

## **Return to School – Guidelines for planned reopening by enabling preparedness of schools & stakeholders**

---

### **By Education Circle**

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

### **Outcome Note**

---

**August 2020**

#### **Contents**

- About the Education Circle
- Background and context
- Chapter 1: Parameters for reopening schools
- Chapter 2: Guidelines for reopening schools
  - Stage 1- Prior to opening school
  - Stage 2- Once school reopens
- Chapter 3: Evolved Role of Stakeholders and Enablers
- Acknowledgements
- Appendix

## About the Education Circle

Considering the impact of COVID-19 crisis on children's education across the country, the Education Circle was created as a voluntary collective of 13 non-profits to:

- Identify high priority focus areas for the ecosystem to reimagine a new normal of education transformation
- Leverage practitioners experience to identify scalable and sustainable actionable approaches
- Identify actionable solutions that can be deployed by government at scale as well as by practitioners for enabling on-ground transformation

The non-profits which are part of the Education Circle work across multiple states in India and collectively impact more than 5 million children. These non-profits 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 program designing for the stakeholders. Participant organizations of the education circle collectively span across multiple geographies, have designed, and implemented programs across various aspects of the education sector, have worked extensively with the government and policymakers, and designed training modules to enable stakeholders across the education spectrum.

## 2020 Education Circle Participants



*Following organizations were part of the Working Group that have co-created this document*



*Education Circle is a voluntary COVID-19 response initiative facilitated by*



---

## Background and Context

It is hard to exaggerate the scale of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the lives of millions at threat, due to direct health risks and disappearing incomes, the strength of our health and welfare systems are being tested to their limits. One of the first measures to be taken against COVID-19 was the nationwide closure of schools that has continued for over 5 months since lockdown was imposed in mid-March. Since then, several government interventions have been introduced to maintain learning continuity and ensure well-being of students. This has included the introduction of classes through television, establishing regular teacher-student communications through WhatsApp and the delivery of dry rations or cooked meals in place of mid-day meals.

Despite the ambition and commitment of these initiatives, there remain **vulnerable segments** of the population who fall into gaps and cracks in implemented programs. This is where nonprofit organizations across the country have been playing a pivotal role in reaching out to and assisting their beneficiaries by supplementing government efforts. It is crucial to ensure that students keep learning and that the efforts over the last several years to bring more children to school and strengthen learning outcomes is not eradicated due to **severe learning loss** and **unmitigated dropouts**.

Due to pandemic, there was a huge gap of learning for our students. While planning reopening of schools another critical thing to keep in mind would be ensuring the well-being of students and staff. This recommendation note aims to **support the planning of school reopening** by creating **stakeholder centric strategies** for ensuring **maximum return** of students to schools safely. The collective conducted several working sessions to brainstorm and arrive at exhaustive guidelines which can be used as tools to ensure preparedness for reopening school.

The participants of this Working Group of the Education Circle engaged in multiple working sessions to consolidate recommendations on following problem statements –

1. What are the **key parameters** to be considered before deciding when to open schools?
2. What are the **guidelines for ensuring school preparedness** upon reopening to ensure minimal risk?
3. What is the **evolved role that stakeholders** will play in the current context of pandemic?
4. How can **Government as enablers support stakeholders** in their role?

---

# 1 - Parameters for Reopening schools

## Current state of school reopening in India

Over the last couple of months, states in India have begun to actively discuss reopening of schools, with some even having plans to reopen as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> of September<sup>1</sup>. However, it is the central government that has been leading and taking calls on when schools can be reopened. The current stance of the Ministry of Home Affairs is that schools must stay closed at least until December with distance-learning mechanisms being encouraged in the meantime<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, Union education ministry officials told a parliamentary panel on Monday that online classes are only meant for school children above class 3 and only a limited number of online classes are allowed for those up to 8<sup>th</sup> standard. The ministry is taking steps such as feedback from parents and teachers to understand their comfort level and share feedback on their expectations once school reopen.

According to a survey conducted recently by Local circles, a community of social media platform only 33% parents support reopening of schools in September. While 13% of the survey respondents said they cannot afford to take chances with their children, 1% thought there was a serious risk of exposing senior members in the family to the virus if a child gets infected. 9% said social distancing will not be possible in schools and 5% believed COVID-19 would spread even faster if schools reopened. 2% respondents believed that online education was a “good substitute” and 47% gave all the above reasons for not wanting schools to reopen<sup>3</sup>.

Countries have differed in terms of when they reopened schools (relative to the epidemiological situation), whether they reopened fully or partially (phased for different grades) or reopened with modified school hours<sup>4</sup>. In Israel, with 85,354 coronavirus cases so far, a second wave of infections has been directly linked to reopening of schools. Schools in the US states of Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Indiana, and Louisiana have reported cases of transmission among students and staff within a fortnight of them reopening. Kenya, meanwhile, has cancelled the entire school year and will make students repeat it. As the same decisions now await our own country and states, it is important to lay out the key parameters that need to be addressed before deciding to reopen. These criteria must be grounded in local context and defined in a manner so they can be gauged without too much hassle, while at the same time being comprehensive and rigorous

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/aug/01/assam-prepares-to-reopen-schools-colleges-from-september-1-2177837.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/schools-colleges-and-coaching-institutes-to-remain-closed-till-august-31-mha/articleshow/77253337.cms>

