

A. Strengthening GP’s engagement in Education: Key objectives

The objectives behind our efforts to strengthen GP’s engagement in Education can be categorized into 2: Firstly, to strengthen the institutional capacity and mechanisms for GP to engage in Education, which involves helping the GP understand its role in Education, develop the context in which it can intervene through a database, build coordination mechanism and develop planning and monitoring systems through MIS. Secondly, which is an outcome of the first, to help the GP focus on core thematic goals: Improving enrolment, learning outcomes and developing school infrastructure to levels required for building a safe and stimulating learning atmosphere. (Refer Figure 1)

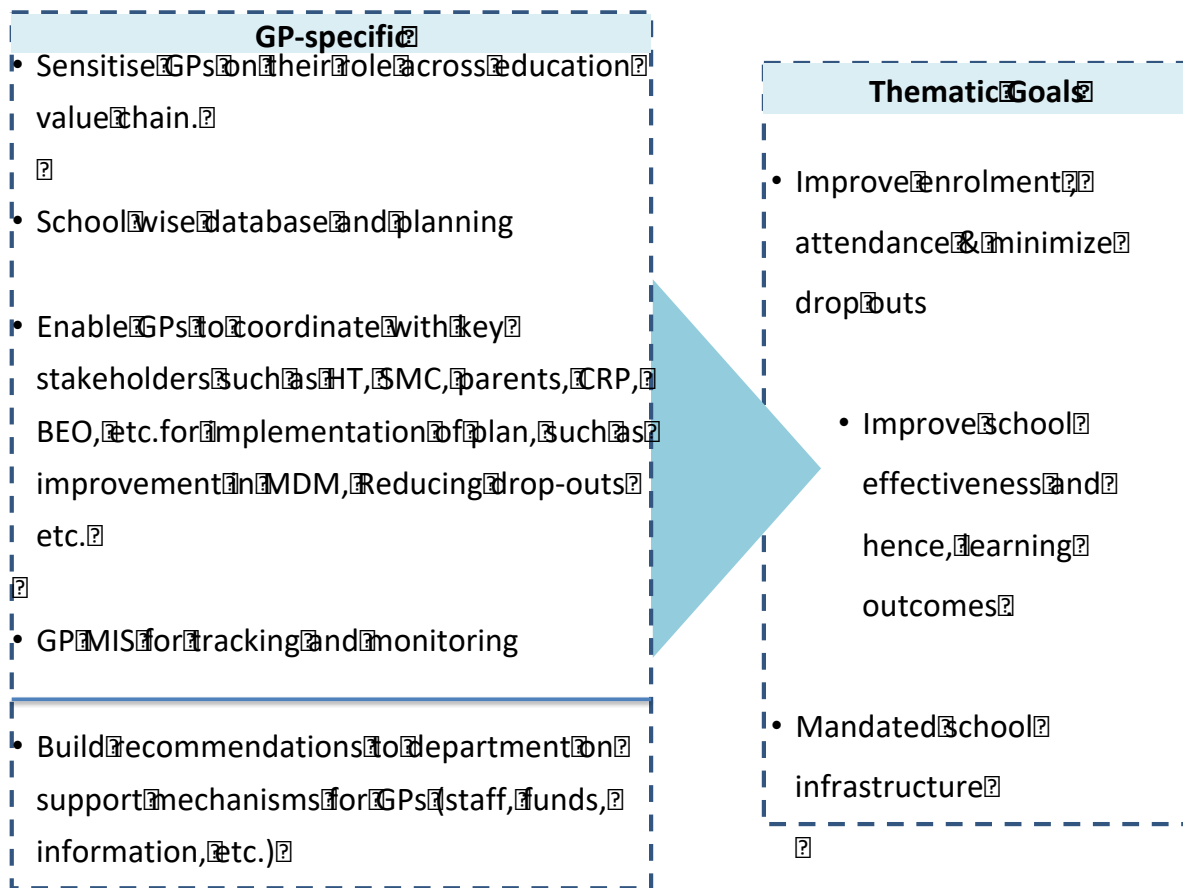


Figure 1: Objectives behind strengthening GP’s engagement in Education

While the focus of this initiative was operationalizing the panchayat role in the schooling system an important objective envisaged was that the building of capacities in one sector should equip the panchayat to translate learnings in their role in other sectors like Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) etc.

B. Introduction

Jharkhand, like other states in India, is facing common problems in delivering Education services through government schools. The focus on learning outcomes exists largely by exception and is a function of passion, engagement and commitment of select teachers. The challenges are similar: low and demotivated teaching staff, presence of para teachers due to shortage of permanent teachers, low Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in schools, poor infrastructure even in terms of toilets and piped water supply, and low budgets for maintaining schools. Agriculture cycle and migrant population moving from rural to urban areas impact enrollment and attendance of students.

We believe Gram Panchayats (GPs), as institutions of local governments, can play a key role in improving status of education in villages. However, there are institutional gaps and lack of capacities, which hinder GPs to perform this role. To address these issues of institutional gaps and to build capacities in GPs, Pradan with its knowledge partner Anode Governance Lab piloted the SPACE (Strengthening Panchayat Actions for Community Empowerment) project in 16 GPs ('beacon panchayats') across 3 districts (Gumla, Hazaribagh and Koderma) in the state of Jharkhand. The foundational processes are based on the Gram Panchayat Organisation Development (GPOD) framework, which focus on strengthening organizational capacity of Gram Panchayats to be able to deliver their different mandates, as per the functions devolved by the State.

The rest of the document describes our approach and steps towards enabling improvement in education through local Gram Panchayats, issues emerging during implementation and recommendations based out of the learnings from the field over 2 years of intervention.

