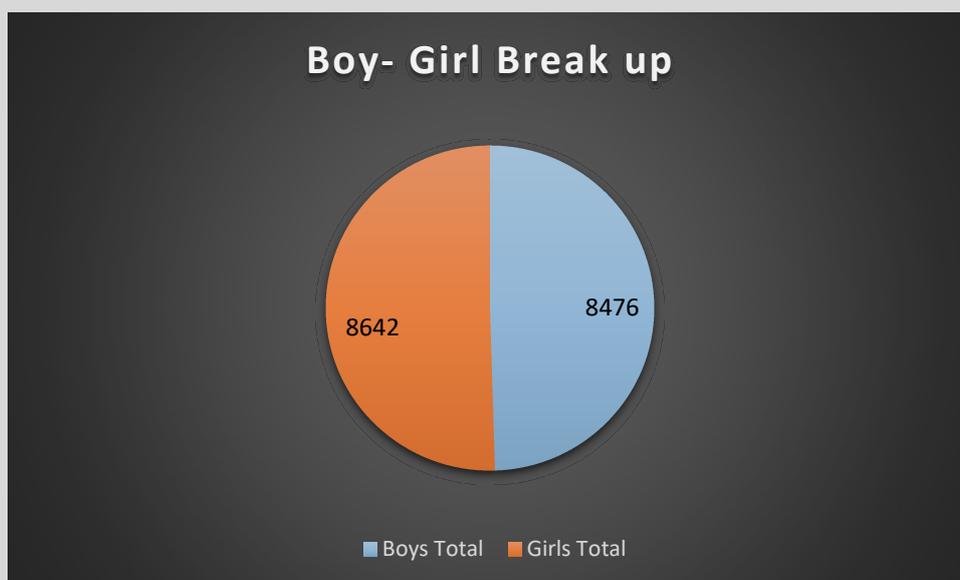


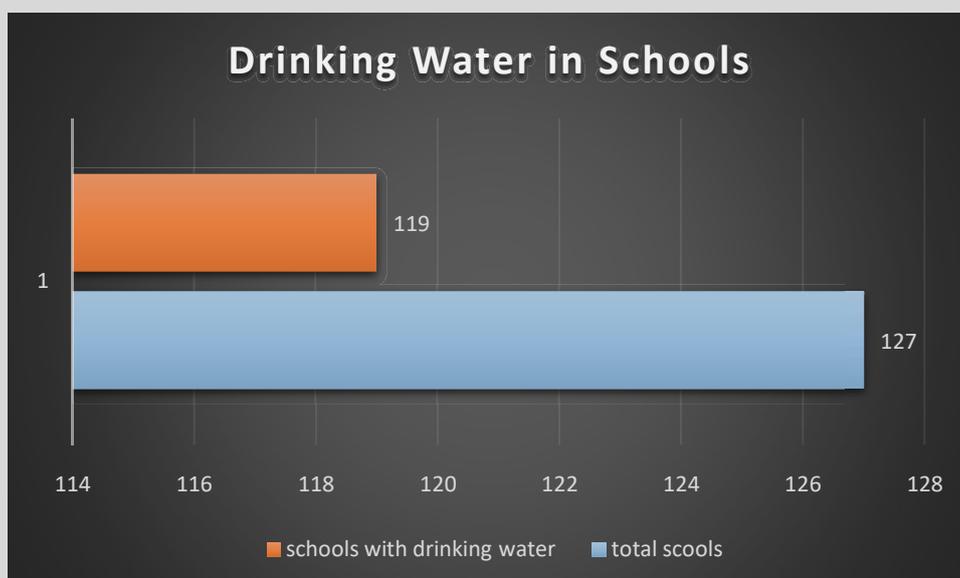
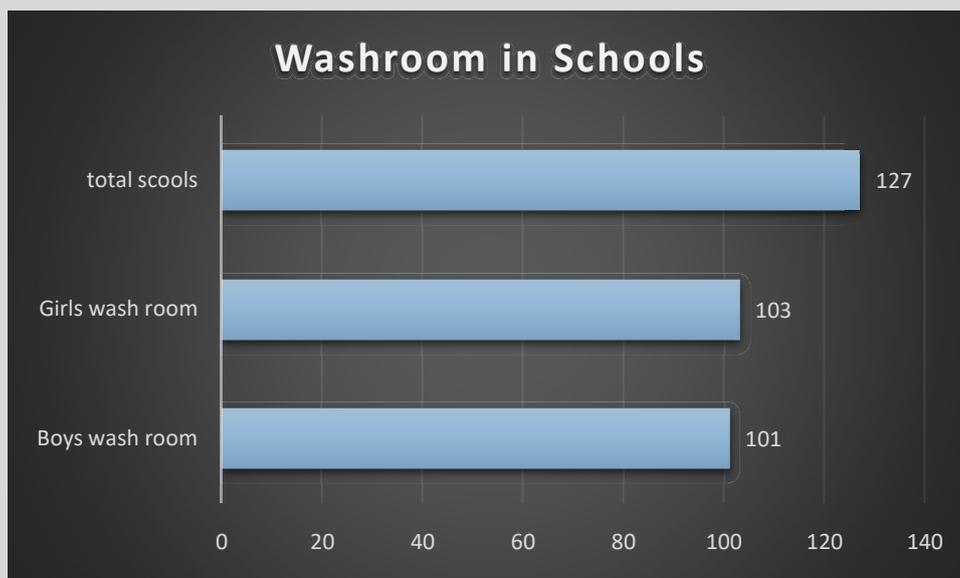
Our Project- Part Two