<sup>3</sup> <https://theprint.in/india/only-33-parents-support-reopening-of-schools-from-1-september-finds-survey/479612/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Reopening\\_Schools\\_COVID-19-19\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Reopening_Schools_COVID-19-19_BRIEF.pdf)

## Proposed Parameters for Consideration for School Reopening

Keeping this in mind, this document elaborates upon **five key parameters** identified by practitioners for reopening of schools. The parameters place emphasis on whether the school is **equipped to protect** its members from COVID-19 transmission and whether it can **effectively resume** its functions keeping **stakeholder willingness and needs** at core

### COVID-19 cases in the locality

*The community must have a low number of cases for 2-3 weeks before schools reopen to avoid exacerbating community transmission and protect community's health.*

### School infrastructural readiness

*Sufficient infrastructure relative to the school's population – in terms of classrooms, toilets, and handwashing taps – required to ensure essential safety guidelines and social distancing can be followed.*

### Stakeholder Needs and Readiness

*School leaders, staff, parents, and students need to be informed and prepared to adapt to modified/new processes and execute their responsibilities before reopening schools.*

### Stakeholder Willingness

*Reopening must happen after considering willingness and comfort of key stakeholders – staff and parents – in returning to school.*

### Availability of Essential Services

*Plan for reopening of schools should be determined based on access and availability of safe essential services for transport, food, and healthcare.*



---

## Parameter 1: COVID-19 cases in the locality

Given that reopening of schools would lead to interaction of a large segment of the community, even in areas experiencing a decline in COVID-19 cases, there remains potential for large-scale community transmission. It is essential to keep an eye on the number of COVID-19 cases, healthcare facilities and potential channels of infection in the school's surrounding area so that reopening does not occur prematurely and lead to outbreaks threatening the community's health. One must be cognizant of the school's locality and whether the area is designated by the government as being considerably safe, or in a 'green' zone consistently for over a period.

## Parameter 2: School infrastructural readiness

While over 90% of schools across the country do not have toilets and handwashing areas separately built for boys and girls. In addition, in many schools the number of students per classroom is greater than 30<sup>5</sup>. As the COVID-19 virus primarily spreads through respiratory droplets<sup>6</sup>, it is essential that schools are infrastructurally prepared to prevent contact between people on school premises. In addition, schools across the country have been used as quarantine and testing centers to support overwhelmed hospitals and health facilities. This highlights a serious need for resources to thoroughly clean and maintain the infrastructure in terms of its sanitation and hygiene too.

## Parameter 3: Stakeholder Needs and Readiness

Given the number of changes in systems and processes required to adapt to the current situation, many stakeholders that engage closely with schools may be unaware of how new/modified systems and processes work, and unprepared to cope with the same. They may also now have new responsibilities that they need help undertaking. For this reason, it is crucial that schools are cognizant of the needs and preparedness of all stakeholders before reopening.

## Parameter 4: Stakeholder Willingness

The pandemic has taken a massive toll on all households by putting unprecedented financial pressures and severely affecting mental health<sup>7</sup>. As some localities see relief from COVID-19 cases, members of the community may experience significant anxiety and uncertainty with regards to services opening again<sup>8</sup>. Schools must reach out to and listen to all stakeholders involved to gauge whether they are comfortable with resuming their roles, to ensure that reopening does not exacerbate the stress being experienced by members.

## Parameter 5: Availability of Essential Services

Public transport plays a crucial role in the ability of many students, especially in rural areas, to commute to schools. Many of these families cannot afford private means of transport and parents do not have time to drop and pick up their children daily. In addition, many working families depend on the government's mid-day meal program to provide their children with sufficient nutrition. Schools will need to reconfigure the facilitation of preparation and distribution of mid-day meals before reopening as this is a crucial aspect of a child's well-being.

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://udise.in/Downloads/Publications/Documents/Analytical\\_Table\\_2016-17.pdf](http://udise.in/Downloads/Publications/Documents/Analytical_Table_2016-17.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-how-is-COVID-19-transmitted>

<sup>7</sup> <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/COVID-19-takes-a-toll-on-mental-health-of-many/articleshow/76881278.cms?from=mdr>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-05-04/coronavirus-some-countries-are-anxious-to-be-back-in-public>