C. Legal analysis: JPR Act, 2001 and Notifications

The intervention is based and founded in operationalizing the state governments notifications related to role of panchayats in education based on the Jharkhand PRI Act, 2001, as well as the rules and notifications based on Right to Education (RTE) Act.

In order to operationalize the intervention, Anode Governance Lab conducted an in-depth analysis of the Jharkhand Panchayat Raj (JPR) Act, 2001, and corresponding schemes, rules and notifications relating to the devolution to panchayats¹ which included notifications related to education from the Department of HRD (*Notification dated 16.02.2013*).

Figure 2 describes the key mandate of Gram Panchayats in Education, as per Section 75, JPR Act, 2001, as well as the as per the notification by the Department of HRD.

¹ Report on Legal Framework and Devolution Status in Jharkhand, Anode Governance Lab

<p><u>Section 75 -1- 16: JPR Act: Role of Gram Panchayat in Education</u></p> <p>Education, including primary and secondary schools:</p> <p>(i) Promotion of public awareness and participation in primary and secondary education;</p> <p>(ii) Ensuring full enrollment and attendance in primary schools and its management;</p> <p>(iii) Providing for education guarantee;</p> <p>(iv) Management of secondary schools.</p>	<p><u>Notification from Department of HRD, Govt of Jharkhand., dt. 16.02.2013, Role of GP:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of registers with all available human resources and other facilities • Along with SMC, conduct education campaigns, need for schools, enrolment. • Monitoring & inspection of schools • Ensure attendance of students and teachers • Make sure delivery of books, kits etc. • Support minimizing drop outs. • Meetings with parents & SMC • Supervision of Mid-day meals • Head teachers and Para teachers to function under authority of GP
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Figure 2: Role of GP in Education as per JPR Act and Notification by Dept of HRD

As seen from Figure 2, GPs in Jharkhand have been provided an empowering mandate to engage with Education. However, in the absence of active support by the department and lack of required functionaries and funds, panchayats’ engagement in education has been negligible.

D. Intervention methodology: Sectoral engagement within Gram Panchayat Organisation Development (GPOD) Framework

GPOD Framework intervenes at the systemic level and works on strengthening key components of the GP organization, i.e., vision, strategies, structures, processes, incentive mechanisms and planning, which provide the foundational capacities in GPs for better services and governance to citizens across different functions. (For details, refer to GPOD Process Document).

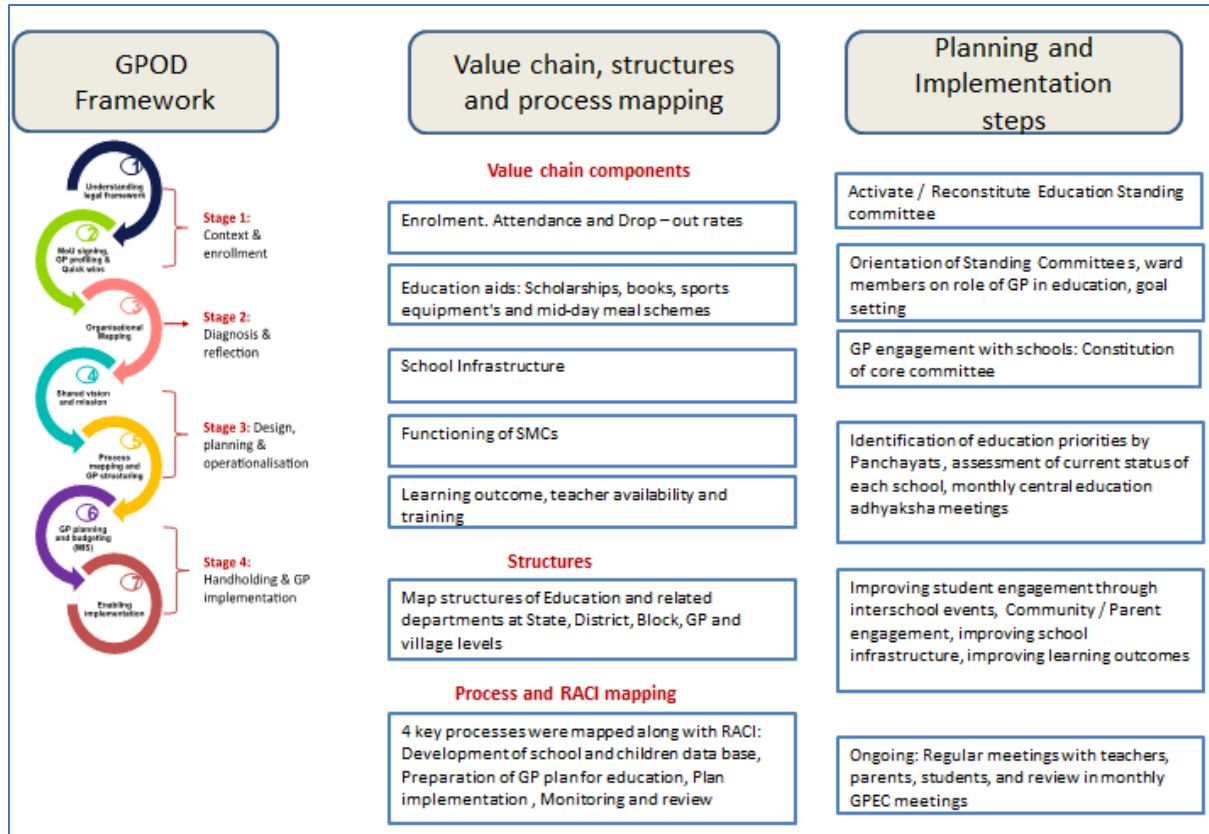


Figure 3: Intervention methodology

During the visioning stage, an exercise was done with ward members and citizens of the panchayat as to how their 'adarsh' panchayat should look like in the future. Out of this visioning exercise, one of the key focus areas, which the participants wanted to improve, was the schooling outcome for their children.