The second part of the project involved creating a master data of Schools. The objective was to capture all relevant data pertaining to schools such as number of girls and boys, the caste wise student break- up, infrastructural facilities such as toilets, water, electricity and boundary wall. We have tried to capture any other problem which a particular school maybe facing. We also visited the office of the Block Resource Co-ordinator to discuss the findings of the report made.



Some key observations coming out of the master data are summarized graphically as follows:





Total Number of Schools	127
Schools with less than 60 students	83 (65.3%)
Schools without boundary walls	13 (10.23%)

Key Observations:

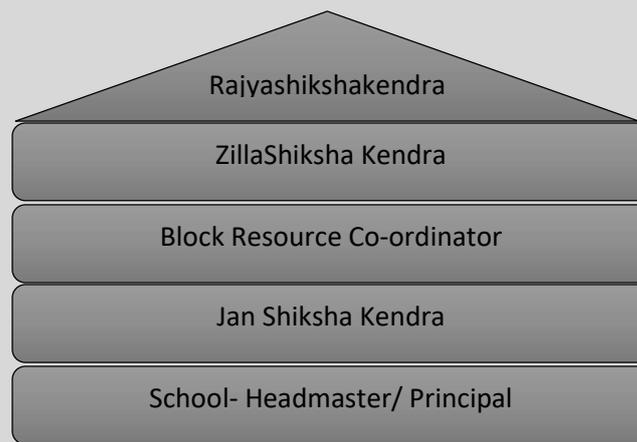
- **Poor Infrastructure:** Infrastructure Facilities were poor in most schools. Most complained of either not having a boundary wall or cycle shed or proper toilets and playground. Some even complained of not having a roof and buildings needing immediate repair.

- **Lack of Teachers:** Most Schools did not have permanent teachers. As per the Government requirement, every primary school with 60 students should have two teachers. However, this was not the case in most schools. Schools mostly had one temporary teacher.
- **Water Problems:** A lot of the schools had no water for the toilets. Consequently, even though toilets had been built, they could not be used as there is no water. Also some schools faced drinking water problems. Some did not have hand pumps, in other cases, hand pump is situated 400 metres away from the school. In other cases, the PH level of the water is too high, making it unfit for drinking. Lack of drinking water creates problems in cooking Mid-day meals.
- **Electricity Problems:** There are 5 schools which do not have electricity. Hence, students find it difficult to study in classrooms and end up playing most of the time.

Learnings from Interaction with Deputy Block Resource Co-Ordinator, Block- Baihar

After preparing the data about the state of schools in Baihar block, we visited the Deputy BRC, Baihar to show him the data analysis, talk to him and understand what the Department does, what could be the possible solutions to the existing problems and become well-versed with the existing education system in place.

The office of the Block Resource Co-ordinator is responsible for providing full academic support to all the schools in their Block. For this purpose there are nine Jan Shiksha Kendras (JSK) in Baihar block. These JSKs monitor the functioning of the schools. Therefore, schools can come to them with any problem they may be facing. The Headmaster can send notice of any particular problem to the Jan Shiksha Kendra. For instance, if a teacher has not been reporting to duty without notice of leave, the Headmaster can report the same with the JSK. The JSK shall check necessary facts and forward the matter to BRC. The BRC shall recheck the details submitted and if a teacher is found to not reporting without notice, will intimate Zilla Shiksha Kendra (ZSK). The ZSK would initiate strict action against the teacher unless he is able to justify his absence.



The above figure depicts the hierarchy in the education system at State level.

In addition to the above offices, every school has a committee (Shala PrabandhanSamiti) comprising of a Panchayat member, meritorious students and their parents and the principal. This committee can discuss all matters pertaining to working of the school. They can ensure school abiding by norms like providing Mid-day meals as per the chart. But as it seemed from the discussion with Mr. B.S Dhruvey, most of these committees did not take their role seriously. Therefore lot of school work remains pending as they do not take necessary action which may simply be intimidating the JSK.

We told him about that many schools did not have boundary walls and this was particularly unsafe for primary school students. While playing, without realising, some ran out on the main roads. According to what he said, when a government builds a school, it creates a priority list of things which should be in place. The prioritisation is as follows:

1. School Building
2. Washrooms
3. Water for toilets and drinking
4. Playground
5. Boundary wall

Therefore, boundary wall features in the end and hence the absence of the same in many schools. It was quite surprising to know that boundary wall which is so important for safety and security, featured so low on priority list.

He agreed that electricity shortage was an issue in almost all schools which they are very well aware of. The government this year is compiling data of schools without regular power supply and electricity poles are being put up to take care of the same. He feels as a result of this initiative, situation should improve.

Also regarding repair and maintenance of school building, the ZillaShiksha Kendra directly transfers a fixed sum annually to every school. The amount of money allocated depends on the number of rooms the school has. So schools are given the finances to take care of basic repairs, painting and other work. For other problems, they can write to Jan Shiksha Kendra or BRC directly.

As per government rule, every primary school requires to have minimum 2 teachers at all times and minimum 3 teachers in middle school.

If enrolment goes above 60, 1 additional teacher needs to be appointed. Subsequently for every 30 additional students, a teacher needs to be appointed.

Despite this, the real picture is very dismal. Most schools do not even have 2 teachers. Another problem as discussed by Dhruvey sir is that the two teachers are expected to teach all subjects to students from different classes. Teachers therefore are not able to do justice to all subjects as they have specialised in different subjects. An arts professor may find it difficult to teach science properly, this also leads to poor teaching quality.



Recommendations

Based on the data collected and the discussion with the Deputy BRC, some suggestions which I believe could be beneficial are as follows:

- There are mechanisms in place to address problems related to school. Elected women representatives should be made aware of this, so they can handle issues related to school more effectively. As a part of the training conducted by CDC, EWRs can be made aware about the Jan Shiksha Kendras and how to address them.
- EWRs who are part of the school committee need to become more proactive. They should be sensitised on how important their role is in monitoring school activities. If they are educated on this topic, they can educate the parents of the students who are members of the school committee on the importance of taking active part.

- It is important to send in writing the requests, concerns and complaints with regard to school issues. As seen from the interviews with the EWRs, most complain they told the officer who came for inspection. There is a need for them to have written proofs of communication, as it would help them in future interactions with the concerned officials. Moreover, written communication can help them reach out to higher authorities, in case no action is taken at lower levels.
- Fortnightly Audit of the schools should be done by the Panchayat. Many EWRs interviewed admitted not being able to give attention to school as they were busy focussing on other work like road construction and digging up of lakes. They need to make school monitoring part of their regular Panchayat work.

Conclusion

Through these projects, we realised that, Elected Women Representatives can be the pioneers of change in the village. By educating and informing them, the village can be educated and made more informed. Empowered women can improve the lives of their families. They can make better choices, stand up against ill- practices such as child marriage.

Training given by CDC is the only source of knowledge for many women representatives who did not have much of formal school education. Post training, many of these women have done significant work in their Panchayats, ensured women get their pensions, made sure C.C Road construction takes place and so on. When these women taste success, it gives them the confidence to do better and more work. Such women would promote the girl child in their house and educate her.

The state of affair of Government run school is disheartening and alarming. There are dearth of required number of teachers and lack of infrastructural facilities. Water and electricity both continue to be a problem in schools. Education is not given priority as many EWRs said parents are not sending their children to school. They do not makes sure their children attend school every day. For education to become a priority, EWRs need to take up the duty of making villagers understand and also look into the working of the schools.

Through our DOCC project we realised how some government schemes sounded better than they actually are in reality. The Government's Scheme to directly transfer Rs. 12000 in the beneficiary's account once toilet is constructed, seems to be a good plan to curb corruption

and make sure the right person gets the money. But, most people in these villages cannot afford to spend such huge amounts and wait for Government transfers. Consequently, toilet work gets delayed.

The project helped us form objective views by looking at an issue from various angles. Before arriving at conclusions, we heard from the Government officials, the Panchayat member and CDC members. This helped us understand situations better rather than indulging in blame games

Acknowledgements

DOCC was a great learning and humbling experience. What it entailed for me was something I had not thought of prior to my experience. The experience of living in the village and understanding and experiencing its beauty, problems and peculiarities personally helped us get immersed in rural life in true sense of the term.

However, this would not have been possible without the people involved who made this experience a truly memorable one. Firstly, my deepest gratitude to Ameen Charles sir for everything. He invested so much time in making sure we understand the project and kept in touch with us to help us wherever we got stuck. He took very good care of our accommodation and travel. Sir's compassion justifies the noble work that he has taken up. He encouraged us throughout the project and helped us in every way possible.

We could have done nothing without the support of the ground staff of CDC at Garhi. No interviews, field work and visits to Government office would have been possible had they not provided us with Bikes. In case of field interviews, they personally accompanied us to the villages so that we could talk to as many people possible. We were always greeted with a smile. A big note of thanks to Praveen Sir and Bindeshwari Ma'am who accompanied us. Komal sir who helped us immensely with the School data. Also we cannot thank Indra Kumar sir and Mahesh Chaurasia Sir enough for making our stay as pleasant as possible. Indra Kumar Sir helped us take care of our food arrangements.

I would like to thank my classmates who accompanied me and gave me a lifetime of memories. We bonded and cared for each other like a family.

Appendix



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

School master data

Questions asked to EWRs during interview:

1. Have you attended training?
2. What did you learn from training?
3. How did training help you with your Panchayat work?
4. What are the problems you faced being a Panchayat member?
5. What led to you becoming a Panchayat Member?
6. What are the main problems of your village?
7. What initiatives have you taken up for your village?
8. Do children of the village go to school?
9. Does the Panchayat look into the running of the school?
10. What other things would you expect from training?

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