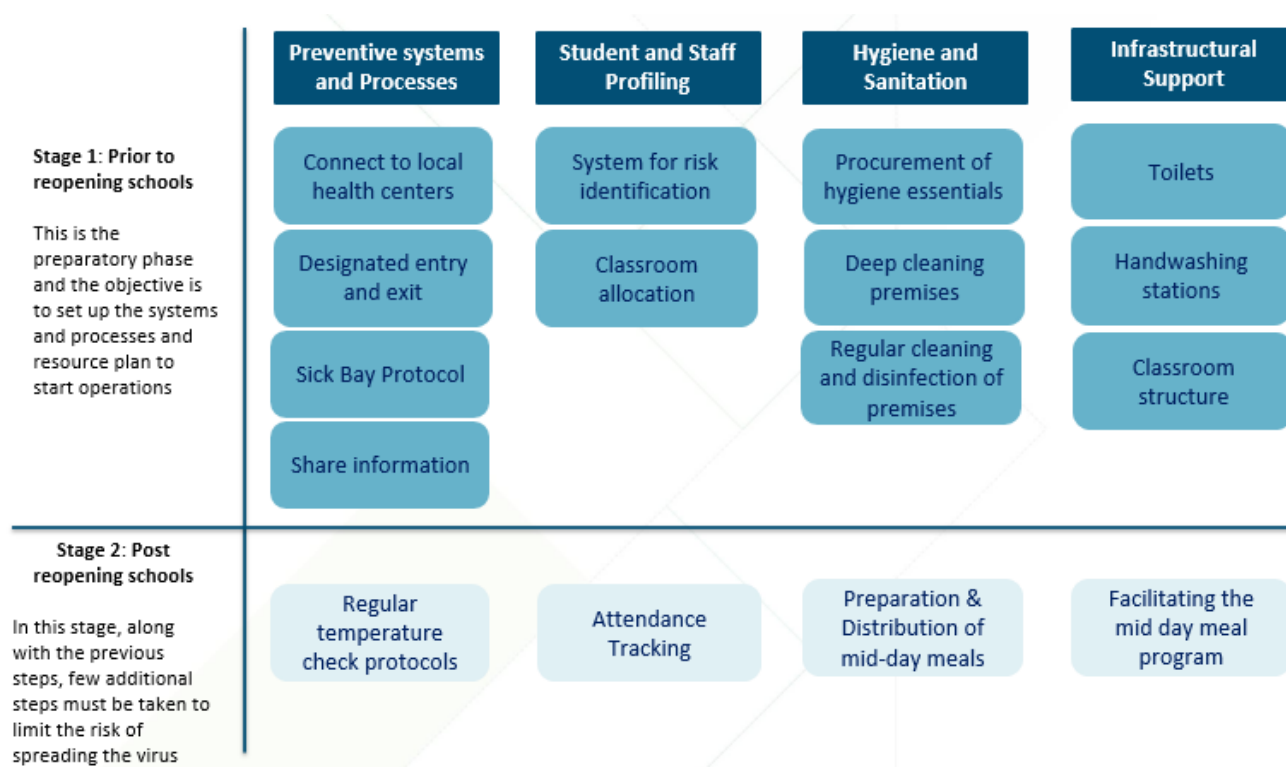
## 2 - Guidelines for reopening school

In India during the lockdown, focus has been on learning and ensuring that students are not falling behind. Several methods such as digital mediums (WhatsApp, TikTok, TV, radio) were leveraged to actively disseminate information and share learning materials. However, despite several attempts a category of students was completely inaccessible over digital mediums because they have migrated or live in remote parts of the state. The remaining who were able to access some learning materials were struggling to understand the concepts and missed the interpersonal connections at school.

Keeping all of this in mind, education practitioners are actively brainstorming measures to mitigate learning loss for children while preventing the spread of the virus. Rather than trying to detect the virus once it has already spread as done by some nations that have conducted mass testing of students, it would be critical to implement measures to ensure the school environment does not encourage the spread of COVID-19 once schools reopen, and to boost children's immunity so that they are not as susceptible in case they are exposed to the virus.

A comprehensive plan for ensuring adequate safety of children and staff is paramount when reopening schools. The given framework has been co-created by multiple practitioners representing 16 education nonprofits. Key areas have been shortlisted for schools to focus for both the stages of prior and post reopening.

**Figure: Framework to Plan Reopening of Schools**





## Prior to reopening school

### Preventive systems and Processes

Connect with Local Health Centers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Schools to have a phone record of the nearest public health center, ambulance system and the zone's health officials.</li><li>2. Schools should keep a check on the number of beds available in the local health center once every two weeks.</li><li>3. School should have a government doctor as a consultant for quick emergency relief.</li><li>4. The school can appoint a qualified nurse through NREGA if PHC has insufficient health workers.</li></ol>
Designated Entry and Exit Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. School administration must identify and demarcate appropriate places with signages of rules as points for entry and exit to avoid crowding.</li><li>2. Schools with only one entry/exit, students must stand in two parallel queues.</li><li>3. Students from grade 1-5 (Primary student) first gets entry into the school followed by students from grade 6-10 (secondary students)</li></ol>
Regular Temperature Checks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Schools must be equipped with 1 thermometer per 30 students or 1 thermometer per teacher, whichever is possible.</li><li>2. Schools must use infrared (touchless) thermometers which are ideal for use during the COVID-19 outbreak</li><li>3. Schools must set up the arrangements for regular temperature checks at the designated entry/exit point</li></ol>
Sick Bay Protocol	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify and demarcate a designated sick bay/holding room.</li><li>2. The room/area should ideally be located with an outside door for access so it can be entered/exited without contaminating other areas of the building.</li><li>3. The room can have a chair/easy-to-clean bed.</li></ol>
Share Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Put up government-issued flyers and posters around the school instructing students and parents on various precautions to be taken as well as how to proceed if they develop symptoms.</li></ol>



## Student and Staff Profiling

System for Risk Identification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students should be assigned to fixed classrooms for all lessons to minimize interaction between different groups of students.</li> <li>2. If the school is large, staff can be assigned to specific grades/sections of the school to minimize interaction as well.</li> </ol>
Classroom Allocation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Primary students must be given priority, school timings for them should be between 8 am- 12 noon followed by secondary students from 1pm- 5pm.</li> <li>2. A dedicated hour must be allocated in between entry and exit of students to clean the surfaces.</li> <li>3. School hours to be reduced and follow ups to be taken either online or via calls. Staff can be assigned to specific grades/sections of the school to minimize interaction as well.</li> </ol>

