

*'Didi, kendra kab khulega?'*, (when will the centre reopen) three-four children came asking one of the *sanchalaks* (community-selected facilitators) at the *Mohalla Learning Activity Centre* (M-LAC) in village Gunga, Berasia block, Bhopal. This was part of Eklavya's project *Shiksha Ki Udaan* in which we reached out to children by delivering worksheets door-to-door through *sanchalaks*, something we had never done before. This was in June; two months of lockdown had passed with no circulars from the *Rajya Shiksha Kendra* and there was a sense of concern amongst our team members. We were reluctant to gather children in our M-LACs, so we began to work with them through these *sanchalaks*, who would interact with the children individually, going door-to-door. We had set these worksheets for three different learning levels, which we named *Ankur* (emergent), *Tarun* (intermediate) and *Umang* (advanced).

The COVID-19 pandemic was indeed a time for us to press the 'pause' button on the hustle and bustle of life, pushing us to reset all the facets of our entire social life. Another school academic year passing by, especially for those children who do not have access to technology, has made us all realise how face-to-face interaction with hands-on activities is irreplaceable. This lack of human interaction, especially in the field of education, has led to a loss for children not just in terms of academics, but socially and emotionally as well. The children have been robbed of their 'hub of social interaction', their school, where they made friends, fought and argued with each other, played and did co-curricular activities together. Children have been robbed of their 'hub of social interaction', their school, where they made friends, fought and argued with each other, played and did co-curricular activities together. And teachers, who would have had an opportunity to get to know each child's strengths and weaknesses, have had to think of different methodologies to carry out the teaching-learning process.

One method that has been attempted was through worksheets. This model has become one of the ways

in which teachers could attempt to understand the learning levels of children.

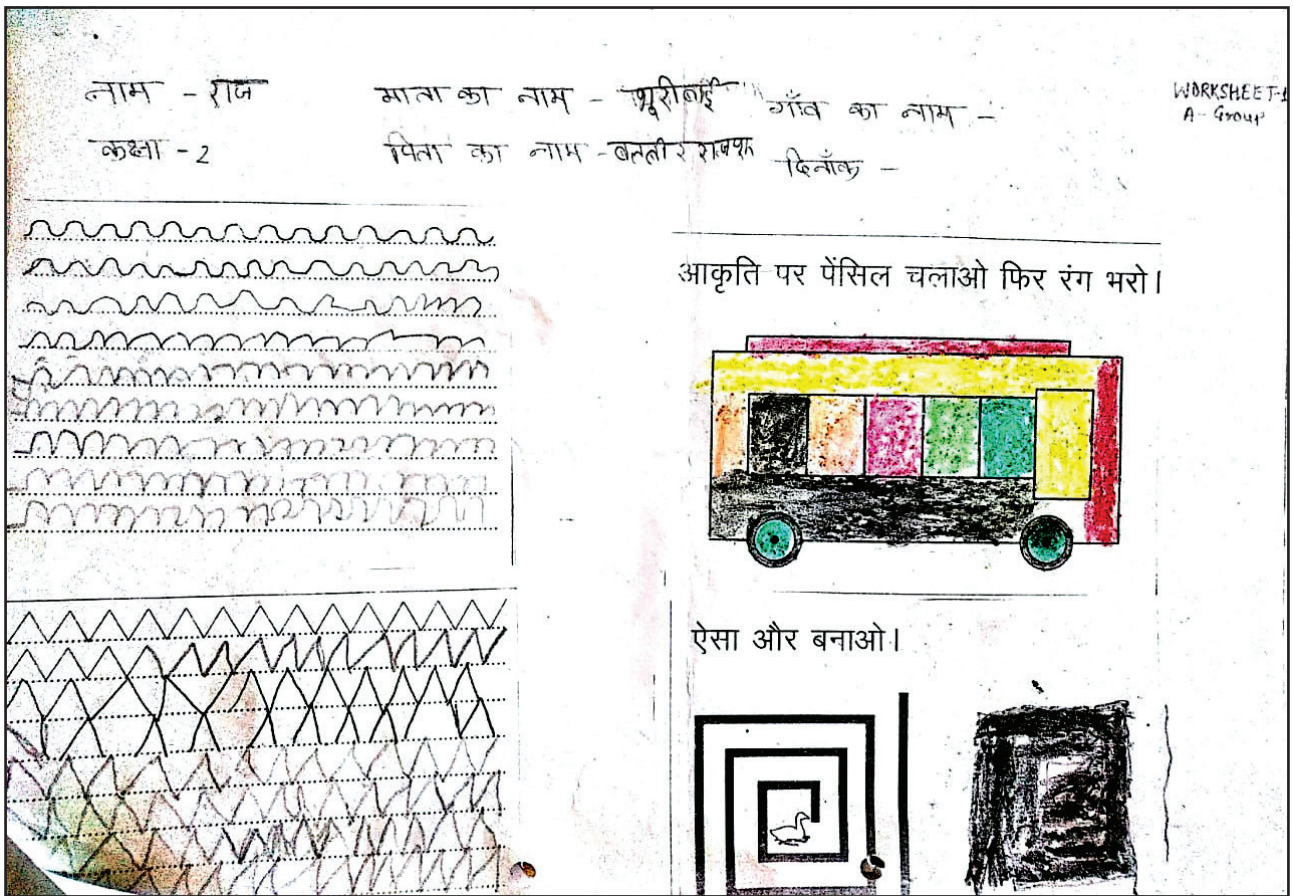
Now, we are trying to look at this intervention also to help us understand the learning gaps of children and prepare them when schools reopen. Although COVID-19 affected us in the most severe ways, it has given us a chance to re-look at the routine of our lives. Several parents, who previously stayed completely occupied with their work, have been able to spend a considerable amount of time with their children during the lockdowns. It also gave teachers some time to ponder on what strategy they could adopt for working with children, a process that may not have been possible had they constantly worried about completing the textbook lessons. This was a chance for them to try out something new, something different.