For each sector to be delivered by the GPs, following foundational steps were followed:

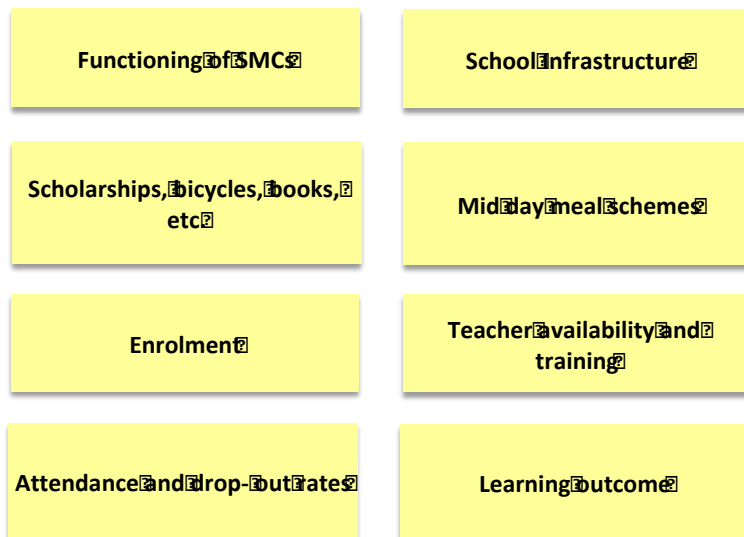
1. Identify value chain covering key activities required for effective performance of the function.
2. Process and RACI mapping, to detail key activities and roles for delivery of the value chain components.
3. Activation of relevant structures: GP Standing Committees mandated under the State PR Act, as well as other institutional mechanisms which will help in building coordination among key stakeholders related to the function.

Once the processes and structures were in place, the project focused on handholding GPs towards planning and implementation (Refer Figure 3).

Value chain, structures and process mapping

D.1. Value Chain Components related to Education

The key value chain components identified for education are: Engagement with parents through School Management Committees (SMCs), Enabling access to education aids: Scholarships, books, bicycles etc., Enabling access to nutrition through Midday meals, Focusing on Student Enrolment, Attendance and reduction in drop outs, Focusing on Teachers’ issues to ensure their availability and training, Focusing on school infrastructure, and finally and most critically, on Learning Outcomes



Source: Document study and interaction with thematic team

Figure 4: Value chain components identified for Education

D.2. Structures mapping

With the purpose of understanding roles of different stakeholders for GPs to coordinate with, the structure of the Department of HRD related to Education was mapped across all levels: State, District, Block, GP and village (Refer Figure 4).

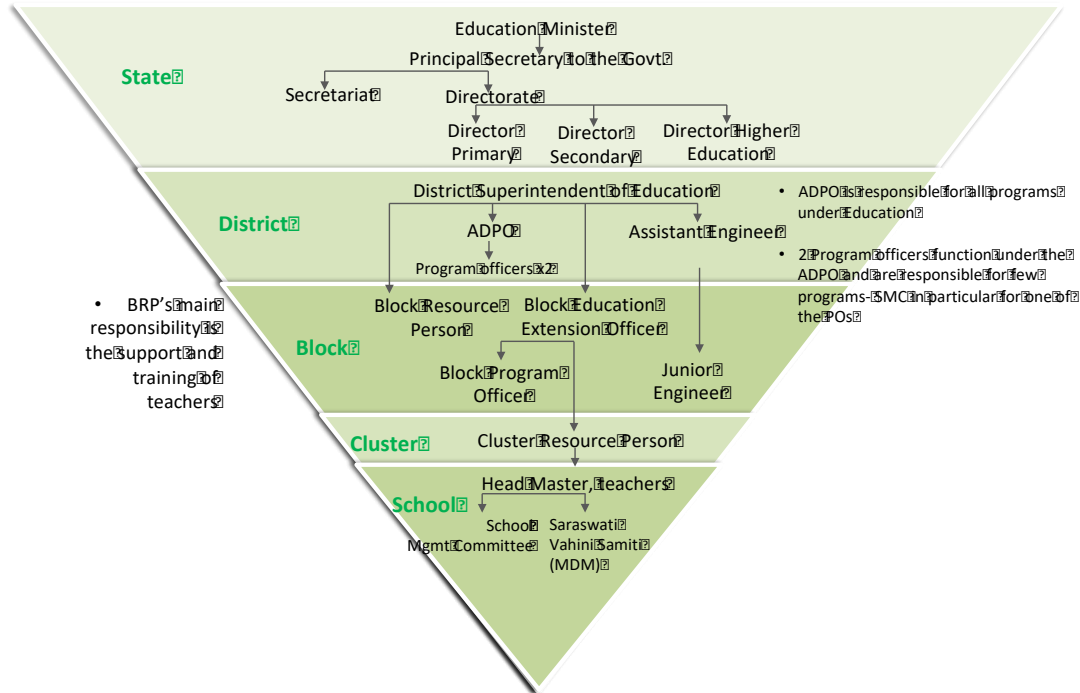


Figure 5: Structure mapped for Department of HRD related to Education

The Standing Committee structure of the GPs in Jharkhand, and particularly role of Education Standing committee was also mapped. As per Government of Jharkhand’s notification dated, 6th May 2011, Education is a part of Standing Committee for Health, Education and Environment. However, the notification provides only the following role related to Education:

- Observation of all schools, certification of attendance of all teachers by 5th of next month, inspection and support for non formal education, adult education

Therefore, we have derived GP Standing Committee’s role from the notification dt. 16.02.2013 from Department of HRD (Refer Figure 2)

D.3. Process and RACI mapping

Four key processes were mapped, while simultaneously mapping the structures and roles for different activities. Roles of each stakeholder were understood and mapped following the RACI² methodology, which seeks to understand and distinguish between those who are accountable (A), the final approving authority, and those who play supporting roles, such as those who are responsible (R) for completion of the task, those who should be consulted (C), i.e., their advice should be sought (subject matter experts etc.) and finally, those who should be informed/kept up to date (I) on the progress.

In the case of Education, access to accurate data has been a challenge. The only data available is through the DISE Report, which is published only once a year and does not include some critical data such as that related to 6-14 year olds in the GP. The four key processes mapped are:

1. Development of school and children data base

² Responsibility, Accountability, Collaboration and Information

2. Preparation of GP Plan for education
3. Plan implementation
4. Monitoring and Review

Each of the processes are described in the ensuing pages with the following details: Activities involved, RACI structures, opportunities and challenges.

Process 1: Development of school and children database (Suggested process, as it does not exist at the GP level in the present context.)

Processes	School/Village	GP	Cluster	Block	District	State
Consolidation of school wise existing data and preparation of required register (SDP, DISE, Baal Panji, etc.) to understand current status and issues	A- HM/ Teachers C: SMC/ GS SC	R- GPSC Adhyaksha	R- CRP	R- BEEO	R: DSE	
Triangulation and filling data gaps as required	R- HT C: SMC GS SC	A- GPSC Adhyaksha	R- CRP	R- BEEO		

Issues related to this process

- GP Standing Committees and their Adyakshas exist primarily on paper. There has been no orientation/training for these bodies/individuals
- The GP is responsible for maintenance of register with all available human resources and available facilities related to primary education, but the GPs do not maintain such data/register due to lack of information ; GP has little understanding of what is happening in its schools
- Multiple reports compiled by Head Teacher (HT); but GP is not a recipient
- Online DISE data is dated; Also, DISE data and situation on the ground does not always match. Need for triangulation.
- No ready data on learning outcomes, number of children between 6-14 years to compare present versus required enrolment figures

Opportunities that can be leveraged

- Data on all school going children in the village (Bal Panji)is collected by the Head Teacher , though sporadically and is not consistent; school wise information on enrolment, teachers, infrastructure, and other parameters as per RTE norms is available in DISE.

Process 2: Preparation of GP Plan for Education

Processes	School/ Village	GP	Cluster	Block	District	State
Ensure active parent engagement in all aspects of Education, through active SMCs. (Activities may involve mapping of SMCs and planning for restructure/formation of SMCs for each school etc.)	A- HM C: GS SC	R- GPSC C- GPEC, Mukhia	C- CRP	I- BEE0	R- PO (SMC) I- DSE	
Ensure priorities of all concerned are incorporated and there is timely development of the Annual Plans for each school, as per laid down process for plans and budgets	A- HM R- Teachers R-SMC	C- GPSC Adhyaksha	R- CRP	I- BEE0	I- DSE	
Assessment of current status of each school, and preparation of GP Education plan, covering priority areas for each school: School infrastructure, MDM, Teacher Availability and Training, Enrolment, Learning Outcomes, Attendance and Drop-outs, Baal Sansad etc..	C-HM C: GS SC/ SMC	A- GP SC Adhyaksha	R- CRP	R: BEE0	R- DSE	
Developing recommendation for new school if required	C- HM	A- GP SC Adhyaksha C- GPEC, Mukhia	C- CRP	R- BPO I- BEE0	C- DSE	

Issues with this process:

- To fulfil their mandate in Education, GPs need to be involved in preparation of school wise plans and arrive at an overall plan for the GP. Presently, GPs are not involved in the development of Annual Development Plans.
- Planning for schools reflects primarily needs and priorities as understood by HT and teachers. The other key stakeholder, parents, are not involved due to non functional SMCs
- While learning outcome is the key deliverable from the Education system, there is little planning for aspects such as concerted action for learning, remedial action for weaker students etc.
- As there is no GP Education Plan, aspect such as requirement of new school is not covered. Also decisions on schools are decided at state level . Currently Jharkhand is going through a consolidation of schools. However there has been no role for GP's.

Opportunities that can be leveraged

- Annual plans for each school are prepared by the HT and teachers, and are supposed to be discussed in the SMC which can be a good starting point for assessment of current

While Education is a subject where the three key stakeholders: Parents, Teachers and Local Body need to work together, there is no or little engagement among them. Both parents and schools have no awareness or expectations on the support that the panchayats could provide.

status and needs.

Process 3: Ensuring implementation of plans

This section covers different components of the value chain.

