# The Tale of Kosish Schools






## *Where Policing meets Pedagogy*

**by Priyanka Ghosh [2218561]**
**IIMC Ed LEAP**
**Cohort II**

## *Acknowledgement*

My life took a sharp turn last October when, for the first time, I encountered a hall full of immaculately uniformed Civic policemen and women waiting to get trained as teachers for Kosish Schools[1] in the tiny mofussil town of Alipurduar. The men were sturdy and broad shouldered, the women strapping and athletic. It was really far-fetched to imagine them teaching toddlers — singing, dancing, playing and frolicking. My team and I swallowed hard and got going with our jobs. Within a few hours I understood what 'serendipity' felt like, Shaking off all inhibitions my 'students' the Civic police personnel sang their hearts out, learnt to boogie-woogie, played endless number-games and asked curious questions about the latest pedagogy.

Spending 70 rigorous hours of training and then time online, teaching-learning, catching up, reasoning, solving problems, sending resources, wondering over the learning outcomes of children located in far flung chai bagans in the foothills of Himalayas—- the Civic police and I became friends. Life happened to me, as they say, when I was busy making other plans.

I acknowledge with gratitude the 120 Civic Police volunteers from Alipurduar and Dakshin Dinajpur who gave my teaching career a revelation that 'it always seems impossible until it's done'. I extend my gratitude to the senior officials and all functionaries of Alipurduar District Police for their exceptional support and guidance.

I thank my friend Ms. Ranjana Sengupta, Secretary Nanritam and Mr. Sarada Prasad Namhata, Operation Head, Education For All, for keeping faith in my team and helping us in every imaginable way. I thank Dr.Bharati Bakshi, Working President Nanritam for being a pillar of strength to the training team. My colleagues Ms. Tanushree Patra and Ms. Sushmita Saha for being confident, capable and creative. I also thank 5 month old Rupun who accompanied us and was always ready to cheer us up with his toothless grin and endless cuddles.

I thank my father-in-law Mr.Dilip Ghosh who read the drafts endlessly, offering insightful comments and never hesitating to call a spade a spade. This paper would not have seen the light of day without his support.

My gratitude to Prof.Vipul Mathur for hand holding my efforts and showing me the right way to edit my draft.

Finally, I thank all the children of the *chai bagans* who came back to schools, played, sang, danced and learnt making all of our dreams of an equal world come true every single day.

.....

[1] Learning Centres in tea plantations in Alipurduar district for providing academic support to the local children

## *Contents*


1. Introduction..... 6

2. At the doors of Col Hidayat Ali Khan..... 6

3. Chai bagans of Alipurduar: There's many a slip..... 8

4. Learning Poverty: The Covid Chapter..... 10

5. Kosish Schools: An attempt for a better tomorrow..... 12

6. Education For All: Be the Candle that lights up a thousand candles 13

7. Is this the way a teacher learns: Curriculum, Pedagogy,Training..... 15

8. Finance..... 18

9. Insights: Where Impossible beats the Possible ..... 19

10. Challenges that remain..... 22

11. Should Civic Volunteers teach: Pedagogy of the oppressed..... 23

12. Promises to Keep..... 25

13. Exhibits..... 30




## The Tale of Kosish Schools
## Where Policing meets Pedagogy

**by Priyanka Ghosh [2218561]**

*[We] took the [road] less travelled by,*
*And that has made all the difference.*
*'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost*

1. What does one do when a toddler refuses to finish her meal? What if she does not want to do her homework? How do you make a toddler listen to you?

Of course you reason, coax, cajole...make her porridge spoon into a choo choo train or an aeroplane. Finally, when every pleading falls into deaf ears you take a stern stand and say, "If you do not finish your food/home work, I will call the police and they'll lock you up in a dark room."

Though much against the principles of gentle parenting, the fear factor may cut some ice in the heart of the toddler.

This brief parable of the toddler and the fear of police is as old as we can remember. The demonisation of the law enforcement agencies is a well established phenomena which percolates deep into an infant heart and stays there till adulthood. Not only do the clueless parents use it at random, but also the teachers, politicians and the Government who unleash this fear of police to establish their authority over the young and the weak.

But our story moves off the beaten track. It tells a tale of smashed stereotypes and misgivings. It is a narrative of counter currents generated in turbulent times. It is about individuals from unexpected quarters trying to rebuild communities with the help of education as the social glue. It is about a saga of contra intuitive efforts which promises to make the invisible visible, the unequal equal.

***It is a tale where the police metamorphose into educators, nurturers and custodians of the future for the deprived and give them a voice...their fair share in the democracy.***

***Yes, the impossible is made possible when the police embrace pedagogy.***

Our tale unfolds in the picturesque *chai bagans* [tea plantations] of Alipurduar district in West Bengal.

### *2.At the doors of Col Hedayat Ali Khan*

Alipurduar owes its name to Col Hedayat Ali Khan who fought valiantly in the Duar War or Anglo-Bhutan War (1864-65), a military conflict between the British Raj and Bhutan. As this war ended, Col Khan was posted as the Commander at the military settlement on the bank of the river

Kaljani. The entire tract of land of the Buxa Duar was leased out to him on his superannuation and the growing town adjacent to the military settlement began to grow as well.[2]

Around 1870 the establishment of the tea gardens in Alipurduar began under the leadership of British planters. The labour intensive tea plantation prompted them to acquire help from far flung areas of Chotanagpur, Western Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Ravas, Garos, Meches, Totos, Dhimals, Koches, Nepalis and Rajbanshis migrated from different corners of the vast subcontinent. To this date, they continue to populate most of the *chai bagans*.



After the partition of India of 1947, there was a heavy exodus of Hindu population from East Pakistan to this Dooars-Terai region **[See Exhibit 1]** which considerably reduced its land man ratio. The mixture of orthodox hindu culture with that of rich aboriginal tradition is still reflected in the cultural practices of the *chai bagans*. The rich diversity of the tea plantations are visible in the form of tribal origin, descent and languages. Despite a healthy mix of Bengali and Hindi languages, the population of the tea garden speak around 141 dialects which makes their culture rich yet reclusive.

Alipurduar, an old town, yet a young district,**[See Map]** [3]was carved out from Jalpaiguri on 25th June, 2014 as the 20th district in the state of West Bengal, India. It comprises mainly a rural population. More than 80% of its population belong to the SC/ST community. [4]

The total geographical area of Alipurduar, 2788 sq km, is dominated by 66 tea plantations each of them stretching for 100 acres or more. The hilly terrain ranging from 90 m to 1750 m, the annual rainfall of around 350 cm and temperature ranging from $6^0$C to $36^0$C is conducive to the growth of the Dooars-Terai variety of tea. The Dooars-Terai tea (*Camelia sinensis*) is characterised by a bright, smooth and full-bodied liquor that is a wee bit lighter than Assam tea.[5] Unfortunately, the rich diversity and produce of the tea gardens in its idyllic setting at the Himalayan foothills present a

[2] http://alipurduarzp.org/about_us.php

[3] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alipurduar_in_West_Bengal_%28India%29.svg

[4] https://alipurduar.gov.in/aboutus.html

[5] https://www.teaboard.gov.in/TEABOARDCSM/MTA=

lopsided view of the socio-economic situation that pervades in its inner sanctums and tells us why education has always been a social emergency here.

### *3.Chai bagans of Alipurduar: There's many a slip ...*

Jaldapara National Park, Chilapata Wildlife Sanctuary, Buxa Tiger Reserve.....all located in Alipurduar forests conjure up glossy touristy fantasy of elephant safaris, spotting a solemn rhinoceros munching indifferently, flavourful whiffs from the piping hot cuppa and chilly mornings. An exhausted city dweller often dreams of spending a lazy long weekend at one of the colonial bungalows of the tea




Map showing different tea estates (T.E.) in the study area (in red dots), Terai, the Dooars and Darjeeling hills.

estates blissfully unaware of the going ons of the other side of the tea bushes.

The distant end of the spectrum often hits the headlines for the wrong reasons. Starvation, death, social and political apathy towards the labourers, insurgence, lock outs are episodes which regularly tag themselves to *chai bagans*. **[See Map]** [6]The root cause of the trouble finds its way to societal apathy and the workers' reclusive life cut off from the mainstream society. Though the tea garden labourers are permanent workers, but they are daily rated, they get the wages for the actual day that they work. Besides, the wages of tea workers are below the minimum wages of agricultural labour. As the wages are very low the workers cannot afford even the basic needs of their life which result in them being caught in the vicious circle of poverty, illiteracy, hunger and so on. The condition of tea workers

6 https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-showing-different-tea-estates-TE-in-the-study-area-in-red-dots-Terai-the_fig1_252930494 as viewed on 20th February, 2023

becomes more vulnerable when the tea garden is locked out or the work is temporarily suspended as the worker does not have agricultural land and other sources of earning. With the closure of the tea garden, they are unable to feed themselves and many people die due to starvation. [7]

With poverty and seclusion dominating the lives of the tea garden workers, it snowballs to their children who are highly vulnerable to illiteracy, poor health conditions, and human trafficking.

The educational scenario within the precincts is particularly grim and bleak. Though poverty is highlighted as the prime reason for discontinuation of education, the roots of this evil penetrate deeper into the discriminatory practices of the society. **[See Exhibit 2]**

Level of literacy pattern of population in the selected tea gardens of Dooars

| Level of education | Male | % of Male | Female | % of Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary (Class I-V) | 563 | 56.24 | 527 | 66.46 | 60.76 |
| Upper primary (Class VI-VIII) | 301 | 30.07 | 196 | 24.72 | 27.70 |
| Secondary (Class IX-X) | 106 | 10.59 | 61 | 7.69 | 9.31 |
| Higher Secondary (Class XI-XII) | 25 | 2.50 | 7 | 0.88 | 1.78 |
| Under Graduate | 6 | 0.60 | 2 | 0.25 | 0.45 |
| Total | 1001 | 100.00 | 793 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Source: Based on field survey

The vast numbers of people of the tea gardens of Dooars region are illiterate (41.47%). The data reveals from the above table that on an average 60.76 percent of the people had education up to primary level, of which the percentage share of male and female 56.24 percent and 66.46 percent respectively. It can be also observed that the percentage of female literacy rate is comparatively lower that of male counterparts with the advancement of education in the hierarchical level. 27.70 percent of the female population has educated up to upper primary level followed by 9.31 percent with secondary, 1.78 percent with higher secondary and only 0.45 percent of them have qualification up to under graduate level whereas 30.07 percent of male educated up to upper primary level, 2.50 percent with higher secondary and only 0.60 percent up to the graduate level. Thus, it can be clear that the literacy level among the females is comparatively lower than the male literacy rate in the selected tea gardens of Dooars region. [8]

---

[7] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337593132_Socio-economic_Condition_of_Tea_Garden_Worker_in_Alipurduar_District_West_Bengal as viewed on 6th March, 2023.