## Hygiene and Sanitation

Procurement of Hygiene Essentials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create checklist of general hygiene essentials required. Items are needed for following categories <b>(Sample list to be found in Appendix A)</b></li> <li>2. Create checklist of additional COVID-19 specific essentials needed. Items are needed for following categories <b>(Sample list to be found in Appendix B)</b></li> </ol>
Deep Cleaning of Premises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must be conducted once just before reopening schools for the first time.</li> <li>2. Items required are same as those listed above as general and COVID-19-related hygiene essentials, with larger quantities <b>(Sample lists in Appendices A and B)</b>.</li> <li>3. Cleaners must be wearing PPE - disposable gloves, gowns, and masks. Clothing worn while cleaning should be placed in a plastic bag until it can be laundered. Laundering should be done as soon as possible and done safely at home.</li> <li>4. Deep cleaning must cover kitchens, sheds and all areas related to the mid-day meal program.</li> </ol>
Regular Cleaning and Disinfection of Premises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hire more cleaning staff due to the increased frequency and extent of cleaning.</li> <li>2. Create an SOP for all regular cleaning and disinfection including the following points <b>(Sample SOP in Appendix C)</b>:</li> <li>3. Create tracking system to check that cleaning is taking place at the frequency and level of thoroughness stated by the SOP <b>(Sample tracking system in Appendix D)</b>.</li> </ol>
Preparation and Distribution of Mid-Day Meals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gauge whether your school has sufficient space and manpower for preparation safe preparation and service of meals. If infrastructural and human resources are direly lacking plan for distribution of boiled eggs, or dry rations as a last resort.</li> <li>2. Earmark one shop close by where most in-person purchases can be made.</li> <li>3. Set up kitchen gardens if possible as it will help avoid interactions outside premises.</li> <li>4. Create protocol on personal hygiene for cooks and notify them of the same. This should include keeping nails short, no spitting, daily baths, clean clothes and not coming to work if they are suffering from cough/fever.</li> <li>5. Inform cooks of PPE required while cooking- an apron, head gear, and face mask.</li> <li>6. If usual kitchens are not big enough for safe distancing, prepare clean open spaces for</li> </ol>

## Infrastructural Support

Toilets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure there are minimum number of working toilets - one cubicle/25 girls, one cubicle/100 boys and one urinal/40-60 boys<sup>8, 9</sup>. Additionally, break times can be staggered and/or more toilets can be constructed to avoid queuing.</li> <li>2. Mark spaces 1m apart outside washrooms using tape/chalk to encourage distancing.</li> </ol>
Handwashing Stations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Construct more basins if the school does not have at least 1 wash basin per 20 students<sup>10, 11</sup>. Staggering of break and mealtimes can also reduce pressure on hand wash stations.</li> <li>2. Large schools must have group handwashing facilities with each facility must house at least 10 taps. For big schools, group facilities can be as large as 50 taps<sup>12</sup>.</li> <li>3. Users must always be able to maintain a 1-meter distance between each other when washing hands.</li> <li>4. There must be an effective process to drain wastewater, the exact process will differ based on the mechanism of the handwashing stations being used.</li> <li>5. Mark out spaces 1m apart on the floor outside washrooms using tape/chalk so students know where to stand to maintain distance from one another if they are queuing.</li> </ol>
Classroom Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Desks and chairs must be spaced out with at least 1m between each in classrooms. <b>(Sample illustrations in Appendix E)</b></li> <li>2. To ensure students can be accommodated in spaced out classrooms of lower capacity, the school can consider one or a combination of the following arrangements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students of only certain grades attend school on a specific day.</li> <li>b. Schools can function with a system of double shifts - one that begins in the morning and ends at noon, and one that begins at noon and ends early evening.</li> <li>c. Staggered opening/closing/break times to reduce pressure on any infrastructural capacity - classes, cafeteria, toilets, etc.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Facilitating the Mid-Day Meal Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All vendors serving food must sanitize themselves and check their temperature before entering school</li> <li>2. Vendors must always wear gloves and masks and limit conversations on duty</li> <li>3. Students must keep some distance while taking food</li> <li>4. A teacher must guide the entire process every day and ensure strict measures are taken</li> <li>5. Handwashing area must be used in a queue and students must wash their own plates</li> </ol>

<sup>9</sup> <https://resources.peopleinneed.cz/documents/211-wfp-2000-school-feeding-handbook.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> These are the minimum requirements in normal circumstances. To avoid crowding and queueing however, break times need to be staggered and/or more cubicles are required.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.fitforschool.international/wp-content/uploads/giz\\_unicef\\_Catalogue\\_WashingFacilities\\_FINAL\\_WEB\\_new.pdf](http://www.fitforschool.international/wp-content/uploads/giz_unicef_Catalogue_WashingFacilities_FINAL_WEB_new.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://resources.peopleinneed.cz/documents/211-wfp-2000-school-feeding-handbook.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> In normal circumstances, the minimum number of handwashing basins is 1/50-100 students. But in current circumstances with more frequent handwashing, more basins may be required to avoid queueing and crowding.

