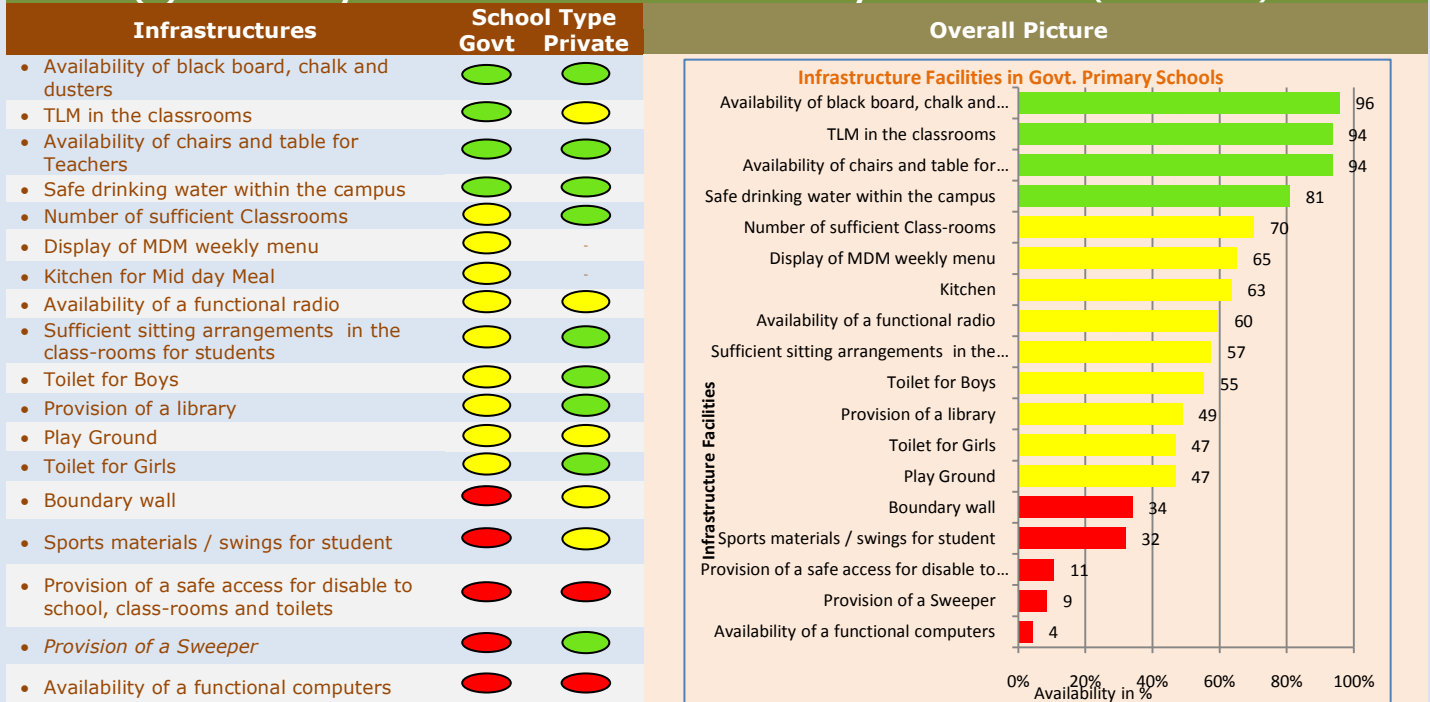


Report Card : Primary Education in Madhya Pradesh

Covering 45 villages of Datia, Panna and Sheore districts, Samarthan conducted a Report Card Study on Primary Education in January 2011. Information -- collected from 5 villages each from 3 selected blocks in a district – was relating to School infrastructure, Parent Teacher Association, and perceptions of Parents and Community about schools. A School profile, prepared on availability and access of schools, is based on information collected from 47 Government and 16 Private schools. Structured interviews with 249 PTA members and 868 parents on working of PTA and issues relating to school performance was main data for the analysis. Focus Group Discussions to validate community perceptions were also conducted. The key finding of the study are as follows:

(1) Availability of Basic Infrastructure in Primary School (in % schools)



Status on Access and Availability in Primary School

As against the SSA norms that a child should not walk more than a kilometre for reaching the school, findings on access to primary schools reveal that:

- On an average, the maximum distance of government schools from residence is less than one km, while distance to private schools is 1.6 km.