[8] (PDF) LITERACY PATTERN AND LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS OF DOOARS REGION, WEST BENGAL (researchgate.net) as viewed on 20th March, 2023

The peculiar infrastructure of the tea garden makes education both inaccessible and problematic. Though almost half of the tea plantation workers are women there are no creche or pre school facilities for children between 3 to 5 years. Many of the tea gardens have primary schools or SSKs but the quality of education is poor owing to lack of competent teachers, teacher irregularity and absenteeism, shortage of books, notebooks and stationery and lack of post school academic support. The children who speak the *adivasi* dialects at home find it difficult to follow instructions in Nepali or Hindi in the local schools. Also, there are no high schools within the tea gardens which force the children to travel far. Bad roads, inclement weather conditions during monsoons, lack of transport, cost of transport, cost of reading and writing materials add to the woes of the middle and high school students. Absence of parental support makes the children all the more vulnerable and dropping out of school seems to them the most convenient option. During closure and consequent non-payment of essential benefits, parents prefer to cut costs on education.[9]

Alcoholism and callousness of parents, unexposed to the outer world, pollute the familial setting and render it almost impossible for children to continue education. The illiterate parents many a time consider education to be a liability to a large family run by a sole member. The prevalent 'culture of child labour' also tempts children to join the workforce early as casual labours following the suit of their elders.

Gender preference is another reason why a lot more girls drop out of school to manage the household and look after their siblings if their mothers go out to work or fall sick.

On taking a bird's eye view of the education or the lack of it, we can make an informed guess that much of the unrest in the tea gardens stems from the lack of educational facilities, considering the fact that literacy being the acid test of the socio-economic advancement of a community. This chaotic environment of unrest and discontent was recently punctuated by an intervention of serendipity by two unexpected changemakers- the West Bengal Police and Nanritam [नानृतं], an NGO based out in Purulia who run a CBSE school called Filix School of Education and had initiated an educational outreach program to promote foundational literacy and numeracy among 3 to 8 year olds suffering from learning deficiency post the prolonged school closure during Covid times.

## *4.Learning Poverty : The Covid Chapter*

Learning poverty, as a phenomenon, is as ancient as the act of learning itself. Standardised learning [as done in schools] and the lapse in learning go hand in hand. Before the pandemic screeched life and livelihood to a halt, the world was already in the throes of a severe learning crisis, with nearly 6 out of

9 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353117390_Study_on_Vulnerability_of_Children_in_Closed_and_Sick_Tea_Gardens_in_Jalpaiguri_District_West_Bengal_A_collaborative_Study_by_Save_the_Children_UNICEF_Burdwan_University as viewed on 7th March, 2023

every 10 ten-year-olds in low-and middle-income countries suffering from learning poverty—meaning they were unable to read and understand a simple story. [10]

The pandemic and the consequent closure of schools deepened the crisis manifold. The lockdown cast its long shadow on the marginalised population to the extent that 12 crore Indians lost their jobs and nearly 84% households suffered a loss in monthly income. Almost 27 crore Indian children have been adversely affected by the closure of schools.[11] Prolonged school closure stretched for more than 20 months in West Bengal.[12] This led to total or partial non delivery of education owing to no concrete State policy, lack of technological infrastructure and economic crunch. As expected, a sharp spike in the existing learning poverty grew to reach 7 out of 10 children in low- and middle-income countries. As a study finds, 92% and 82% of the children have lost foundational abilities in language and mathematics respectively owing to Covid-19 school closures.[13] Learning poverty, as is evident from the data, severely violates a child's right to education and equality. The recently published Annual Status of Education Report [ASER] 2022[14] shows that nationally, children's basic reading ability has dropped to pre-2012 levels, reversing the slow improvement achieved in the intervening years. Drops are visible in both government and private schools in most states, and for both boys and girls. The percentage of children in Std III in government or private schools who can read at Std II level dropped from 27.3% in 2018 to 20.5% in 2022. This decline is visible in every state and for children in both government and private schools.

The learning losses, once escalated, results in lower skill level and consequently reduces the future earning potential of the children in the job market. The disrupted state of the human capital affects not only the economy of the nation but pushes back the entire generation.To fight this impending disaster the community needed to present a united front and it did.

The tea gardens with its education in dire straits had not much to lose after the pandemic. With the countrywide lockdown halting all economic work of any kind, that source of income of the plantation workers dried up completely. They have become dependent on relief food being distributed by the government or non-government agencies.

The West Bengal government has been launching schemes relevant for tea workers (e.g. 5000 crores has been allocated for housing development projects (Chaii Sundari); using Financial Assistance to the Workers of Locked out Industries supporting benefits for returning migrants. The Alipurduar

[10] The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update CONFERENCE EDITION June 23, 2022 World Bank

[11] Status Report- Government and private schools during COVID-19 Oxfam India

[12] https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/students-return-to-schools-after-20-month-covid-induced-break-say-good-to-be-back-7626577/ accessed on November 20, 2022

[13] Azim Premji Foundation Research Group (2021), Loss of Learning during the Pandemic: Field Studies in Education, https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/ field-studies-in-education/loss-of-learning-during-the-pandemic.accessed on November 20, 2022

[14] http://www.asercentre.org/survey/p/418.html accessed on February 20, 2022

administration launched 'Apnar Bagane Proshashan' [The Government in your Tea Garden] to conduct meetings with the tea workers; the goal is to respond to workers' grievances and share awareness of government schemes. In this sense, the aftermath of COVID-19 presents a unique opportunity for the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal – with reverse migration and support from the government this is an excellent opportunity to consolidate and formulate its workforce and strengthen the labour ecosystem of the tea industry in Assam and West Bengal that produces a large faction of the total tea produce. [15] Along with the other positive initiatives, the reopening of Kosish Schools in tea gardens showed a bright light at the end of the tunnel.

### *5. Kosish Schools -An attempt for a better tomorrow*

In 2017, the Alipurduar District Police tried to assess the climate of discontent, unrest and instability in the tea gardens and sagaciously joined the dots and zeroed down upon education as the answer. Kosish schools were started to provide academic foundation to young children of the *chai bagans* who were eligible for pre primary education but could not travel across long distances. They functioned as coaching classes for children who were already in primary or high schools.**[See Exhibit 3]** It also had the mission of engaging children meaningfully during the working hours of their parents. Most interestingly, since Kosish School was a Police initiative the teachers were chosen from among the Civic Police Volunteers. Civic Police Volunteers are men and women who belong to the community and are engaged temporarily to help the Police force in diverse policing works like controlling traffic as may be assigned to them. They are selected through interviews and receive a consolidated remuneration from the Government of West Bengal. The Civic Police Force receive thorough training from the Police Force which make them capable of handling different policing responsibilities.

Appointing the uniformed Civic Police Volunteer as teachers for very young children was quite a trailblazing social experiment conducted by the district police. The Kosish School teachers were chosen from the Civic Police who were qualified and showed a penchant for teaching. The primary aim was to promote education, prevent dropping out of children and maintain a relationship of trust with the reclusive *chai bagan* community. Since the Civic Police Personnel belonged to specific communities, they could speak the dialects and interact closely with the children and parents, counsel them and explain the benefits of education. The District Police found that Civic Police aka the Kosish School teachers could improve the image of the Police Force in the *chai bagans* where they were often viewed with fear and suspicion. It helped them exercise some sort of control through a beneficial activity—--- teaching vulnerable children who were otherwise grossly neglected.

Kosish schools functioned in early mornings or evenings in Community Centres or Primary Schools before or after the regular class hours. The pedagogical practice was thoroughly conventional-text

[15] https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2105578.pdf as viewed on 7th March, 2023.

based, focused on the traditional 'chalk and talk' method familiar to the teachers. They had not received any formal training on pedagogy or classroom practices. Similar model was followed in four blocks [Hili, Tapan, Kushmandi and Banshihari] of the neighbouring district of Dakshin Dinajpur where the schools were primarily run in empty rooms or courtyards of local Police Stations.

Prolonged school closure during Covid led to the complete disruption of the Kosish Schools. Like other children around the globe, the Covid hit children of the *chai bagans* who had either lost or never gained the benefits of foundational education be it literacy, numeracy or social skills. The traditional curricula followed by the schooling system did not cater to their post pandemic distracted minds which had lost the focus required for conventional classroom learning.

As for teachers, they had also suffered serious setbacks due to school closure. The gap of being away from classrooms took a severe toll on their classroom management skill, academic abilities and catching up with the new pedagogical practices. Upskilling workshops for teachers was also a calling that needed to be addressed to bring the schooling system back into track.

The Police Leadership Sri. Devendra Prakash Singh, IPS, Inspector General, North Bengal and Sri. Y Raghuvamshi IPS, SP Alipurduar took cognizance of the matter and decided to provide the debilitated Kosish Schools a new lease of life by training the Kosish teachers in latest pedagogical practices and providing them with the much needed academic scaffolding. An opportune connection saved the day when Sri Raghuvamshi met the representatives of Nanritam, a Purulia based NGO, who had been working on the historical gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy deepened by the pandemic through their outreach project Education for All.

## *6.Education for All: Be that Candle that lights up a thousand candle*

Education for All is an outreach programme initiated by Nanritam, a Purulia based non-profit organisation in November 2021 to empower teachers and children [3 to 8 years] with a curriculum that strengthens early literacy and numeracy skills. Anchored in Filix School of Education, Purulia, Education for All or EFA promotes quality education for children through a robust early literacy and numeracy curriculum, intensive capacity building of teachers' and regular monitoring and evaluation of schools and learning centres. In short, EFA as an initiative is an attempt to fight the 'learning poverty' that has had a deadly effect on children in their early years of schooling during the lockdown imposed to contain the pandemic. Before the Alipurduar chapter, EFA had already built a robust teachers' network across ten districts of West Bengal by training almost 500 teachers teaching in 150 schools and learning centres under its purview. This in turn affected almost 20000 children.