## What do schools need to do on reopening?

Once planning in the pre-opening phase has been done thoroughly, guidelines for once schools have reopened are mostly about executing the processes that have been put in place. It is important that these guidelines are detailed but simple to understand and perform so that they are followed. The table below once again follows the 4 categories laid out previously - **Preventive Systems and Processes, Student and Staff Profiling, Hygiene and Sanitation and Infrastructural Support.**

Preventive Systems and Processes	
Connect with Local Health Centers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NREGA nurse appointed comes for a round visit fortnightly for a routine checkup.</li> <li>2. NREGA nurse studies the daily temperature records and interacts with the teachers to update them about symptoms etc.</li> </ol>
Designated Entry and Exit Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parents must not be allowed to enter the school, they should drop/pick up students at the designated points.</li> <li>2. A staff member must be posted at the entrances to take the temperature of staff and children, as well as ask them if they have any symptoms. (more on this in the next section)</li> <li>3. For younger students (KG, primary 1 and 2), class teachers can wait close to the entry point to coax reluctant students to leave their parents and come to class.</li> </ol>
Regular Temperature Checks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Parents</b> are strongly encouraged to <b>check the temperature of their children every morning</b> before sending them to school.</li> <li>2. Temperature <b>screening done at all entry points</b> of the school/classrooms at the start of the day. Any staff/child with <b>temperature above normal</b> (37.3C / 99.2F or higher) must be <b>sent back</b>.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If the child's temperature is above normal, and is accompanied by an adult, <b>send the child back home along with the adult.</b></li> <li>b. If the child's temperature is above normal, and is <b>not accompanied by an adult, follow the sick bay protocol.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>3. To <b>protect staff doing temperature checks</b> at drop-off points:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Have the person posted at the entrance maintain a <b>six-foot distance</b> from individuals as much as possible – use <b>tape/chalk on the floor</b> to delineate the space.</li> <li>b. Clean and <b>sanitize the thermometer</b> using manufacturer's instructions often, and between uses if disposable covers are not available.</li> <li>c. <b>Wash hands</b> or use hand sanitizer between direct contact with individuals. Use a peddler system to pour sanitizers</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Conduct <b>another round of temperature screening in the second half</b> of the day if possible (could be when children are entering the classroom after lunch break).</li> <li>5. Class teachers must <b>add the temperature of the students into the classroom's records</b> of its students while taking attendance in the morning.</li> <li>6. If an asymptomatic child travels with a symptomatic child, while the symptomatic child is sent back home, the asymptomatic child can be allowed into school premises.</li> </ol>

## Preventive Systems and Processes

### Sick Bay Protocol

1. Despite morning temperature check, if child develops symptoms:
  - a. Inform parent/guardian immediately.
  - b. Student temporarily waits in the sick bay.
  - c. School staff to provide guidance on next steps to parents - information/flyer

\*Onus is not on teacher, but they can give brief information if necessary
2. The sick bay should hold only one symptomatic person at a time, keeping the door closed.
3. Anyone entering the room must use appropriate PPE (face mask/gloves/gown) and perform appropriate hand hygiene when exiting.
4. Affected staff/students should wear a facemask to contain secretions while in isolation. If a facemask cannot be tolerated or one is not available, they should use tissues to cover their mouth and nose.
5. Once staff/student has vacated the room, ventilate well before entering to clean and disinfect all surfaces thoroughly.

### Share Information

1. Update notice board everyday with important yet positive information for students.
2. Conduct regular (virtual/physical) SMC meetings to share information and problem-solve with parents and other stakeholders.

## Student and Staff Profiling

### System for Risk-Identification

1. Use the system to stay updated on students' attendance, travel history and family health.
  - a. Daily attendance must be entered into members' school records (for students, into their classroom record).
  - b. Use data collection forms weekly to keep track of any student travel history and health of family.
2. On a weekly basis, compile and review data collected on travel history and family health.
  - a. From forms, if a student/staff has traveled to a zone that is not defined 'green', they should be told to quarantine for 14 days before returning.
  - b. From forms, if someone in a member's family has tested positive for COVID-19, they should be told to quarantine until 14 days after their family member recovers before returning to school.

### Attendance Tracking

1. Track daily attendance of students/staff and enter it into their records.
2. If a student/staff is absent for more than 2 days, the teacher/school admin should call to see why they have not been coming to school.

