

Porta Cabins in LWE areas

The most naxal-affected districts in Chhattisgarh at present are Bastar, Bijapur, Dantewada, Sukma and Narayanpur. The State Govt. tried to open schools in the remote areas and approved budgets for the construction of school buildings. But the district administration failed to construct the buildings because of the strong opposition of Naxals as the school buildings used to become safe shelters for the security forces. The Budget sanctioned for civil works in these districts used to get lapsed.

In the year 2008, while making the Annual Work Plan, the state thought of proposing for prefabricated temporary structures for schools. During the discussions in Project Approval Board, the idea of National Bamboo Mission and the bamboo-made school building was brought forward. A sample room made of bamboo was constructed in the Ed.CIL premises. The state was suggested to demand for the same and use the bamboos available in the forest areas for the construction of school buildings with the technical support of National Bamboo Mission.

At present, total 60 Porta cabins are functional in these four districts and total 25317 children are enrolled and are getting education in these cabins. The main ideas behind the acceptance of this approach were:

- It is very difficult to monitor schools being functional in remote areas
- Teachers find it difficult to work in such remote schools
- It is better to run schools on roadsides and comparatively safer areas
- Bamboo is abundantly found in the forest areas, which could be easily used
- Being temporary and portable structures, these could be used to construct schools in respective villages once peace is established in these LWE areas.

Civil strife adversely affects school education system both directly (destruction/ occupation of schools) and indirectly (poor morale and capacities of administrators and teachers). There is an urgent need to relook beyond the existing system of schooling. The community in civil-strife areas are forced to be dislocated, are disempowered, isolated and polarized. We need to think of the following while planning for such children:

Protection: Protecting children from different attacks

Provision: Providing schooling facilities in difficult areas

Reconstruction: safe, educational and recreational spaces for children

Peace building: Long term approach to unlock the potential of education for peace