Impact Assessment Study of Education for All was conducted by Centre for Development Research Sustainability and Technical Advancement (C-DRAṢṬĀ) during July 2022 to January 2023. A combination of Statistical and Qualitative research methods has been used to analyse and interpret the

data collected from these project areas. Major findings based on exploration of empirical evidence show an overall positive impact of Nanritam's EFA program on fundamental literacy and numeracy skills among children enrolled in the program. There has been marked improvement in the modal and median (along with average) midterm grades among EFA students as compared with the baseline assessment grades. This is even more pronounced for slightly advanced numeracy and literacy skills.[16] **[See Exhibit 4]**

The first training workshop for Kosish School teachers was scheduled in October, 2022. It was indeed a sight to see 120 immaculately uniformed Civil Police personnel from their crested cap down to their polished boots sitting erect was quite a sight for the apprehensive trainers. **[See Exhibit 5]**

Sri. Y Raghuvamshi, IPS, in his motivating inaugural address said, '*The Civic Police had to decide whether they wanted to break down boundaries and prove that they could rise above their usual call of duty. Let children come to your school and even after they pass out let them remember you as their teacher.*'

At the ice breaking session, the Kosish School teachers shared that poverty and parental indifference seemed to be the biggest hurdle.The lockdown and migration had wreaked havoc in the children's learning. It was reported that many students in middle and high school had forgotten their letters and numbers. Furthermore being away from classrooms and books have shortened their attention span and it became extremely difficult to help them focus.

The Kosish teachers said they wanted to learn to make the child happy in school. While being questioned on the pedagogy, they said that they never had any formal training and stuck to books and conventional ways of teaching as that was the only way they knew. Many of them were eager to learn more for the sake of their own children and their students. Some Kosish teachers seemed a little unsure about the hands-on method of teaching because they had never been exposed to it. There were trepidations on the part of the training team as well with big, burly police personnel waiting patiently.



**Photograph I: Inaugural Session October, 2022**

[16] https://drasta.org/projects/#assessment_study as viewed on 13th February 2023.

The question whether playful learning which encompasses music, dance, games and activities and very little reading and writing would be well embraced by the teachers was also another question. The prevalent stereotype that only sophisticated, well spoken women were suitable for teaching very young children and whether the policemen would be able to unlearn and learn the kindergarten method was another apprehension that loomed large before the actual pedagogical transaction started.

## *7.Is this how a Teacher Learns: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Training*

The World Bank report on Global Learning Poverty advocates, 'Concerted action against learning poverty is urgently needed now—both to recover learning and to accelerate it in countries that already suffered from very high learning poverty.[17] EFA seemed to check all the boxes of the need based education solution for the Covid hit children who had either lost or never gained the benefits of foundational education be it literacy, numeracy or social skills.The curriculum team comprising teachers and kindergarten experts of national and international repute had developed curriculum modules keeping the National Educational Policy (2020) framework in mind. The curriculum followed the kindergarten pedagogy which advocated immersive hands-on methods involving real life objects. Special emphasis was laid on development of fine motor and gross motor skills of children which helped build up their smaller and bigger muscles, an essential faculty for a healthy individual. To the trainers' surprise, the gross motor skill activities solely based on music and dance were learnt with utmost enthusiasm irrespective of the gender. The men joined the women with equal gusto.The lively fervour was contagious which was reflected later in Kosish schools when replicated by children.



**Photograph II: Playful Learning made all the difference in the training**

Every academic activity, be it learning the alphabets, numbers, colours, names of body parts or identifying the emotions, was taught through games mostly accompanied by songs and music. This promoted collaborative learning through group activities which is the current buzzword of latest

[17] The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update CONFERENCE EDITION June 23, 2022 World Bank

pedagogical practices around the world. The joyful learning through activities, games and music address the gap in the socio-emotional skills caused by social distancing and long school closure. Rebuilding the culture of camaraderie, cooperation, collaboration, empathy in the classrooms also remained one of the prime objectives of the curriculum.

Two colourful, age-appropriate books on English literacy [***'My Journey in English']*** and numeracy [***'Aamar Anker Jaagat'***], **[See Photo]** were prepared by the curriculum team as an academic scaffolding. The books were definitely more attractive than the standard classroom texts and guided the students and teachers through the same activity oriented learning that was being followed in classroom practices. The curriculum lays special weightage to preliminary English learning, especially conversational, through games and songs. English speaking skills, as all of us are well aware, is an essential requirement even in the small town job market. Another apprehension that was proved wrong was around the notion of foundational English literacy. Language has always been a bone of contention in the *chai bagans* where multiple languages and dialects, though reflecting rich diversity, also proves to be a bane when it comes to education. English, as a lingua franca, was acceptable and is believed to act as a vehicle of social mobility and a means to break out of the vicious cycle of poverty. English, be it spoken or written, was unfamiliar to many Kosish school teachers yet they started from scratch and participated in activities and games with enthusiasm and clarified many doubts which they had nobody to ask. In fact, the teachers insisted that they are willing to join online classes for learning English because it would boost their careers, help them teach their own children and elevate their status in their social circle. The honesty of the purpose somehow indicated that exposure the training opened up was much sought. It did not restrict itself to pedagogy but opened up a world of exposure to the teachers.




**Photograph III:The colourful and carefully curated books generated interest among teachers**

The households of tea workers have their own quota of social evils. To battle that it is essential to make the classroom safe, fun filled and interactive. Learning through games and TLM [Teaching Learning Materials] was used to teach vocabulary, number operations. conversational English. Every teacher was invited to participate in the games so that they could experience the fun and also learn the trick of controlling and teaching children in the class while the games were being played. The teachers

participated in small batches and the ones who were left out due to paucity of time religiously captured the videos of all the activities so that they could replicate the same in class.



**Photograph IV: The teachers learnt to make TLMs in group and proudly carried it back to their centres**

The Kosish school teachers had no prior knowledge of using TLMs in classrooms to make lessons experiential for students. Blackboards and textbooks were the only materials that had been used earlier in Kosish classrooms. Education for All in its books and training details out activities which need low cost TLM usually prepared from waste materials found around the house of neighbourhood. Boxes, papers, sticks, clothes pins, and straws were used to prepare TLMs in a session. The joy of hands-on learning was evident and each teacher prepared a set of TLMs for their own centres. Later it was seen that TLM making turned out to be a bonding activity between the teacher and the students at the Kosish Schools. The older children took tremendous interest in helping their teachers make these TLMs and the younger ones learnt faster; it marked a departure from monotonous rote learning.

Three consecutive training sessions were conducted in October 2022, December 2022 and February 2023 stretching to almost 70 hours of rigorous training to Kosish school teachers from Alipurduar and Dakshin Dinajpur.

The workshops were attended by 120 teachers from Alipurduar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts who cater to almost 5000 children, many of whom are socially deprived first generation learners. The Civic Volunteers of Alipurduar and Dakshin Dinajpur received 5000 sets of books for their respective schools. The network between the Civic volunteers and the EFA training team has been further strengthened by the continuous sharing of videos, training material and feedback on online platforms.

To stretch the support further training videos were shared on Nanritam Youtube channel and Whatsapp groups dedicated to training. Online classes were scheduled regularly for revision, catch up and mentorship.




**Photograph V: Proud display of TLMs made by a Kosish School teacher**

Though the training sessions were effective, it was impossible to make them continuous due to the travel time incurred by the trainers, trainees and the cost involved. The digital platforms were extensively honed for this purpose for uninterrupted training support aimed at exploring every module of the curricula in detail. Furthermore, doubt clearing sessions and in general keeping a tab of the learning activities of the schools and community learning centres was made possible through the digital mode of communication.

A project website allowed the teachers inbound access to the digitised books and videos of pedagogical practices. Videos created by Filix teachers were uploaded on the organisational youtube channel as a ready reckoner. The Whatsapp platform was used extensively for training as well as round the clock support. The trainers from the EFA team meet the Kosish teachers every fortnight through Whatsapp video calls and together they formulate a lesson plan and take stock of the classroom transactions. Despite the patchy internet, the teachers joined the calls to learn new ways of learning and discuss the problems they had been facing in class.

## *8. Finance*

Education for All receives its funding from three sources. First, the friends, family and well wishers who have been with Nanritam for a long time helping the social initiatives, were the initial support behind the endeavour.

Secondly, trusts, charitable organisations and Corporate Social Responsibility of various organisations lent a helping hand, especially in the printing of the books.

Finally, funds have been raised through crowdfunding platforms like Give.do. It is imperative to mention here that the Education for All program with its curriculum, training, books and digital resources remains completely free for all its beneficieries. All a teacher has to do is register herself on the project website and get access to all training support or contact Nanritam.

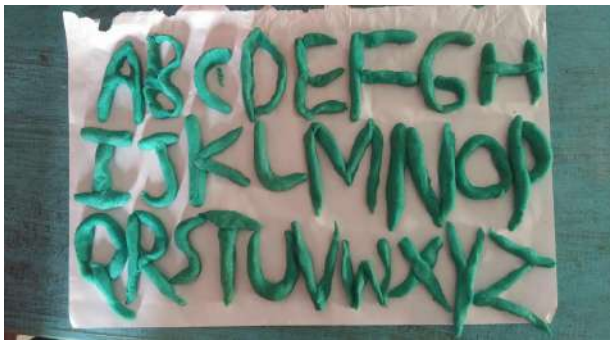
West Bengal Police bore the cost of accommodation, food of the trainers and the trainees. They also bore the training costs of venue, training materials and communication of the Kosish school teachers from their respective centres to Alipurduar town.

## *9.Insights: Where Possible Beats the Impossible*

The educational scenario post Covid has ruffled quite a few feathers. Educationists, economists, social commentators, the educators, the media— have expressed deep concern if not hopelessness on the current education scenario. In an article in *The Hindu* edupreneur Divya Lal goes to the extent of stating '*Education has been one of the biggest casualties of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The UNICEF-ITU report signals that this was the largest mass disruption in education in modern history that has affected 1.6 billion children globally.*'[18] Post pandemic with the opening up of schools, the situation has moved to the other extreme with students and teachers both trying to fit the new normal into the old normal like square pegs in round holes.

EFA intervention at this strategic juncture has quite a different story to tell.

First, the collaboration between the police, educators and the community celebrates the triumph of democracy. The initiative is spearheaded by members of the community for their own people. It celebrates the triumph of goodwill and over petty apprehensions. With the young men and women trained to educate and develop the discriminated and deprived, West Bengal Police live up to their motto 'We Care We Dare'. Caring for the community and daring to think out of the box is something the Alipurduar District Police needed to be lauded for. Nanritam who believe in Swami Vivekananda's philosophy, 'Service to man is service to God' also play a catalytic role exposing them to the world's best pedagogical practices and empowering them to rethink their lives from a positive perspective. Once the online classes started and the Whatsapp groups started functioning on an everyday basis, the bond between the trainers and trainees became stronger and a whole new community of teachers.




**Photograph VI: Fine Motor Skill activities done by Chunia Jhora Koshish School students with flour and colours**

Secondly, the EFA has functioned in Kosish schools with an army of community teachers and volunteers who are born and brought up in remote villages and plantations, mostly among marginalised communities. Majority of them have no urban education or exposure per se. Handful of them have university degrees and very little training as a teacher. Fortified with the raw inside

[18] https://www.thehindu.com/education/education-in-a-post-pandemic-world/article34496849.ece as viewed on 15th February 2023

knowledge of their community, empathy and motivation for upskilling themselves they exposed themselves to the long, exacting training both online and offline. The pedagogic practices discussed and taught in the training were diametrically different from the conventional ways in which they had been exposed.