Engagement with parents through School Management Committees (SMCs), School Infrastructure and School Aids

Processes		School/ Village	GP	Cluster	Block	District	State
Ensuring functional SMCs	Ensuring SMCs are functional and active	A: HM R: Teachers, GS SC, SMC	R: GP SC Adhyaksha / SMC Ward member	R: CRP	I: BRP	R: PO (SMC)	
Infrastructure and new schools	Ensuring required infrastructure in schools	R: HM C: Teachers, GS SC, SMC	R: GP SC Adhyaksha	R: CRP	R: BEEO/Assistant JE	A: DSE	
	Maintenance of existing school infrastructure using maintenance budgets of the school	A: HM A: SMC President (co-signatories)	I: GP SC Adhyaksha/Mukhiya	C: CRP	R: BEEO, JE	I: DSE	
Scholarships, bicycles, books, MDM, etc.	- MDM (Nutrition), - Bicycles (Transportation between home and school), - Scholarships (Assisting economically backward children), - Distribution of text books and note books etc.	A: HM R: Teachers, SMC; SVS for MDM	R: GP SC Adhyaksha/SMC Ward member	R: CRP	R: BPO/BEEO (Progrms)	R: PO (Progrms) I: DSE	

Issues and Opportunities related to the process

SMCs:

- SMCs are designed as key resource for implementing activities related to education; However, they are not functional
- HTs and Para teachers are to function under authority of the GP; there is little interaction and coordination with them

Infrastructure

- RTE Guidelines lay down infrastructure norms for different types of schools. And the Annual DISE report provides the status against norms.
- Many schools have been wanting in required infrastructure such as clean drinking water facilities, functional toilets and boundary walls.
- Even if the construction/installation has taken place, maintenance is an issue
- HM does not seem to have any control on maintenance of infrastructure. Many schools do not have electricity. Even if computers are available, they cannot be used.

Programs and schemes to aid students: MDM (Nutrition), Bicycles (Transportation between home and school), Scholarships (Assisting economically backward children) etc.

- GP, as per Notification by Dept. of HRD, GoJ, dt. 16/02/2013, is to assume responsibilities for implementation of schemes to aid students. This creates an overload on HM and Teachers, taking away focus from their core job of teaching.
- There are many implementation related issues such as likelihood of wrong beneficiary selection, untimely receipt of scholarship amounts due to issues such as incorrect bank accounts or Adhaar linkage, delay in receipt of books etc.
- Despite very good menu and budget for MDM scheme, the food served may not be as per norms.

Teachers Availability and Enrolment of children

Processes		School/ Village	GP	Cluster	Block	District	State
Teacher Availability and Training	Ensure norms for all aspects (e.g., teacher qualification, teacher-student ratio) are fulfilled as per guidelines, and teachers are trained as required	R: HM C: SMC	I: GP SC Adhyak sha	R: CRP	R: BEEO	A: DSE	
	Ensure HM, teacher/staff attendance	A: HM for Teachers R: SMC	R: GP Mukhia	R: CRP	A: BEEO	I: DSE	
Full enrolment of children in Primary Schools	Ensuring full enrolment of 6-14 year olds in the GP, through understanding gaps, conduct of awareness campaigns	A: HM C: Teachers, GS SC, SMC	R: GP SC Adhyak sha	R: CRP	C: BEEO	I: DSE	

Issues and Opportunities related to the process

Teacher availability and Training:

- DSE is responsible for life cycle of Teachers and support staff of all primary schools.
- Attendance of HT and Para teachers is to be signed by the Mukhia; which is a mandate that GP could use to align and involve with Education related matters
- With very little involvement of GP in Education, the supervision of HM and teachers by the Mukhia is primarily on paper, and to some extent, resented by the former.
- Acute shortage of teachers in schools, creating need for many para teachers. In some schools, the HM is also a Para Teacher.
- As the salaries of Para teachers are lower than government teachers, there are clashes between para teachers vs. regular teachers. Also lot of schools have only para teachers as acting Heads of schools. Their demotivation due to low salaries impacts their morale and motivation , thus impacting functioning of schools.

- The department found anomalies in hiring of para teachers by GPs, and withdrew an earlier responsibility of GPs to hire para teachers.

Full enrolment of children in Primary Schools

- As per the JPR Act as well as the notification by Department of HRD, GP is responsible for ensuring full enrolment of children in the GP, along with SMC.
- In the absence of data of 6-14 year olds in the GP, exact enrolment status is not known.
- Often, students enrol in government schools for all the aids, and then move to private schools as quality of education is perceived to be better

Attendance, Dropouts and Learning Outcomes

Processes		School/ Village	GP	Cluster	Block	District	State
Attendance of students, reduction in drop outs	Ensuring maximum attendance and reduction in drop outs	A: HM R: Teachers, SMC; GS SC	R: GS SC Adh yaksha	R: CRP	R: BEEO	I: DSE	
	Ensuring remedial measures for students who have dropped out (e.g., meeting absentees)	A: HM R: Teachers, SMC; GS SC	R: GS SC Adh yaksha	R: CRP	R: BEEO	I: DSE	
Learning Outcome: Develop an evaluation, learning boosters and corrective action plan	Ensuring appropriate plans for students of different performance, including remedial actions for weaker students	A: HM R: Teachers, SMC; GS SC	I: GS SC Adh yaksha	R: CRP	R: BEEO	I: DSE	

Issues and opportunities related to this process

Attendance of students, reduction in drop outs

- GP is responsible for ensuring attendance in schools and reduction of drop outs. However, there is no staff in the GP for this purpose and GP has not taken this role and neither does the department seek this support
- Attendance is a result of how well a school is run, and we have found near full attendance in good schools with committed HM and teachers, which can be benchmarked.
- Due to pressure to show mandated attendance, the data may be manoeuvred, and the actual attendance quoted is as low as 50% in some schools.
- PRAYAS, an initiative designed by Pratham in partnership with the GoJ, is designed for this purpose and needs to be leveraged.
- Where they exist, private schools are slowly encroaching even in rural areas. The department needs to set up a tracking mechanism for enrolment in these schools.

