

Mainstreaming READ's Reading Instruction and Assessment Training Manual in Mirzapur Upazila

SUCCESS STORY



“If all teachers follow the training manual correctly then one day there will be no students who cannot read Bangla fluently”

- Mr. Bishwajit Kumar Shaha, URC Instructor, Mirzapur upazila

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Since February 2014, the Village Education Resource Center (VERC) has been implementing the READ project of Save the Children in 38 Newly Nationalized Primary Schools (NNPS) of Mirzapur upazila in Tangail district. The baseline study of reading skills at NNP schools indicated that these schools are lower-performing compared to government primary schools (GPS) both in Bangla and other language communities. Equalizing learning outcomes among primary students requires extra attention to NNPS.

Prior to READ, the teaching-learning process in Mirzapur upazila did not differ from other places in Bangladesh. Most students had no access to supplementary reading materials (SRM) beyond the textbook nor time dedicated to reading SRM. Reading was fixated on the textbook, generally in a group process that did not take the diverse levels of children into account. Teachers were not equipped with teaching aids that engage children in multiple ways of learning – something which is known to reinforce the learning effect.

READ trained 2-3 Bangla subject teachers per school in Newly Nationalized Primary schools. They were trained in two stages on reading instruction and assessment. READ also trained head teachers on academic supervision so that they could create an enabling environment, together with teachers, for reading.

The Upazila Resource Center Instructor of Mirzapur upazila, Mr. Bishwajit Kumar Shaha, actively took on board READ training. He visited READ intervention schools several times to observe the new activities. Mr. Bishwajit was impressed to find the teachers preparing lesson plans that incorporated the five reading components that they were trained on, and applying them in the classroom.

The Instructor took the initiative to develop a training module for his URC, following the READ training manual. Then he arranged a special meeting with upazila education officials and discussed with them the idea of developing a READ model training manual for Bangla literacy instruction to be used in training all of the school teachers including both NNPS and GPS

(Government Primary Schools) in Mirzapur upazila. The UEO of Mirzapur upazila agreed to commit the full support of his office to realize this plan.

Mr. Bishwajit then consulted with the PTI Superintendent in Tangail district, Ms. Mohsena Khatun. The PTI Superintendent requested the URC to draft a handout of the READ manual in collaboration with upazila education officials and READ staff. The handout was submitted for approval to the PTI Superintendent for use in the needs-based sub-cluster (in-service) training of teachers. The handout was approved by the PTI Superintendent for sub-cluster training. She issued a letter to the Upazila Education Officer, Mirzapur instructing that the training handout be used in all sub-cluster trainings of the upazila.

Since then, all of the Bangla subject teachers across 167 Government Primary Schools and NNPS of Mirzapur upazila are using the handout in their sub-cluster training. READ's teaching-learning techniques have become mainstreamed in this upazila's system for in-service professional development, reaching teachers and grade 1-3 students well beyond the 38 schools where READ directly intervenes. The next step is to track if the training is improving instructional practices in classrooms and, ultimately, the reading outcomes among grade 1-3 children.