Moving away from text based teaching, learning each concept through music-dance-activity, using TLMs needed a lot of unlearning-learning-relearning which the teachers embraced wholeheartedly. They successfully communicated the same in their tiny, dark classrooms or sometimes in open air to the distracted children, many of whom had missed coming to school in age appropriate time. The retention and academic progress bear testimony to the teacher's knowledge, compassion and skill.

Thirdly, if teachers form the strongest pillar of EFA, they are buttressed by the EFA curriculum. Using games, music and activities as pedagogical tools as opposed to the conventional 'chalk and talk' or lecture method engages children and helps them learn while they play.

**Photograph VII: A child, from Hansroil Sishu Shikkha Mandir, Kushmandi, Dakshin Dinajpur, writing alphabets with real life objects**

While formal school propagates the dichotomy of games and lessons by partitioning off playtime from study time, the EFA curriculum works the opposite. Every literacy and mathematical concept is introduced, emphasised and practised through movement and music.

Sitting at one place for a long time and concentrating on fixed text becomes a trial for small children even the older ones. The EFA curriculum gives the children the freedom of movement and talking which makes the learning enjoyable and engaging. Learning English conversation while playing 'catch' or adding numbers playing hopscotch breaks the rigidity and welcomes new ideas. The colourful books, which mainly focuses on writing activities, are favourite with both the teachers and students. The standardised textbooks offered in schools are seldom so colourful with high quality pages. It is a source of joy to watch a child hold, savour and smell a lovely book perhaps for the first time in her life.

Fourthly, learning English, a language neither spoken or heard in far off rural areas or tea gardens, in itself was a challenge. It was often noticed by EFA trainers that the community teachers were extremely focused and enthusiastic while learning the basics of English. That learning English can better their chances in the job market, provide them with extra income through private tuitions and help them guide their own children as well as students is something that motivates them to learn English. There were requests of online extra English lessons from teachers which they felt would groom them

professionally. This massive demand for learning English was a common factor noticed in every workshop. The sense of accomplishment is visible both in children and teachers when they showcase their learning in class or workshops.



**Photograph VIII: Learning English through collaborative activities in Chuapara Koshish School in Kalchini**

Fifthly, the hybrid model of 'training the teachers' has successfully made the learning and monitoring sustainable. Despite bad internet, the teachers joined the online sessions and kept the chat box ticking with questions. Sharing videos of class activities and pictures of children's works as a daily monitoring mechanism which would have been impossible given the geographical locations of the learning centres. It is impossible and unfair to evaluate the children's learning on the basis of one or two assessments. The video calls and the ease of making short reels on mobile phones has made it possible. By communicating every day the trainers and trainees build a sustainable relationship which in turn builds a community of teachers. Regular usage of online platforms like Zoom also provides a technical know-how to the rural teachers which they would not have gained otherwise.

Finally, urban eyes are used to seeing expensive branded TLMs in Montessori or kindergartens. EFA curriculum emphasises on use of real life materials which are found easily inside or outside the learning centres. The materials used for TLMs are sand, salt, rice, sticks, leaves, waste paper, abandoned boxes of various shapes, clothes pins and so on. These articles are easy to procure, can be moulded into various shapes and often cost next to nothing. The teachers and students sit together after classes to prepare them which provides them with an experience of collaboration and bonding. It has been noticed that the older children enjoy making TLMs for younger ones and help out the teacher with teaching, honing their leadership potential and sense of responsibility.



**Photograph IX: Kumargram Newlands Kosish School children use the EFA books for English and Math**

The success of the EFA is primarily the success of collaboration as well as networking supported by effective use of technology. The collaboration of motivated teachers and trainers who actually wanted to create a difference in the children's lives reinforced by a scientifically validated proprietary curriculum which had been tried and tested on similar rural settings for 7 years. The network was underpinned by the technology of online gateways, a knowledge we all owe to turbulent time. The online platforms, social media helped the teachers break away from the rigidity of closed spaces and made training accessible to their remote counterparts. The completely free off cost training and books, use of low cost TLMs made it easier for the grassroot educators to embrace it. Finally, the platform to bond with each other, share, find solutions together and inspire each other furthered the cause of addressing learning poverty through community effort. **[See Exhibit 6]**

## *10. Challenges that Remain*

The EFA program runs in close communion with the communities involved and the technology. Issues affecting the communities automatically affect the program.

- Lack of smartphones, patchy internet facilities and intermittent power outages in remote areas have been an obstacle on many occasions. Community teachers without smartphones, without internet services, even sometimes without a spot from where they can join the online training face trials despite best intentions. The lack of technological infrastructure, though improving slowly, will take quite some time to be at par with the big cities.
- Since teaching in a learning centre is only a part time profession, many of the community teachers are engaged in other jobs too. The Civic Volunteers in the tea plantations who teach in the Kosish Schools also have other responsibilities pertaining law and order which sometimes

hampers their teaching. Not all community schools and learning centres function at the same working hours. This makes it difficult to gather them in a common time for meetings and training sessions.

- ➢ Many learning centres do not have their own infrastructure and use school building, community clubs to conduct their classes. Activities in schools and clubs like functions, fairs and so on often distract the children from the lessons.
- ➢ Finally, the communities which live hand to mouth struggling for two square meals everyday, need awareness to send their children to school regularly. Regular supply of notebooks and stationery for their children also seem an unaffordable luxury for these parents.

The EFA team, community leaders and other stakeholders like West Bengal Police in tea gardens are trying their utmost to integrate the community to the schools to make the delivery of lessons smoother and more effective.

## *11.Should Civic Volunteers teach: A Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

The Bankura district police were on about to launch a project named Ankur in collaboration with Nanritam's Education for All on March 14, 2023 where Civic Volunteers would have been trained to teach children between 3 to 8 years in five left wing extremist (LWE) affected blocks as an academic support system, **[See Exhibit 7]**.

A section of the media misdelivered the message and reported that the Civic volunteers were about to appropriate the role of teachers in primary schools which was far from the truth. From the onset, the objective of the training delivered by Education for All, **is not shaping an alternative to the formal school curriculum, rather building a complementary academic scaffolding to strengthen the foundational literacy and numeracy.**

The civic volunteers were to be trained to provide the bridging support that every child requires to transcend this humongous learning deficiency that the children are undergoing using globally accepted immersive pedagogy.

In an editorial article[19] published in Anandabazar Patrika, Prof Sukanta Chaudhuri, an eminent literary scholar and Professor Emeritus of Jadavpur University, expresses his concern over the fact that ***in West Bengal alone 17 lac children are admitted in primary School every year (almost 3.5 cr pan India) who have been away from school for the last two years. It is an unsettling truth that almost 8 to 10 crore children across India can grow up without any schooling.*** Prof Chaudhuri insists ***besides the teaching fraternity, every educated citizen should join hands to help educate these children and build a future for them.*** The two pronged approach of the

19 https://www.anandabazar.com/editorial/essays/if-schools-remain-closed-for-so-long-then-there-is-a-probability-that-many-children-will-grow-up-without-any-education-this-cannot-happen/cid/1326589

educated and trained Civic Volunteers of bridging the learning gap and building a rapport with the community serves the purpose which Prof Chaudhuri opines on.




**Photograph X: Civic volunteers play a pivotal role in nurturing, educating and mainstreaming children**

In his article in Project Syndicate A Lesson from West Bengal[20] Prof Kaushik Basu notes that ***The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the learning outcomes of millions of pupils across India, reversing years of incremental progress. The world has reached a major turning point. As artificial intelligence increasingly edges out traditional labour, it becomes clear that the future belongs to countries that can adapt to the changing nature of work. But adaptability requires an education system that nurtures creativity. This is particularly true in countries like India, where the growing digital divide threatens to widen existing inequalities.*** After having interacted with Kosish school teachers he pertinently points out that this learning chasm could be bridged ***taking advantage of the unique civic police volunteer force that was started in 2012. The police officers who are helping the teachers set up learning centres in the remote tea gardens of northern West Bengal are exemplary in terms of enthusiasm and a sense of mission.This type of anecdotal evidence suggests that employees' pride in their work and personal identification with its mission are critical sources of product quality.***

The current media trial against Civic Police Volunteers tried to demonise them following the usual stereotypes that alienate the police from the mainstream. The social media slurs painted them as uneducated, untrained and morally corrupt. Unfortunately, they found themselves at the receiving end of lampoons, spoofs, memes and fodder of stand up comedy made in poor taste. The Education for All training team, Koshish School teachers and the invisible children of *Chai Bagans* will tell you a very different story—-- a story which media witch hunters, the toxic social media woke activists would never want to know. It is a tale of joy, rediscovery and an attempt to do something for the children who are invisible to the public and the media gaze. Instead of police, if we could only view them as young men

20 https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/west-bengal-school-could-point-to-future-of-indian-education-by-kaushik-basu-2023-01

and women of the community who volunteered to bring about a change in their own communities without any extra benefits or remuneration.

In the face of controversy and media mayhem, the Government has reportedly directed to keep the program under suspension but has not abandoned it. The future of the Kosish Schools also stands on slippery ground. Frantic calls from the Civic volunteers to the trainers echo their desperation, Will our schools shut down too? The answer, like the decision of the higher authorities remain suspended in vacuum. The children, in the meanwhile, remain left out and invisible from the polemic of fatuity.

## *12. Promises to Keep*

The future goals of EFA are consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals SDG4 that promises 'to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'[21] and Government of India's National Education Policy which highlights its purpose of 'recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitising teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres.'[22]

**Strengthening the network of teachers:** Students can only be as good as their teacher. While students are at the centre of the learning process, it is the teachers who take charge to ignite the intellectual curiosity in them. Despite the popularity of digital learning and AI invasion, it is the teacher's empathy which instigates the children to learn, socialise and grow up as a humane individual.



**Photograph XI: Learning Collaborative Practices in training sessions can be fun and interactive**

One of the primary objectives of EFA has been the enrichment and empowerment of community volunteers who have the academic capability, fondness for children and intention of upskilling themselves in modern pedagogical practices. An EFA teacher might not have a university degree in core subjects or teaching practices, yet their close knowledge of the community, sense of altruism can be honed and put to bring about positive learning output with rigorous training on the child-centred pedagogical practices.The Civic Police who are teaching in 69 Kosish Schools located in 66 tea gardens of Alipurduar are excellent examples of how motivation and proper training can change

[21] https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4
[22] https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

a community with a lion's share of first generation learners. The EFA program seeks to build a strong network of community teachers by training and empowering them to move to the next level of cluster trainers and gradually take charge of content development and training making the program sustainable and replicable.