As safe location of school is a motivating factor for parents to send their children to school, authorities insist that schools shall be located in such a manner as to avoid unsafe approach. Findings reveal that:

- The location of every fourth government school is unsafe for children. The major reasons are as follows:
 - Children have to cross roads with heavy traffic in 11 out of 19 schools. In some schools, children have to cross Nalla and River that makes constrained access during some part of the year.
 - Private schools are located on more appropriate place. Possibly, private schools have invested more for getting prime locations, while this is not a priority for the government schools.

The findings on availability of functional infrastructures facilities in government school reveals that not a single school has all the basic facilities mentioned in the provisions of section 9 of RTE Act, 2009. Generally it was observed that most of the schools have only the following infrastructures:

- (1) availability of black board, chalk and dusters,
- (2) teaching learning material (TLM) in the class rooms,
- (3) availability of chairs and table for teachers, and
- (4) Safe drinking water within the campus.

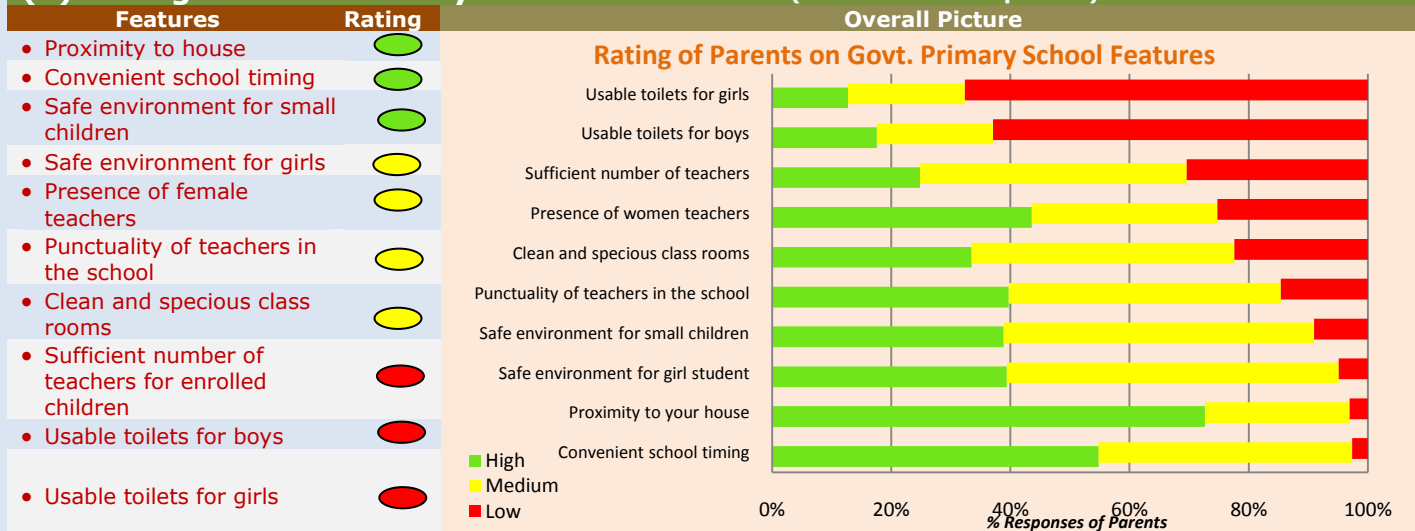
Findings also reveal that there is lack of sufficient number of classrooms, kitchen for Mid-day-meal, and lack of sanitation in the government schools.

- Sanitation and related infrastructure are missing from most of the government schools. Only one out of ten schools has sweeper for cleaning toilets.

