

RISE Mundka & Sangam Vihar Update | The Lockdown Stories

RISE

Remedial Innovation in School Education



*At the end of the day, the goals
are simple: safety and security.*

JODI HELL

Education in Covid 19 Lockdown



Almost 90% of the world's countries have shut their schools in efforts to slow the transmission of COVID-19. For most of these students, school closures are temporary; they have access to quality education and distance learning; and their education and ambitions for the future will continue after the crisis. But online education is not as easy as speaking into the microphone at one end, and connecting a laptop and listening in on the other; there are challenges faced at both ends of the spectrum.

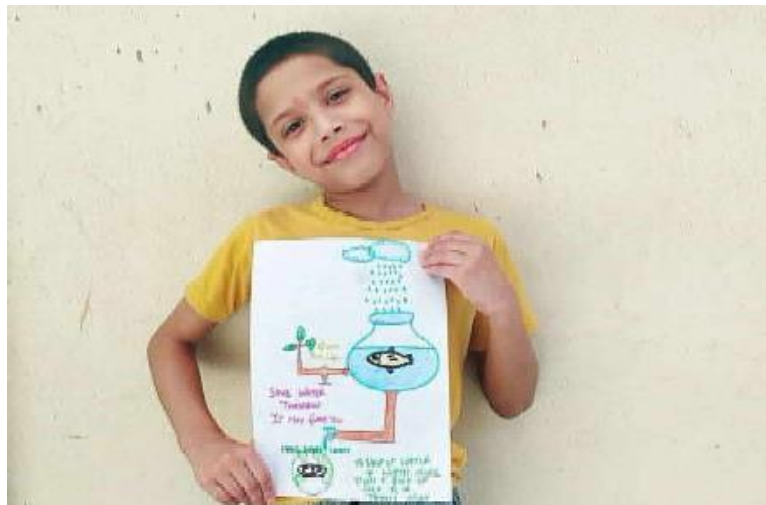
The structure of schooling and learning, including teaching and assessment methodologies, was the first to be affected by these closures. Only a handful of private schools could adopt online teaching methods. Their low-income private and government school counterparts, on the other hand, have completely shut down for not having access to e-learning solutions. The students, in addition to the missed opportunities for learning, no longer have access to internet, digital classes & healthy meals during this time and are subject to economic and social stress. For most of the parents it is easy to download apps to teach kids, and teachers sending video lessons or zoom calls reflect the

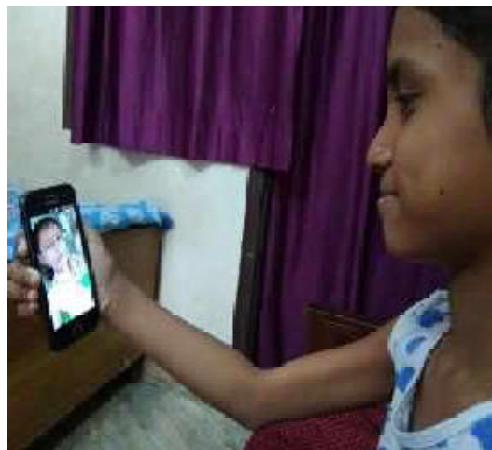
commitment and creativity of teachers for student learning. While in classrooms, a lecturer can judge the involvement of students through their behavior and accordingly adjust the delivery of a lecture. On a virtual platform though, such benefits are non-existent.

Nearly 16 lakh children from poor families studying in government and municipal schools in the national capital are staring at disruptions in their studies without access to mobiles, internet and laptops or desktops, even as privileged students from private schools are

taking online classes amid the corona virus lockdown. Delhi government has started teaching students on the Zoom app, but most of the students in primary and middle schools are struggling as they have either no access to assignments, or find it virtually impossible to study mathematics and many other subjects through WhatsApp or other platforms.

Municipal schools appear to be even worse off — authorities of the north, south and east zones of the MCD might have issued orders on paper to school principals and teachers to





assign work on WhatsApp, but the ground reality is quite different. Interaction with primary school students, their parents, and teachers from MCD schools revealed how everyone is struggling to bridge the digital gap — many families do not have smart phones, let alone computers or laptops. Some said they don't know how to use WhatsApp, while some parents are engaged in essential services and need to take their only phone with them on duty. It has been months since private and government schools in the city have been providing online classes and sharing study material through various digital platforms with their students. However, many of the students have been struggling to access the classes because of poor internet connectivity and lack of devices that support such classes.