**Upgrade and enrich Kosish schools:** The schools and the learning centres being the lifeblood of a rural community are in dire need of upgrading. To make classrooms a safe, happy and interactive space the EFA has planned a school enriching program in its second year of operation. In sync with its objectives of promoting fundamental literacy a small library will be set up for all students and teachers




**Photograph XII: Every child deserves a voice to express and reach their potential**

with age appropriate, colourful books in English, Bengali and Hindi.

To battle this reading deficiency, a thriving school library to aid and support children who are just beginning to read can prove to be an agile catalyst. Also, to add impetus to children who have already begun reading, getting them interested in literature, culture, STEM and other branches of learning need the scaffolding of a school library. Modern learning is also highly dependent on audio-visual aids which are few and far between in rural learning centres. The EFA initiative plans to provide user-friendly smart screens to various clusters which would serve as an aid to teacher training as well as student enrichment.

**Zero hunger in classrooms:** Swami Vivekananda had once affirmed in his inimitable way, 'Spirituality can not be taught on an empty stomach.' The axiom stands equally relevant in terms of education. The phenomenon of Indian marginalised, rural school children attending hours of school in empty stomachs waiting impatiently for the mid day meal to arrive is an idea which has been accepted and normalised (and often romanticised) by the mass media. But the children (also, teachers) do feel the pangs of hunger in the morning too. Nourishing 'empty stomachs' of growing children especially in the early mornings, almost 5 hours before the mid day meal is served in school, is a crisis that the Nanritam's *Nutri-ed* program is trying to address.



**Photograph XIII: Nutritional laddoos being prepared in Nanritam kitchen and being distributed in an EFA learning centre in Purulia**

At present the Nutri-ed program is catering to more that 500 children in severely impoverished tribal villages of Purulia, there are plans to implement it in all the EFA centres in future. To ensure that the supply of nutrition does not limit to a single meal, the kitchen garden project has been spearheaded by Nanritam Krishi Kendra. Providing quality seed, manure, pesticide and agricultural know-how to the schools will escalate the nutritional value in the meal, and also add to the knowledge repository of the teachers and students who tend to this garden.

**Support for middle school education:** STEM Education is one of the strongest points of Filix School's pedagogy. As already mentioned, Filix School has partnered with *Indian Association of Physics Teachers* (IAPT) Centre for Scientific Culture, Midnapore College to spark the interest in science

learning among high school students of rural areas. IAPT is a grass-root organisation working nationwide for improvement of Physics teaching through various programs and activities.

EFA was fortunate to have three extraordinary educators to guide and conduct these important workshops. The eminent facilitators have achieved the highest level in their academic and teaching credentials, and dedicated a major part of their life to passionately champion science education at the grassroots throughout the country. Prof. Birendranath Das, Former Professor of Physics in Presidency College, Prof. Subhash Samanta, Former Professor of Physics, Midnapore College and Dr. Chinmoy Kumar Ghosh, Former Director, National Centre for Innovations in Distance Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University have been facilitating these outbound workshops for students as well as teachers.While three workshops have already been conducted in Purulia and Alipurduar, more are in pipeline which would follow the pedagogy of Active Teaching Learning Process (ATLP) where every problem is introduced by sensitising the learners about the diverse learning outcomes of an experiment and relating the same to intimate connection between Physics and Mathematics.



**Photograph XIV: Science Workshop with high school students of Filix School Purulia**

**Integrate technology:** In the scenario of new normal, technology integration has helped us reimagine education even at the grassroot level. From its early days EFA has made judicious use of technology for training, support, bonding and motivation for teachers. To make the experience of training and education more immersive the two books published by EFA will be equipped with QR codes leading to the training videos. In case of absenteeism from training or school, both students and teachers would access the videos directly by scanning the QR code provided with each chapter to catch up with the hands-on aspect of the lesson.It would act as a ready reckoner for visualisation of an activity. The teachers would find videos of TLM preparation and classroom organisation which would empower them to the next level. With further upscaling of the project the idea of developing an IOS/android app that would act as a knowledge and practice repository for immersive pedagogy is also taking shape.

**Community bonding:** Education is essentially a community project. Children learn and grow only when the community around them, be it their teachers, parents or neighbours provide the right support and create a positive ambience conducive to education. To encourage the community to take an active interest in schools the EFA plans to hold regular learning showcases in the form of workshops, cultural programs, sporting activities where parents and the members of the community would be invited to watch and participate in academic and non academic displays. Filix school has already hosted a Learning Festival and a Reading extravaganza which created a stir among the parent community who participated wholeheartedly in the children's display of learning through role plays, music, demonstrations and so on. The same model would be replicated in the EFA clusters where the students, teachers and parents come together to celebrate their journey of learning.

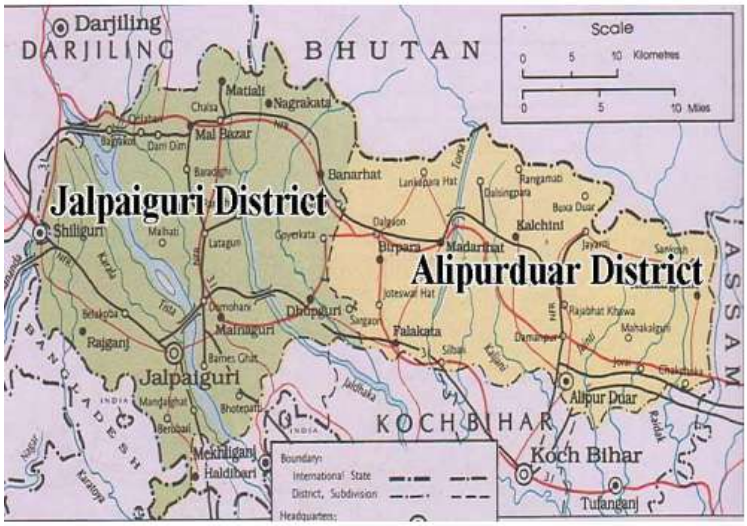


**Photograph XV: And what fun they had learning together!**

Kosish Schools of Alipurduar and Dakshin Dinajpur with their lively classrooms buzzing with music and activities spearheaded by inspired educators are reaching out to more than 4000 children from 3 to 15 years old. After the school started the new academic session in January, 2023 the Kosish Schools have witnessed a surge in the number of students. Since the project is in progress, the process of data compilation on the learning outcome has not been completed. After the mid term assessment is evaluated we can get a clear picture of the learning outcomes. The teachers have already reported that students, especially the younger ones, are learning concepts faster because of the immersive classroom practices. Music and activities are the two important things that they love about their little schools located in distant *chai bagans*. As the teachers take a proactive role in opening up their isolated little universe, the tale of the Kosish School will continue to inspire and build a new community of changemakers where the five year olds are no longer afraid of the police. Not ever.

.....

## Exhibit 1




### 1.1 Doors - Terai Region

## Exhibit 2[23]

Crude percentage of literacy, crude male literacy rate and crude female literacy rate of the selected tea gardens of Dooars

| Sl. No. | Name of the T.G. | Crude % of Literacy | Crude Male Literacy Rate | Crude Female Literacy Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Kumargram T.G. | 69.69 | 83.67 | 56 |
| 2 | Kohinoor T.G. | 55.45 | 52.63 | 58.49 |
| 3 | Kadambini T.G. | 70.87 | 75 | 65.95 |
| 4 | Muthura T.G. | 74.31 | 85.71 | 62.26 |
| 5 | Ellenbari T.G. | 53.63 | 53.44 | 53.84 |
| 6 | Washabari T.G. | 65.34 | 68.51 | 61.70 |
| 7 | Srinathpur T.G. | 69 | 71.18 | 65.85 |
| 8 | Damdim T.G. | 55.10 | 48.27 | 65 |
| 9 | Chulsa T.G. | 54.63 | 52.72 | 57.14 |
| 10 | Raidak T.G. | 59.61 | 66.07 | 52.08 |
| 11 | Atiabari T.G. | 66.96 | 69.23 | 63.82 |
| 12 | Bagrakote T.G. | 72.72 | 70.96 | 75 |
| 13 | Zurrantee T.G. | 75.67 | 80.39 | 71.66 |

[23] (PDF) LITERACY PATTERN AND LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS OF DOOARS REGION, WEST BENGAL (researchgate.net) as viewed on 20th March, 2023

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | Chengmari T.G. | 61.76 | 63.63 | 59.57 |
| 15 | Mujnai T.G. | 61.38 | 62.96 | 59.57 |
| 16 | Banarhat T.G. | 55.45 | 57.40 | 53.57 |
| 17 | Telepara T.G. | 62.38 | 66.10 | 58 |
| 18 | Huldibari T.G. | 64.70 | 49.05 | 61.22 |
| 19 | Leesh River T.G. | 64.21 | 69.23 | 58.13 |
| 20 | Nagrakata T.G. | 60.21 | 60.37 | 60 |
| 21 | Madhu T.G. | 47.66 | 53.57 | 41.17 |
| 22 | Mahua T.G. | 48.51 | 67.34 | 30.76 |
| 23 | Hilla T.G. | 56.98 | 59.18 | 54.54 |
| 24 | Gandrapara T.G. | 51.45 | 44.64 | 59.57 |
| 25 | Redbank T.G. | 50.52 | 52.94 | 47.72 |
| 26 | Surendranagar T.G. | 41.58 | 40.81 | 42.30 |
| 27 | Dharanipur T.G. | 42.85 | 50.94 | 33.33 |
| 28 | Manabarrie T.G. | 48.03 | 44.68 | 50.90 |
| 29 | Bandapani T.G. | 46.15 | 61.90 | 32.65 |
| 30 | Dheklapara T.G. | 40.81 | 44.23 | 36.95 |

Source: Based on field survey.