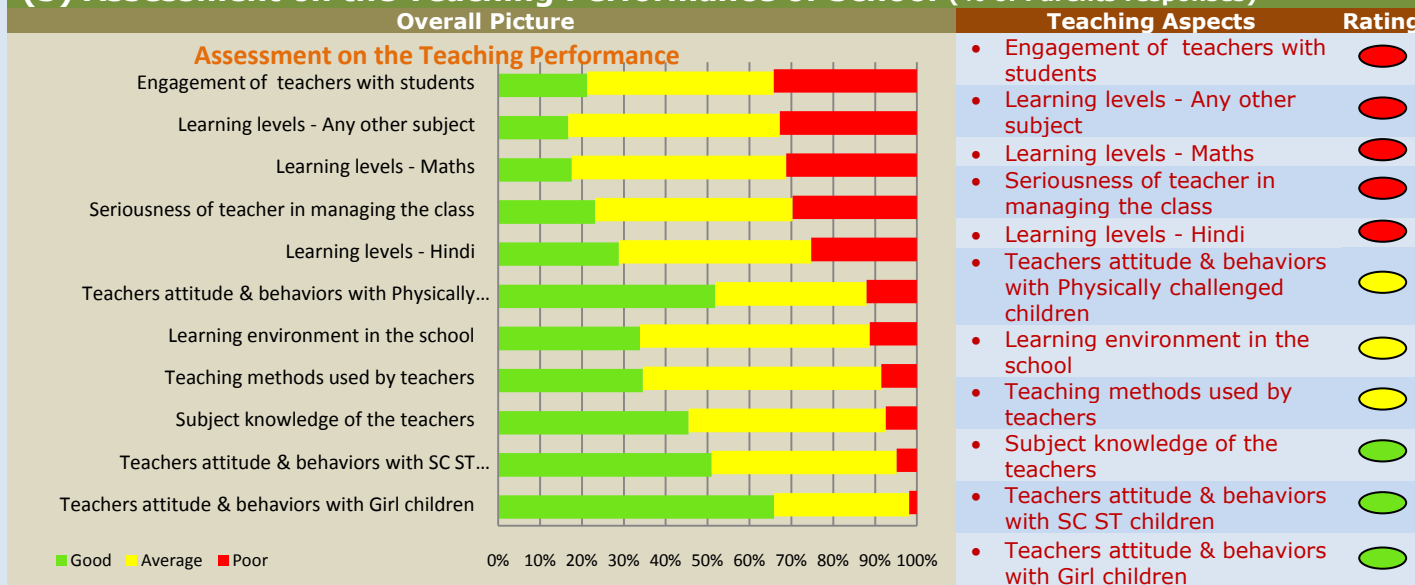
Findings also reveal that children were maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, which includes daily arrangement of seats in the classrooms, toilet cleaning and brooming the school floor. Although there are provisions of funds for the purpose, these funds are used on activities other than cleaning. Often children from marginalised section are engaged in the cleaning activities.

Similarly, the availability of a functional computer and safe access for disabled to school, classroom and toilet is neglected in all the government schools.

(2) Rating of Govt. Primary School Features (% of Parents responses)



(3) Assessment on the Teaching Performance of School (% of Parents responses)



Status of Quality Education in Primary School

Some key features of school that adversely effect the quality of education are attitude of the teachers and their teaching methods. Satisfaction of parents on these features is important for checking dropout and improving child performance. It was observed that:

- Half of the sample parents rate toilets on low scale. About one-fourth of the parents stated that government schools don't have sufficient number of teachers, including female teachers.
- Parents are highly satisfied on school timing, proximity to house, safe environment for small children and girls.
- However, usable toilets for girls and insufficient number of teachers including female teacher, is serious concern of parents.

At the same time, the issue of safe environment for small children and girl child and availability of clean and specious classrooms for children are found on moderate scale.

Arti - an 8 years old single child in her family lives in Nunawaha village (Datia) - is not regular in school because her mother feels that neither the school environment is safe nor the learning environment is conducive. Therefore, feels the mother, it is better for her to learn some household work rather than so called school learning skills.

Similarly, Anjali -- an 11 years old child -- has to broom the school campus daily. Due to this, she feels embarrassed, and is not attending school, for the last five months.

