius, all over the country. This has resulted in a 102.9% gross enrolment rate in the urban areas of the state of Madhya Pradesh.⁴ This situation, in some ways, shows that there is an acceptance of this institution, even within the poor communities (for whom this is a first or a second generation decision).

II. Urban Poverty

Poverty has become as much an urban phenomenon as a rural one. It is impera-

tive to draw attention to the urban situation because, (a) more and more parts of the country are getting urbanized and this population group is large enough to demand attention, and (b) the manifestations of poverty are different in an urban setting, and need to be understood and addressed from within that specific geographic context. The most prominent feature of urban poverty perhaps is the irreversible conversion into a cash economy with no assets and no access to natural resources along with an increasing dependence on daily earning. In addition, the environmental conditions in slums, such as housing/living space, drainage, toilets and safe drinking water also become severely compromised. The limited physical space, relentless pressure to earn for survival and inhuman working conditions take their toll on a person's temperament, and violence takes a much more evident and brutal form in a basti.

Further, different communities have to live in close proximity with each other. In such an environment marginalization and discrimination are manifested and felt differently.

Communities try to retain their culture-specific norms and behaviours and protect their community identities. Along with this is a constant evaluation and judgement about the customs and values of other communities fuelled by the existing mainstream perception of them. This also becomes an area in which communities tend to clash with each other.

However, since the opportunities to interact with each other are more, when community boundaries get broken, new

norms of interactions emerge. These may not always be positive but the potential that they could become so remains.

In several states, the incidence of poverty is higher in urban than in rural areas. According to the Planning Commission, Government of India's Poverty Estimates for 2004-05, in Madhya Pradesh, 42% of the urban population has been designated Below Poverty Line (BPL) as compared to 37% in rural areas. The proportion of urban poverty in the cities of Madhya Pradesh is as high as 42%, second only to Orissa (44%), as against the national average of 25.7%. Earlier, these figures had been linked to (i) migration into urban areas, (ii) the expansion of city limits to include peripheral villages, and (iii) natural growth within slums. But the recent Urban Poverty Report⁵ attributes the large proportion of urban poor also to the fact that urban workers are being increasingly pushed into the informal sector, even as the space for informal economic activities is gradually shrinking.

An increasing number of people from rural regions are being forced to move to urban centres owing to diminishing means of survival, employment and livelihood opportunities. In the period 2001–11, the population growth rate in absolute numbers has, for the first time, been higher in urban areas of the country than in its rural areas.

III. About the Study

Study objectives

Universalisation of elementary education and high enrolment figures have ensured

that formal education touches everyone's lives in one or more ways. This study was undertaken with the aim of understanding the status of formal education among the urban poor, and the form in which it has been integrated within their lives.

In specific terms, this study attempts to:

- Know where and to what extent children from urban slum backgrounds are studying, and what the factors determining their choices within education are
- Understand the burden of the cost of education on parents
- Explore the perception of 'formal education' amidst the working class
- Examine the kind of space provided to children and their parents within the institution of a school
- Understand children's perspectives on the school system and their experiences

Research setting: sample, tools and data collection

The urban poor live in different kinds of slums and squatter settlements. For the study, sample slums for interviews were selected from a detailed list of all slum settlements where the urban poor lived (irrespective of their notification status in the government records). This was done to ensure that we covered critical attributes of the urban poor. A listing and mapping of slums in Bhopal done earlier in two studies⁶ showed that there were about 500 slums in the city. While selecting the sample slums from this large number of slums in the city, the following

background characteristics of the people were purposively considered so as to include different kinds of 'urban poor' in the study –

- Religion (Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist)
- Caste or tribe (adivasi pockets, denotified tribes, dalit settlements, OBC groups)
- Work (domestic workers, waste-pickers, wage labourers, self-employed)
- Land rights (living on unoccupied land stretches, living in unregistered and registered slums)
- Location (relocated slums, inner-city slums, slums on the outskirts)
- Disaster affected (gas affected)
- Size (big, medium, small)

There were bastis with overlapping attributes. Ensuring that we studied at least two slums with each variation of the main attribute, a total of 18 slums were selected for the study. A list of these along with their criteria for selection have been included in Annexure 1.

Within the basti, households were selected randomly from every pocket of the slum. The survey was conducted only with people who had children of a school-going age (between 5 to 18 years). From each household that was selected, at least one adult parent - either the mother or the father - participated in the survey. Interviews were conducted with a total of 228 parents. Since children's perceptions were also an area of interest, 164 children were interviewed either at their homes

or in the common spaces of the bastis. Slum-wise details of the participants is included in Annexure 2. We decided to include children till the age of 16 years in the survey.

Tools for data collection

Data collection tools were developed in two phases. To begin with, a conceptual framework map was developed through intensive discussions with the investigation team (consisting of members of the education team in Muskaan) to identify the inter-linkages between and perceptions about different aspects of education, and to categorize them. This map has been included as Annexure 3. The map was initially used to have discussions in the bastis with people of different communities. Based on the responses at this level, the final tool was developed to

collect qualitative and quantitative data. This has been included as Annexure 4. A separate tool was developed for child participants. This has been included as Annexure 5.

Reading the report

The findings of the study have been presented in separate sections –

- Situations and Perspectives of Adults
- Situations and Perspectives of Children

Tables and charts have been used to elaborate the findings of the report. Boxes have been used to present verbatim, specific narratives of participants.

Following the findings, a chapter on recommendations has been included.

¹Arun C. Mehta; Impact of Primary Education on Literacy: An Analysis of Census 2001 Provisional Data. Available at <http://www.educationforallinindia.com/page138.html>. Accessed on January 3, 2013.

²http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/literacy_and_level_of_education.aspx. Accessed on December 9, 2012.

³UNESCO (2006) "Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006, Literacy for Life" R. Govinda & K.Biswal, 2005, Mapping literacy in India: Who are the illiterates & where do we find them?

⁴GER 5 – 14 years urban – 102.91% State SSA website. Accessed on September 4, 2012.

⁵UNDP and Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. 'India: Urban Poverty Report, 2009

⁶Aarambh-Water Aid Poverty Pockets and Department of Health and Family Welfare, Bhopal District and Muskaan (2007) Vulnerability Assessment of Slums in Bhopal

Situations and Perspectives of Adults

I. Participant Characteristics

Background characteristics of the participants are presented here to provide a profile of the basti-residing populations. Out of the total 228 respondents, 144 were females and 84 were males. A

Table 2.1 - Profile of Adult Participants

Characteristic	Participants
Total	228
Education	
No formal education	129
Class 1 to 5	46
Class 6 to 8	27
Class 9 – 10	12
Class 11 – 12	7
Graduate	7
Working Status	
Working Men	76
Women	74
Not Working Men	8
Women	70

Table 2.2 - Profile of Adult Participants

Characteristic	Participants
Total	228
Age	
< 30	80
< 40	92
≥ 41	56
Sex	
Male	84
Female	144
Social Group	
Dalit	73
Adivasi	39
OBC	89
General	27

majority of the respondents were young parents, 35% under 30 years and 40% under 40 years.

The bastis have a large population of vulnerable groups including dalits, other

backward castes and adivasis. Information on religion could not be collected for all respondents, but the data did indicate that a large number of people were also from the minorities.

The education and livelihood of the people participating in the study are detailed in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2.

a) Employment status

In contrast to the overall population where the women worker participation rate in an urban area is 14% , this study found that a much higher proportion of women were contributing significantly to household incomes in the bastis. Approximately 50% (74) of the women were working and almost all men except 7 were working.²

While there was a male member earning in the families of 89% of the respondents, women were also earning in 41% of the families. 23% of the families reported that there were children (girls and boys under the age of 15 years) in the house who were working.

Case studies and experiences in the field have shown that by and large, a woman's earning capacity does not mean she enjoys an improved status in her family or within her marriage. Situations of violence and suppression continue as much for her as for those women who are not working. There are communities where women are the primary earning members (like those involved in activities like waste-picking), but the suppression and control of their lives by men continues. Like women, children too do not get space to express their views or assert themselves in spite of contributing to the family's income. It can

Table 3 - Work amongst Adults

Nature of Work	Participants
Mazduri and Beldari - digging roads and holes, breaking stone, carrying cargo	41
Domestic Work (cooking, cleaning, sweeping etc.)	27
Selling vegetables, fruits on thela	5
Small shops (tea, plastic goods, bangles)	6
Waste picking, Scrap-dealing	5
Selling things walking (namkeen, dholak, herbal medicines)	14
Producing on piecemeal (zari, beedi)	5
Skilled Work	
Construction line – Masonry, iron work Plumbing, Painting, carpentry,	8
Stitching– at home (women), tailor(men)	10
Driving - salaried, auto driving, taking a vehicle on daily rental	4
Gardening – at home and nurseries	3
Nagar Nigam	5
Other works (security guard, repairs of mobile, etc.)	17

thus be said that the relatively high proportion of working women and children in these bastis is due to the pressures of poverty that force various family members to pitch in and make ends meet.

Where the man is bringing in income at home, his earnings go towards food and his daily needs. But it is the woman's savings from that pool, and her income that ensures that other crucial needs (like school or health) are met.

There are several situations where the man does not give his earnings at home. In these and in household headed by single women, deprivation is higher as earnings are very limited and do not even suffice for daily food expenses.

Table 4 - Nature of Work amongst Children

Boys	Girls
Welding	Waste picking (Kachra beenna)
Mechanic	Cooking and cleaning in houses
Vegetable shop	Mazduri (as stone breaking)
Peon in a bank	Gardening
Puncture shop	Selling water in the weekly vegetable market
Guard	
Scrap shop (kabad)	Bidi making
Mazduri	
Fishing & Selling lotus from the lakes	

The study showed that the occupations of men and women in the bastis differed only to the extent that a very small proportion of men have been able to become part of the skilled workforce.

Very few groups are still engaged in the original occupations of their ancestors that had been passed down generations. These included the skills of selling herbal medicines, working with leather and making dholaks, selling precious stones, selling manjan and chura. The participants who reported continuing these occupations were mostly adivasis. However, the nature of production has changed for

them with more and more materials being bought from wholesalers before being further processed or packaged, and then marketed.

All kinds of supportive tasks to run the city, the economy and making the lives of the middle class and the elite easier are carried out by these groups.

b) Education status of adults

The education status of parents of the school-going age-group was explored in order to understand the children's backgrounds and the kinds of educational environments available at their homes.

Census 2011 reported the overall literacy level in urban areas of Madhya Pradesh at 84.1%. However, this study showed that the situation is drastically different when we look at the adult urban poor population and their educational levels. Figure 1 shows that an average of 44% of the adults among the urban poor had access to some kind of education. Of these, the bulk (i.e. another 20% of the total) had dropped out before class 5. Compared to men, the literacy levels of women was predominantly lower, with less than 1 in 5 mothers having had cleared class 5 themselves. Amongst men, 1 in 3 had studied beyond class 5. But across men and women, just about 10% of the parents sending children to school had themselves studied beyond elementary school.

Considering the low adult literacy levels in the bastis, the following aspects need to be taken into account by an education system meant to work for this social group:—

- The absence of a literate environment

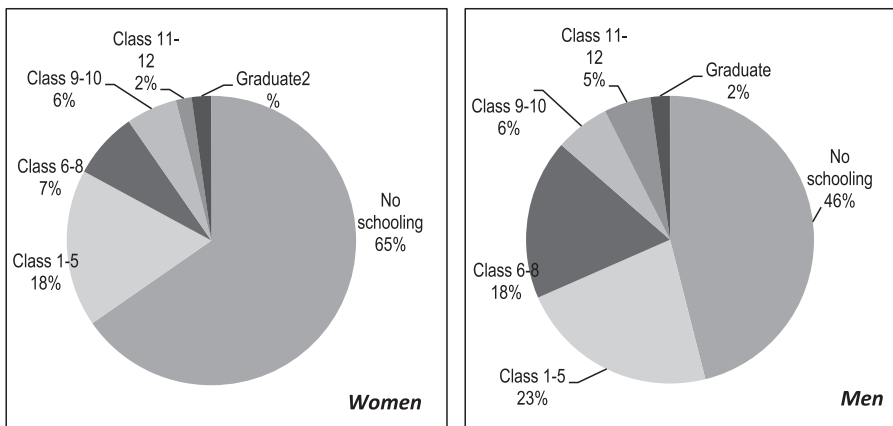


Figure 1 - Education Status of the Parents

in the child's house means that a child cannot acquire pre-literacy skills before s/he comes to school.

- The parents are not educated enough (formally) to support a child with his/her school work.
- The community, as a larger geographical and social space, has not had space for formal education so far, and therefore the environment outside school hours is not directed towards academic learning. This is in reference to the routine schedules of peers and also the elders.
- The limited formal education of parents also means that children in bastis do not have people in their environment who have experience with issues such as entrance examinations, career guidance and caste certificates.

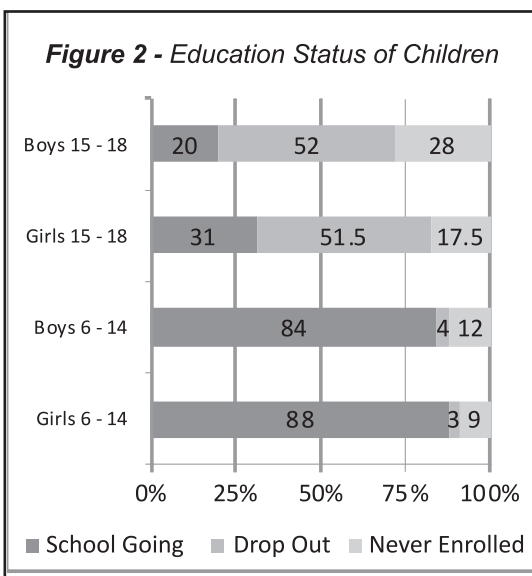
II. Education Status Of Children

The study explored the current educational status of children from 6-18 years of age residing in the slums/bastis of

Bhopal.

a) Education status

Among the 228 families surveyed, there were 746 children of school-going age (363 girls and 383 boys from 6 to 18 years)³. Only 63% of these children were actually going to school. While 21% had dropped out, 16% of the children had never been enrolled in a school.



Within the age group of 6 – 14 years, 12% of the girls and 16% of the boys were out of schools. These figures are quite high given the mandate of the Right to Education Act to cover all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. This data depicts the situation in the state capital, and it can be safely assumed that the situation of the urban poor in the smaller cities of the state is likely to be much worse.

Looking only at the age group of 15 – 18 years, 80% of the boys and 69% of the girls were not in schools, the majority of them having attempted school and dropped out.

b) Reasons for being out of schools

Through interviews and discussion, the study explored why some children were out of school. Some of the reasons given were:

b.1) Situations of minimal living conditions

such as uncertainty of residence and/or inadequate supply of water, of sanitation, etc. lead to a sense of insecurity and temporariness even though the family (or community) may have been living in a specific place for years. In these circumstances, decisions about a child's education do not spontaneously arise because they require to be planned in advance. Squatter settlements on the roadside (such as ironsmiths' families, people working on roadside excavation), construction sites of large colonies (where people may be staying for long time periods of a few years and more), or even bastis that do not have legal land-titles, are all places where it is common to see children spend-

ing their time playing, getting fuel-wood or water, and doing chores around the house. It is difficult to make education a priority under these living circumstances. Going into formal education is also opening up unfamiliar paths and an engagement with the larger society in unknown ways, which has its inherent insecurities.

This problem is also seen when a slum is relocated. Immediately after the relocation, efforts are made to continue sending the child to his/her school of the previous residence. But this cannot be sustained for very long because of the distances the child has to commute, and gradually

Box 1 - Many realities behind not being in schools

The children say they want to study but what can be done? There is no place where we can be stably located. What studies, how can we educate them? We are getting daal-roti to eat, that is more than what we could have hoped for. You can see how perilous this place is, and we are staying here.

- Rukmani, Kargil Nagar

There is no comfort here, no water, no bathroom. The children have to stay dirty; where will we send them? What will the other children in the school say? What will the teachers say? "Chee chee, where have you brought these children from?" We also feel embarrassed.

- Najma Qureshi, Dholak Basti

However much we study, we will be making dholaks. If we don't study, then also we will be making dholaks. There are some children in our community who have studied and they are doing the same work. (But) if one studies, they will be able to read the train numbers, they will read what is written in your papers, they will send news to the village in a letter.

- Shaeeda, Dholak Basti

I wanted to study, but there was always a shortage of money.

- Rambabu Meena, Balaji Nagar

If there is food in the stomach, then only can one study.

- Phoolchand Balae, Krishna Nagar

the child drops out of school. Enrolling a child in another school requires several trips to the previous school for a transfer certificate, and many a times this effort also remains incomplete or extensively delayed as it does not take precedence over many competing priorities related to the family's survival in their new location. In most cases, children lose a year or just stop studying.

b.2) Futility of an education stretched over a long period of time

was pointed out. While some attributes of literacy were considered important, higher education was not thought to confer any concrete advantage to an individual. The journey of formal education does not guarantee people with any tangible job at the end. In addition, the chances that children will fail as they cross elementary classes (in spite of all efforts and intentions) are very high.

b.3) Financial needs of the family

have to be met with the children's help. Usually, this responsibility lies with the elder boy in the family but in some communities, all children, including the younger ones, need to bring in an income. Slum dwellers have difficulties in fulfilling their basic needs, including those of food. People continuously strive to meet their daily requirements. Women and men are willing to work, but the state has left it to the market to provide employment, which is not working out for many. So they then depend on seasonal work and have to agree to work for low wages. In some families, children are expected to contribute to the family income at younger ages than in others. This can be in the form of

direct cash support or labour at home.

Girls are expected to look after their younger siblings, and this becomes aggravated when women in the house are also working. On one hand, this is a cultural norm where children are seen as mini-adults, living the life and bearing the responsibilities of an adult from an age before they become adults. On the other hand, there is no other choice for the family because no agency (employers or the state) provides adequate support such as crèches for the infants and toddlers, or even for the older kids.

Loans taken at times of illnesses impound families with debt and can be utterly debilitating. A cash flow study conducted in slum pockets in five cities of the state of Rajasthan showed that on any day, only 23% of the respondents were debt-free, whereas about half of the people had debts ranging from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 50,000.⁴

b.4) Expenses for higher education

increase and this results in adolescents dropping out of schools. The option of government schools with lower fees is rarely considered, as children and parents know that given the current poor condition of these schools, it will be very difficult for children to pass their examinations. Teachers encourage after-school tuitions so students have a chance of passing their examinations, and the 'guide'⁵ culture pervades the system. Tuitions become more expensive as the number of subjects as well as the level of difficulty increase.

b.5) The processes within the school

have also been mentioned as reasons for children staying in or dropping out of schools. Out of the 159 drop-out children identified (of the 746 children in the families of those interviewed), 52% children had dropped out in primary classes (1 to 5) and another 34% by class 8. This corroborates national level studies that show the inability of schools to retain children at the elementary level. Primary data from small, urban clusters in Kolkata also show that less than 5% of children (who were waste-pickers and were enrolled after major bridging efforts) were able to finish primary school in spite of the efforts of NGOs.⁶ Of those children in the study at that time in the age group of 6 to 15 years and who had dropped out, 82% of them had done so by class 5.

This also shows that it is not the physical distance to the school, in the case of middle schools or higher secondary schools, which has caused this drop-out, but the basic inability to retain children in elementary schools.

Box 2 – Classroom failures pushing children out from schools

We sent her to school for so many years, but she still does not know how to write. So now, she doesn't want to go and we also don't send her.

- Fatima Pathan, Ahata Rustam Khan Ki Basti

The teacher hit him so badly that we had to take him to the hospital. We believe that the flesh is yours (teacher's) but leave the bones for us. The teacher has a right to hit but not to this extent. My son stopped going after that.

- Malti Bai, Majhi Basti

Krishna Kumar⁷ writes that a major assumption is that early dropping out of/withdrawal from schools is caused by pov-

erty and backwardness, simply because almost all children who leave school are poor. But there is no explanation for why a child's labour value changes dramatically between class 1 and 2, where the drop-out rate is the highest. He further states that there is no explanation for why a parent would send the child to class 1 but withdraw him before class 2.

Reasons cited for dropping out of/withdrawing children from schools were:

- a. The children not having learnt anything even after many years in school
- b. Corporal punishment in schools
- c. Inability to adjust to the school environment

However, these reasons were more clearly stated by children and adolescents, and indirectly by the parents themselves. This has been elaborated in the chapter that discusses the interviews with children.

c) Girls enrolments and retention

The study showed no significant difference in the the school enrolment rate of girls and boys. Among children under 15 years, 88% of girls were school-going against 84% of boys, which also matches the National Family Health Survey 3 (NFHS-3) data of 2005-06.⁸

The difference between boys and girls in the above data (marginally favourable towards the girls) is not statistically significant, and also cannot be generalized – taken as the situation of education for girls in the long run. This minor difference was found to be basti-specific and partly stems from the fact that options for boys' work (like putting up small shops, me-

chanic work, etc.) are more available in a city. The pressure on boys to earn begins at earlier ages, while girls are expected to get married. This was primarily noted in the interviews in the predominantly Muslim bastis. This kind of a trend has also been observed in another urban study. While little over 50% girls were found to be school-going, less than 50% of the boys were found to be school-going.⁹

The situation may also be linked to the fact that school expenses increase in senior classes, and the cost of educating boys becomes higher. One reason for this is that government policy encourages the education of girls through various financial incentives and the provision of school textbooks and uniforms, which are not available for boys. It was also seen that there was a preference for private schools for boys compared to girls (discussed in greater detail later on), which may continue to hike up the costs for the education of boys.

Box 3 – Stopping girls' education

If we don't get the girl married by 15 – 16 years, then people start taunting us.

- Sigar Bai, Gandhi Nagar

She is the female caste. We can't send her out. Boys tease on the road; therefore we have got her name cut (from the school).

- Radha Lohar, Ahata Rustam Khan Ki Basti

We stop the girl's studies when she starts looking big. Her elder brother stopped her education.

- Kareena Qureshi, Blue Moon Colony

Girls can't study after 5th. They don't do that in our community.

- Gulabram Babari, Jaatkhedhi

In several communities, with (even) weaker socio-economic conditions, the cir-

cumstances of deprivation work against boys and girls similarly. As a norm, none of the children go to school.

However, in discussions with people, patriarchal attitudes that work against the education of girls including - questioning the need for girls to study, fear for their safety, unacceptability of their education within existing social norms, etc.- kept coming up. It was also seen that a girl's choice and her voice regarding her life are always subservient to the needs of not one or two, but several persons, particularly male household members. This makes her life heavily dependent on external factors.

d) Private and government schooling

The study found that of the total children studying in schools, 58% of them were going to government schools, and the balance 42% to private schools. This reflects the perception that the basti people have about the government education system.

This trend is further supported by various reports on urban slums; private school enrolment in urban areas was reported at 67.7% in the state of Madhya Pradesh.¹⁰ In another slum-specific study, it was noted that almost 62% of children, be it boys or girls, go to private schools.¹¹ In the city of Hyderabad, 73% of families in slum areas send their children to private schools.¹²

The data from Table 5 clearly shows that:

- The percentage of children going to a government school increased with the classes.
- With limited resources in the urban

Table 5 - Distribution of School – going children as per sex, class, school

Class	Type of School	Girls	Boys	Total
1 – 5	Government	113 (65%)	59 (46%)	172 (57%)
	Private	62 (35%)	70 (54%)	132 (43%)
	Total	175 (100%)	129 (100%)	304 (100%)
6 – 8	Government	34 (67%)	22 (47%)	56 (57%)
	Private	17 (33%)	25 (53%)	42 (43%)
	Total	51 (100%)	47 (100%)	98 (100%)
9 – 10	Government	19 (76%)	15 (50%)	34 (62%)
	Private	6 (24%)	15 (50%)	21 (38%)
	Total	25 (100%)	30 (100%)	55 (100%)
11 – 12	Government	7 (78%)	5 (83%)	12 (80%)
	Private	2 (22%)	1 (17%)	3 (20%)
	Total	9 (100%)	6 (100%)	15 (100%)
Total	Government	173 (67%)	101 (48%)	274 (58%)
	Private	87 (33%)	111 (52%)	198 (42%)
	Total	262(100%)	212(100%)	472 (100%)

poor families, girls were more likely to be studying in government schools, than boys.

- Across classes, a preference for sending boys to private schools was seen. It is only in classes 9 – 12 that there is a reversal in this trend.

A preference for sending girls to government schools as against boys was seen even within a family. Overall, 67% of the school-going girls were going to government schools versus 48% of the school-going boys.

The proportion of boys studying in government schools increased only in the higher classes as the cost of education in these classes is more. In classes 11-12 it was found that 78% of the girls were studying in government schools versus 83% of the boys.

This preference for sending children to private schools in the primary classes and to government schools for high school education is associated with econom-

Box 4 – Deciding where to send the child for her/his studies

The government schools would have been our choice if the teachers came on time, and the studies were good. We will send the children to the government school once they reach a higher class.

- Mamta, Balaji Nagar

Nowadays the 'lighter fees' private schools are much worse than the government schools. And we can't send (the children) to the 'good' private schools (and have therefore enrolled them in government schools).

- Narsingh Atut, Krishna

Where do they study in a government school? We put the children in a private school because there is no other choice. Our heart knows how we take out the money (to pay).

In the government school, the teacher writes on the board, and tells the children to copy that. She will sit on the chair and eat. Now whose fault is it that the children have not learnt- the madam's or the children's?

- Mahesh Verma, Vishwakarma Nagar

In the government school, they take a child only when a child is 6 or 7. By then, the child in a private school has already learnt to read and write.

- Nazma Bi, Gehukheda

ics and the perception of school quality. With limited resources, parents feel that it is important that their child is able to build a strong base by providing a good education in her/his early years. In some cases, where children have been enrolled in government schools, parents try to bolster their education by sending their children for tuitions.

The combination of living in a city and the widespread popularisation of education has had an impact on the education of girls, but most of society's concerns are still directed towards the education of boys. While sending them to government schools is not disheartening for girls, the reality is that given the quality of a typical government school today, parents do not happily choose these schools unless they have no other option. The fact that given limited finances, people choose to send girls and not boys to government schools shows that the education of girls is not yet a priority (or at the very least, less of a priority than the education of boys). Such decisions are also linked with a family's reasons and aspirations for educating a particular child, and these differ for a 'girl' and a 'boy'.

e) Pre-school education

In response to the question of children's studies, very few children were reported to be going for early childhood education. This study did not specifically explore the area of pre-school education, and people's access to the Anganwadi centres needs to be better understood. However, the limited response does point towards the commonly held view that the Integrated Child Development Scheme

centres are geared more to provide health and nutrition services and the early childhood education component remains weak with no association with the Education Department. During the study, some parents had voiced their preference for a private school giving the lack of provision for early childhood education in government schools.

f) Non-Formal Education (NFE) Centres

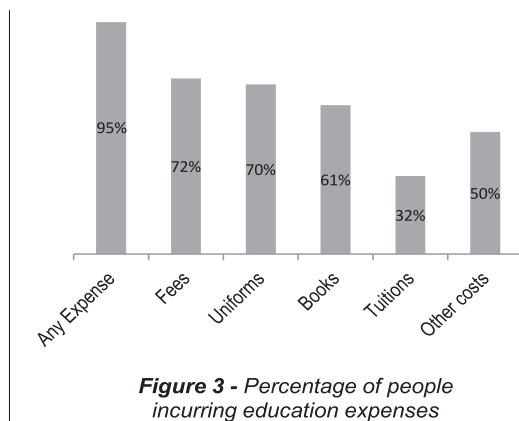
In the area of the study, there were two NFE centres, one under a government program for 'urban, deprived children' and another run by a religious institute. However, both the centres had not been functional for a long period at the time of the study.¹³ Both the centres were in bastis with predominantly tribal communities and the children were not enrolled in any full-time school. In one basti, the children's response to the centre was quite positive as it was relatively new, and they had recently received uniforms and books. In the other basti, some children and parents had distanced themselves from the centre because of the teacher's inability to handle the class effectively.

III. Expenditure on Education

The study explored whether parents incurred any expense on educating their children, and if they did, what the nature of these expenses was. The sample size for this part of the study was 199 participants, as the children of 29 of the participants (out of the total of 228) were not enrolled in a school.

As shown in the Figure 3, 95% of the par-

ents were spending some money on their child's education. Although the Right to Education Act provides free education until the age of 14 (equivalent to class 8), the study shows that even when their children fell in this age group, parents incurred expenses.



The section below details the nature of educational expenses borne by parents :

a) School fees

72% of the participants said that they spend some amount of money on school fees (though only 42% of the children study in private schools). This clearly means that some kind of a fee is being collected regularly from parents of enrolled students, even in the government schools. The amounts ranged from Rs. 50 to Rs. 200 per child per month, and 2 families reported paying fees of up to Rs. 350 on a child per month.