**Exhibit 3**



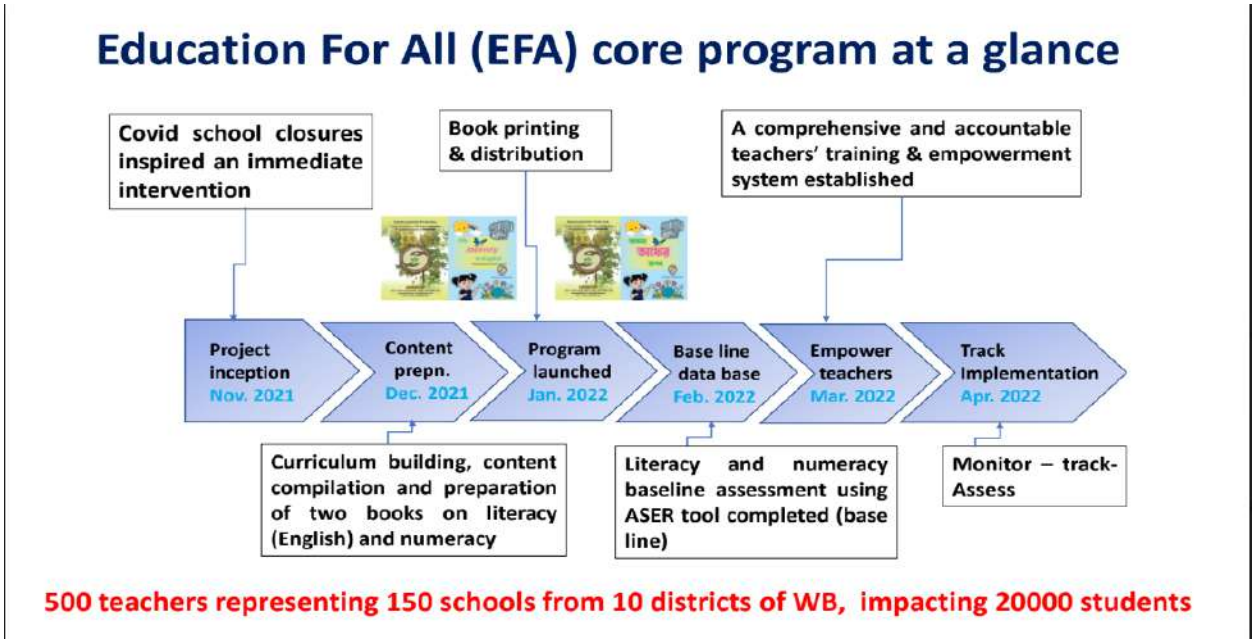




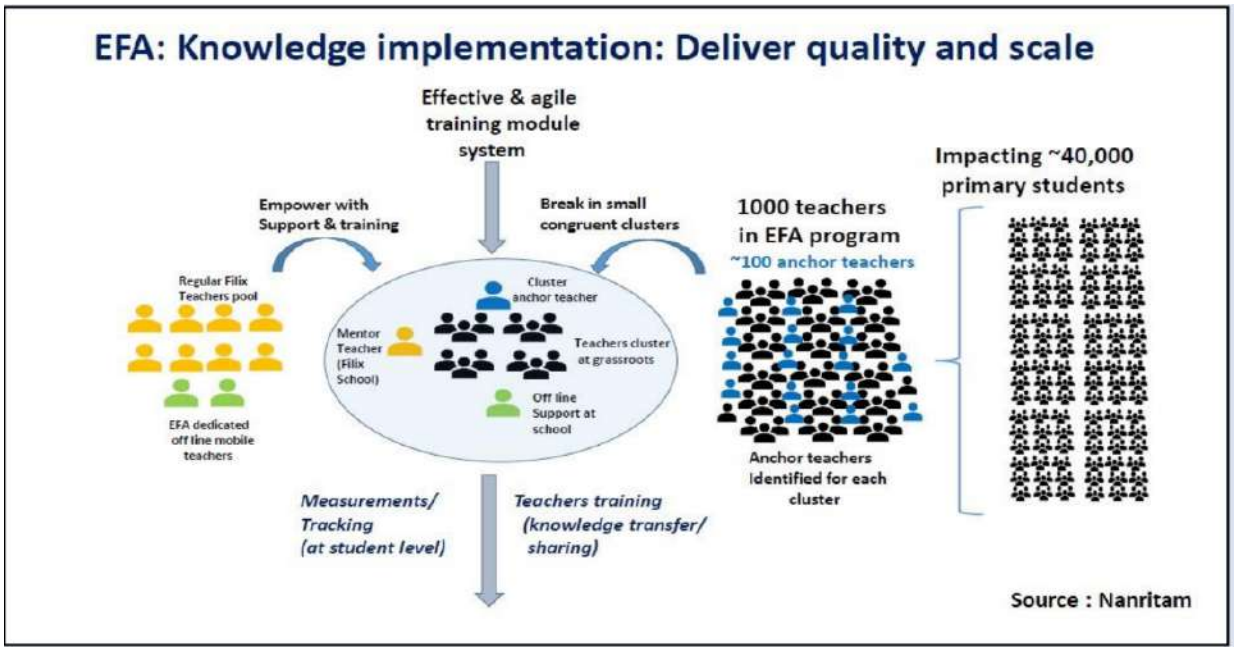


**Kosish Schools in Pre-Covid Days [2018-19]**

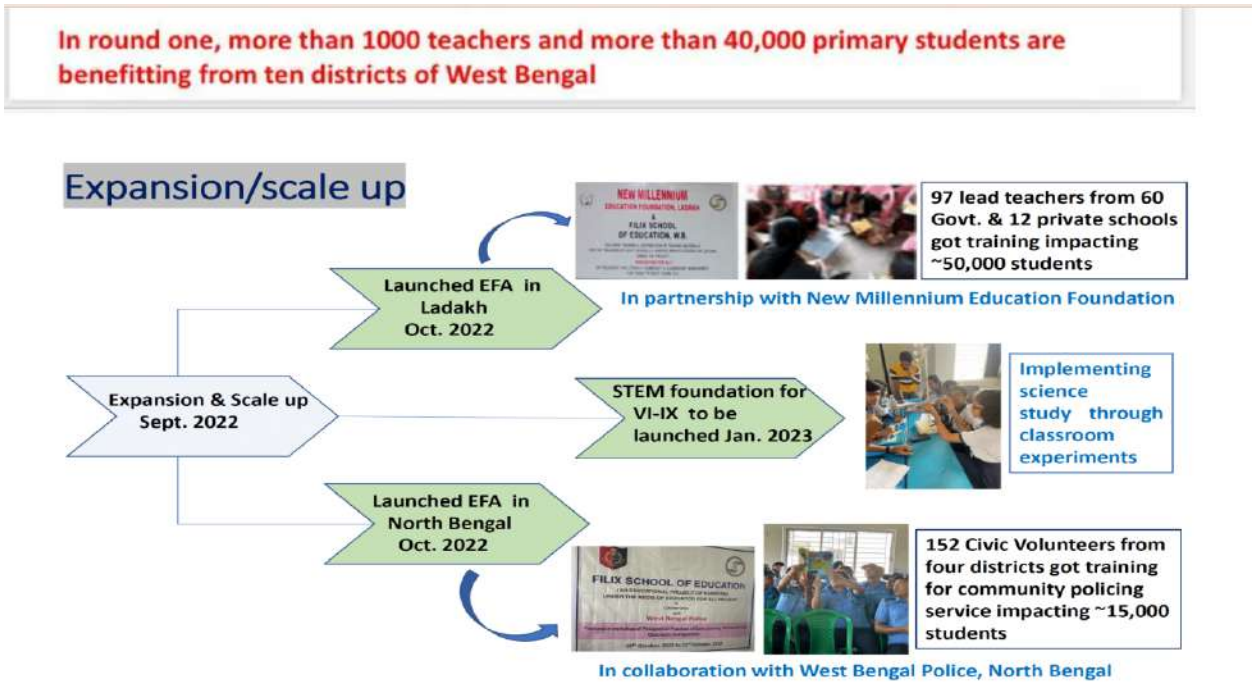
## Exhibit 4



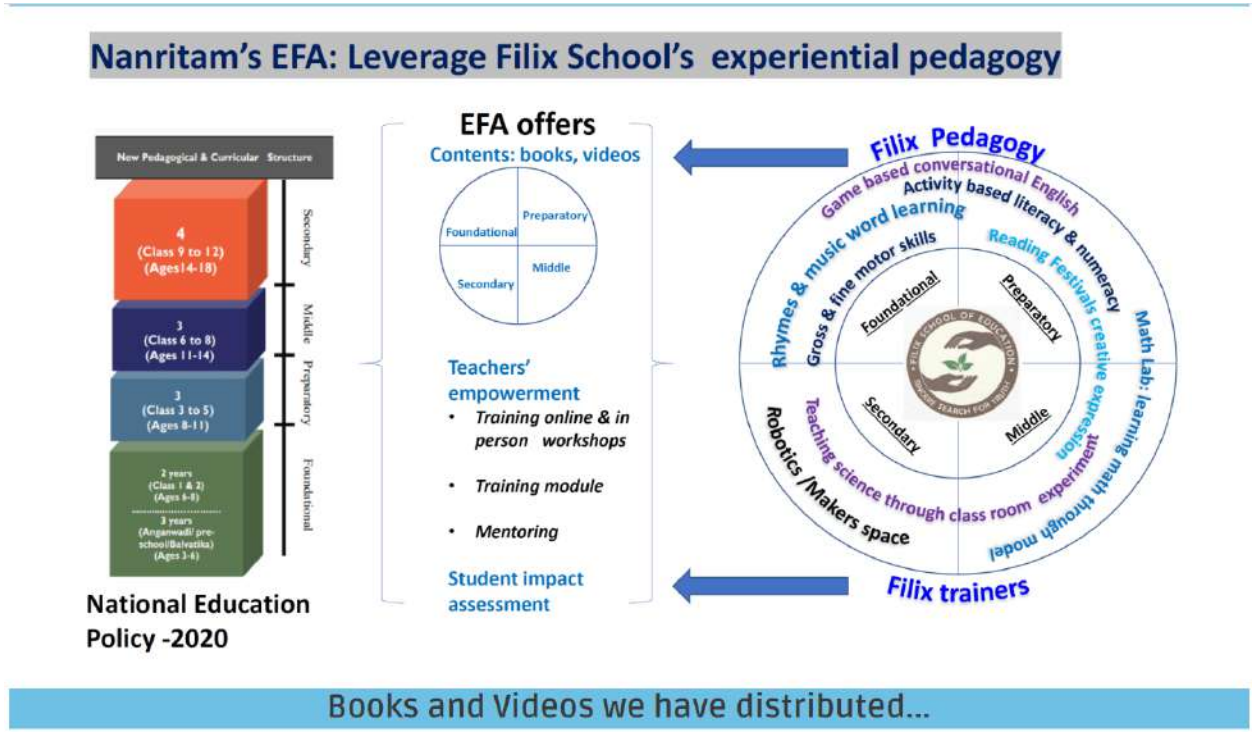

**4.1 Education For All: Timeline**



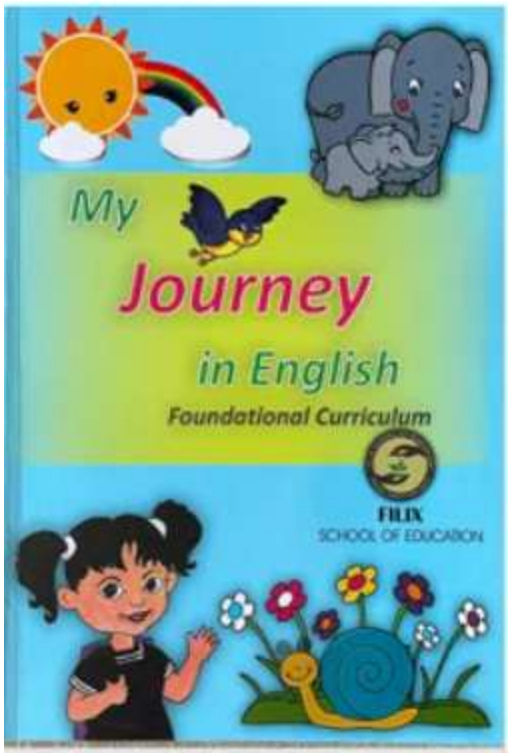

**4.2 Education For All: Delivery Model**




**4.3 Education For All : Verticals**



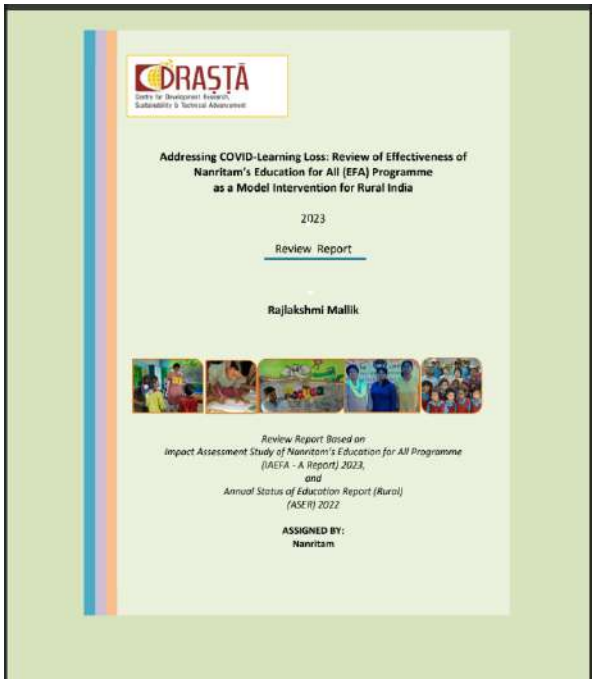

**4.4 Education For All: Leveraging Vision**







**4.5 English and Mathematics Bridge Course: An Academic Scaffolding**




**4.6 Impact Assessment Study on Effectiveness of EFA**

**Link to the document: https://drasta.org/projects/#assessment_study**

**As accessed on March 17, 2023**



# Foreword

As the world navigates a turning point caused by rapid advances in digital technology over the last few decades, with robots and artificial intelligence trying to edge out traditional labor, it is increasingly clear that the future belongs to nations that can adapt to this changing landscape of work, livelihood and the economy. The key to this adaptability is education--modern, scientific education, that nurtures creativity. As mechanical work is taken over by machines, the human endeavor will have to be more and more focused on more advanced forms of activity, and education is the key to this. This is of particular importance to a country like India with a large population.

An experiment with modern education that is taking place in a most unusual place is the Filix School run by the NGO Nanritam. This school, where the medium of education is English, is located not in a metropolis, nor in an advanced economy, but in a poor, rural region in the state of West Bengal, in eastern India, with largely tribal population. The remarkable success of this school, which has tried to bring in the best methods of teaching from around the world and notably from Finland is creating hope.

To expand the impact of its method of teaching, from 2021 Nanritam started the ambitious program called Education for All (EFA) to spread their method of instruction to other schools across ten districts of West Bengal. I have had a long association with the school run by Nanritam almost from the time of its inception and have been hugely impressed by the quality of education—mathematics, the sciences, literature and language—and by the fluency of students in English and mathematics. However, this was all my impression, and I was curious to know if the quality of education being imparted could be scientifically evaluated.

For this reason I am heartened to read this independent evaluation of Nanritam's EFA program, conducted by the Kolkata-based research institute, Centre for Development Research Sustainability and Technical Advancement (C-DRASTA). What this study, led by Rajlakshmi Mallik, does is to test the impact of the teaching methods used by Filix School and the EFA programme on student learning by statistically comparing data from 46 treatment schools and 10 control schools.

This controlled study confirms my intuitive assessment and, more importantly, it gives details that are impossible to get to by pure intuition. This is what makes the evaluation and report by C-DRASTA valuable. Thus we see that students who have been enrolled for a while in the EFA programme do better than students in non-EFA schools in terms of fundamental literacy and numeracy skills. However, this learning advantage becomes even more pronounced for advanced numeracy and literacy skills. The C-DRASTA study also shows that the English and mathematics books designed by Nanritam for basic literacy and numeracy has a big impact via the EFA teacher training programme.

In short, this report provides statistical evidence of the superior training of students and also of teachers being provided by the Education for All programme. It is no surprise that students from the Filix School have begun to attract international attention. Recently, 6 students from the Filix School were among the finalists in the World Storytelling Championship, organized by AC Enovation, Singapore, and one student, Anushi Nigar, was first runner-up. This is big achievement for a rural school in an emerging market economy, with a majority of students coming from households that are below the national poverty line of India. It is worth keeping in mind that students from 137 nations participated in this contest.

The study by Rajlakshmi Mallik is useful as it stands but, more importantly, it opens up a host of new questions that would be useful to try to find answers to. What we now need to understand is what it is in the system of teaching and books in the EFA schools that gives it the great advantage that is now showing up statistically. Is it the atmosphere of treating

learning as fun? Or the moderns methods of teaching? Or the encouragement to students to engage with the teachers by asking questions and even contesting the claims.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the author of this report, Rajlakshmi Mallik, the leaders of Nanritam and the outstanding teachers of Filix School who worked hard to make learning fun.

Once we understand the kinds of causal links studied in this report better we will be able to carry out the lessons learned from Nanritam's experience and reported in this report to better the quality of school education everywhere.

**Kaushik Basu**
Professor of Economics and Carl Marks Professor of International Studies,
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York