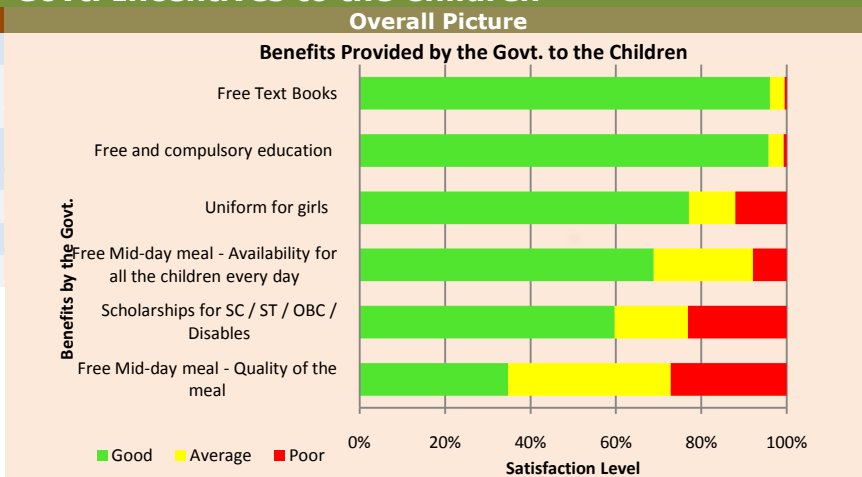
Majority of parents feel that discrimination against the Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribes as well as girl children is not in the attitude of teachers. Similarly, large proportion of parents rated subject knowledge of the teachers as good. Nevertheless, the learning levels of children in Mathematics and Hindi were rated as poor:

- Out of the total sample, 50% parents stated that learning level of their children on Maths and other subject is average and 30% found it is very poor. It means, the basics reading, writing and arithmetic learning achievements were very poor.
- The reason could be the seriousness of the teacher in classroom transaction and learning environment in the school, which was perceived as low by the parents.

(4) Performance of Govt. Incentives to the Children

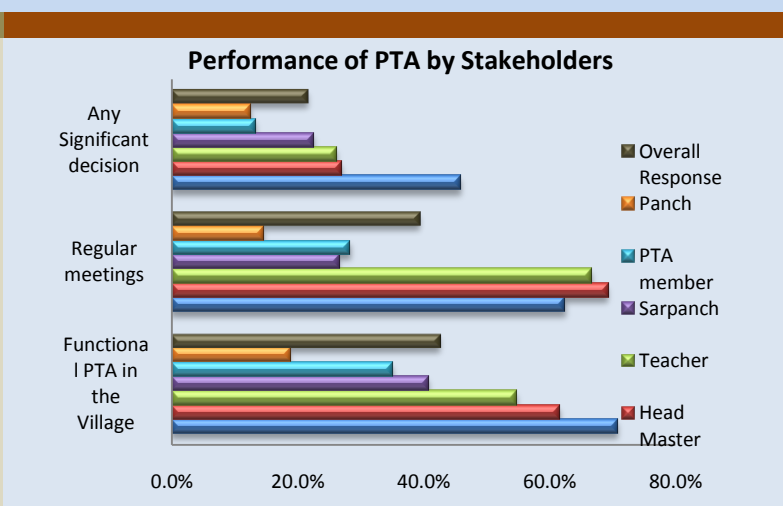
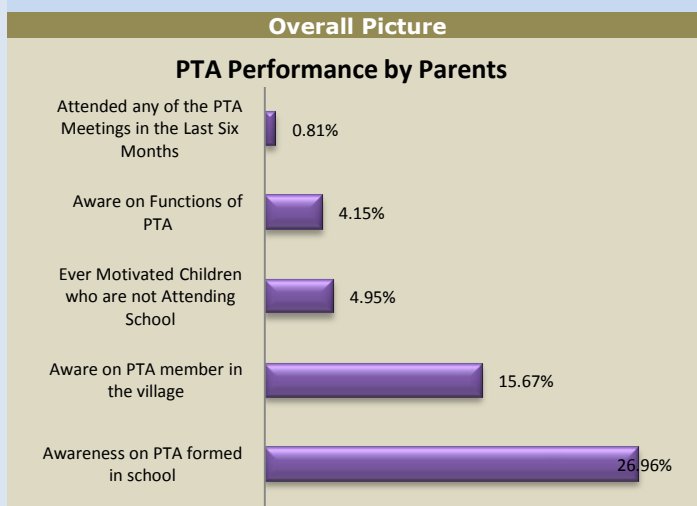
Benefits	Rating
Free Mid-day meal - Quality of the meal	●
Scholarships for SC / ST / OBC / Disables	●
Free Mid-day meal - Availability for all the children every day	●
Uniform for girls	●
Free and compulsory education	●
Free Text Books	●

Out of every four schools quality of mid day meal found poor in one school, therefore it is major concern among the incentives provided by the government to the children. Similarly issue of scholarships for deprive children is also issue of concern for the parents.