Learning Outcome: Develop an evaluation and corrective action plan

- As per Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system, all subjects in each semester from Class 1 are to be compiled into a report card. Good schools actively conduct and maintain CCE.
- However, as all students are supposed to pass as per guidelines, there are little implications of this evaluation
- While actual learning levels are dependent on school and teachers, the overall scenario is not encouraging in Jharkhand.
- There is need to track actual learning levels and plan remedial action for weaker students.
- BUNIYAAD 1 and 2, schemes of GoJ to strengthen learning, needs to be leveraged

Process 4: Monitoring and Reporting

Processes	School/Village	GP	Cluster	Block	District	State
Issue resolution/Quick wins	R: HM R: Teachers, SMC; SSC SVS (MDM)	A: GPSC Adhyaksha; C: GPEC, Mukhia	R: CRP	C: All concerned functionaries	I: DSE/POs	
Preparation of GP Monthly MIS aligned to DISE report prepared by HTs	R: HM R: Teachers, SMC; SSC SVS (MDM)	A: GPSC Adhyaksha C: GPEC, Mukhia	R: CRP	C: All concerned functionaries	I: DSE/POs	

Issues and opportunities related to this process

- Elaborate school level MIS exists. However, GP does not receive any information on functioning of schools and updates related to implementation of school development plans
- GPs do not have dedicated manpower for administrative requirements related to education MIS
- Local level government appointees such as Swayam Sevaks exist for multiple roles, could be leveraged

Planning and Implementation steps are covered in Section F.

E. Summary of issues: Key factors hindering GP's engagement in Education

Most issues at the GP and school levels are related to defunct structures and/or lack of structural mechanisms to enable coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders

- Within the GP: Standing Committee on Health, Education & Environment instituted are largely on paper (similar situation for all Standing Committees) and no meetings are held.
 - Lack of awareness of panchayat members on their role and responsibility in the context of education. Given this, it was not surprising that the teachers in the schools also had no awareness or expectations on the support, which panchayats could provide.
 - Engagement with community: Education was the top three concern areas as expressed by SHG groups across all panchayats. However, there was lack of clarity on what needed to be done.
 - Engagement with schools: No interface between the panchayat and the government schools except for the mukhiya initialing on teacher attendance on a monthly basis.
 - Community engagement with the schooling system was low. There was lack of understanding and engagement with both the teachers and parents. This was reflected by lack of participation even in forums like SMC, which envisage a specific role for parents in the schools. Teachers and parents blamed each other for the poor engagement. Low community engagement resulted in low attendance in schools and dropouts.
 - Engagement with Department: No mechanism by the department to enroll panchayats: MIS exists between the school and department, but GP is not a recipient
 - Availability of resources in the school system: Given that most schools were short staffed and had single teacher schools with even para teachers as principals, there was no time or inclination of teachers to spend time on community engagement and improve school attendance & drop outs.
 - Given the administrative workload of teachers, the time available for teaching itself gets limited.
- Given that the local structures do not really work, the school management is mostly top-down, leading to many issues on ground
- No ready data on learning outcomes, number of children between 6-14 years to compare present versus required enrolment figures
 - Issues exist across all value chain components: School infrastructure, teacher availability, delivery of school aids, enrolment and attendance of students, all of which impact learning outcomes

F. Planning and Implementation steps in the GPs

With the clear diagnosis of structural failures, our implementation steps primarily focus on constituting/ reviving structural mechanisms, which have led to encouraging results:

1. Workshop to build awareness of the roles and responsibilities of Gram Panchayats and other institutions for all ward members.

The workshop was designed to build awareness of the roles of GP and different institutions as per JPR Act, Department notification and the Process and RACI mapping. Given the need for collaboration among various stakeholders, the workshop emphasized that the spirit of the role of panchayats was facilitative and supportive of the schools and teachers rather than a supervisory role, which is the responsibility of the Education Department of the state.

The Pradan/Anode intervention with panchayats is founded on this basic principle and drives all panchayat engagement with schools. It formed an important component in arriving at the role of panchayats for discussions during the workshop.

Based on inputs and feedback from the workshop, following key issues and focus areas were identified:

- Revisit Health, Education and Environment standing committee of each panchayat and support operationalizing of the SC.
- Need to formulate communication channels between teachers and panchayat members.
- Facilitate and build relationships between schools/teachers and the community, with the Gram Panchayat as the facilitator.
- To help improve learning levels and effectiveness of schools.

To address the above-mentioned issues the next steps were initiated.

2. Review and activation of Standing Committees: A review with each individual Mukhiya of all the panchayats was done to assess the interest levels of the present members of the Health, Education & Environment Standing Committee (GPSC). It was found that the GPSC existed primarily on paper as no meeting was ever held of the Standing Committee till date. Also, most ward members who were a part of the Standing Committee as per records were not aware of it. Based on this review some members were freshly appointed to the reconstituted standing committee and the Mukhiya took the responsibility for convening the meeting of the GPSC on a monthly basis.

3. Creation of forum for central meeting of Standing Committee Adhyakshas: Awareness sessions were held for all Adhyakshas, which helped in evolving the direction and role of the Adhyakshas and the Standing Committee. This evolved into a monthly Adhyaksha meeting of the beacon panchayats in the respective blocks/district. The agenda of this meeting is to share learnings and find solutions to common issues being faced by different panchayats in the education sector.

4. Constitution of Core Committee: To address the issue of regular communication between the GP and schools, a Core Committee was formed consisting of school teachers, the Panchayat Mukhiyas and the Adhyaksha of the Education Standing Committee. The frequency of this

meeting is monthly and it creates a forum for the teachers and the panchayat to understand the concerns and help find joint solutions to the issues being faced by the schools. Given the constructive and collaborative approach of the panchayat and the Mukhiyas, this has been well received by the teachers across all the panchayats. This is substantiated by the fact that the teachers identified attendance & dropouts and infrastructure as the key areas where the panchayat could help the teachers and the schools.