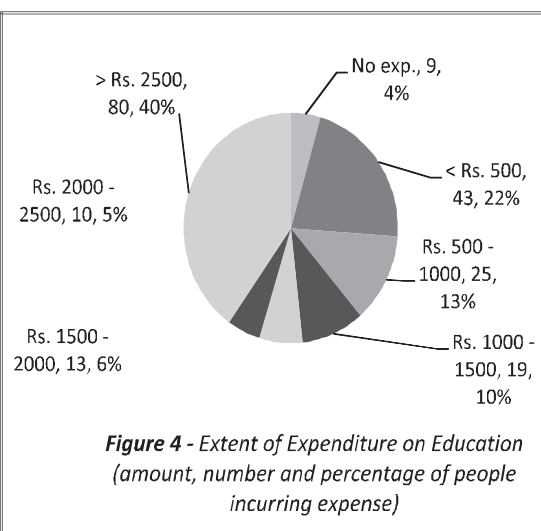
b) Tuitions

Tuitions began as early as class 1 and one-third of the families were sending their children for tuitions that cost them between Rs. 30 to Rs. 200 per month.

Experiences showed that in government schools, teachers encourage the parents to send their children for tuitions and if a child is not learning, the blame is placed either on the parents' inability to teach their children at home, or on the child for not attending tuitions. The consequence of this attitude, coupled with the poor quality of teaching in the government system is that a child going to a government school is more likely to be enrolled in tuitions than a child going to a private school. In this way, parents have also chosen where they'd rather spend their limited resources (on school fees or tuitions).

c) Books and uniforms

The number of parents who spend money on books and uniforms is also considerably high. If the child is going to a government school and his/her books are provided for free, then the money spent on stationery (notebooks, pens) comes up to about Rs. 120 – 250 per child, annually. If the child is in a private school and needs to buy textbooks, then the costs



can be beyond Rs. 500. Uniforms range from Rs. 150 to 500 per child.

Figure 4 clearly shows the extent of expenses incurred by parents for educating their children. The expenditure per family thus works out to be quite high, with 40% of the participants spending more than Rs. 2500 per year on their children's studies.

In-depth interviews showed that people were cutting down on all kinds of basic requirements to be able to pay for their children's education. Though the bulk of family income was still being spent on food and health care, parents continuously strove to meet the educational expenses of their children by cutting down

on other expenses and/or by finding additional work.

According to a UNICEF study of urban areas in seven states, monthly household expenditure on primary education per child as a proportion of per capita monthly consumption expenditure is quite high, ranging from 11% to 21%. This was not specific to slum areas where the burden of expenditure seems to be higher.¹⁴ In another study, it was found that poor families spent up to one third of their income sending their children to private schools because they value education very highly.¹⁵

IV. Role of Parents in Children's Education

Within the education system, the parent has a narrow, pre-determined and fixed role allotted to him/her. The Right to Education Act allows for parents to play a role in the schools through the School Management Committees, but this is for specific parents and not the parent body at large. The fact that some parents come from impoverished communities has determined the way they are viewed. For a typical school, parents of enrolled students bear no importance. They are typically labelled as poor people living in bastis who have sent their children to school, but have no interest in it. The mid-day meal, uniforms and other support systems are viewed only as incentives for parents to send their children to school, rather than needs and rights of the children themselves. In the same vein, parents' complaints are seen as malafide actions rather than as expressions of genuine concern.

Box 5 – Putting together money for children's education

We think- who needs to eat expensive vegetables, we have to educate the children also.

- Ramdhari Devi, Vishwakarma Nagar

We take a loan from the ration shop. We try to save on the soap. We don't buy things.

- Bhagwati, Krishna Nagar

I think that if I am able to stitch two more sets of clothes, then the children's fees will be possible.

- Bilkis, Arjun Nagar

We work for longer hours, so that we can earn more.

- Cheena Bai, GondBasti

The way we save and organize (money) for the evening's meal, (similarly) we save for the children's expenses.

- M.L Kshatriya, Vajpayi Nagar.

I try to save Rs. 10 everyday from the food expenses, and manage Rs. 100 by the end of the month to give for the tuitions. We may eat less one day, but we somehow get the school materials for them.

- Ramdhari Devi, Vishwakarma Nagar

In this backdrop, the study wanted to understand, by talking to people what the real role in their children's education was. The section below discusses these findings.

a) **Consciously including 'formal education' in their children's lives**

Choosing to send children to schools is a conscious and planned effort by the people. Though the message of schooling is booming from all quarters, and this institution has taken a firm place in society, it is still a daily decision of choosing to make space for this in their lives as it is not something coming down from generations, nor have people seen this (schooling) work for many around them.

Amongst the middle class population, the fear that the only way ahead is by being formally qualified and getting certificates ensures that a child is sent to school and a higher education is also pursued. There is a common refrain heard in such homes - 'if you don't want to go to school, would you rather become a maid or a washerman?' Such rebukes underscore the risk of regressing in life or becoming the odd one out in their social circles if children don't go to school. However, there is no such risk or fear among people of marginalized backgrounds. Therefore, the decision of sending children to schools is in itself a conscious choice.

b) **Going to school and taking part in discussions**

The survey showed that almost all children have a parent visiting the school; the family stays associated with a child's efforts in getting an education.

Box 6 – Family members go to the child's school

We go when they call us. They say that your daughter does not study and talks a lot.

- Gopi Dhurve, Gond Basti

We go and answer what the teacher asks. Sometimes, she has us sign on a paper.

- Umrao, Vajpayi Basti

We go and ask about our child and ensure that he is not bothering the teacher.

- Cheena Bai, Gond Basti

(We go to) Answer complaints.

- Vasudev, Vishwakarma Nagar

We give money in the private school, so have the right to speak.

- Narmada Prasad, Krishna Nagar

We give fees but still they speak to us with an attitude, and don't speak nicely.

-Tara Chandra, Indira Nagar

As can be seen in Figure 5, over 90% parents have visited their child's school on more than one occasion.

Parents said that they would go to the school when the child had been absent for a few days, or to pay the fees. Two in three parents said they went to the school when they were called by the school. Complaints of children playing or talk-

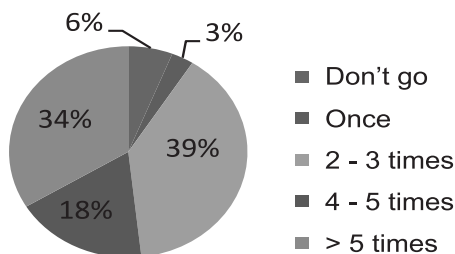


Figure 5: Incidence of family members going to school during the past year

ing in class, or not studying well were the main reasons for parents being called to the schools.

In private schools, the nature of conversations does not seem to be very different. Some parents did feel that the private schools were slightly more accountable towards them because they were paying higher fees, and they themselves also felt more confident in complaining or asking for information about their children's education. But this was not the case for many.

The traditional norm of respecting teachers and the educated class (as a whole) alienates parents from impoverished backgrounds within the space of the school. It was also evident from the interviews that the parents felt that they had gone to the school to hear something from the teachers rather than share something of theirs. Across the survey, it was voiced that the teachers spoke more than the parents in any one-to-one conversation or in a meeting with teachers. This can change only when an effort is made by the group that has an advantage over the others in these situations. The study also shows quite clearly that of the two parents, it was

more likely the mother who visited their children's schools (in 64% of the households). Hence, gender and poverty both intensify the hierarchal relationship of the child's caregiver with the school management and teachers. There is a feeling of gratitude and submissiveness on the part of the parent. Even though problems of the schools are apparent to the parents, it is difficult for them to question the existing social structures, especially for those coming from marginalized backgrounds.

c) Bearing the expenses of 'formal education'

The high cost of schooling borne by families (as seen in the earlier section) is evidence of a family's commitment to their child's education. In addition to the school expenses, there is another cost to parents - when their children go to school instead of going to work.

d) Conversations at home

The study points out that the children brought back information about some aspect or the other of their school to parents on a regular basis. The parents said that children discussed what they had

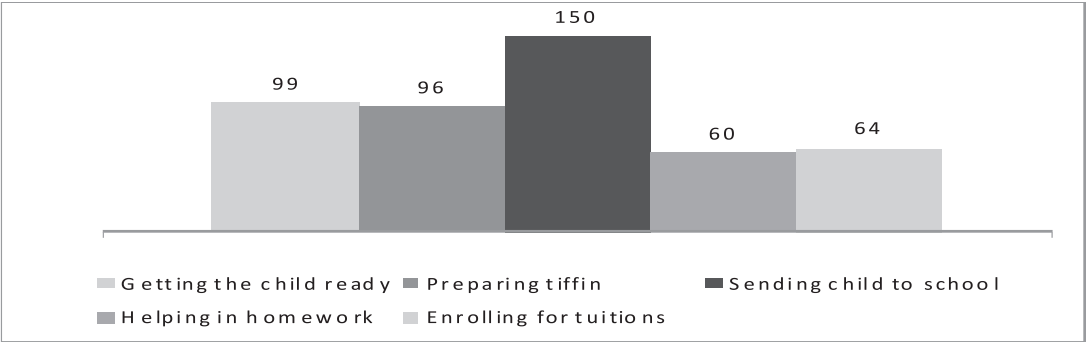


Figure 6 - Kinds of support provided by parents towards their children's education (out of the total of 199 parents)

done in school, what had been taught to them, how the teacher had behaved and also about their interactions with other children. The children also brought back news of whatever events took place in the school on that day (any special programme, teachers going for training sessions, fights in the school, etc.).

Spontaneous answers on what parents do to ensure that children study have been quantified in Figure 6 below. It can be seen that there are many kinds of efforts involved in sending a child to school including getting the child ready for school, sending them to school on a daily basis, dropping the child to school, and preparing a tiffin for him/her. Parents also try to ensure that children were learning on a continuous basis by making sure that a child would sit and study, or they would help them with their home-work when there was a literate adult or elder sibling in the house. Parents gave examples of switching off the television so that children could study. They also admitted they would beat their children to make sure they studied.

e) Membership in School Management Committees

The parents had limited information about a school committee of any form (Parents Teachers Association, School Management Committee, etc.). Only 14 individuals who had children in government schools (i.e. 10% of such parents) knew of the existence of these committees. As the majority did not know about them, it was not expected that they could identify the President or the Secretary of

the school committees. Among the participants whose children were enrolled in private schools, only seven (i.e. 7.6%) knew about an education committee comprised of parents.

It can thus be concluded that the notion of school management committees, and that parents have a role in the school management is something that was unknown to the communities in the urban areas that were a part of this study. The responsibility for the parents' lack of knowledge of this situation lies with the school management and not with the parents. It is the schools who should proactively initiate this relationship.

V. Perceptions of Parents on the Role Education will Play in Their Lives

In today's world, there is a very strong belief that education is a valuable asset in children's lives. This study also showed that the majority of the children (even in the bastis) have had at least some experience of schooling even if they have dropped out at some point. Not being able to finish schooling is due to a lack of choice and does not denote apathy towards formal education. Additionally, with the 'Universalization of Education' and the growing physical access to schools, the proportion of children that have never being enrolled in a school is decreasing over the years.

In this scenario, the number still not being enrolled can be explained by extreme social and economic conditions.

It is worthwhile to understand how being "educated" is viewed by the communities where education has still not become a

norm, as the children here are first generation learners who are going to school. This study tried to explore the perception of parents regarding the contribution that formal education can make to their child's life or could have made in their lives had they been formally educated.

The study revealed that people associate education with different kinds of values. Their perceptions and associated values have been mentioned below.

Being able to read and write has its many practical uses, which adults have either found lacking in their lives or have found important in their daily lives, as seen in the quotes in Box 7.

There were many people who related education to what they were then do-

Box 7 - Uses of knowing how to read

We would be able to read and write If there is any paper that comes, it just lies around now. If one knew how to read, we would have picked it up and read it.

It helps in opening a bank account. First you learn to sign, and then finally the account gets opened.

Medicines – we can see if they are old or new. Get different kinds of information.

Can write letters.

When buying things, we sometimes get confused how much has to be given – whether the shopkeeper has said 47 or 53 we have to think first and then give.

One is able to write the address when one has to go somewhere.

Is useful in court.

Able to read a book or a pamphlet; one is able to know what is happening where.

Would see the phone number ourselves, now we have to show it to others.

To write down the loan and how much we owe.

ing, and felt that education would have helped them in their work (see Box 8). Numerical skills were particularly required to write down measurements, counts and other quantities. One tribal person also pointed out to the communication gap with the educated that was affecting their livelihood.

Box 8 - Literacy would help us in our work

Instead of only a driver, we could have become a better driver. We could have worked in a school or in a factory, because you have to write the meter there.

- Kadir, Vajpayi Nagar

I do stitching work. I am not able to write the measurements in the copy because I haven't studied. It is quite a problem.

- Laxmi Bai, Vajpayi Nagar

I am a washer-man. I also do ironing work. We have to keep a record in this also.

- Atmaram, Vishwakarma Nagar

We can do the calculations mentally. We do scrap-dealing work and need to need to write at times.

- Aarif Ali, Annu Nagar.

We sell herbs and roots for medical cure. If we had studied a bit, we may have been able to communicate differently. People who have studied a lot are not able to understand what we are saying.

- Gopi Dhurve, Gond Basti

Having to ask someone to read things out is a demeaning experience, because there is always a sense of 'being lesser' than the other (see Box 9). The 'literate' world has used this skill to negotiate with the marginalized classes, and be on the stronger side in the discussions.

By and large, education was perceived as a symbol of progress. While the people's voices reflect this (see Box 10), the voices

Box 9 - Experiences of asking people to read for you

If we were literate, we wouldn't have to request and plead anyone. Now if we need to read something or get something written, one has to look for someone and see if they are willing to help.

- Mehrunisa, Arjun Nagar

Feel shameful at times to ask which number bus it is.

- Nazama Bi, Genhukheda

Get an illiterate person to put his thumb print anywhere. They don't even tell you what is written. We have to plead and beg (for getting someone to read out to you). When we have to put our thumb print, then we remember studies a lot.

- JaswantKosal, Indira Nagar

strangely do not reflect a confidence of these changes coming in their own lives. It was clearly more a comment on the bourgeois world.

Box 10 - Educated people have a different life

Life would change (if we were formally educated).

- Krishna Bai, JaatKhedi.

They move by car; we walk (literally and also in the pace of life).

- Mahesh Kumar Verma, Vishwakarma Nagar.

An educated person is able to prepare himself before the time comes. SindhuKunbi, Krishna Nagar.

The world is of educated people nowadays.

- Narayan, SewaniaGond

It is peculiar that 'formal education' has been interpreted as bringing a change in culture and mannerisms. Having been subjected to disdain from the 'progressed middle class', there was a feeling of irrelevance and self-denigration; they had accepted the treatment meted out to them rather than question the attitudes of these

classes. And they aspired to such external qualities of these classes. Education is therefore perceived as a tool to build dignity and respect for oneself.

Box 11 – 'Education' changes a person.

Learn to sit and speak properly (amongst the richer people).

- Lalmon Pandit, Vishwakarma Nagar.

The way one behaves, sits and functions, changes with education. Work differently.

- Naaz Bi, Bhadbada

If they learn to read, they would be able to speak properly. They think in a different way.

- Urmila Ahirwar, Balaji Nagar.

They look beautiful – all educated people.

- Naazma Bi, Gehukheda.

They (educated people) fight less.

- Jameela Bi, Gehukhedi.

You learn the way, method.

- Kisna Bai, AhmedpurBasti

Some responses showed that people felt a person's confidence was associated with his/her education (see Box 12). It can be observed that irrespective of age or a general timid temperament, a formally schooled person assumes confidence when s/he interacted with the poor. This confidence comes across in the ways a person relates to, or chooses not to engage with a person of a certain socio-economic order. This 'confidence' creates an opposite effect on the other person.

The interviews also showed that it was widely thought that to some extent education would bring a semblance of control over their circumstances (see Box 13).

People's lives have been defined by

Box 12 – ‘Education’ to beat the fear

If you are educated, then you can sit amongst four people and express what you think. (We) Feel hesitant because we are not educated like them.

- Khushbu Bano, Jaatkhedhi.

The fear will go. Once the fear goes, a lot of things will become easier. We work but feel scared to ask for the wages for our work. We put together all our strength and courage to enter an office.

- Mohan Singh, Gautum Nagar

The most important thing is that your fear goes (if you are educated).

- Suryavanshi, Vishwakarma Nagar

If my child studies, s/he would not have to hear other people's banter. They will not feel scared of everything as we do.

- Vandana Tomar, Indira Nagar.

If he studies, he will himself feel – yes, I can take all my decisions.

- Umrao, Vajpayi Basti.

I think that it is important for one to study to be able to understand one's rights.

- Heeralal Atoor, Vajpayi Nagar

many external factors. While this is with reference to many aspects of life, occupation and work are considered the most prominent. The resultant limited earning and purchasing power is seen as the determinant of other constraints. The possibility of getting a job or choosing work because of being educated was brought up in the interviews. Education, many felt, would also provide a way out of the drudgery of physical labour and having to submit to others (swallowing one's pride repeatedly, day after day). It would also bring some economic benefits that would in turn improve the quality of their lives.

Box 13 – Education to have a choice of work

If you are educated, then you can change your work easily. Money also grows.

- Lalmon Pandit, Vishwakarma Nagar

If we have to sell the hut (jhuggi) also to get him a job, we'll do that.

- Munni Devi, Vishwakarma Nagar

I don't want them to roam around as we have done in our lifetime. Don't like to work in other people's houses, but it is a compulsion.

- Gopi Dhurve, Gond Basti

An illiterate person cannot do anything else besides mazduri (manual labour).

- Kamla, CRPF Phatak

We can't educate our children in good schools, nor can we fulfil all their requirements. But if these children manage to study, they will be able to fulfil their children's needs.

- Mehrunisa, Arjun Nagar

They won't stay in a hutment as we do; the house can be broken anytime.

- Lata, JaatKhedi

Won't have to keep walking in the sun, the way their father has to.

- Sunita, Sewaniya Gond

Won't have to do manual labour, it is not about money, your body breaks. As long as your hands and legs are working, it is okay. Ask those who are coming back from work. It is bad for the one who sits on the computer all the time. We should learn that work which uses both (mental and physical faculties).

- Deepak, Gandhi Nagar

The working classes have not been given the respect due to them - for their labour, community identity and intelligence, and they are as a class, belittled. Education has also become one of the tools for class divisions, and is therefore seen as a means of overcoming discrimination based on social class. As one gets educated, the tendency to ape the higher class is evi-

dent. The marginalized groups (that are covered in this study) also tend to denigrate their own ways of living because of the way they have been treated over the years. This becomes worse with migration to the cities - the exposure of migrants to new social and economic structures and a breaking down of their own systems. This discussion also notes the limited changes that 'education' is seen to bring. It has mostly been explained as an external change in behaviour or rank and signifies a tool in the hands of the more powerful. People have not noted education as bringing any kind of value-addition in thought, or widening of perspectives.

VI. Expectations from Schools

People articulated what kind of a school they felt was appropriate for their children. Their responses have been categorized to convey the characteristics of a good school, as thought of by parents.

a) Ensuring learning

The overwhelming majority of people used the terms 'good education' or 'good teachers' for what they felt was a priority for schools to have.

Box 14 – Schools should ensure learning

The school where children learn is a good school. It could be a government school or a private school.

- Shamshed Begum, Bhadbhada

(In a good school,) They teach you well. In some schools, they hold the child's hand and help him/her to write. They teach you the alphabet properly.

- Madhu, Dholak Basti

They explain and tell (the children) nicely when they ask.

- Sarita, Kargil Nagar

b) Positive relationships between the teacher and the children

Parents gave importance to the relationship between the teacher and a child. It was important for the parents that the child felt safe in the school, and was not threatened by the teacher or other children.

Box 15 – Positive relationships should develop in schools

That school is good where they don't distinguish between the rich and the poor (big, small).

- Kareena Qureshi, Blue Moon Colony

We would consider that school good where children talk nicely to each other.

- Jitendra Maali, Vishwakarma Nagar

The children are well looked after. The teacher is also good. She does not hit.

- Rubina, Ahata Rustam Khan Ki Basti

c) To be able to keep the child engaged

It was also said that children should want to go to a school. This could come from the child enjoying the space that a school is, for various reasons such as for being treated properly and enjoying the studies and friends. It was a big struggle for parents to persist in sending a child to school if s/he was reluctant to do so.

Box 16 – Schools should draw children to them

A space where the child feels like going is a good school.

- Chanda Mansuri, Annu Nagar

A school should be such that it is able to capture the child's interest. What point would there be if the child is not willing to go there?

- Gendalal, Manjhi Nagar

d) The content of education should be useful

The utility of today's education was questioned. Some parents astutely said that a greater value should be assigned to occupational skills as a part of the curriculum. They expected holistic development, voicing the need to integrate mental development and livelihood skills, physical work, sports and art.

Box 17 – Productive work in schools

If they spent the number of years they spend in schooling in learning some work properly, it would be more useful and helpful in life.

- Phoolchand, Krishna Nagar

I feel that they should teach something productive in school, something to make, as a mat, repairing a puncture. If they taught this for an hour also, the children would not feel ashamed in doing these works because he would have learnt all this in a school.

- Sherun Nisha, Jaat Khedi

e) Appreciate different talents and interests of children

Some parents voiced that non-scholastic aspects should be promoted within the schools. Children's interest in music, theatre, art was felt necessary in a school.

Box 18 – Space for various arts in schools

Many children want to draw but they don't do drawing in the schools. There is no role for this in education.

- Laxmi Bai, Vajpayi Nagar

There are cultural activities in a private school. These should be conducted in the government school also.

- Mukesh, Vishwakarma Nagar

There should be a provision for teaching music and games.

- Salma, Blue Moon Colony

People may have voiced these either because of a personal interest in a specified area or because of having seen these features in another school.

f) Useful services provided by the government school

Almost all the people interviewed felt that the provision of free textbooks and uniforms has helped in taking a big financial load off their limited purses. They felt these provisions should be made available for boys also since the families could not afford it. While they said this, they also said that foremost, the quality of teaching should be good.

Box 19 – Need government support in education

For poor people as us, they should provide all facilities for the child to study as we don't have the money to put in for education.

- Cheena Bai, Gond Basti

The mid day meal was valued by parents in many bastis. However, it was clearly conveyed that the child was not being sent to the school for the meal. Many parents said that they don't send the children to school to eat food; this was said up-front as an assertion of self-respect, and that the quality of education should not be compromised on the premise that at least food is provided. All the parents had a problem with the quality of food, some saying that their children did not eat in the school at all on the days rotis were distributed. (The mid day meals are prepared at a central, mechanized facility in Bhopal, from where they are then delivered to all government schools in the city.)

g) Decent infrastructure facilities

Many people felt that there should be a separate toilet for the girls. This was of paramount importance and should be a part of the infrastructure of schools. Some parents further specified that the toilet should have a sturdy door, it should not be far from the main school building and should be situated such that girls feel secure in going there. There was a strong, widespread view that girls should not be enrolled in schools which do not have a toilet.

People also voiced that basic water facilities should be in place. There should be a fan to beat the heat in summers and the need for a playground was also expressed.

Box 20 – Toilets for girls

It is useless to educate a girl in a school which does not have a toilet for her.

- Motim Khare, Krishna Nagar

If there is no toilet for boys, it will still be alright. But it is important to have separate toilets for girls. Otherwise where would the girls go? Nowadays, people don't give respite to even small girls. If the school does not have a toilet, we will not send our girl to that school.

- Manjo Pathan, Annu Nagar

According to this study, large sections of the poor had minimum, basic expectations from school. The discussions showed that parents did not expect a lot from a school especially in terms of infrastructure. They did not want luxurious rooms or equipment. However, they did stress directly and indirectly that 'teaching' and 'education' of some quality should take place.

The 'commodification' of education is evident in Bhopal, a city where the schools charge fees of up to Rs. 5000 a month. In practice, the poor selected a school primarily on the basis of the fees charged. There is an unquestioning acceptance of different packages of education for different classes. The failure of several government policies has led to a loss of idealism and the poor now have accepted their lot and know what to expect from the government.

Box 21 – Poor quality government education for poor people

The government school is good for the poor.

- Neem Kuwar Pardhi, Gond Basti

We cannot afford any more expense. The government (school) is good for us.

- Raheem Khan, Annu Nagar

¹ Central Statistical Office of the Government of India; Women and Men in India, 12th issue (2010)

² Work wise distribution of participants listed in annexure 5

³ The age group of 6 to 18 years has been taken as we believe that education should be seen in continuity till at least class 12th. The data for age group of 6 to 14 years has also been presented in light of the provisions of Right to Education Act.

⁴ Centre for Micro Finance (2010) Cash Flow Study: Kota District Centre for Micro Finance (2010) Cash Flow Study: Kota District

⁵ Guides are books which provide the chapter in a question-answer format and encourage a rote learning of these answers

⁶ Kolkata. Tila Jamala NGO Report

⁷ Reading in the primary school curriculum in what is worth teaching. Orient Blackswan (192)

⁸ NFHS 2005-06

⁹ Centre for Micro-Finance, Jaipur Report on Urban Livelihood Profiling Study; Survey Location: Jagatpura, Jaipur

¹⁰ Recognized enrollment compiled from National Institute of Education Awareness and Planning, "District System Information on Education, 2007" available online at www.dise.in/ar2005.html; unrecognized enrolment compiled from National Council on Education Research and Training, "NCERT All-India Education Survey, 2003," available online at <http://gov.ua.nic.in/NScheduleData/>; total enrollment compiled from the sum of government and private enrollment from DISE 2007 and unrecognized enrollment from NCERT reported in Ross Baird (May 2009) Private Schools for the Poor; Development, Provision, and Choice in India; A Report for Gray Matters Capital

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ A repeat visit to the basti after data collection to share findings showed that the centres had closed down.

¹⁴ Mehrotra, S. (2006). What ails the educationally backward states? The challenge of public finance, private provision and household costs.

¹⁵ K. Watkins, "Private Education and Education for All," *Economic Affairs*: 24:4, 2004, p. 8-11.

Situations and Perspectives of Children

I. Participant Characteristics

A total of 164 children were surveyed in the bastis. Almost equal numbers of girls and boys were interviewed. The ages of

Table 6.1 – Profile of children participating in the study

Characteristic	Children
Total	164
Gender	
Girls	83
Boys	81
Ages	
5 to 7 years	19
8 to 10 years	67
11 to 13 years	65
14 to 16 years	13
Earning Status	
Working	60
Not working	104

Table 6.2 – Profile of children participating in the study

Characteristic	Children
Total	164
Education Status	
School going	141
Drop Out	16
Never Enrolled	7
Type of School	
Government School	75
Private School	66

the children were between 5 and 16 years, though most participants were from 8 to 13 years of age.

Majority of the children were school-going. Of the school-going ones, 53% were studying in government schools. A significant number of the children (36%) were working to contribute to their family income.

Schools are spaces where children learn to expand themselves beyond their roles within their families. In this formal space, they interact with people of their own age as well as adults who come into their lives for a specific purpose (such as teachers or administrators, or in any other form). The first part of this chapter deals with the experiences of children with the people they encounter in school spaces.

The second part of this chapter deals with the children's vision of a school. Here, the children speak about curricular content and the different relationships within a school. This is followed by a section on the children's disillusionment with the education system, which causes them to drop out.

The last part of this chapter covers several aspects that came up in the interviews and that we feel need to be further explored. These dimensions give certain insights to the situations in schools as perceived by the children.

II. Relationships in Schools

a) Relationships amongst children

The present section details friendships and relations amongst children while in schools.

a.1) Across communities and cultures

The school is a (social) space that is meant to provide children with ample opportunities to interact with other children. However, interactions here also tend to be limited, within similar socio-economic backgrounds.

The study showed that almost all the

children had at least one friend within the school. However, friends were mostly from their immediate neighbourhoods. Only 17% of the children (boys more than girls) had friends who were not living in their own bastis. This data may need further exploration, but it does suggest that schools are not necessarily spaces where children develop relationships across different economic and social groups. There is a lot of discrimination among children. Those who are 'socially more vulnerable' are often targeted by the others and insulted and humiliated because of their community identities.

This seems to be the case in government schools as well as in small private schools. Such instances of discrimination in missionary schools and other larger private schools that run separate sections for the 'poor' were also mentioned.

Children further felt violated when the adults witnessing these scenes did not defend them. On the contrary, most times, the teachers carried a similar bias against a student (being ridiculed) giving more space for the other children to carry on the attack.

Box 22 – Discrimination based on community

I took part in a dance competition in my school. We practiced and prepared for it. Then the girl who I was paired with refused to do the final performance with me saying that my mother stays dirty all the time. My mother does scrap-picking work.

- Hema, 7 year old girl

We would go to collect scrap in the morning, and the other children would sometimes see us. In school, they would tease us saying that we beg and are filthy. I stopped going after that.

- Virendra, 10 year old boy

This process can definitely be reversed and stopped. Field experiences¹ also show that children do overcome these negative attitudes (towards physical attributes, social labels) and start engaging with other children on a one-to-one level when in an environment that encourages such behaviour and provides opportunities for the children to interact with each other.

a.2) Between children of opposite sexes

Many of the schools in the city are co-educational. But the study showed that schools are not spaces where children can get to know and be friendly with a child of the opposite sex. Interactions between girls and boys are limited throughout school life. The interactions become more restrictive as the children grow up.