## Hygiene and Sanitation

Procurement of Hygiene Essentials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regularly take stock of essentials and purchase in bulk to avoid shortages.</li> </ol>
Deep-Cleaning of Premises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deep-cleaning must be conducted if a school member tests positive for COVID-19</li> <li>2. Schools must also undergo deep-cleaning monthly until the pandemic is fully under control.</li> </ol>
Regular Cleaning and Disinfection of Premises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cleaning staff must follow SOP and indicate completion of tasks in the tracking system.</li> <li>2. Tracking system must be reviewed every week by school leaders to ensure cleaning and disinfection are being performed.</li> <li>3. Ensure that areas being cleaned include all kitchens and spaces related to preparation and distribution of mid-day meals.</li> </ol>
Preparation and Distribution of Mid-Day Meals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Procurement of raw material               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Avoid daily purchases by buying non-perishables in bulk for at least a month and as much perishables as can be stored at the school.</li> <li>b. Wash unsealed food material (e.g., fruits) with 50ppm chlorine and clean water. Clean sealed packets of food with disinfectant.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Preparation of meals/boiled eggs/dry ration packs               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Follow personal hygiene and PPE protocol.</li> <li>b. Use of gloves is encouraged while cooking to avoid bare-handed contact.</li> <li>c. Hand wash with soap for 20-30 seconds, every 20 minutes while cooking and after touching face, hair, or eyes.</li> <li>d. Maintain respiratory etiquettes - cover your mouth if you sneeze and do not talk around food.</li> <li>e. Alcohol-based sanitizer and soap must be placed at basin for hand cleaning.</li> <li>f. Carry out all kitchen activities while maintaining the maximum possible distance between people.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Distribution of food               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Maintain physical distance between staff and students or objects such as food containers.</li> <li>b. Staff serving food must wear gloves and masks; students should wear masks while collecting food.</li> <li>c. The staff at distribution should perform hand sanitization and disinfection of high-touch points like ladles/tongs regularly.</li> <li>d. Students should wash hands immediately before and after eating.</li> <li>e. Meals can be served environment friendly disposables or utensils brought from home</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## Infrastructural Support

### Toilets

1. Students must maintain distancing while waiting to use the toilet by standing behind the markings on the floor.

### Handwashing Stations

1. Students must maintain distancing while waiting to use the wash basins by standing behind the markings on the floor.

### Facilitating the Mid-Day Meal Program

1. Distribute mid-day meals in a staggered manner over a couple of hours to allow for social distancing.
2. Ideally, meals should be served in open air seating with distancing of 1-2m. However, if staggering the distribution is not possible, meals can be served within students' classrooms.
3. If meals are served in open spaces/dining halls, necessary markings should guide the children on the seating arrangement.

## 3 – Role of Stakeholders and Enablers in Reopening

### Enabling Students in Return to School

Students should not be overlooked in the ways they too can support the reopening of schools and help each other prepare for the same. Senior students can play a massive role in raising awareness and helping other stakeholders address key issues facing their school.

#### 1. Disseminate information and raise awareness

- a. Students can play an active role in the community through dissemination of information (class timings, new SOP in school, etc.) to younger students and siblings
- b. Senior students can motivate peers and younger students/siblings to return to school and distribute homework during school closure
- c. Students can run campaigns with a few teachers in the community and act as a brand ambassador in the communities

#### 2. Run Design for Change projects

- a. Student problem solve the current issues in the community (Design for Change Akanksha Case)
- b. Engage other students in (possible) learning activity

### How can students be enabled?

#### 1. Run back to school campaign

- a. Older children in the community can lead 'Back to School' Campaigns
- b. Support the teachers/school staff with data on at risk families which need help

As schools reopen, stakeholders will have to play evolved roles comprising of different, and in most cases additional, tasks that they will have to implement. **The key stakeholders involved in the school's functioning are school leaders, teachers, parents, and students (primarily, older students).** Their awareness and preparedness will be key to ensuring that the guidelines for reopening achieve the desired outcomes of keeping the school safe and maximizing the return of students. **To play their diverse roles however, stakeholders will need significant capacity building and support from the dedicated enablers – Cluster Resource Center Officials and Government Officials, mainly at the District and State levels.**

### 3.1 - Enabling Gram Panchayat and Local Corporators

Gram Panchayat and Local corporators will play a significant role in the communities. Main **functions** of the **Gram Panchayat** are: Maintenance and construction of School buildings and CPR (common property resources) amongst others. They are responsible for executing government schemes on ground. However, past few years they have not been actively involved in school management committee. Post school reopening, the gram panchayat role must evolve:

#### 1. Ensure availability of resources

- a. Support School leader to appoint sufficient cleaning staff per school
- b. Support in appoint a nurse through NREGA if the local PHC is overwhelmed.
- c. Plan budget allocations per school keeping in mind the need for extra classroom, PPE, hygiene, and sanitation supplies, etc.

#### 2. Ensure infrastructure readiness

- a. Ensuring the availability of desks and chair in every school to maintain social distancing
- b. Ensure availability of hygiene kits and kits and regularly maintaining records in every school
- c. Ensure availability of toilets and handwashing space in schools



- d. Ensure there is a separate space allocated to follow sick bay protocol in every school
- 3. Enable different kinds of stakeholders**
  - a. Attend the SMC meetings in school to understand school preparedness
  - b. Ensure training resources available for teaching and non-teaching staffs
  - c. Motivate teaching staff to join schools to ensure availability of enough teachers in school



#### Case Study: Community Radio Partnership with Vidhya Vahini Pune

**Problem Statement:** Prolonged disconnect to learning in rural areas due to low penetration and limited resources for children to engage in learning content.

#### Approach

Akanksha's radio partnership with Kshmtalaya, Vidya Vahini, Rising on Air was designed for students from preprimary and primary grades who could tune into radio every week in a scheduled time to learn concepts that were presented creatively through songs, stories, jingles etc. The shows are designed in a way that is meaningful, relatable, contextual. The shows span over 30 minutes per day and includes topics such as Mindfulness and thematic learning sessions mapped to their school curriculum. The solution aimed at helping children connect to their learning with joy and critical thinking.