(5) Performance of Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

State considers community involvement in school management, through Parent Teacher Association (PTA), as panacea for school mismanagement. Decentralised school management was thus promoted through setting-up PTA under SSA. However, PTAs are at the nascent stage in Madhya Pradesh. It is paradoxical that good schools with motivated teachers have stronger and more involved PTAs; while relatively less functional schools have weaker PTAs. Currently the character of the school tends to determine the efficiency of PTA. Till date, 103546 PTAs are working in the state. However, the findings reveal that the performance of PTA is far from expectations. The report card of PTA performance is given below:



Expected Role from PTA

Roles	High	Low	Rank
Motivating out of school/drop out children for back to school	53.0%	2.0%	1
Monitoring of MDM/ Scholarships and other provisions in school	47.0%	0.8%	2
Assessment of quality of education and sharing with the parents and Village Panchayat	38.2%	1.6%	3
Monitoring attendance of teachers	37.8%	5.2%	4
Improving school environment by ensuring better up-keep of class rooms/toilets etc.	36.9%	1.2%	5
Preparing school development plan & mobilizing resources	35.3%	6.4%	6
Work as a two-way feedback communication mechanism between teachers and parents for school improvement	34.1%	0.4%	7
Management of financial grants and funds for the school development	30.5%	18.1%	8

Status of PTA in Primary School

Only 25 per cent of the parents are aware about PTA formation in the school. Amongst those who are aware of PTA, only half knew the names of PTA member of their village. In the last six months, less than one percent of the parents has attended monthly meeting of PTA. Findings of the study also reveal that parents are unaware on the functions of PTA, which ensure community participation in the improvement of quality of education. Minuscule of the parents has ever motivated children, who are not attending the school. About 43% schools have functional PTA and 39% PTA are organizing regular meetings to discuss issues related to school development. It indicates that PTA office bearers might have poor communication with parents or possibly the PTA is functional only on papers. These findings are matter of serious concern.

Concerning is also the variations in the opinions of teachers, PRI members and PTA members about the performance of PTA. While PTA members consider the decisions taken in the meetings as significant, others think the decisions were not significant.

The analysis reveals that PTA members are less aware about the expected role of the PTA. Community participation in school; management is also missing. Both of these are key element for decentralised decision-making and improving quality of education.

Challenges and Ways Forwards – Elementary Education

Key Issues of Concerns

Infrastructural Related

Lack of proper arrangements for cleanliness and sanitation is one of the deterring concerns for the children attending school. Children, despite availability of funds for the purpose, are performing these functions. It is discomforting for children to use filthy washrooms. Nevertheless, as students are keen to attend school, they put-up with this inconvenience.

The main reasons for high rate of dropout are as follows. Children, instead of going to school, are forced into labour market for work; they look after younger children, elders and cattle. They do not like the school environment and teacher's behaviour. Poor space for seating, poor quality of mid day meal, lack of proper arrangement like sweeper and usable toilet are also reason for high dropout.

School Feature Related

Acceptable features are one of the encouraging factors for children as well as parents. Findings reveal that there are two serious concerns of parents:

- Separate and usable toilets for girls are a rarity in government schools. Even if toilets are available, often they are locked during and after school hours.
- There is lack of sufficient number of teachers, including women teachers.

Teaching Performance

Although over three fourth of the teachers were regular, parents believe that there is lack of engagement of teacher with students and lack of seriousness of teachers in classroom transactions. Parents are not satisfied with the learning level of their children as far as reading, writing and arithmetic is concerned. Children complained that instead of teaching, the teachers were mostly busy in some administrative work. Spending more time in school by the teacher did not ensure quality of education.