In the questionnaire used for the study, there were three options for the children to choose from while responding to the question about the nature of interactions between girls and boys:

- i. communication and interaction with ease
- ii. limited scope of interactions and
- iii. no interactions

Across schools and classes, there was not a single 'yes' on the first which would indicate a free flow of interactions between girls and boys. 43% of the children said that they had limited interactions with a child of the opposite sex. They elaborated that conversations between girls and boys were mostly about exchanging school work when the situation required so. 52% of the children said that they did not talk to a child of the opposite sex, at all.

Girls and boys are taught to sit in separate straight lines and to not sit next to each other. They do not have any physical contact/do not share the same physical space at any time, and there is a conscious effort to keep them segregated. Such rules have been made so that there is no chance of even an accidental touch between a boy and a girl. The children explained that they were taught to not mix with this other group (of the opposite sex). 'The teacher says we shouldn't, so we don't' is a common answer. This kind of a division comes in the way of boys and girls relating to each other normally.

Conversations with teachers suggested that they feel that the two sexes should be segregated right from the beginning (in class 1) as 'they have to learn this sooner or later'. Girls and boys playing together is always seen in a negative light, and actively discouraged without giving the children any reason. This is ingrained in many ways that ironically, by the time the children are older, it is considered safe for a girl and boy to sit next to each other during an examination as it is assumed that one will not help the other.

b) Relationship with the teachers

The relationship between the teachers and the children is a complex one. Children spend a considerable part of their day with the teacher. Research shows that children who have had secure relationships with their teachers demonstrate lower levels of challenging behaviours and higher levels of competence in school.² The quality of children's relationships with their early school teachers is increasingly recognized as a contributing factor to children adapting to schools.³

Box 23 – What children like in teachers

She teaches well. She teaches again and again until the children understand, that is why she is nice. Otherwise, half the children wouldn't understand anything. In our class, most children don't know Hindi.

- Jalpina, 12 year old girl

When Maya Madam explains, everything becomes simple. Even if it is difficult, she can make you understand; that is why I like her.

- Kiran, 9 year old girl

She first makes us laugh in class, and then she teaches us.

- Anjali, 9 year old girl

Sometimes if a child does not have a pencil, she gives her or him her own pencil. She does not hit the children; that is why I like her.

- Aslam, 8 year old boy

Box 24 – What children dislike in teachers

One of the teachers comes and sees what each child is doing and talks to us affectionately. But I don't like the other Madam because she hits everyone with a stick, and doesn't let anyone talk.

- Rohit, 9 year old boy

The teacher has half the period for teaching and half for beating. First they teach, and then comes the beating time. Sometimes, the bell rings and we get spared from the rod. She is quite scary when she is angry (describing another teacher).

- Rakesh, 9 year old boy

In the interviews, it was found that children did have a very strong opinion about their teachers and reasons for why they liked or disliked them. Their choices were determined by various elements – the way a teacher taught, the way s/he treated the children, the way s/he spoke to them, whether s/he gave a child attention, and quite significantly, if s/he hit them. It was also found that their like or dislike for a teacher was clearly a reaction to a specific teacher, and within the same school, there were teachers a child related to or did not relate to.

Children identified certain characteristics of the teachers whom they 'liked' and whom they 'disliked'.

Interestingly, quality of teaching was cited as one of the most desired qualities in a teacher. Violence, on the other hand, was considered the most undesirable quality in a teacher.

Children's observations and views about their teachers were keen and sharp. They were able to sense the attitude with which they were being treated, the contradictions in a teachers' behaviour; they were able to detect unfairness in the expectations of teachers from a specific group of children but not from other children or from adults.

In the study, children also commented on the kind of knowledge and skills they felt teachers should be equipped with, the norms of behaviour that they should

Figure 7.1 - Reasons for Liking Teachers (responses out of 141)

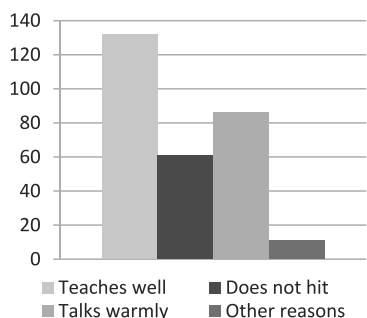
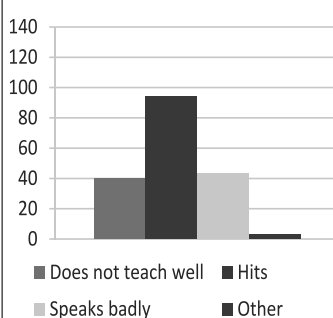


Figure 7.2 - Reasons for Disliking Teachers (responses out of 141)



Box 25 – What children expect of teachers

A teacher should not decide whom to talk to or not to talk to based on a child's clothes. They should give equal attention to everyone. It should not be that some children are spoken to with warmth, while others are always scolded.

- Divya, 9 year old girl

There should be rules for teachers also - they should not buy and eat snacks during class. If we have to plait our hair and keep our nails short, these rules should apply to them as well.

- Sheetal, 11 year old girl

Whenever he gets a phone call, he goes out of the class and starts talking. When will he get time to teach?

- Rakesh, 9 year old boy

People who are new teachers should be told about the school system and also about how to treat children. A new 'sir' has come and he beats up children for every small thing saying that if he doesn't beat them, they will go out of control. Nobody says anything to him. Everybody is scared of him.

- Sonu, 10 year old boy

Teachers should not criticize children who don't know something, nor should they hit children for it.

- Akbar, 11 year old boy

The teacher should be intelligent and knowledgeable. She should know everything – addition, multiplication, division, about the human body etc.

- Sohail, 9 year old boy

follow, and the nature of interaction they expected to have with teachers.

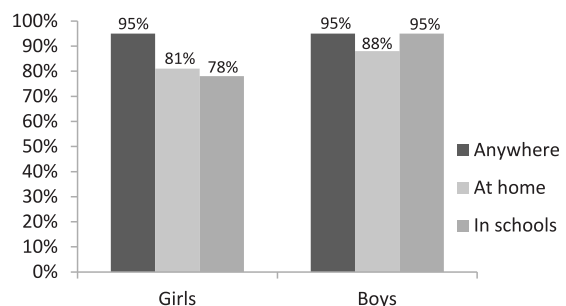
III. Violence against Children

The study explored the issue of violence within schools and how it affects children. Although the interview schedule was limited to understanding physical punishment, children shared information about emotional violence as well.

Violence against children took place in almost all settings. In families at home, communities, schools and other institutions, violence was found in the form of physical punishment, mental torture/abuse and/or sexual abuse.

As shown in the Figure 8, almost all the children (95%) said they were beaten, at home as well as at school. There were only 9 children out of 164 who said they were not beaten at all. 78% of all girls had been beaten in schools, as against 94% of all boys.

Figure 8 - Children facing Violence by Location



A marginal difference also existed between girls and boys facing violence at home. However, only every fifth girl seems to have escaped the punishment.

Different studies have shown that in general, boys experience more frequent and more severe corporal punishment than girls, although girls are far from immune. It also appears from our study that children of all age groups are constantly beaten and that these are not sporadic incidents or incidents linked to a child's specific age.

The extent of violence against children in the bastis denotes that it is as much a result of problems within families, as an acceptance of violence in a community. Children do not have their own agency in society. Their status is further compromised when the children are from marginalized backgrounds. When it comes to these children, people from outside the community also assume that they have the right to intrude upon a child.

a) Corporal punishment in schools

The Right to Education Act bans corporal punishment in schools. Corporal Punishment has been defined as physical force being used by someone in a position of authority against someone in his or her care, with the intention of causing some degree of pain or discomfort.⁴

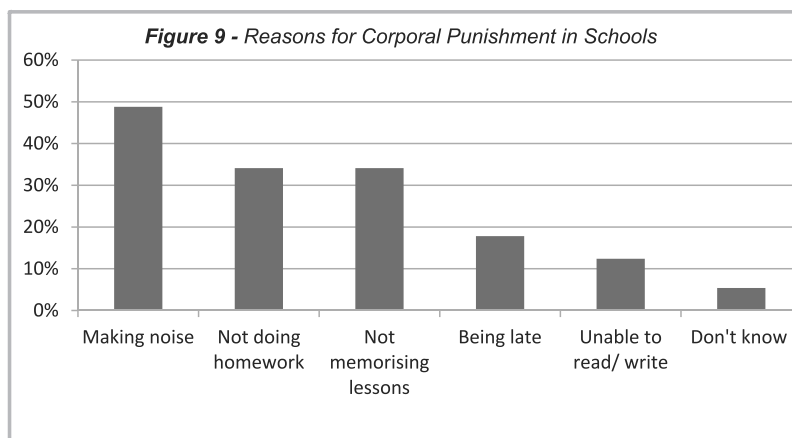
This study shows that there is no difference in the type or amount

of punishment in government and/or private schools. The forms of violence found in schools are both physical and psychological, and usually occur together. Physical violence is often accompanied by emotional torture and verbal insults. These insults are meant to label a child negatively, using the child's (socio-economic) identity to slot them as 'failures' for life.

When there is a conflict between a teacher and a child, there is no space for discussion or argument, and the child has nothing to reflect upon or to learn from. Abusive words are simply hurled on children in a fit of rage. This kind of violence is such a common thing that it does not surprise a child. Child after child recounted their experiences of physical violence. Even girls as young as those in class 2 admitted that they had been physically punished because they could not read or write properly. Several children also recounted that teachers spent more time in scolding them than in actually teaching in class.

a.1) Reasons for violence on children

The study investigated the reasons for



which children were beaten. Children reported different reasons, that have been presented in Figure 9 below.

'Making noise' was cited as the most common reason for being punished. In this context, what emerged from the narratives was that this reason was used to punish children whenever teachers felt it was required. Not just in class, but also during break time or in any out-of-class activity children could be punished for not being quiet. What became clear from discussions with children was that violence was meted out on the children more from a need of the teachers to control the children and to express their authority, and to 'make them listen', than anything else.

More than one third of the children in our study were punished for reasons related to studying, like not doing home work, or not remembering or memorising their lessons.

It is apparent that the principles of teaching are being severely compromised when children are reprimanded for not being able to understand and thereby 'learn' something. At such a young age, the child develops a sense of being a failure and of inadequacy in school. The child also loses interest in education and no longer trusts the idea of 'formal education' existing for him/her.

Two students reported being sent to the police station from school because the teacher thought they were rowdies and teased girls. The teacher constantly threatened that he would further have the students sent to jail. One of them added that the teacher pulled his hair because he was wearing a bracelet. Eventually the

boys' parents went to the police station to get them released from custody.

Another group of children reported that the teacher repeatedly threatened that she could get anyone locked up, as her husband was a police officer. This really terrified the children and they tried to hide from her.

Box 26 –Why was I beaten?

I am able to write A,B,C, D from the board but am not able to do it on my own. So she hits me on my hand. I run away in the break. Then I get beaten up more the next day.

- Aashikana, 7 years old

Madam does not teach us Hindi. She says we should learn by ourselves - keep joining the alphabets and reading. I don't know how to do it, so she hits me on the hands and makes us sit bent like a 'murga'.

- Javed, 8 year old boy

If I ask the teacher something she says who is asking unnecessary questions and hits with the scale.

- Radha, 11 year old girl

If we don't do homework, they (people in the school) make you sit like a 'murga'. Sometimes they use the duster to hit. Once I had not learnt Chapter 10, so the teacher beat me. The teacher twists and pulls children's ears. Badal gets his ears pulled everyday.

- Mohit, 12 year old boy

These kinds of incidents clearly illustrate the prejudice of middle class teachers towards students from bastis. These students are perceived as a threat and the language used by teachers is repressive. Nambissan (2000)⁵ has talked about studies in which children have been referred to as 'dullards', 'backwards' and 'uncivilized' by teachers. Sarada Balagopalan's study⁶ of adivasi children shows how overt discriminative practices are a result

of a teacher's prejudices. These discriminations get internalized in the psyche of both children and their parents.

With so much violence, the school, which is supposed to enable children to explore and discover their own potential as well as the knowledge around them, turns into a place where a child is repressed. The middle class society and the state agencies form alliances to protect members of their own classes from the working classes, and see the basti children as miscreants.

b) Violence at home for reasons associated with school

As seen in Figure 8, 80.5% girls and 87.7% boys reported being beaten at home.

Various reasons were given for this including not doing the work expected of them, quarrels amongst siblings, complaints received from the neighbourhood or schools, etc.

Children are punished in numerous ways and at such young ages that it is beyond their comprehension to understand why or what it is that they are doing that is so undesirable. As a result, children learn to keep out of the way of the people who

get angry with them.

c) Impact on the children

Violence impacts children in different ways. Studies have shown long-term impacts of continuous exposure to violence on a child's psyche if interventions are not made.

This study documents some short-term implications of violence as was evident from the attitudes and behaviours of children in the school space. It must be noted that consequences of any violence are context-specific. Personality factors and the different roles of people in a community and family spaces are critical determinants of the impact of violence; there is no one factor that has the same effect at all times.

c.1) Rationalising violence

When children are unable to escape regular violence, they begin to cope with it by rationalizing it. It gradually ceases to be perceived as a violation of their personal physical space. Instead it is justified as being done for one's own good, as necessary for them to concentrate on their studies. To ensure that 'wrong' things are not done and people become 'good'.

As children grow into adults, violence is further justified as a way of establishing discipline, and punishment is viewed as a natural corollary to it. Thus, women accept and bear violence because they feel they have not been able to fulfil the demands/expectations of their superior male counterparts, or of those placed above them in an established, hierarchical patriarchal structure. There is a complete acceptance of these roles in society and within this structure it is very clear who can perpe-

Box 27 –Violence at home for reasons associated with school

First, we get beaten in school for not getting good enough marks. Then we get beaten at home for the same reason. I don't like it in school; Madam hits us very hard on the back. Mummy insists that I go to school. If I refuse, then Papa will give me two slaps.

- Parzana, 9 years old girl

If we don't go to school, (we) get beaten at home. But when we go to school, there too we get beaten at the smallest of pretexts.

- Rakesh, 10 year old boy

trate violence, and against whom violence can be perpetrated. Women and children thus become the most common receivers of violence as they are way down in the hierarchy.

Box 28 –Justification of violence

One should be punished, otherwise how will one study and learn?

- Asif, 11 year old boy

We are punished only when we do something wrong.

- Varsha, 10 year old girl

Madam says you will learn only when you are caned.

- Arvind, 11 year old boy

You start doing ABCD out of fear.