We know that COVID-19 is not going to go away soon, so this 'worksheet model' could also be integrated in schools and at home. It is important that we talk to teachers about this intervention which can be added to our preparations for the reopening of schools which will require us to work in flexible modes.

Another perspective that COVID-19 has emphasised is that children come from different cultural backgrounds. For example, it is likely that the child from an urban middle-class setting would have support with skills such as interpersonal-intrapersonal relation-building, problem-solving, creative thinking and so on from family and community, along with access to technology. Whereas a child whose family may be engaged in daily-wage work or agriculture (as in the Berasia block) would have life skills but may not have the same type of socio-cultural support. The use of worksheets in M-LACs can play a supplementary role in helping children acquire some of these skills.

### Planning for reopening

Using worksheets during the lockdown made us realise that this is an effective method of learning for children, which reinforces their learning. The worksheet intervention also pushed parents to



This worksheet was designed for the Ankur group with a focus on building motor skills.

engage with their child's learning. As mentioned, children have missed a considerable period of learning and teachers do not know what changes have occurred in their learning levels. Worksheets of different levels, such as these, can help children by working in small groups and supporting each other. Using these worksheets, teachers can help children gradually recall what they had learned in their previous classes.

As schools reopened in Madhya Pradesh on September 1, teachers could work with children in groups and, with the help of worksheets, support them in picking up what they had forgotten without the children feeling intimidated by the next levels of learning. Worksheets, thus, serve a significant purpose in the teaching-learning process where it gives children multiple opportunities to practice along with an assessment tool and makes the transition to new learning easier for them. The emphasis is on the fact that children should feel at ease with the learning process when they return to school.

#### Some experiences

At the Government Middle School, Hirankhedi (Berasia, Bhopal), I began talking to children about


how they felt of coming back to school after one-and-a-half-years, what had they done during this time? Children said that they had been at home, or at their grandparent's or other relatives' homes. One child mentioned that the family visited Van Vihar and Bheembetka in Bhopal. Then, since it was the first time I was interacting with the whole class, we moved on to talking about how we introduce ourselves in English. I asked them to write their names on a piece of paper and demonstrated: My name is Lovis, I come from Bhopal. Children continued in the same way: My name is... I come from Hirankhedi village. Along with this, they mentioned one thing that they liked. I also included an exercise of letting the children identify the first letter and sound of the respective letter. We did the exercise by tagging each other. As children mentioned the things they liked, I wrote down the words on the blackboard.

At the Government Middle School, Harrakheda (Berasia, Bhopal), I began by asking the students about what they had been doing in the last so many months and children told me about having played games on the mobile phone, helping with the household chores and going cycling with

friends. I then did a picture-reading with them by dividing the class into groups. I gave each group a picture story along with chart paper and asked them to select a picture from the book and write about it - *Who* is/are there in the picture? *Why* is something happening and where is it happening? Two members from each group had to present this to the entire class.

Both these were worksheet exercises of listening, speaking and writing in which children were given the opportunity of talking without fear or the feeling of being judged. An activity related to this

could be asking children to draw pictures or write a paragraph about the place they visited or write in their notebooks, five to ten words which they liked from our discussion. Children's writings can be put up on the classroom walls. Having a dialogue with children through such activities and making sure that they enjoy the learning, has to be ensured by teachers once schools reopen and gradually increase the rigour of learning over a period of time. Worksheet activities could later progress into teaching-learning from the textbooks too.



**लॉकडाउन की तैयारी**

समीर की दादी ने परिवार को खाने का ज़रूरी सामान जमा करके रखने को कहा। तुम्हें क्या लगता है उन्होंने ऐसा क्यों कहा होगा?  
 उन्होंने ऐसा इसलिए कहा कि .....

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ऐसी 6 चीज़ों के बारे में सोचो जो तुम एमरजेंसी के लिए अपनी रसोई में रखोगे। चित्र बनाओ और नाम लिखो-

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*This worksheet was designed to make children think about the circumstances of the pandemic by integrating EVS and Hindi. They are being asked to draw pictures of six items that they would need in the kitchen in an emergency. This worksheet was used for the Tarun group.*

नाम ..... कक्षा ..... दिनांक .....


माता..... पिता ..... गाँव.....

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प्रश्न 1) क्या आपको घड़ी देखना आता है? हाँ या नहीं।

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प्रश्न 2) आज हिना सुबह 6 बजकर 20 मिनट पर सो कर उठी। नीचे दी गई घड़ी में उसके उठने के समय को दर्शाइए।



प्रश्न 3) आप रोज सुबह कितने बजे उठते हो और रात को कितने बजे सोते हो? इस घड़ी में समय दर्शाओ और खाली जगह में लिखो।



सुबह उठने का समय.....



रात को सोने का समय.....

*This worksheet was designed for the Umang group and focuses on the concept of time, which essential skill in our daily life.*

#### **Acknowledgements**

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#### **Endnotes**

- i Mohalla Learning Activity Centres (M-LAC) are set up in open, well-ventilated spaces where children of a particular neighborhood/*mohalla* can come to study English, Hindi and maths by sanchalaks (local youth) following all the necessary safety protocols. Before COVID-19, these centres were called *Learning Activity Centers* and were held in school premises.



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