**4.7 Forward to the Impact Assessment Report by Prof Kaushik Basu, Professor of Economics and Carl Marks Professor of International Studies at the Department of Economics and SC Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University, Ithaca and New York.**


Education for All : Our Team
Head Operations, Planning and Execution
Sri Sarada Prasad Namhata (Former R&D Director Dow Chemical & Global R&D Innovation Vice President, Hunstman Corporation, USA
Ranjana Sengupta (Secretary, Nanritam)
Curriculum Development Team
Ms Hilda Peackok (Former Principal, La Martiniere for Girls)
Ms Lena Garkman (Curricular Advisor and Tutor for Teacher Students, Finland)
Sri Samar Bagchi (Former Director, Birla Industrial &Technological Museums,under National Council of Science Museum, Eastern India)
Dr Biren Das (Former Professor of Physics in Presidency College, Vidyasagar College and Thakurpukur Vivekananda College, Kolkata)
Curriculum, Training and Assessment
Dr Bharati Bakshi (Working President, Nanritam)
Smt. Ruma Guha Neogi (Principal, Filix School of Education)
Smt. Priyanka Ghosh (Academic Co-ordinator, Filix School of Education)
Smt. Tanushree Patra (Co-ordinator Kindergarten Section, Filix School of Education)
Associate Trainers:
Sri. Debasish Roy (Teacher Filix School of Education)
Ms. Susmita Saha (Teacher Filix School of Education)
Ms.Aditi Mondal (Teacher Filix School of Education)
Mrs Poulomi Mukhopadhyay (Teacher Filix School of Education)
Public Relation:
Sri Jagannath Goswami
Graphic Designer:
Sri Gobinda Karmakar

**4.8 Team EFA**

**Exhibit 5**

**KOSHISH SCHOOL**

| SL NO. | Police Station | School Name | Nos. of Students | RANK | Teacher's Name | Mobile Number | Class Time | Medium |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sonapur OP (Alipurduar PS) | Mathura Bagan Surendra Prasad Junior Basic Unit-I .School. | 40 | CVF- 67 | Jico Sarkar | 8637088952 7076907839 | 7.30 hrs - 9.30 hrs. | Bengali |
| 2 | | Patlakhawa 2 no Board School | 65 | CVF-345 | Shyamal Sarkar | 7908579248 | 7.00 hrs. - 9.30 hrs. | Bengali |
| 3 | | Sidhabari Primary School. | 35 | CVF-235 | Raju Karjee | 8250687730 | 9.00 hrs. - 11.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 4 | | Mahakal SSK school | 60 | CVF-240 | Ashok Roy | 8348120084 | 8.30 hrs. - 11.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 5 | Alipurduar PS | Sirubari 1 no. BFP School | 87 | CVF-28 | Hari Prashad Roy | 9647779765 | 7.00 hrs. - 9.30 hrs. | Bengali |
| | | | | CVF-253 | Dulal Barman | 8345825801 | 7.00 hrs. - 9.30 hrs. | Bengali |
| 6 | Kumargram PS | Khordanga St. James Pry. School | 40 | CVF-189 | Debashis Mahato | 7797141023 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 7 | | | | LCVF - 232 | Priyanka Das | 9064395762 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 8 | | Kumargram T.G Pry. School | 87 | CVF-235 | Dasharata Bagwar | 8967612429 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| | | | 55 | CVF-76 | Suman Lakra | 6296059151 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 9 | | Newlands T. G primary school koshish school | 105 | CVF-62 | Rustam Tirkey | 7047866210 9734136556 | 16.00 hrs--18.00 hrs | Hindi & Bengali |
| | | | | CVF-74 | Sudip Dutta | 7679447157 | 16.00 hrs--18.00 hrs | Hindi & Bengali |
| 10 | | Sankosh T.G Pry. School | 120 | CVF-41 | Kalyan Adhikary | 9870819597 | 15.30 hrs--17.30 hrs | Hindi & Bengali |
| | | | | LCVF - 286 | Sakila Oraon | 8597290900 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Hindi & Bengali |
| 11 | Barobisha OP (Kumargram PS) | Rahanagar Adibasi Pry. School | | CVF - 125 | Nandan Das | 7602939377 | | Till date not open |
| | | | | VP - 128 | Biplob Das | 9641675139 | | |
| 12 | Falakata PS | Tasati T.G Dugabari Koshish Center | 41 | CVF - 440 | Suman Kujur | 8167621886 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Hindi & Bangali |
| | | | | CVF - 437 | Mithun Indwar | 8509807780 | | |
| 13 | | Kadambini T.G Pry. School | 45 | CVF - 261 | Chandan Mondal | 8348267245 | 15.30 hrs--17.30 hrs. | Bengali |
| 14 | | Kadombini Nimnobuniadi Pry. School | 80 | LCVF - 250 | Bartila Oraon | 7584095578 | 15.00 hrs. - 18.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 15 | Samuktala PS | Dhowlajhora T.G Bengali School | 40 | CVF - 08 | Ajit Dey | 7905476263 9733291541 | 11.00 hrs. - 2.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 16 | | Majherdabri T.G Spl. Cader Primary School | 55 | CVF - 37 | Ashis Barman | 9091705796 | 13.30 hrs. - 15.30 hrs. | Hindi |
| 17 | | Kohinoor Vivekananda S.S.K School | 60 | VP - 105 | Bipul Saha | 8250245619 | 14.00 hrs. - 16.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 18 | | Mainabari Pry. School | 33 | LCVF - 173 | Pinki Chhetri | 9832599191 | 9.00 hrs. - 11.00 hrs. | Hindi & Bengali |
| 19 | | Jaianti Pry. School | 30 | LCVF - 214 | Sujanti Oraon | 9932408371 | 9.30 hrs. - 11.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 20 | | Rahimabad T.G Pry. School | 35 | LCVF - 251 | Dipmala Chik Barik | 9735310542 | 9.30 hrs. - 11.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 21 | | Raidak FV New Pry. School | 35 | LCVF - 106 | Durgi Kujur | 9547104320 | 9.30 hrs. - 11.00 hrs. | Bengali & English |
| 22 | | Phaskhawa Pry School | 34 | LCVF - 199 | Sasi Promila Khalko | 9641494094 | 16.00 hrs. - 18.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 23 | | Raidak T.G Pry. School | 38 | LCVF - 159 | Nil Kushum Kujur | 8348425003 | 9.00 hrs. - 11.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 24 | | Srinathpur T.G Pry. School | 33 | LCVF - 174 | Pinki Mandol | 9832181532 9679786415 | 13.30 hrs. - 15.30 hrs. | Bengali & English |