5. CBO – PRI Relationship: One of the key feed back that emerged during the orientation workshop was the need to build relationships of teachers/schools with the community. As elected representatives, ward members represent the community and are ideally placed to develop engagement and faith in the government schooling system. Consistent research shows that community engagement plays an important role and has a direct impact on attendance and dropouts.

With this as the backdrop regular interactions between CBO’s and panchayat members have been initiated. The framework to leverage this relationship has been developed and is in the process of being implemented. Once the structure is in place, it should help address the attendance and drop out concern of the schooling system.

G. Initial achievements and plans of GPs

Structure related: Constitution and activation of Standing Committees, constitution of core committee, regular conduct of Central education adhyaksha committee and core committee meetings are the key achievements of the project. This requires intensive support and handholding to the GPs.

Structures	Desirable	Achieved
Constitution and activation of Education standing committee	11 GPs	Constituted/ Activated in 11 GPs
Nomination and appointment of Education adhyaksha	11 GPs	Appointment of adhyaksha in 11 GPs
Regular central education adhyaksha meeting	14 meetings 1 per month	Meetings held (Sept 2018- Oct 2019) Hazaribagh: 9 / 14 Koderma: 11 / 14
Core committee meetings	1 meeting per GP once in a month	1 meeting per GP once in two months

Figure 6: Structures and status in 11GPs of Koderma and Hazaribagh

Service delivery related: Due to the activation and strengthening of structures, the panchayats could actively engage in education and had significant achievements (in various stages of implementation), which are listed here:

Addressing issues related to learning levels

- a. Assessment of class 5 and class 8 students at GP level for all schools in the panchayats: With the new policy of assessing students in class 5 and class 8 to decide on moving to the next grade, it is proposed that panchayats run a subject matter examination for students of these two grades at the beginning of the academic year. The question papers are set by the teachers themselves, ensuring their ownership to the results. The objective of running this at the beginning of the academic year is to ensure teachers know the weaker students and can then provide special attention to them to support them to improve their learning levels. This should have a direct impact on the pass percentage at class 5 and class 8. As a proof of concept, this was piloted in Tamai panchayat where test scores showed significant gaps between what was reflected by the school report cards and the GP level tests. Since the GP level test was done in collaboration with teachers (teachers prepared the questions and the GP shortlisted few from those), the ownership of the results was very high with the teachers. It also provided visibility to the panchayat on which schools were doing well and which were lagging behind in learning levels.
- b. Transfer of best practices of better schools to the lower ranking schools to improve quality of teaching and effective utilization of school resources: Some examples of transfer of best practices were tree planting, libraries and school practices like ringing of bells which brought better structure to running of schools.
- c. Build a library in each panchayat: There is a plan to partner with other NGO's to operationalize libraries in 50% of schools in each GP. Tamai started the first library and Pindarkon and Kanko panchayats have initiated the same in their GPs.

Attendance and Drop Outs

- a. Shiksha sathi's (representatives of CBOs) to be in each village as part of CBO-PRI collaboration: The framework and structure are in place and implementation is being initiated.
- b. Mukhiya and Standing Committee Adhyaksha's engagement with parents of drop outs and students with low attendance: These meetings are held in the schools itself along with the teacher/headmaster of the school, where parents are spoken to by the Mukhiya/ SC Adhyaksha and the teacher, to understand the parent's issues on attendance or drop out. This practice has been adopted in Pindarkon, Tamai, Tham and Kanko panchayats though at varying level of systematic practice and process.

Community Engagement

- a. CBO - PRI collaboration to build ownership within the community of the schooling system: Initial meetings have been initiated in Kanko, Pindarkon, Tamai, Tham and Ranichua GPs.
- b. Improved student engagement with the schooling system through panchayat run Inter school events: Today more than 70% of the panchayats have been running these

competitions/events at the panchayat level and anecdotal data shows greater engagement of students with the schools.

- c. Bal Sabha's: PRI driven events to build understanding of duties and responsibilities as citizens and PRI driven collaboration with Bal Sabha's to bring about school improvement has been initiated in Pindarkon Panchayat where it has reached a structured and self sustaining level. Bal Sabha's have also been initiated in Tamai, Ranichua and Dapok panchayats.
- d. School Management Committee: We have planned for CBO-PRI collaboration to operationalize SMC's.

School Infrastructure

Panchayats have been providing support to schools in developing infrastructure like boundary walls with special focus on ensuring functional toilets and running water in all the schools of the panchayats. Today almost 90% of the 65+ schools across all the 11 panchayats have running water and functional toilets.