The emergence of virtual education during the lockdown seems to have further created a 'class division' among the rich and the poor, especially those from the economically weaker section (EWS).

According to the Delhi government, in private schools about nearly 10 to 15 per cent of students from the EWS do not have access to the digital medium to attend the online classes. But private schools have claimed that 90 to 92 per cent of their students have access to digital platforms, and most students from the EWS managed to attend the classes. However, the attendance of these students dropped after a few days of launching the virtual classes due to low internet data and non-availability of Wi-Fi connections at home, something many schools have also admitted to.

While interacting with children AROH team found that: Many children who are weaker in class don't understand online teaching. They told the team that "they too are learning, but it's tough to learn a subject like Maths online." "In the beginning, they attended the online classes, but after 4-5 days, they could not log in due to internet issues. Now, they completely rely on a WhatsApp group where their teachers send study material and recorded videos for EWS students. But it is tough to study without any assistance and tuition classes," said students studying at in private & government schools.

In the past days Team AROH has realized that the problems of limited resources and poor connectivity are compounded for students with disabilities. Due to which RISE Educators are trying very hard to teach children through online classes and helping them study through calls. They daily follow up the kids, counsel them and ask for their wellbeing which somehow motivates the inner selves of the children to study.



Relief Work for the Community - Safety & Ration Kits



India's huge population, its density, and very large numbers of poor present an extraordinary challenge for the country's COVID-19 response, and the Indian government has imposed the largest lockdown in history. Implementing a lockdown in a country of India's scale is socially, economically, institutionally, and politically very demanding and disproportionately affects the poor, daily wage earners, and other marginalized groups. Thus COVID-19 exposes a harsh reality: An inadequate and uneven safety net may leave many from these economically vulnerable groups without access to food and other services. This struggle is particularly acute for large numbers of informal sector workers—including self-employed, subcontracted laborers, small farmers, and landless workers. The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic is unique. Shutting down many business operations, leaving people without work, is an integral part of efforts to "flatten the curve" of disease progression. Laid-off workers, particularly daily wage workers who are largely seasonal migrants are struggling to find employment. For informal sector workers and rural poor, are missing even a day's earnings that can make

it difficult to buy basic food items, safety items and joblessness extended over several days can mean economic ruin.

COVID-19 poses an extraordinary challenge for India—both for infectious disease control and for maintaining food security and livelihoods. The lockdown that came into force on March 25 has hit the migrant workers the most, who are stranded in the city without adequate money, food or shelter.

Informal settlements are experiencing a great surge in COVID-19 cases than other urban neighborhoods in Delhi, India. Their high density, narrow streets, tight internal spaces, poor access to water and sanitation leave residents highly vulnerable to the spread of corona virus. One of Delhi's poorest & most under-developed neighborhoods, Sangam Vihar, is one of three

informal settlements we have been studying. More than a month before the Indian government imposed a national lockdown, Sangam Vihar residents, supported by the NGO AROH Foundation, and adopted their own measures to counter the pandemic as the area suffers from severe lack of health facilities. Unsurprisingly, residents' health suffers. Respiratory illness makes Covid-19 even more threatening for residents.

The sudden lockdown and market





closures left most residents without food, water and medicines. Some of the residents didn't have the ration cards & money needed to get free food & safety items like masks, sanitizers & handwashes. Enforcing social distancing and stopping people from venturing out of their homes, by beating them, didn't work either. AROH Foundation enrolled 40-50 volunteers from the neighborhood to distribute relief & safety supplies instead of bringing in staff. AROH arranged helps for the area. Elderly and pregnant women were encouraged to stay home and contact the volunteers for help with their daily needs. AROH team was providing ration & safety kits and essentials to residents. Distribution began within the containment zones, but later extended to the entire settlement. AROH Foundation's permanent staff members were now managing everything from outside. The telephone became a medium to reach families who didn't have a TV or a radio and to monitor the situation. Staff regularly phoned residents to give advice on hygiene and how to get essentials and contact doctors for other ailments.

While the government acted pre-emptively, it failed to consider local conditions and needs. Team AROH filled the gaps. Thus AROH Foundation's team is playing a key role, providing ration kits to poor in regular installments. The relief packages & safety kits allotment were very helpful to meet most families' cereal & health requirements.

