



## OPEN SCHOOLS NOW: END EDUCATION EXCLUSION

UNESCO estimates that about 140 million students in primary and 130 million in secondary have been affected by the lockdown in India (UNESCO,2020).

### CHILDREN FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES DO NOT HAVE INTERNET OR CELLPHONES

- As per NSSO(2020)– **only 4% students in rural areas** have access to essential digital infrastructure – more than 80 % students in urban areas do not have access to essential digital infrastructure
- **Only 2 % of students from the lowest income quintile** reported having essential digital infrastructure.
- **Only 4 % of SC and STs, 8 % of Muslims and 7 % of OBC** students had access.

### WOMEN AND LEARNERS FROM MOST MARGINALISED SECTIONS ARE LEAST LIKELY TO ACCESS ONLINE EDUCATION.

A recent survey of 3176 households across four Indian states conducted by the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (Ghatak et al., 2020) found:

- In **more than 70 per cent of the households**, the phone belonged to a male member
- **Only 26 % of the girls** who responded to the survey said that they had unhindered access to phones at home.
- Girls spent a disproportionate amount of time on chores and care work and less time on education.



### WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF ONLINE PEDAGOGY?

- **80% of parents in govt schools (100% in Bihar) and 60 % in private schools** felt that education was not delivered (Oxfam, 2020).
- More than half of teachers surveyed perceive remote learning materials and methods to be less effective than classroom teaching (UNICEF, 2021).
- **50% of urban teachers and 40% of rural teachers** were in touch with students through WhatsApp and phone calls (Singh et al., 2020)

## HOW HIGH IS THE LEARNING LOSS?

- **92% of children** on an average have lost at least one specific language ability from the previous year across all classes (Azim Premji Foundation, 2021).
- **82% of children** on an average have lost at least one specific mathematical ability from the previous year across all classes (Azim Premji Foundation, 2021).
- UNESCO(2020) has listed “interrupted learning” among the top adverse consequences of COVID-19 school closures worldwide. It estimates that COVID-19 led school closures caused worldwide **learning losses estimated at two thirds of an academic year** on average



## CHILDREN ARE DEPENDENT ON MID DAY MEALS FOR NUTRITION

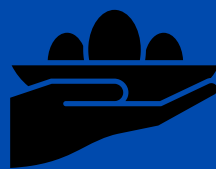
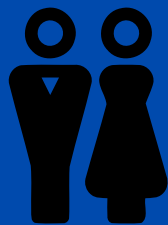
Inability of children to access cooked meals during the lock down is likely to have had a detrimental effect on their nutrition and health. The impact may be worse for girls and children from other marginalised groups.

- The pandemic put an estimated **115 million children** at the risk of severe malnutrition (Lancet Covid-19 Commission, 2021)
- Approximately **35% of children** did not receive their mid-day meals. Of the remaining 65%, only 8% received cooked meals while 53 received dry rations and 4% received money in lieu of the MDM (OXFAM, 2020)

## ECONOMIC DISTRESS DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

A recent survey of 3176 households across four Indian states conducted by the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (Ghatak et al., 2020) found:

- Marginalised lower caste groups disproportionately affected by a factor of three as there is over-representation of them in vulnerable jobs.
- **84%** said not enough employment opportunities.
- **84%** have experienced severe cash crunch
- **63% reported food shortages, 71% in Bihar**
- **70% minorities** said not enough food at home



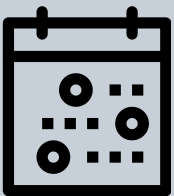
## INCREASED CHILD LABOUR AND CHILD MARRIAGES

- NSSO(2020) data indicates that 35% of school drop-outs occur due to involvement in economic activities and 26% due to financial constraints. There is an **increased likelihood of child labour** arising from large-scale job loss for casual labourers.
- CHILDLINE 1098, India recently announced a **50 % increase in calls received on the helpline**, requesting protection from abuse and violence, since the lock down began.
- India has over 10 million children (5-14 years) and 23 million adolescents working across industries (Census,2011). There are fears that **school closures are beginning to push these numbers up.**

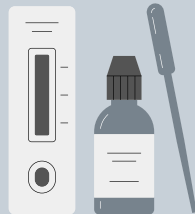
The risk of re-opening schools leading to higher rates of infection is *marginal* compared to the learning loss and risk of losing the gains made in education over the past years.

- Recent evidence from modelling studies indicate that school closures alone would avoid only 2–4% of deaths, a percentage much smaller than other strategies of social distancing.
- Data from countries which reopened schools or did not shut them in the first place, indicates low community transmission rates of less than 1 new case per day per 100,000 people.
- Trends in child-to-child transmission in schools is poor indicating that relevant prevention strategies can potentially be effective in preventing transmission in the school setting.
- Children 9 years or younger have demonstrated lower seroprevalence and susceptibility as compared to children aged 10-14 years.
- Studies also indicate much lower infections in children under the age of 10, under the same conditions of exposure to infected household members, as compared to adults and adolescents.

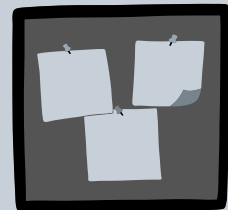
## SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR SCHOOL REOPENING



Alternate day attendance



Vaccination and testing  
of teachers



Limited numbers per classroom with  
pre-planned seating arrangements

## REFERENCES: