

Case Study - Home Learning during COVID-19

Name of the child: Popatbhai Turi

School: Dhokavada Primary School, Sanatalpur, Patan, Gujarat

Name of the Head teacher: Mr. Ahir Narayan Bhai

Name of the Bal Mitra: Mr. Jepak, Kamlesh Bhai

This story is about Barot Popatbhai of the Dhokavada village of Patan District of Gujarat. Popatbhai is 10 years old and was not enrolled until the year 2019-20 when he was enrolled in the STP centre running in the Dhokavada Primary school of the village.

About the village- The main occupation of the people in the village is agriculture. The families shift to their fields for around four months during the time of the cumin crop. Most of the people have low to moderate income and low to medium sized land holdings.

About the school- Dhokavada Primary school has a total enrolment of 448 students and a staff of 14 teachers. The Head Teacher of the school, Mr. Ahir Narayan Bhai is originally from the same village and is very motivated to work towards supporting all the children to reach their best potentials. The school, during the time of the harvest when the families shift to the hamlets located in the fields (*generally 20 kms or more away from the main resident village*), provides the space to run a seasonal hostel in the school. Around 40-50 students stay in the hostel every year and the Head teacher and the

staff personally support the students to get adjusted to staying in the school. The decision of which students should stay back in the school is collectively decided. Because of the motivation, concern and commitment of the head teacher towards the community and the school, the community has really high regards and respect for him and the entire school's teachers' collective and cooperates in taking the decision collectively for the progress and growth of the school.

About Popatbhai- Popat bhai is a 10 years old boy who stayed earlier in Banaskantha with his mother and elder brother. Dhokavada is his maternal home and he shifted here with him family two years back after his dad passed away. His mom is widowed and has some psychological issues because of which it is difficult for her to manage her daily

living smoothly. The family is presently supported by his elder brother who started working as a wage labour from a young age. Popat bhai didn't go to school when he was living in his paternal village because of family's financial condition. When he shifted to the new village, the Head teacher and Bal Mitra collectively convinced his mother and him to get enrolled in the STP centre.

Journey of Popat bhai- Popat bhai found the initial days of coming to the STP centre quite challenging. He wasn't used to taking a shower everyday or getting ready for school. He wasn't used to dressing up independently too. The Bal Mitra, Mr. Jepak Kamlesh bhai first handholded him to learn to get ready for the school, feel motivated and positive about it and also picked him up from home to the STP centre. He introduced him to the other students of the STP

group and tried to gradually make him feel safe in that space. Being an experienced Bal Mitra he knew that the best way to evolve relationships amongst students is to engage them in collective play. The learning activities that involve children to work together in small groups and to freely express themselves, play, talk, run, work with hands and share provides the safe environment for the students to create new bonds. The students create their own new rules, get to know each other and start supporting each other in the journey of learning. After having studied for a year in the STP centre, Popatbhai was mainstreamed in the class 4 in the primary school. As the STP centre runs in the school only, the teachers already knew him and the Bal Mitra (Kamlesh bhai) and the teachers were already in well coordination about the learning level and challenges of the children who

were in the STP centre and then shifted to the school.

The last year, because of COVID, the students had to study from home. Popat doesn't have an access to smart phone or TV because of which it was tough for him to access the learning materials. The head teacher made sure that he gets the textbook and blended learning materials at home and as soon as the lockdown was lifted, the teachers and Kamlesh bhai started visiting his home to provide him the learning support.

Support extended during COVID times- Kamlesh bhai ensured that Popatbhai is visited few times every week and he also learns to take help from the digital resources. For that, Kamlesh bhai, Bal Mitra shared his phone with Popat to access the home learning materials that is broadcasted on TV and is later uploaded on the Diksha Platform. He also

supported him to attend select virtual classes with the teachers so that he doesn't feel left out while many of the other students have an access to the resources. As the other teachers were also teaching the students by creating small groups within the community, Popat was encouraged to attend some of those classes. It was also really important to him because he had to shift to new class (class 4) from the STP centre. Though he knew many of the students already as they are from the same village, building relationship and identity of a new class still needed conscious and careful actions of the teachers. He now is showing really positive motivation towards learning and is making efforts to continue his journey in the school.



Challenges faced- The biggest challenge that the Bal Mitra, Kamlesh ji faced with Popat was that his aural comprehension was also weak in the beginning. He found it difficult to respond to oral instructions and spoke quite less too. His case felt like that of a suppressed childhood where because of the situation of challenge of his mother and the death of his father, he didn't get much attention and encouragement in the early years. He now, though not at

the grade level, understands oral stories and instructions well and attempts to recall information and respond to oral questions.

The Bal Mitra took almost three months to teach him the numbers from 0-10. He used different ways and activities to facilitate Popat to understand the concept of number system. Though at a pace slower than the other children, he is moving towards improving in his learning of the school curriculum, his skills to socialise and build relationships and his affection towards making sense of the world around him.