Mental Wellbeing of children during Lockdown



India's public landscape has transformed dramatically over the last couple of months, with the most prolonged lockdown that the present generation can remember. Declared on March 24, 2020, the lockdown ensured that hundreds of millions of people were effectively confined to home, except when they ventured out to stock up on essentials. National lockdown has restricted children to stay at home which is likely to impact their physical as well as mental health. Especially vulnerable to this are children. It has been found that children staying at home due to lockdown spend more time in front of TV and internet which can lead to psycho-social problems, like lower self-esteem. Excess use of internet can lead to internet addiction disorder. Some can also experience cyber bullying which can affect their mental health. Moreover, spending more time inside the house makes

children vulnerable to effects of indoor pollution which can affect their brain development leading to limited development of cognitive abilities. Children's mental health has been the biggest casualty during the lockdown as they need their schools. Every child deserves to have an uninterrupted education and teachers, school leaders and local authorities have worked tirelessly to provide that before and during COVID. But teachers do so much more than teach and schools provide so much more than education. Schools are vital to the wellbeing of children and young people, providing a range of services from vaccinations to mental health support. And, of course, schools are also where our children run around, play and laugh and argue with each other. They need to return to that sort of a healthy normality as soon as possible. But for the last few

months the majority of children and adolescents in India are experiencing a prolonged state of physical isolation from their friends, as well as teachers, extended family, and community networks.

While quarantining children have generally led to negative psychological effects, including confusion, loneliness, depression, anxiety, trauma, mental health, or mental wellbeing and anger & still turn up for studies everyday appearing fine! AROH team is continuously working to uplift the psychological morale of marginalized children. Children are continuously coping with excessive homework even after being locked in houses. Psychologically blocked & physically trapped, children can't wait to go back to RISE centres where they can study & play and be themselves. But since we know opening of our RISE study centres is not happening soon, Team AROH provided them enough toys & games to keep them engaged. We engage them in innovative games/ competitions/ webinars to keep their learning going on. Even, RISE educators are counseling & helping the kids on regular basis through video calls.

To eradicate mental issues, children have started performing Yogasanas & listening music to keep them calm & stress-free. RISE-AROH team is counseling parents to spend more & more time with their kids and told to maintain healthy environment. Though RISE is stopped but RISING has not!



School Provided with Pedal Sanitizing Stand



During lockdown, Mr Yogesh, RISE Project coordinator came up with an initiative & introduced it to the Principal of Government School, Bakkarwala, and then he told about AROH Foundation how it is ready to reach & help people. Impressed by sense of service, the Principal praised AROH and requested for support to provide sanitizer stand for sanitizing poor & marginalized children studying in government schools. AROH assured them that we would definitely provide them sanitization stands. To support this initiative, RISE Mundka team did a survey in the communities keeping in mind the idea of social distancing and counseled the community people about the pandemic and its preventive measures. Therefore in such a short span of time the team was able to collect the funds & start the process of sanitizers' stand installation. The villagers too were in full support of the initiative to fight against the pandemic. Eventually the installation got completed & RISE-AROH team provided sanitizer stands in the government schools of Bakkarwala village so that the people can stay safe and fight against the pandemic. All the people of Bakkarwala immensely appreciated & thanked for the work done by Team RISE-AROH.



Ishita - supporting children with digital essentials

Ishita, 12 yrs old, is a student of one of the RISE centres in Sangam Vihar; Delhi has been finding it hard to attend online classes. The daughter of a poor family doesn't have a laptop and the family possesses only one phone, that too by her father. Since the Covid-19 lockdown was imposed March 25, Ishita's father has been working hard to make their ends meet.

"I have to help my mother in household chores in the day and meanwhile my father goes on work to feed the entire family. My parents don't have a smart phone through which I can get my homework done given by school which leaves me behind of all my classmates because I'm unable to complete the daily homework as I've no access to smart phone or a laptop," said Ishita, who stays



in the slums of Sangam Vihar in South Delhi's area in a one-room flat with her parents and a brother. Mrs. Neelam Singh, RISE educator informed AROH Foundation about the dire need of her getting a laptop so that she also can complete her homework on time and cope up with her classmates. Hearing this, Ishita appealed Dr. Neelam Gupta, Founder of AROH Foundation to help her getting a laptop.

Looking at Ishita's innocent appeal and supporting such big education project of RISE, Dr. Neelam Gupta agreed to help her and Ishita was provided a laptop in just next few days.

Now Ishita is extremely pleased with her laptop and she thanks AROH Foundation & Dr Neelam Gupta saying *"Ma'am thankyou so much for your generous support & help. This will help me to complete my homework on time, get better grades in class and help with my course work. I cannot thankyou enough for giving me a leg up in starting this new phase in my life."*

