

Re-imagining Education in a post-COVID World

- *By Education Circle*

An initiative by a collection of education non-profits for COVID-19 response

COVID-19 crisis has considerably disrupted healthcare, livelihoods, and other developmental aspects for different sections of the society. The COVID-19 crisis and lockdown has also had a staggering negative impact on access as well as quality of education for children. Approximately 1.6 Billion learners are out of school globally while 320 million learners in India are affected by the school closures due to the crisis. Since lockdown, India has witnessed a large-scale, if not complete, closure of physical schools across the country, however close to 70% schools in India were unfortunately not equipped for imparting education outside of the classroom. As India rallies to deliver immediate relief for COVID-19, educational needs also need to be reprioritized as it has an equally detrimental impact on the society at large.

With schools being shut since 17th March, 2020 and teachers juggling between administrative work, COVID-19 relief work and creating digital content, teachers were finding it challenging to actively keep in touch with their students and give one on one support to the child and family. This is an opportunity for nonprofits to come together to problem solve and design practical solutions that can be implemented at scale and would be feasible on ground even in the remotest location. Further, these solutions must be validated with the data from their on-ground experience of working across domains with a diverse group of stakeholders.

Sattva facilitated the Education circle last month that brings together 16 nonprofits and practitioners. The participants are committed to engage for a period of 4-6 weeks and actively problem solve each week to define the final recommendations for the government.

About the Education Circle

In light of the impact of COVID-19 crisis on children's education across the country, the Education Circle was created as a voluntary collective of non-profits to:

- Identify high priority focus areas for the ecosystem to reimagine a new normal of education transformation
- Identify actionable solutions and approaches that can be deployed by government at scale
- Enabling on ground transformation of the solutions by the practitioners

The non-profits which are part of the Education Circle work across multiple states in India and collectively impact more than 5 million children. The nonprofits engage teachers, community, parents, children, government, and other NGOs to execute various kinds of interventions focused on education such as training, capacity building, content development, building life skills and advocacy.

For identifying actionable solutions and approaches under each Focus Area, the Education Circle participants have formed 3 Working Groups. Over the last few weeks, the organizations have been leveraging their practical experiences on the ground and insights to problem solve and co-create ideas that can be circulated with the ecosystem.

This Outcome note summarizes the insights from the first set of discussions within the participants of the Education Circle to identify key focus areas for reimagining education in a post-COVID world.

Priority areas for reimagining education in the new normal

Despite multiple efforts, the children within the beneficiary circle of these non-profits were unable to access resources and/or struggled to learn during the lockdown. This dire context has been further exacerbated by a growing redirection of funds channeled through NGOs and the government away from the education sector and into other critical health and wellness areas.

Based on practitioner experiences of the non-profits, three primary areas were collectively identified for education in the new normal in light of the Covid-19 crisis:

- 1. Return to School** - Need for planned reopening and enabling preparedness of schools
- 2. Need to reimagine technology**-based blended education delivery models
- 3. Need to redefine learning** for development of life skills in children

Priority Area 1

Return to School - Need for planned reopening and enabling preparedness of schools/learning centres

In India, schools across several states were turned into quarantine centres and there is currently a lot of uncertainty on when schools are expected to open back. Experiences from other countries which had reopened schools in an unplanned manner has already shown that children, teachers and other school stakeholders faced a higher risk of infection. Government has identified two needs, **to plan reopening of schools in a well-structured manner keeping school preparedness in mind** to ensure minimal risk to children, teachers and associated community members and **to develop comprehensive guidelines for processes and operations** when schools resume that can be customized to the local context.

Secondly, special focus is also needed to ensure gender equitable access to education since dropouts for girl children are anticipated to increase due to financial distress. Teachers have found it difficult to keep in touch with migrated students since they left the village. This can be expected to worsen as the pandemic continues. Hence, **stakeholder centric strategies need to be planned to enable return of maximum children to schools.**

Priority Area 2

Need to reimagine technology-based blended education delivery models

During the lockdown period, several organizations as well the government focused on delivery of education through digital mediums. Several non-profits focused on providing content and learning resources to children through smartphone apps (such as Chalklit, Google Bolo, iDream Learning App, Quest App etc) and saw a significant increase in adoption. While several State Governments focused on smartphone applications, TV, radio and other modes of online learning during the lockdown.

As of 2018-19, despite growing digital penetration, only 24% Indians own a smartphone and 11% of households possess any type of computer. Therefore, moving education completely from classroom to online learning might not be possible in the near term or even conducive for learning especially in case of younger children. Hence, there is a huge need for **designing tech and non-tech blended learning models** as the new normal.

Priority Area 3

Need to redefine learning with a focus on holistic education in children

In the current academic year, the children as well as their stakeholders would grapple with the prolonged loss of learning due to school shutdown, especially in case of children who were below their learning levels. With the lockdown, the learning gap continues to increase leaving children in a state of unhappiness. Increasingly over the last couple of years, there has been discussions on focusing towards social, emotional and ethical skills in children as well as development of 21st century skills to increase their life chances. The pandemic had presented an opportune moment to go beyond learning outcomes and redefine certain principles of current learning models. It is critical to focus on going beyond traditional models of rote learning **towards equipping children with life skills and prepare students for life by focusing on their holistic improvement** that would enable them to deal with uncertainty.

As the pandemic continues and uncertainty lingers on, the learning journey of millions of students across the country must continue on. Education circle practitioners will continue to collaborate and deliver high quality recommendations for the ecosystem to define the new normal for education post COVID-19. We would do happy to take suggestions or questions to understand the impact of education on ground and strengthen our recommendations

To get involved with the Education Circle, please reach out at covid19response@sattva.co.in

2020 Education Circle Participants

Participant organizations of the education circle collectively span across multiple geographies, have designed and implemented programmes across various aspects of the education sector, have worked extensively with the government and policymakers, and also enable stakeholders across the education spectrum.



Education Circle is a voluntary Covid-19 response initiative facilitated by



Sattva has been working with various non-profits and social organizations as well as corporate clients to help them define their social impact goals. Our focus is to solve critical problems and find scalable solutions. We assist organizations in formulating their long-term social impact strategy by strategically aligning with business to provide meaningful solutions to social issues.

We'd love to hear your thoughts and feedback on this topic. Do write to us: impact@sattva.co.in