- Seema, 10 year old girl

We would have become 'dhor' (foolish people) if the teacher didn't hit us. They hit us for our own good.

- Ajit, 9 year old boy

Only the bad children are punished (in school).

- Renu, 10 year old girl

If you don't learn, then people call you a thief. We become bad children. We don't listen to our parents and then we do even worse things like drinking alcohol.

- Sumit, 10 year old boy

c.2) Avoiding people/places where they may be subject to violence

Children start fearing the teacher and avoiding people who may hurt them. Unsure of how to deal with this, boys begin to absent themselves from school as well as home. As a result, we often get to hear - 'he left home on time but didn't reach school'.

In the interviews, severe corporal punishment was given as one of the major reasons for children dropping out of school.

This has been discussed in greater detail in Section V of this chapter.

c.3) Harboursing guilt, anger and humiliation

Physical pain and injury are the most evident and visible outcomes of the abuse that children face. What are more damaging though are the feelings of guilt, anger and humiliation that children harbour. These are far more complicated and difficult to resolve and deal with. Such feelings also tend to get carried over to and manifested at later stages in life.

Some children felt extremely angry about the continuous violence inflicted on them at school. They often wanted to subject the perpetrators to the same treatment but know that they can't. Girls felt a deep sense of guilt and humiliation more than the physical pain.

This repository of anger and resentment about the way they have been treated has long-term effects on their self-esteem and their perception of human relations. They vent these feelings destructively, at different times and in different places.

Box 30 – Holding anger against teachers who punish

Feel like beating the teacher back. I don't go to school for some days. When you are caned, why would you like to go to school?

- Monu, 11 year old boy

I feel like catching hold of the teacher who is hitting us, and hit back. Why can't Madam talk nicely? She just doesn't talk properly.

- Twinkle, 12 year old girl

c.4) Inability to fit into the mainstream, leading to further marginalisation

Being 'educated' and 'disciplined' are clearly declared, desirable attributes. The two accomplishments are also the pre-requisites for getting accepted into the mainstream. Those unable to imbibe these traits are treated by teachers as offenders that need to be set right.

Children's narratives showed how those who are unable to follow the 'mainstream' norms of behaviour are constantly targeted. Teachers declared them as being 'bad' and heading towards doom. Many other children then adopt this attitude of the teacher. When not checked, they assume that the teacher approves of their behaviour. They then use this behaviour to get into the teacher's good books, share his/her power on one hand and avoid punishment on the other by virtue of being the teacher's favourites.

Box 31 – Marginalization by the children

She has lice in her hair. See, she is so dirty.

- Barkha, 11 year old girl

She does not even know the alphabets. She does not know how to read.

- Shashi, 10 year old girl

He is sitting quietly here but actually he is the real mischief maker.

- Bunt, 11 year old boy

As a result, when children are punished, they also become objects of disdain for their own peers (even when they belong to the same community), leading to their further marginalisation.

In every discussion in a basti, children would ridicule the one who was beaten

up by a teacher or had become an eyesore for a teacher. Such a child is derided for anything that s/he does, by everyone including friends, siblings and community elders.

c.5) The embedding of violence in a child's psyche

The repetitive cycle of physical violence becomes part of a child's psyche. Field experiences show that this often reaches a state where a child responds only to the threat of being beaten, or on being beaten. This becomes a way of functioning for the child, and s/he relates in the same manner to his/her younger siblings and other children in his/her environment.

Such an individual becomes harsh and this form of functioning ends up harming the child in the long run. The constant pressure to be externally controlled while not being comfortable and disciplined within oneself makes it difficult for children to allow themselves to engage with anything constructively for a considerable length of time. They get irritated for irrelevant reasons and have a strong desire for retribution. Not having been able to defend themselves in other situations, they have a fierce need to be one up on others through a physical show of strength.

It is not easy for the children to let go of this behaviour. Interventions to counter this sort of behaviour takes a lot of time, as well as physical and mental space for the child to begin trusting and relating to people in a non-aggressive manner through conversations and positive actions.

IV. Children's Expectations of a School

Children's ideas of what schools should be seemed to have been drawn from what they have experienced in the different places they identify as 'schools'. The responses showed that the children's concept of a school was narrow in scope, and as a result, so were their expectations. As much as the children recalled positive experience in the school space and felt that such experiences should become a part of the norm, they also clearly gave voice to their negative experiences and stressed that such behaviours or situations should not arise in a school.

a) Good teaching

When asked what kind of education a school should provide, many children spontaneously spoke of the teaching methodology and material, as well as the attitude of the teachers and interactions in classrooms. They also said that there should be female teachers, good education and free education.

As expressed by the quotes in the box, one of the great concerns for a child is to understand what is being taught. We could see that the children had ways of assessing when they were learning or not, and what the problems in the teaching methods were. Visual and tangible teaching material was mentioned as a useful tool to enhance comprehension. Moreover, the teacher's attention and attitude towards mistakes, as well as his/her intentions (good or bad) seemed to have an impact on the children's learning.

Box 33 – What we expect from a school...good teaching

There should be things in front of a child to be able to understand, as when they show a picture of a lion when you are small. They should have many things to teach with.

- Shubham, 10 year old boy

The teachers should teach well, meaning they should not teach in a hurry - children are not able to understand then. A good teacher teaches the child again and again if s/he can't understand. She gives attention to each child.

- Deepak, 8 year old boy

There should be good studies in the school, meaning that what they teach should go into our heads. Everybody should be able to understand. If there is some mistake made, you correct and explain it again.

- Rachna, 10 year old girl

Should teach counting and numbers by paper notes. If you don't have notes, then maybe you can use stones to teach.

- Laxmi, 11 year old girl

There should be drawings and pictures on the wall.

- Abhishek, 10 year old boy.

Earlier we used to get books to read in school. We enjoyed story books. Now we don't get them anymore.

- Samreen, 11 year old girl

b) Space to be oneself

Children have also expressed the need for free expression and space for being themselves. The curriculum in classrooms and schools are designed in a way that there is minimal space for the children to interact and behave in any way besides that which is in accordance with an institution's expectations. Uniformity is very important and there is pressure to fit into the pre-defined mould of a 'student'. Though children find it difficult to adjust to this rigidity, the adults around them (both at

Box 34 – What we expect from a school...to be oneself

They should not hit us in schools if we talk.

- Salman, 8 year old boy

There should be one free period where children can do different things.

- Shiva, 14 year old

I feel sad when we have to sit quiet and told not to act and do natak. I like it when we have to say dialogues with expressions. We should regularly do theatre in schools.

- Aman, 8 year old

They should not be disturbing you in everything. They interfere in everything you do.

- Deepak, 15 year old

home and at school), as well as the established norms within an institution repress any kind of resistance and the only option left to them is to conform.

The children articulated the need to have space to be themselves, as they felt a pressure to be different from what they really were. This is as much the consequence of limited opportunities to explore your talent as the inability to temperamentally be the person you are. Many children clearly said that they should not be punished in schools when they do something different from what was expected of them.

Box 35 – (Not) Accepting and appreciating diverse backgrounds

The teachers don't know that I am a 'jhaarewala' (the Agariya tribe who make steel strainers referred to as jhaara). They think the jhaarewala are ruffians and can never study. If they had known I am a jhaarewala, they would not have given me admission nor would they have allowed jhaarewala children in the school. I want to study and show that even a jhaarewala can study, and it is not only the rich who can study.

- Bunt, 13 year old boy (he joined school directly in class 6 after studying privately).

It is clear from the study that children did not have any space to talk to the teacher or amongst themselves. When asked if there was any time in the week or during a day when the children could talk about and share their feelings and thoughts, one child promptly answered that they could do this in the break period.

The distance between the school and the children is an extremely wide one. There were several examples the children gave where teachers did not know about their student's identity or his/her parents' occupation. The children were very conscious that their teacher did not know their family background, and would not approve of it.

c) Teach human values

Children from very vulnerable communities who have had to face biases from different quarters were also very articulate about the prejudices they have to face in school. Many of these children were drop outs from mainstream schools. As seen below, their voices show how schools have failed to ensure that human values are promoted and maintained through the years a child grows into an adult.

Box 36 –Facing prejudice

Everyone should be taught to speak to each other properly. People don't speak to us nicely. I just asked the girl on the bus stand how did her hair grow so beautiful and she said 'Why should I tell you how I grow my hair; you stay away from me, how can you speak to me?'

- Archana, 10 years old

It feels bad when people speak like this. They do 'chee, chee' to us as though we are dirty and bad. They learn this at home and in school, so schools should teach you to value everyone (kadar karna chahiye).

- Mala, 12 years old

These negative situations highlighted by children from vulnerable communities explain the bare minimum expectations from a dismal system. The children have indirectly spoken about wrongs taking place in schools and have expressed hopes for these situations being corrected. Many of their expectations do not go any further.

d) Teach practical skills

Some children spoke about different, practical skills that should be a part of the course content, in a school curriculum. Informed by their backgrounds and contexts, the nature of the children's suggestions was practical and indicative of their thirst for acquiring knowledge and learning.

Box 37 – Skills, discovery and invention in schools

It would also be nice if cycling was also taught in the school.

- Priya, 12 year old girl

We should discover and invent things in schools like - how to make things out of old things.

- Ashirwaad, 10 year old

They should teach us how to make some medicines in school so that we can help in the basti when anyone has a problem. It is very expensive to go to a doctor.

- Goli, 10 year old boy

Elder children should be taught livelihood-oriented work so that they can manage to earn after they finish school. They should learn how to make a building, masonry, repairing things etc.

- Guddi 14 year old girl

e) Basic infrastructure

The need for basic infrastructure in schools was also expressed.

Besides benches and fans children also expressed the need for annual functions in schools where they could show their parents and members of their communities what they had learnt and also to entertain them. Several girls expressed the need for toilets. Different studies⁷ have established that non-availability of toilets leaves girls with no option but to be absent from school during menstruation. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2011⁸ reported that only 43.8% of government schools had separate girls' toilets that were useable.

These simple requirements of children from a school show that they can see that the schools they are going to are in some way 'not as good' as the schools where 'other' children, 'children from bigger homes, bigger people' go. The stark differences in the basic requirements between the schools that children from these two groups attend reflect the unequal opportunities within education.

Box 38 – Infrastructure in schools

There is no latrine in the school, so sometimes the teacher lets us go home, and sometimes we have to make an excuse to go home. Then I don't come back.

- Mohini, 8 year old girl

We should also get benches and tables like the elder kids do.

- Anshu, 10 year old girl

They should organise a function or a big event (hungama) in the school, like they do in big schools.

- Nadeem, 11 year old boy

There should be a fan.

- Radha, 9 year old girl

f) Flexible school timings

Some children also said that the school timings should be such that they could adjust their work to attend school. Some children work and earn while continuing their studies. (discussed in a later section). While it may not be possible to work out timings that will suit all the 'working' children because of the varying natures of their work, it is worthwhile to explore what could be the options. There have been models of schools⁹ with flexible timings and this has had a positive impact on the lives of these working children.

It is also remarkable to note how children are able to accept, analyze and propose all by themselves how a school should function taking their own realities in consideration.

Box 39 –Managing work and school

The school should be such that one can study between 7 and 12 in the morning, and then go to the shop to work.

- Madhu, 11 year old girl

g) Play space

Children feel the school should be an institution where a safe play space is provided. The children in this study come from slums that lack places to play in the houses or outside. They often end up playing on the roads, where the risk of accidents is high.

In recent times, the availability of playgrounds has become even more scarce as open spaces are being taken over for developing them into colonies and complexes. Boundary walls are being built around erstwhile open spaces to mark ownership, and public spaces are open

only at specific times of the day. Also, older boys take control over the grounds making them out of bounds for girls and younger children.

Box 40 – Not all work, some play too

I would like a school which has games.

- Gulfasa, 10 year old girl

There should be things for playing, and everybody should get a chance. Only the older children get to play.

- Rinku, 8 year old girl

I come to the park with my friends. My sisters don't come to the park. They only come when our father is not at home. He forbids them to go out.

- Subhash, 11 year old boy

V. Disillusionment with School

To explore what disappoints children, 16 of them who were drop-outs were interviewed separately. For the purpose of the study, a child who had left school any time before or during Class 10 was considered a drop-out.

The views of children who have dropped out were not significantly different from those who were still enrolled; their experiences in schools were similar. They felt similarly violated through the physical and mental violence meted out to them; they found schooling to be similarly mundane and which failed to attract them back to the space the next day. Many children (who were among those going to school), voiced that they did not like going to school, but were forced to. The relationships within their schools did not leave them with a sense of warmth.

Children reported that they dropped out of schools because of being beaten or

Box - 42 Interview with an 11 year old boy

Do you like the school? I don't like to go to school at all. The teachers hit a lot. Even the older boys beat us. But my parents and older sisters insist that I go. I make many excuses and don't go on some days.

What should be there in a school? I feel that (in schools) children should be asked what they want to do - if they are taught what they like, then the child will be able to get higher scores. There should be one room in the school which has a tabla and other musical instruments, and children should get the opportunity to learn to play them.

Why are you studying, what will you do with what your education? I want to grow up to protect the country... from the bad people who come from the western side of the country.
(The above child studies in a school that promotes a right-wing, Hindu ideology).

seeing other children being beaten. Both male and female teachers have been reported to beat the children.

Some children try to gain a sense of pride and self-determination of not giving into the system when they have dropped out, particularly at a younger age. This does mellow over the years into a sense of

remorse later on, but they also realize that they were not able to adjust to the compromises demanded by schools.

In most situations, girls have different reasons for dropping out from boys. Even if a girl is not enjoying school, she usually keeps going, as she is not able to outright rebel and take the decision to drop out herself. Boys have the option of sitting in parks and open spaces during the school timings if they want to bunk a class, but girls are unable to do so.

As social pressures work on a girl child, many choices really don't occur to her and submission becomes part of who she is. Only girls from specific communities, who have been working or who have been independently engaged in 'activities' outside their homes since childhood (such as waste-picking, begging), are able to exert their choices regarding dropping out from schools. Additionally, it is more likely that this choice is accepted (in their families) with less resistance because of the lack of experience of parents in this regard and other independent choices in life would probably not be given this acceptance.

Once a child drops out, his/her relationship with school is completely severed. There is no going back to school and the child is left with a sense of negativity.

Box 41 – Why we left school

Nobody likes school in their childhood. It is boring to study. You just don't feel like going there. But when you grow up, you feel 'I should have studied when I was younger'. I only went for a few weeks and then left it.

- Vishal, 10 years old

I didn't feel like studying. The school was only such, that one didn't feel like studying.

- Akram, 14 years old

I was beaten so badly, that I started bleeding and the bleeding would not stop. I did go to school a couple of times after that, but Madam was still angry with me and scolded me. Maybe she didn't want me to come back. I stopped going.