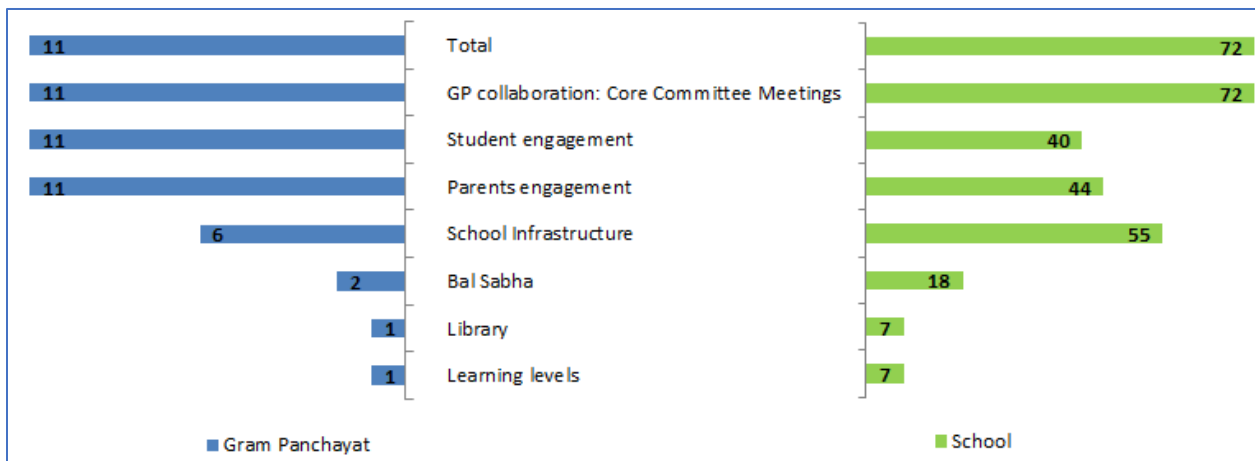


Figure 7: Education outcomes, Oct 2018- Mar 2019

H. Recommendations to the State Education and Panchayati Raj departments:

The big takeaway of this intervention has been that GP’s can play an active and effective role as the bridge between schools and community. They are naturally positioned to drive the education agenda with the community. This needs to be leveraged better to improve community engagement with the schooling system. Specific recommendations include:

Functions:

Data Generation on Enrollment, Attendance & Drop Outs: As per the notification dated 16.02.2013 from Department of HRD (Refer Figure 2), panchayats are responsible for ensuring enrolment, attendance and for reduction in dropouts. We too believe these are areas where Education Department can leverage the Panchayats, as representatives of the people in the

villages are well positioned to play an effective role in this area. However the challenge is that the Panchayats are not looped in by the Education Department and have no access to data on these three important components of the schooling system. Panchayats can be made jointly responsible with teachers to build greater accountability. To enable this, data on attendance, enrolment and dropouts should be provided to panchayats so that they can help address concerns related to these three areas.

The District level Education Department can also take the help of Panchayats in triangulating the data, which they receive from the schools on Attendance, Enrollment and Dropouts.

Student & Community Engagement: The RTE Act recognizes importance of community engagement and the role of panchayats in the Education system and has instituted forums like SMC with panchayat and community representation. To improve community engagement in the schooling system, panchayats can be further leveraged through furthering PRI-CBO relationships. For e.g., in the beacon panchayats project, panchayats actively ran inter school sports and cultural competitions at the panchayat level thus improving student engagement with the schooling system. This also has the potential to positively impact attendance and drop out issues.

Learning Outcomes: While notifications do not provide any specific role to the panchayats in learning outcome; we panchayats can play a key role. There is an obvious contradiction between actual learning levels of students than those reflected in the school report cards, which show good grades in all the tests conducted at the school level. In our experience during working with the beacon panchayats, independent subject matter tests conducted at the Panchayat level, under the aegis of the Gram Panchayats across all the schools in the panchayat showed real time data of actual learning levels which was in stark contrast to the school level tests.

Given the new proposed government policy of holding back students in class 5 and 8, we recommend panchayats conduct level tests in the first half of the academic year for class 5 and class 8 students and this data can be fed back to the Headmaster and teachers of the schools so that they have data points on weaker students to whom they can provide the necessary scaffolding. It would be pertinent to point out that these tests in the beacon panchayats were conducted in collaboration with the teachers of the schools in the panchayats as it was they who gave the list of questions and the panchayat randomly selected the questions to be administered.

Functionaries

Institutionalizing Core Committee's: It is understandable that the schooling system is severely constrained due to resources availability and hence cannot hire human resources to address the multifarious challenges it faces. The Education Department can actively explore how the Mukhiya's, Adhyakshas and members of the Education Standing Committee can be leveraged to drive some of their initiatives. In the beacon panchayats, the concept of Core Committee's where the School teachers, the Panchayat Mukhiyas and the SC Adhyakshas come together in monthly meetings, to collaborate on addressing the schools challenges, including infrastructure

has been the most successful and much appreciated intervention of our initiative. Given this all round support, we recommend the concept of Core Committees to be institutionalized to develop joint ownership of challenges that the school faces between the Education Department and panchayats.

Co-opting Education Standing Committee Adhyakshas in activities of Education department:

In the beacon panchayats the Adhyakshas are playing an active role in helping schools and the panchayat run various activities like Inter school sports etc. The Education Department can co-opt the Adhyakshas into its workflow on specific identified initiatives. This would specifically be helpful in improving the functioning of SMCs, which have not been effective even though there is a Program Manager for SMC's at the district level. Accountability and ownership by the Panchayats can go a long way in helping various school initiatives and also the SMC functioning.

Funds:

The schooling system is starved of resources, both in terms of manpower and monetary resources. In our intervention, panchayats were able to actively support infrastructure development and maintenance like boundary walls, toilets and water availability at schools especially through convergence of resources from NREGA, which is within the ambit of a panchayat. This was facilitated by the institution of Core Committee and the relationship that developed as an outcome of meetings between the panchayat and HM/teachers on a monthly basis.

However for various other activities like inter school competitions and community engagement to improve schooling outcomes, the panchayat has no resources. It is recommended that the Education department allocate some money to each panchayat for such activities. Also the rules that govern utilization of the Finance Commission funds, which are allocated to the panchayat, can be changed to allow panchayat to spend some money on Education related initiatives.