Stats of PTA Performance

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments empowered Panchayats for planning, decisions making, accessing resource, implementing and monitoring the educational plans for the community. As PTA members are unaware about their expected role, community participation in school management is missing. On their part, the local governments, by making PTAs visible only on papers, have grossly ignored community participation in school management.

A functional, responsible and accountable system of education can be established only with the mechanism of decentralised school management. In order to function as a people's governing body, the PTA must acquire fiscal powers, skills, knowledge, and sense of accountability. The community monitoring, -- like social audit -- could be one of the effective tools for ensuring quality education in rural area.

Suggestions & Recommendations

The PTA is considered to work as catalyst for bringing change in the perceptions of the community. The state has pinned its hope on community pressures to change perception of the parents who do not send their children to the school. It is also hoped that the community participation in the management and running schools shall be able to solve the problem of inefficiency in primary education. Community participation and pressures could put an end to problems like absenteeism of teachers, irregular opening of school and improving the quality of primary education. However, there are some basic concerns of parents relating to school infrastructure and features, which need to be address. Findings of the study gives following suggestions for improving performance of government Schools as well as Parent Teacher Associations:

- There should be arrangement of sweeper for cleaning toilet and for general cleanliness at the schools. For this purpose, specific norms need to be prepared with clear guideline for implementation and fund allocation.
- In order to augment resources, there is a need to converge funds from other departments.
- In order to improve quality of teaching, engagement of teachers and their seriousness need to be improved. As per the education act, the teacher should not be involved in work that obstructs teaching. This should be strictly followed and monitored by the community, PTA and discussed in Gram Sabha meetings.
- For proper coordination, there is an urgent need to define a reporting and coordination mechanism between PTA and Panchayat.
- In order to equip schools, all the basic facilities mentioned in the provisions of section 9 of RTE Act, 2009, should be a mandate for schools.

Availability of Infrastructure (%)	Govt	Private	Government Primary School Features (%)	High	Low
Availability of black board, chalk and dusters	96	100	Proximity to your house	62.7	2.6
TLM in the classrooms	94	69	Convenient school timing	52.6	2.5
Availability of chairs and table for Teachers	94	81	Safe environment for small children	38.2	8.9
Safe drinking water within the campus	81	94	Safe environment for girl student	37.1	4.6
Number of sufficient Class-rooms	70	94	Presence of women teachers	36.4	21.1
Availability of a functional radio	60	38	Punctuality of teachers in the school	32.8	12.1
Sufficient sitting arrangements in class-rooms	57	100	Clean and specious class rooms	31.0	20.7
Toilet for Boys	55	75	Usable toilets for boys	14.7	52.8
Provision of a library	49	81	Sufficient teachers for children in school	20.2	24.7
Play Ground	47	63	Usable toilets for girls	10.4	55.0
Toilet for Girls	47	75	Assessment on the Teaching Performance of the School (%)		
Boundry wall	34	50	Learning environment in the school	23.2	7.7
Sports materials / swings for student	32	50	Subject knowledge of the teachers	27.0	4.4
Safe access for disabled to school/rooms/toilets	11	19	Teaching methods used by teachers	17.5	4.3
Provision of a Sweeper	9	81	Attitude and behaviors of the teachers with ;	41.0	3.9
Availability of a functional computers	4	6	a. SC and ST class children	55.9	1.6
Display of MDM weekly menu	65	NA	b. Girl children	27.2	6.3
Kitchen for Mid day Meal	63	NA	c. Physically challenged children		
Benefits/Insentive of School (%)					
	High	Low	Learning levels of your child in subjects of;	16.7	29.7
Free Mid-day meal - Quality of the meal	31.8	24.8	a. Maths	27.6	24.3
Scholarships for SC / ST / OBC / Disables	54.6	21.1	b. Hindi	15.1	29.5
Free MDM availability for all children everyday	65.2	7.5	c. Any other subject	17.2	27.6
Uniform for girls	74.5	11.6	Engagement of teachers with students	15.0	19.2
Free and compulsory education	81.5	0.6	Seriousness of teacher in managing the class		
Free Text Books	90.4	0.5	Data Source: Field Survey by Samarthan, Jan 2011		