- Prakash, 16 year old

I made a mistake once, and the teacher hit me with a stick. I started crying and came away saying that I would never come back to the school after that. I never went to school after that day. I don't feel like going even now.

- Madhu, 11 year old boy

If you have a stick in your hand, nothing will go into a child's brain. I can assure you of that. Forget 100%, the child will not understand even 1% of what is being said.

- Akram, 15 year old boy

VI. Additional Information for Further Research

Discussions with the basti children in the course of this study brought up several other pertinent issues. The study was not designed to explore these adequately. They are documented here to show the need to further understand these aspects. Detailed studies of these issues will provide a perspective on the aspects which need to be considered for making the school system responsive to children. They will also help in identifying gaps in school curricula.

a) Discussions within school

There is little opportunity for children to talk about their lives within a school. These kinds of discussions do not take place as there is no time or space allotted for such activities, and it is not part of the curriculum. The nature of the relationships that children have with their teachers does not encourage such discussions either.

Box 43 - Space for children's lives in schools

My teacher asks me what I ate today, what my mother cooked. She asks me many things and I like to tell her.

- Vishal, 7 year old boy,
(Studying in a government school)

If I discuss situations at home in school, I feel lighter.

- Pooja, 8 year old girl,
(Studying in a private school)

Sharing with teachers is very limited. But, whenever children are asked something about their homes and when they have a chance to discuss any family situation, it makes a big difference to them. This

acceptance and sharing of their lives with each other provides them a sense of comfort and bolsters their self-esteem. This is evident as children remember (what may otherwise be considered) simple and irrelevant details of these kinds of conversations. This needs to be further explored and encouraged within school spaces.

b) Children's work and earnings

It was clear from the study that most school-going boys are working besides going to school. Girls also worked, but what they did was linked to domestic chores and/or their mothers' occupations. Children may work on weekends, in the evening hours or also within school hours, which affects their school attendance. Many assist their parents - for example, in vegetable selling, producing or in the packaging of products on a piecemeal basis, or as domestic help. The proportion of girls assisting in household responsibilities (looking after younger siblings, washing clothes, spending time in getting water) was also very high.

Apart from such children, a large number are completely part of the child labour force of the city and do not go to schools at all. Many such children work for as little as Rs. 30 a day at hotels and roadside dhabas, or work independent of employers and earn via scrap-picking.

This reality of working children should be further understood to see how their life experiences are acknowledged and addressed in the curriculum. Additionally, it needs to be realized that in all such families, these children are really living on a precipice. Many different factors can

unfold to create a situation where a school-going child will be forced to drop out.

c) Continuity in a school

We saw that children studied in the same school for years. Only a very small number of children had ever changed schools. The main reason quoted for changing schools was based on logistics, i.e. the family had to move, and a school nearer their new home was chosen for the children to go to. Another reason for changing schools was that a child had finished the highest class available within his/her school (primary or middle or secondary). One interview specifically showed that dynamics within a school management can also force children to change schools: 'The Principal and the teachers did not get along and we were told that everybody would be failed, so most of the children changed the school'. Otherwise, once enrolled, less than 10% of the children changed their school.

This really shows that a child is with a set of teachers and/or management continuously for many years. With so much of a child's time spent there, a school does have a critical role in the child's growing-up years. There is scope for planning both academic and non-academic activities in a systematic and interesting manner, including seeking and incorporating children's inputs and feedback about what they would like to learn and do at school.

d) Fear of an examination

The fear of examinations is as real to ev-

ery school-going child as is the fear of punishment. Even though this was not explored in as great depth as other topics, it found its way into several interviews. Almost all children said that they were scared of exams.

Notably, the reasons for this fear were as much to do with the result as with the processes that take place during an examination.

This definitely applied to children in the elementary classes. The sternness in the examination hall, the seating arrangements, the inability to speak to anyone, the sense of secrecy and hush-hush in the room, the forced-upon external discipline and the entire pursuit of examinations within the school makes it a dreaded exercise and adds to the sense of alienation, enhancing the growing fear of it.

Box 44 - Examinations

They make you sit far from each other. They don't let you talk at all. And you get beaten if you talk.

- Kamlesh, 13 year old boy

e) Ease with different subjects

Children expressed their ease with a specific subject versus another. It was obvious that this was because of the way the subject had been 'taught' to them and the association they each made with the subject content (in the form of a lesson in the textbook). These aspects were not explored but need to be evaluated in the context of the children's backgrounds and lives.

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- ¹ Documented in experiences of taking multi-cultural classes and classes with children of varying social groups.
- ² M.M. Ostrosky • E.Y. Jung Building Positive Teacher-Child Relations (12) Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
- ³ Teacher-Child Relationships and Children's Success in the First Years of School by Robert C. Pianta , Megan W. Stuhlman. School Psychology Review, Vol. 33, 2004
- ⁴ Plan (2008) Learn Without Fear: The global campaign to end violence in schools. Working Plan.
- ⁵ Nambissan, Geeta (2000). The Social Context of Learning and the Schooling of Dalit and Tribal Children" in Quality in Elementary Education. A collection of Articles. Ecumenial Christain Centre. Whitefield, Bangalore.
- ⁶ Balagopalan, Sarada (2003) Neither suited for the home nor for the fields: Inclusion, Formal Schooling and the Adi vasi Child". IDS Bulletin. Vol 34, No.1
- ⁷ Birdthistle, Dickson et al (2011). What impact does the provision of separate toilets for girls at schools have on their primary , secondary school enrolment, attendance and completion? A systematic review of the evidence. Department for International Development. Available at http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/PDF/Outputs/SystematicReviews/Birdthistle_et_al_2011.pdf
- ⁸ Available at <http://www.asercentre.org>
- ⁹ Flexible school timings have been tried in Rajasthan through the Shiksha Karmi Project and Lok Jumbish

Chapter 4

Recommendations and Conclusions

The role of education as an aspect of the culture of modernity — with its emphasis on equality, dignity of the individual, and room for social justice — has faced unprecedented stress during the recent phase of global history.

Krishna Kumar, 2004

This study lends an insight into the condition and perspectives of 'education' within the urban poor of Bhopal city. It brings up several kinds of issues: it depicts existing realities, problems within the education system as felt by people, and the aspirations of the communities.

People have largely accepted education as necessary for their children, but there are numerous instances where schools have not been successful in bringing anything concrete to the people. Every such

case is an indicator of the problems within and can be evaluated in its specific circumstances, but all cases put together are evidence of the failure of the entire structure of the education system. The current realities of education lead one to doubt the efficacy of the argument of compulsory and universal schooling.

I. Content of Education and Schooling

a) Making education useful

School education has to deliver results for the people in a country where more than 80% of the children continue to drop out before finishing high school. A school experience should be able to instil attributes of equity and justice, concern for nature and humanity, and also provide

access to wider knowledge in a way that the process of learning becomes valuable in itself. In addition, it needs to be able to provide skills necessary for specific jobs.

The current curriculum and pedagogy are not geared for this, and are therefore not of utility to the majority. As education expands to cover all population groups, these issues need to be tackled urgently because more and more population groups coming under the scope of education don't have the socio-economic footing that takes many people forward in life.

b) Addressing the problem of retention

The enrolment campaigns of the government, also promoted by the development sector have had an impact in cities. The younger age group of children, even the most marginalized child is shown as enrolled in a school. However, there is no reason to assume that the likelihood of these children going to and staying on in school has improved.

The study data and experiential information from the basti children and parents clearly show that these children are not moving in a direction that will help them attain 12 years of schooling, for various reasons.

The school processes and class participation indicators do not show any visible change over the years. Situations have worsened in the face of further privatization in education, with the better quality schools now available to and affordable by the middle class and the elite. The economic policies of the 1990s also ushered

in bank-funded education programmes, with reduced quality. The daily running of schools (that cater to the lower income groups) is done in such a way that it does not 'work' for the child. Schools will be able to retain children when a school environment enables learning and is based on positive interactions (involving respect and dignity) among teachers and children. In the absence of these two critical attributes, children will continue to drop out.

Even though it is easy to cite personal/familial factors for this phenomenon, the education system itself has to evaluate its methods, and the quality of education it currently provides.

c) Education for social change

The education system continues to contribute to the asymmetry in the country's state of affairs through its own modes of class and gender-based discrimination in classrooms and class structures. Girls continue to be suppressed in school as much as in society and at home; their options for activities, exposure and nurturing ideas of a life on their own terms have never been encouraged in any mainstream school.

Bringing social change has not been the goal of schooling. The deliberations on education for the marginalised communities have by and large been reduced to a concern for basic numeracy and literacy. More than a discussion on the minimum levels of learning, there needs to be a debate on the values to be imparted through schooling. The purpose of social change through education needs to be practiced for schooling to be of relevance to marginalized people.

d) Education as heterogeneous and inclusive of diversity

The perception that education brings certain external changes in people and also in their social skills was something that emerged in the interviews, and is indicative of the way schools have been grooming children. While some may consider such a grooming desirable as it makes people more 'mainstream acceptable', it is an artificial way of behaving and does not confer dignity or anything of depth in them. Mainstream civil behaviour is a code of restricted and curtailed behaviour. It is a disdain for people who are in many ways 'open' and 'transparent' in their emotions. This is a dangerous trend, and needs to be countered from all sources, most of all, educational institutes. Education should be encouraging people to find what is within them, and respect that, rather than aping the mainstream and breaking people's self-respect.

II. Perception of the 'Learner'

a) Increasing respect for the learner

The use of corporal punishment to discipline children is deeply entrenched in school practices and social attitudes, despite the existing laws against it. Almost all children are beaten in schools, repeatedly. There is no sanction for violence in any place, no more so in a school. Until this situation changes, there is no justification to say that schools are a place where all children should be. On the other hand, they are not safe for children. Schools need to proactively encourage positive relationships in their spaces.

Most children spend as many of their

waking hours in schools as at home. Therefore, schools and teachers have an enormous potential for providing emotional support and nurturing for children exposed to violence. Several studies have shown the positive effects on children when a favourable school climate is provided even if it is located in a violent neighbourhood.

It is clear that a person is beaten only under circumstances in which s/he is considered 'junior' or 'lesser,' either in terms of age, knowledge, capacity or in social hierarchy. The school also encourages this system where a child is the one who needs to be curtailed and moulded, rather than allowing him/her to be himself/herself.

b) Making schools spaces where learners can grow and explore oneself

Formal schooling no longer embraces the meaning of the word 'education'. What a school is now, is a bounded space, a room for many. But to automatically call it a 'school', a space for learning would be placing blind faith in this institution.

A school is rigidly defined in its form, structure and curriculum. The profiles, background, aspirations, needs of the children brought into this institution are not recognized. For the population that the children participating in this study belong to, it is clearly not a space for personal growth, a space for exploring or a space where a child is engaged in the pursuit of learning, finding ways to understand one's life situations and being prepared for them. The children live in two different worlds, one inside the classroom which is overwhelming for them, and another outside.

Academic subjects should be taught in a more practical and meaningful way. The focus on taking in information as knowledge and reproducing it in the examinations has been questioned at various forums. The National Curricular Framework, 2005 adopts a constructivist approach to knowledge formation but this has not changed the classroom practices in the schools accessible to the working classes. Non-scholastic skills do not find space in the school curriculum. There is hardly any space for human interactions, building a personality and realising one's potential in a school.

III. Position of Parents and Communities in Schools

a) Parents need to be seen as capable partners in educational institutes

Schools should engage with children's parents in constructive ways, as partners working towards a common goal. It is ironical that in the field of education, parents are only seen as certain kinds of care-givers, with a limited role and not as adult individuals with many experiences. The school management and the teachers need to make the effort to cross the class boundaries and overcome their biases against the 'working classes'. Most interactions with parents are regarding a complaint about a child's attendance or academics. They need to take a more meaningful form. Similar to the demand that we see the teacher as an agency, as a capable individual, there needs to be another effort that gives the parents this recognition.

Further, a child should not be seen in isolation from her/his family support systems, not for any extended stretch of time. As educators, we should not reject anyone because of our biases. Schools need to develop a curriculum that brings in the parents and the children's lives into the classrooms.

b) The school needs to be placed inside the community, metaphorically

The education system in general and schools in particular do not reach out to the public, the community. The only times this is done is when there is a campaign (for enrolment or for any other reason).

The objectives of education and thereby the content, curriculum, pedagogy, working mechanisms of the schools, all aspects need to be restructured and re-envisioned in the context of the communities, and driven by the histories and present realities of the people.

IV. Inclusion and Outreach

a) Need for programs for the youth

Of the 15 to 18 year olds in our study, a mere 24% were going to school. A total of 52% of girls and boys, in the age group of 15 – 18 years, had dropped out. And another 24% had never been enrolled in a school. This points to the existence of a large group of children who are still quite young; many have dropped out in recent years and who can be included and brought up to a certain level with programmes focused on their specific needs and situations. Presently, there are no programmes to bring them back into

the fold of formal education.

Even the Right to Education Act is silent on these youngsters. It is peculiar that through the implementation of the Act, children have to be enrolled in age appropriate classes. So technically, a 14 year old would be enrolled in class 8 and should be provided with extra classes to bridge any gaps in her/his education, but within a year's time this same student will not have a legal right to be educated by the same Act.

b) Need to improve senior schools

Only a very small number of children from deprived backgrounds are likely to access education provided by the private system for their senior classes. There is already a crunch of government schools for high school education. Strengthening the education system in these critical years will have a direct bearing on the education of these adolescents.

c) Reaching the most marginalized

Some social groups continue to lag in literacy and enrolment of girls and boys. In an urban slum, their internal resources (ancestral skills and knowledge) have limited use because of the drastic difference in the available resources and markets. Life in the city has further compromised their living conditions. The present social-economic structure in a city and the political mindset of the country do not support their ways of life. Restlessness, along with dissatisfaction and a disassociation from their roots is setting into the new generations.

We need to reflect on how the formal

education system can respond to these realities of the urban poor.

V. Logistics of Schooling

a. Costs of education

Schooling for their children has been accompanied by a heavy cost for parents. The right to free education does not fructify on the ground, as parents have to bear charges for uniforms, textbooks, fees of various forms, other than monthly tuition fees. The urban poor communities are spending their precious resources towards getting an education for their children. This really should not be the situation as education is a fundamental right and a state responsibility. The expenditure becomes a high burden for people, particularly when they have to bear this cost for more than one child going to school and also as children go to higher classes. This has been a reason for drop-outs.