#### Outcome/Impact

**Areas near Abu Road & Kotda, broadcast reach upto a radius of 30 KM** for all children especially focused towards areas with low digital access.

**The content is accessible through the online link and Radio Madhuban Android app** for children who have access to smartphones.

## 3.2 Enabling School Leaders to support children to Return to School

School leaders play the most pivotal roles in reopening as they directly lead preparedness and planning on all fronts. Their roles can be delineated as below:

- 1. Establish systems and processes**
  - d. Prepare final list of students enrolled after going through each student profile
  - e. Build the systems and processes to run an effective SMC in schools
  - f. Ensure school is mapped to a local PHC and has key contacts readily available.
  - g. Ensure Consolidate and report data regularly to share with government
  - h. Demarcate designated entry/exit points.
- 4. Set up administrative protocols**
  - a. Actively communicate information within school
  - b. Actively engage with parents and families to disseminate information
  - c. Actively communicate gaps, required support to the district team for better functioning of school
- 5. Ensure availability of resources**
  - a. Appoint sufficient cleaning staff given increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection required on a regular basis.
  - b. Appoint a nurse through NREGA if the local PHC is overwhelmed.
  - c. Plan budget allocations keeping in mind the need for PPE, hygiene, and sanitation supplies, etc.
- 6. Ensure infrastructure readiness**
  - a. Ensuring the arrangement of desks and chair in every classroom to maintain social distancing
  - b. Ensure availability of hygiene kits and kits and regularly maintaining records

- c. Ensure essentials such as infrared thermometers, disinfectants, etc. are stocked up before reopening
- 7. Enable different kinds of stakeholders**
- a. Responsibility allocation on new roles by distributing task evenly between SMC members
  - b. Appoint sufficient cleaning staff given increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection required on a regular basis.
  - c. Train staff on new procedures such as temperature checking, profiling of students' travel history and family health, etc.

## How can school leaders be enabled?

- 1. Streamline reporting systems and process to collect authentic and relevant data frequently**
  - a. Reporting demands needs to be streamlined and structures for simpler and effective reporting by schools
  - b. A central dashboard to be created and shared with school administration to online upload data
  - c. Dedicated resource at a central level to analyze data and send a report with further areas of improvement
- 2. Support School Leaders to create a vision for the school and empower them to think more inclusively**
  - a. Train leaders on strategies and mechanisms to create an inclusive atmosphere within the school that rejects bias or discrimination of any sort
  - b. Equip leaders with materials and communication channels to disseminate it to all other staff, students, and stakeholders

### Case Study: SAAJHA Interventions on strengthening SMCs and Parental Involvement for Holistic School Development



#### Problem Statement

SAAJHA recognized the need to bridge the gap to the most vulnerable members of the communities by providing them relevant information focused on overall capacity building and holistic development

#### Approach

SAAJHA reached out to the headmasters (HMs) of the schools in the communities, to ask for parental contacts to offer relevant and useful content which would improve the wellness of the family. Through regular weekly check-ins with parents, volunteers arrived at a general understanding of their conditions, children's health and existing problems, the critical grievances were collected per family basis and a follow up system on a day-to-day basis was established with the respective POs. SAAJHA would be expanding its IVR and support calls to parents as well as curate learning content for home basis the current needs. The content development would be based on concerns for ration, financial constraints, emotional well-being and child engagement through audio stories, posters, posters, simplified messages, and videos as well as text messages.

#### Outcomes

Through the communication facilitated by SAAJHA between the parents and the governmental authorities, **doorstep delivery of food stock for a month was facilitated to about 130 families** facing an acute shortage of food.

With the consistency displayed by SAAJHA in following up with the community members, the parents grew more comfortable in interacting during the IVRS calls, leading to **an enhancement in the number of grievances raised and mitigated.**

**7 grievances identified and resolved** with the help of the PO office. In most cases, grievances were related to food scarcity

### 3.3 - Enabling Teachers in Return to School

Teachers will need to support efforts to ensure maximum return of students while also being prepared to shoulder additional responsibilities related to safety measures in the school community.

- 1. Support return to school campaign through community advocacy**
  - a. Leverage SMC as a channel to engage with the community and drive behavioral change and active communication to run back to school campaigns
  - b. Set up fortnightly calls with family members for stakeholder willingness to return to school
  - c. Teachers work with School leaders and SMCs to demonstrate preparedness of schools. (In-principle community approval)
  - d. Teachers set up virtual call centers in their community as a process to run back to school campaigns
  - e. Teachers to stay regularly update with district level news and policy implementations
- 2. Build systems and processes for tracking**
  - a. In classroom systems and processes map teachers to student families to check wellbeing and actively engage with families
  - b. In school systems and processes build a weekly dashboard to collect relevant data from the families and provide necessary support
- 3. Provide ongoing support to families of students**
  - a. Working with SMC to enable return to school and review on going plans is important
  - b. The schools form a group who understands challenges in the community as the lockdowns is unlocked community wise
  - c. Identifying nonverbal ways to understand the students and their family members

#### How can teachers be enabled? How can parents be enabled?

- 1. Develop parents' socio-emotional learning**
  - a. Focus on Self-development of parents
  - b. Provide a counselling support for distressed families
- 2. Prepare for reopening of schools (MHRD guideline)**
  - a. Provide timely information on school reopening
  - b. Run large-scale back-to-school campaigns in community to encourage parents to send children back to school
  - c. Create guidelines for parents' referral on social distancing, school hygiene etc.
  - d. Map at-risk families to enable parents to send children back to school
- 3. Treat parents as school-partners**
  - a. Information on livelihood opportunities in the community disseminated through radio (Vidya Vahini Pune)
  - b. Pre-School opening would be critical to build momentum to enable return of children to schools. (Refer MHRD guidelines)

### 3.4 - Enabling Parents to support children to Return to School

Parents will have to play an active role in supporting their children as they go back to schools. They will also need to actively engage with other school stakeholders and in the community as much as possible.