Children's scholarships are hard to access for those who lack a caste certificate. The certificate is difficult to make for the want of documentary proof of 1950 for dalits and adivasis in the cities as they have had to move from place to place in search of work.

b) Mid day meal

The quality of the mid day meal was brought up in many interviews. The earlier decentralized system of cooking in schools was more acceptable to the children and also provided a larger scale of employment to women individually or as part of self-help groups. This has been replaced with a centralized, mechanical cooking where the chapattis are hard to

chew. In this centralized system, the food is also wasted in bulk on a daily basis. Hence, cooking at the school level should be brought back.

c) Infrastructure in schools

The schools in the city are fairly better in their size and infrastructure as can be compared to the rural areas. However, basic facilities such as functional toilets and running water are missing in many schools. In some places, classes are run

in one big room with children not having space to manoeuvre at all. Electricity arrangements are not stable in some places and children and students study in the heat without fans and in rooms with small windows. As denoted by the children also, there are no desks and benches in the schools. A desk would help a child in resting her/his elbows while writing. The availability (or unavailability) of these basic things also reflects how much we value the children studying there.

¹Gendered inequality in Educational Transit "Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, The Quality Imperative" Quality of education at the beginning of the 21st century: lessons from India Krishna Kumar 2004

²Joy D. Osofsky (1999) The Impact of Violence on Children; THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN – WINTER 1999. Available at <http://www.icyrnet.net/UserFiles/vol9no3Art3.pdf>

Criteria for Slum Selection and List of Slums Selected

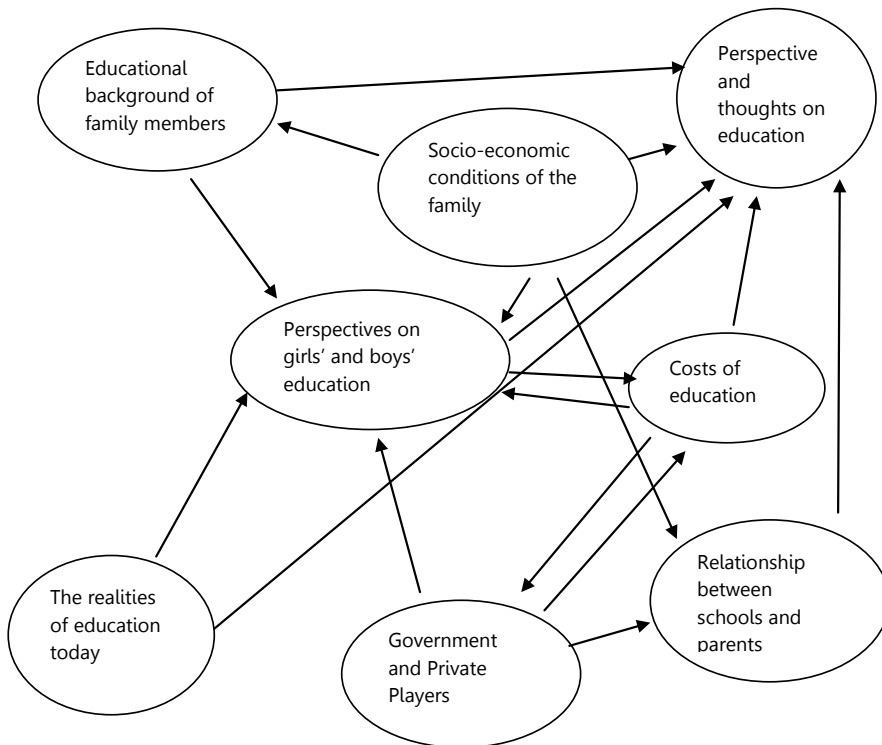
Name of the basti	Broad Characteristics
Annu Nagar	Gas affected
CRPF Phatak Basti	Mixed population groups including tribal, un-regularized basti
Indira Nagar	Centrally located old basti, domestic worker groups
Gehukheda	Relocated basti
Bhadbhada	Located in the city outskirts
Dholak Basti	Un-regularized basti, near the railway line, mixed community
Malin basti, Jaat Khedi	Relocated basti
Ahmadpur	Muslim population, mixed occupations
Ahata Rustam Khan	Registered slum
Kargil Nagar	By the railway tracks
Sewaniya Gond	Mixed population groups including tribal
Balaji Nagar	Registered slum, better living conditions,
Krishna nagar	Registered slum, better living conditions,
Manjhi Basti	SC groups
Bluemoon Colony	Gas affected basti, Muslim population
Vishwakarma Nagar	Registered basti, construction labour and domestic work
Gandhi Nagar	Tribal population, located in the city outskirts
Vajpai Nagar	Mixed population, including SC groups

Annexure 2

Slum-wise Number of Participants, by Age and Sex

Basti	Adults		Children	
	M	F	M	F
Annu Nagar	5	4	2	5
CRPF Phatak Basti	4	11	1	3
Indira Nagar	10	7	12	11
Gehukheda	2	13	2	7
Bhadbhada	4	4	4	1
Dholak Basti	4	5	5	3
Malin basti, Jaat Khedi	3	6	3	4
Ahmadpur	2	6	2	4
Ahata Rustam Khan	0	12	6	3
Kargil Nagar	1	7	1	4
Sewaniya Gond	4	3	3	3
Balaji Nagar	3	6	2	3
Krishna nagar	11	13	5	6
Manjhi Basti	2	3	2	1
Bluemoon Colony	1	4	3	2
Vishwakarma Nagar	9	16	9	7
Gandhi Nagar	6	13	7	6
Vajpai Nagar	12	12	7	5
Total	83	145	76	78

Conceptual Framework Map



Points Discussed with the Adults

Socio-economic Conditions of the Families:

- How many people in the family, how many children
- Who all are earning and the kind of work they do
- If the children are earning, then what work they do
- Understanding the community and migration patterns of community members

Educational Status in the Families:

- Education of parents
- Education of all the children in the family
- Who all are studying now, and where do they study

Perspectives on Education:

- a) About a good school or good education:
 - Which school is good or what should there be in a good school
 - What will enable more children to study
- b) Aspirations related to education:
 - Why are you sending your children to school, what will education give to your child
 - What do you think people should get from studying
 - If your children are able to study, what changes do you want in your present way of life

Perspective on Education of Girls and Boys:

- Role of girls and boys at home, and in earning money
- Any differences in the choice of schools because of the gender of the child

Current Realities of Education:

- How do you know whether the child is learning in school, what else is he/she doing in school
- Do children like the school your children are going to
- How do you decide which school to send your child to
- Do children talk about the school at home, and if yes, what do they discuss
- What do you do to ensure that your children are able to study (at home?)

Government versus Private:

- What are your views on the mid-day meal, has it helped you in making the decision to send your child to school, do children eat it properly
- Do you find the provisions of scholarship, uniforms and books helpful
- Which service is critical for you/your child, what else do you feel should be available in the school
- Is there a difference in the quality of education provided by the two kinds of schools and what are these differences, if any

Relationship between the Community and the School:

- Does anyone (adults from the family) visit the children's school ever
- Who goes and when
- When you go to the school and what happens, what are all the issues you talk about and who talks more, does the teacher do all the talking or is there a conversation between the teachers/administrators and family members
- Are you involved in the school committee

Expenses on Education:

- How much money gets spent on schooling and specifically on what is this money spent
- Do you find it easy to spare this amount
- Usually, who gives this money
- What will you do when the expenses increase for the senior classes

Points of Discussion with the Children:

- Name, age, sex
- For children who go to school:
 - o Which class, which school
- For children who are not going to school:
 - o Never went to school, dropped out
 - o How do you think a school should be
- To be asked to children as per relevance:
 - o Have you changed schools
 - o What do you do in a school
 - o Do you like your school
 - o What is it that you like and what don't you like
 - o Which teacher do you like, what do you like about her/him
 - o Which teacher do you not like, what do you not like about her/him
 - o Do you fear anyone in school, and if yes, who and why
 - o Has anyone ever hit you, why
 - o Are other children punished, why
 - o Do you have friends in school, are they your friends from the basti, or have you made new friends in school
 - o Do you also work, and if yes, what work do you do

Annexure 4

Data Collection Form for Adult Participants

Adult Survey Form No.

Name: Age: Sex:.....

Education:.....:

Caste:.....

Category:.....

SC	ST	OBC	GEN	OTH
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Occupation :.....

BPL Status: Antyodaya/ BPL/APL

Address, Basti:

Details of Family Members :

<i>S no.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Relation</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>What work they are engaged in?</i>	<i>If studying</i>	
							<i>Private</i>	<i>Govt</i>

Working members in the family:

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Total Members</i>	<i>No. of Adults earning</i>	<i>No. of children earning</i>
Male			
Female			

<i>S no.</i>	<i>Type of Work</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Girl Children</i>	<i>Boy Children</i>
1.	Carts				
2.	Rag-Picking				
3.	Maid/Servant				
4.	Hotel Job				
5.	Govt. Job				
6.	NGO				
7.	Factory Worker				

Do your children go to school? Yes [.....] No [.....] Sometimes [.....]

What do boys do at home?

<i>S no.</i>	<i>Work</i>	<i>Younger <12 years</i>	<i>Elder >12 years</i>
1.	Buying groceries and other items of daily use from the general store		
2.	Watching T.V.		
3.	Playing outside		
4.	Other		

What do girls do at home?

<i>S no.</i>	<i>Work</i>	<i>Younger <12 years</i>	<i>Elder >12 years</i>
1.	Filling water		
2.	Collecting wood		
3.	Playing outside		
4.	Taking care of younger siblings		
5.	Cooking		
6.	Washing clothes		
7.	Buying items of daily use from the general store		
8.	Watching T.V.		
9.	Other		

Does anybody from the family visit the school where their children are studying?

Yes [.....] No [.....]

If yes, then who:

How many times would you/that person have gone this year?

When do you/they usually visit the school?

How do the teachers talk when one goes to the school?

1. Very Nicely [.....]
2. Normally [.....]
3. Not able to understand them [.....]
4. Other

Who speaks more in the conversation?

1. You [.....]
2. Teacher [.....]
3. Both equally [.....]
4. Don't Know [.....]

Is there any committee being formed in the schools? Yes / No / Don't Know

Which Committee? [.....]

Are you a part of this committee?: Yes / No

Do you know any other member of this committee?: Yes / No

What role does this community play:

How much do you spend on your children for their studies?

	Child -1	Child – 2	Child – 3
Uniform			
Fees			
Books			
Tuition			
Other			

What is a good school according to you?.....

What are the facilities that you think should be in a school?

Till when one should educate their children?:

Class	Girl	
	Boy	

Why are studies necessary? What do you think is gained by studying?

What changes do you think you will see in your children's lives when they complete their studies?

Do your children discuss their school with you? Yes [.....] No [.....]

If yes, what do they say about their school?.....

What efforts do you make to help your child study?

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Who bears more of the workload at home to ensure a good education for their children?
 (Specify the relation)

1. Father [.....] 2. Mother [.....] 3. Elder Sister [.....] 4. Younger Sister [.....]
5. Elder Brother [.....] 6. Younger Brother [.....] 7. Others [.....]

To which school your children are going, and why have you chosen that school for them?

Who took the decision to send the children in this school?

Data Collection Form for Child Participants

Children Survey Form No.	
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Name: Age: Sex:

Education:.....Caste:.....Category:

SC	ST	OBC	GEN	OTH
----	----	-----	-----	-----

Occupation :..... BPL Status: Antyodaya/ BPL/APL

Address, Basti:

Do you go to the school ? Yes/No

If Yes, then Class : Type of School: Private/Government/ Other

If not going to school then,

Used to go

Never went

If you ever did go to school then, in which class did you leave school? ____

If you ever went, then
reason for leaving the school

Not able to attend school regularly	
Got beaten up in school	
Teachers had been asking for fees	
They asked for a caste certificate	
They did not behave properly	
Parents refused to send you	
School was very far from home	
Any other reasons	

If never went,
then reason for not going

Reasons	Child's words

What do you think should be there in a school?

.....

Since when (year) have you have been studying in this school?:

What was the reason for leaving the previous school?

What all do you do in school? What all do you enjoy there?

.....

.....

Do you eat the mid-day meal?

If yes, how many days in a week?

If no, why not?

Do you like your teachers? Any specific one, why?

	<i>Summary of Answer</i>	<i>Child's words</i>
1.	She/He teaches well	
2.	They don't hit me	
3.	They are well-behaved	
4.	Something else	

Do you dislike your teachers? Any specific one, why?

	<i>Summary of Answer</i>	<i>Child's words</i>
1.	They are harsh on you	
2.	They are not well-behaved	
3.	They discriminate against you	
4.	They don't teach well	
5.	Something else	

Are you afraid of anybody in the school? Yes/No

Who are you afraid of:

<i>S no.</i>	<i>Person</i>	<i>Reason</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Has somebody ever hit you? Yes/No

Who: Mother [.....] Father [.....] Madam [.....] Sir [.....]

Why:

<i>S No.</i>	<i>Summary of Response</i>	<i>Child's words</i>
1.	Don't know	
2.	Didn't complete the assigned homework	
3.	Didn't remember the lessons taught	
4.	Children were making noise in the class	
5.	You were late for the school	
6.	Something else	

S no.	<i>Reasons of getting hit at home.</i>	
1.	Fight with siblings	
2.	Got less marks in the exams	
3.	Complaint from the school	
4.	Didn't complete household chores	
5.	For playing	
6.	Didn't earn money	
7.	Didn't listen to my parents (specifically what)	
8.	Others	

Do you have friends in the school? Yes / No

Your school friends live in:

In your basti	
Outside your basti	
Both	

Do boys and girls talk to each other in the school? Yes/No

Do you talk about your school at home? Yes/No

Does anybody at home talk to you about your studies and school? Yes/No

<i>Who</i>	<i>What do they talk about</i>
Mother	
Father	
Brother	
Sister	
Others	

Do you talk about your home in school?

Do you work and earn? Yes/No

What do you do?

Where?

What work do you do at home?

Muskaan has been working in the area of education among the urban poor in slums (bastis) of Bhopal city (M.P.) since 1998. Muskaan promotes education that is enabling and liberating for the individual and historically marginalised social groups. We believe that education cannot be seen as an isolated package of skills, and is very much linked with a sense of positive self-esteem and a faith in the freedom to explore oneself. This mandates a basic living standard of physical conditions for people.



The concept of universalisation of elementary education has ensured that formal education is seeping into everyone's lives. Even the working classes have been brought to believe in this system or have become subsumed by it, even though they may not have experienced schooling directly. It has also influenced and determined most of us working in the fields of development and education.

This study was undertaken to understand the status of formal education among the urban poor, and the form in which it has been integrated within their lives. The study fills in the gap of bringing qualitative and quantitative information on the education scenario of the urban poor, in the voices of the parents and the children.



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