- 1. Engage with school stakeholders**
  - a. Regularly stay in touch with teachers and school administration
  - b. Attend the SMC meeting, PTM and other school events if any
- 2. Embrace information inflow on school reopening**
  - a. Become tech savvy or allow children access and permission for tech guidance
- b. Support children to go-to-school**
  - a. Take time out to take students to and from school or arrange for company
  - b. Ensure that students are eating well
  - c. Ensure that the entire family follows hygiene practices
  - d. Strengthening and supporting the relationship with their child's new learning needs
- c. Act as community voice & partner to schools**
  - a. Parents understand the message of education and the impact of education long term on the child future

#### How can parents be enabled?

- 1. Develop parents' socio-emotional learning**
  - a. Focus on Self-development of parents
  - b. Provide a counselling support for distressed families
- 2. Prepare for reopening of schools (MHRD guideline)**
  - a. Provide timely information on school reopening
  - b. Run large-scale back-to-school campaigns in community to encourage parents to send children back to school
  - c. Create guidelines for parents' referral on social distancing, school hygiene etc.
  - d. Map at-risk families to enable parents to send children back to school
- 3. Treat parents as school-partners**
  - a. Information on livelihood opportunities in the community disseminated through radio (Vidya Vahini Pune)
  - b. Pre-School opening would be critical to build momentum to enable return of children to schools. (Refer MHRD guidelines)
  - c. Supporting parents' skills building on financial literacy etc.

### Case Study: Well Being Support to Families by Akanksha Foundation



**Problem Statement:** COVID-19 has led to high distress in the families of children studying in Pune public schools. This distress could be both financial as well as psychological. Without adequate support, the family well-being can severely be affected leading to further anxiety and alienation for parents with their children.

**Approach:** To ensure continual well-being support for both parents and students, more than 470 teachers spoke to 8314 families in the communities of Pune by conducting 1:1 check ins with families. The conversations in these calls attempted to assess the risk of physical and mental abuse to child and family as well as concerns around food scarcity, health challenges and livelihood loss. After each conversation, the data was collected on google forms. A weekly dashboard was set up to track the number of families found in distress. Once the data got recorded by the teacher, an immediate flag off system was set up wherein school social workers would get automated email with the family details and distress condition. An email would also be sent to the appointed school counsellors, respectively.

#### **Outcome/Impact**

- **2000** severely distressed families were supported by the counsellors.
- **9000** public school students were engaged in weekly well-being activities to ensure continuous learning.

---

## 4 – ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- Abhishek Choudhary (Saajha)
- Abhishek Nair (ATMA)
- Anish Mukherjee (Art of Play)
- Bhavani Arumugham (Dream A Dream)
- Damini Mainkar (Leadership for Equity)
- Grainia Fernandes (ATMA)
- Kshitiz Patil (Art of Play)
- Madhukar Banuri (Leadership for Equity)
- Mahesha M (Dream A Dream)
- Mary Ellen Matsui (ATMA)
- Rahul S Naidu (Dream A Dream)
- Renuka (Dream A Dream)
- Sheetal Murudkar (Akanksha Foundation)
- Sneha Arora (ATMA)
- Sukhada Ghosalkar (Pratham)
- Archana Bala (Sattva)
- Rathish Balakrishnan (Sattva)
- Roselin Dey (Sattva)
- Rahul Shah (Sattva)
- Swarnava Gupta (Sattva)
- Farhan Yusuf (Sattva)

---

## 5 – APPENDIX

### Appendix A – General Essentials

The following list is adapted from **Save the Children’s Kit 1: Essential COVID-19 WASH in school**<sup>14</sup>. Schools will have to obtain information costs on each item as this will vary between different locations and contexts. Please check the [link](#) to access the detailed checklist tool

### Appendix B – Additional COVID-19 Essentials

The following list is adapted from **Save the Children’s Kit 2: Essential COVID-19 WASH in school**<sup>15</sup> and is to be used in addition to the list in Appendix A. Schools will have to obtain information costs on each item as this will vary between different locations and contexts. Please check the [link](#) to access the detailed checklist tool

### Appendix C – Cleaning and Disinfection Tracking System

Below is a sample tracking system that can be customized and used in different parts of the school premises (e.g., separate lists for classrooms, toilets, kitchens, etc.) on a weekly basis. Please check out the [link](#) to access the template for tracking system.

### Appendix D – Classroom Structures

**Azim Premji Foundation** had released sample portraits to illustrate the classroom structures suitable for maintaining COVID-19 safety guidelines. Please use the [link](#) to access the portraits

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/safe-back-school-practitioners-guide>

<sup>15</sup> <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/safe-back-school-practitioners-guide>