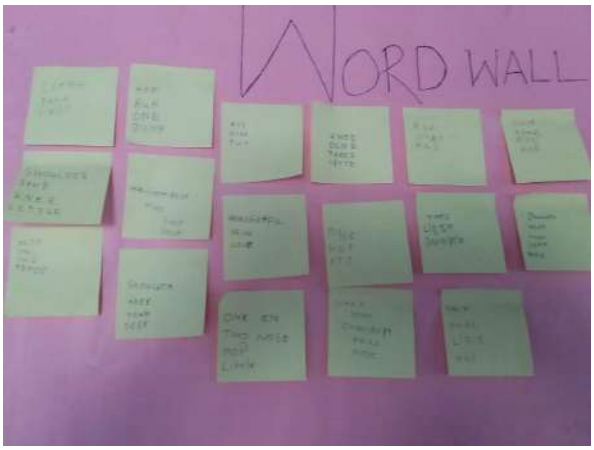
| SL NO. | Police Station | School Name | Nos. of Students | RANK | Teacher's Name | Mobile Number | Class Time | Medium |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | | Chunia Jhora T.G Pry. School | 42 | Public Teacher | Boby Khatun | 6295828572 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Bengali, English & Hindi |
| 26 | Madarihat PS | Toto Para BSC Pry. School. | 72 | CVF-568 | Rajesh Toto | 8436598419 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 27 | | Hantapara SSK Koshish School | 18 | CVF-278 | Mahesh Oraon | 8637876678 | 16.00 hrs. - 18.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 28 | | Mujnai Junior Basic Pry. School | 35 | CVF-187 | Himadri Sen | 9641669342 | 07.30 hrs. - 9.45hrs. | Bengali |
| 29 | | Hantapara East Line Pry. School | 37 | CVF-184 | Monmahan Tudu | 7679755645 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 30 | | Dhumshipara Bara Line T.G Pry. School | 45 | LCVF - 106 | Diksha Mangar | 8617494026 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi & English |
| 31 | | Dakshin Madarihat Spl Cader Primary School | 31 | LCVF - 04 | Saraswati Chhetri | 7477326765 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Bangla |
| 32 | | Hantapara T.G Baiganbari ICDS Center | 30 | LCVF - 63 | Binita Tirky | 8116193503 | 01500 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 33 | | Garganda Community Hall | 25 | LCVF - 102 | Nainasi Dolika Lakra | 8145811048 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 34 | | Hantapara ICDS Center | 24 | LCVF - 639 | Parbati Munda | 8597758917 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 35 | Birpara PS | Sukti Division Pry. School, Makrapara T.G | 45 | CVF - 84 | Kiran Bhujel | 9733468269 | 14.00hrs--15.30hrs | Nepali & English |
| 36 | | Jaybirpara T.G Pry. School | 23 | CVF - 138 | Basant Oraon | 9932680682 | 7.00 hrs. - 10.00 hrs. | Hindi & Bengali |
| 37 | | Birpara Cha Bagan Hindi Pry. School | 37 | LCVF - 72 | Junika Kerketta | 7908388639 | 14.30hrs--16.30hrs | Hindi |
| 38 | | Nagadala T.G Pry School | 35 | LCVF - 119 | Ashima Xaxa | 9734909359 | 09.00 hrs--11.00hrs | Hindi |
| 39 | | Dimdima Downline SSK | 51 | LCVF - 126 | Punam Tirki | 8145449732 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi & Bengali |
| 40 | | Rahimpur T.G Pry. School | 38 | LCVF - 120 | Sunita Prashad | 9734118669 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi & English |
| 41 | | Dalmore T.G Bara Line Shishu Shikha Kendra School | 14 | LCVF - 164 | Jamuna Chik Baraik | 7602327649 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 42 | | Lankabazar BFB Pry. School | 15 | LCVF - 106 | Khushbu Thapa | 8670663468 | 14.30 hrs. - 16.30 hrs. | Hindi |
| 43 | | Tulsi Para Pry. School | 40 | LCVF - 90 | Babita Oraon | 9635794892 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 44 | | Ramjhora Pry. School | 41 | LCVF - 87 | Rupsana Dahal | 9800097314/ 9647754225 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 45 | | Gopalpur Junior Basic pry. School | 15 | LCVF - 153 | Pratima Tirki | 7063131986 | 07.30 hrs--10.00 hrs | Bengali |
| 46 | | Bandapani Pry. School | 35 | LCVF - 131 | Babita Oraon | 9883149711 | 14.30hrs--16.30hrs | Hindi & English |
| 47 | | Dheklapara T.G Pry. School | 20 | LCVF - 160 | Suhani Khalko | 9339046082 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 48 | | Singhania T.G Pry.School | 20 | LCVF - 162 | Indreashi Oraon | 7872575084 | 15.00 hrs--17.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 49 | Jaigaon PS | Kodal Baty School | 55 | CVF - 34 | Mahadeb Subba | 8348776799 | 7.00 hrs. - 9.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 50 | | Sarswati Hindi School | 45 | LCVF - 105 | Kanchi Sherpa | 8348066679 | 12.00 hrs. - 14.00 hrs. | Hindi & English |
| 51 | | Torsa ICDS Center, Bantha Line | 50 | LCVF - 33 | Kabita Oraon | 9593850669 | 14.30 hrs. - 16.30 hrs. | Hindi |
| 52 | | Modhu T.G Primary School | 30 | LCVF - 119 | Tulshi Chhetri | 7602564928 | 7.00 hrs. - 9.00 hrs. | Bengali |
| 53 | | Subhasini T.G Primary School | 50 | LCVF - 42 | Moti Damai | 8927857057 | 08.00 hrs--10.00 hrs | Hindi & English |
| 54 | | Haldibari T.G Primary School | 41 | LCVF - 31 | Kalawati Lakra | 7384539342 | 07.30 hrs-- 9.30 hrs | Hindi & English |
| 55 | | Bharnobari T.G Pry. School | 56 | LCVF - 66 | Sangita Kujur | 7029242896 | 08.00 hrs--10.00 hrs | Hindi |
| 56 | | Nimtijhora T.G Pry. School | 56 | CVF - 13 | Akshay Shyamal | 9932992144 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Hindi & Bengali |
| 57 | | Dima T.G Westen Pry. School | 35 | CVF - 46 | Ashik Munda | 9593080460 | 15.30 hrs--17.30hrs | Hindi |
| 58 | | Atiabari T.G Bangabari Out Divison Pry. | 48 | CVF - 67 | Bibhisan Oraon | 9609934170 | 14.30 hrs. to 17.30 hrs. | Hindi |
| 59 | | Central Dooars T.G Pry. School | 17 | LCVF - 296 | Manisha Pradhan | 9593863168 | 14.30 hrs. - 16.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 60 | | Raimadang T.G Hindi Primary School | 18 | LCVF - 38 | Anjali Tamang | 9609794090 | 09:30 hrs - 11:00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 61 | | Chinchula T.G Pry. School | 30 | LCVF - 184 | Pushpa Kujur | 7557826443 | 09:00 hrs - 11:00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 62 | | Bhatkhawa T.G Godam Line ICDS Center | 17 | LCVF - 294 | Anisosan Kharia | 7063377103 | 08.30 hrs--10.00 hrs | Hindi & English |

| SL NO. | Police Station | School Name | Nos. of Students | RANK | Teacher's Name | Mobile Number | Class Time | Medium |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 63 | Kalchini PS | Bhatpara ICDS Center, Near Bhatpara Club Ground | 18 | LCVF - 37 | Anita Mahli | 8158863741 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 64 | | Lt. Kumar Thapa Smriti Primary School | 40 | LCVF - 254 | Sita Tamang | 7076101161 | 09:00 hrs - 11:00 hrs. | Nepali |
| 65 | | Radharani T.G Pry. School | 12 | LCVF - 41 | Anu Kharia | 7047134205 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 66 | | Kalchini T.G Pry.School | 28 | LCVF - 203 | Ranjana Oraon | 9593608725 | 14.00 hrs. - 16.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| 67 | | Gangutia T.G Pry.School | 30 | LCVF - 303 | Senuka Mizar | 8509753578 | 15.00 hrs. - 17.00 hrs. | Hindi & English |
| 68 | | Rajabhat T.G Godam Line ICDS Center | 15 | LCVF - 202 | Ramila Lama | 9679166995 | 14.30 hrs. - 15.300 hrs. | Hindi, English, |
| 69 | | Chuapara T.G Hindi Pry. School | 20 | LCVF - 257 | Suban Oraon | 7718261147 | 08.00 hrs. --10.00 hrs. | Hindi |
| | | **Total Students** | **2752** | | | | | |

## 5.1 List of functioning Koshish Schools in *Chai Bagans*

**Exhibit 6: Glimpses from Kosish Schools**






**6.1 Totopara Koshish School** **6.2 Vocabulary list: Mathurapur Kosish School**



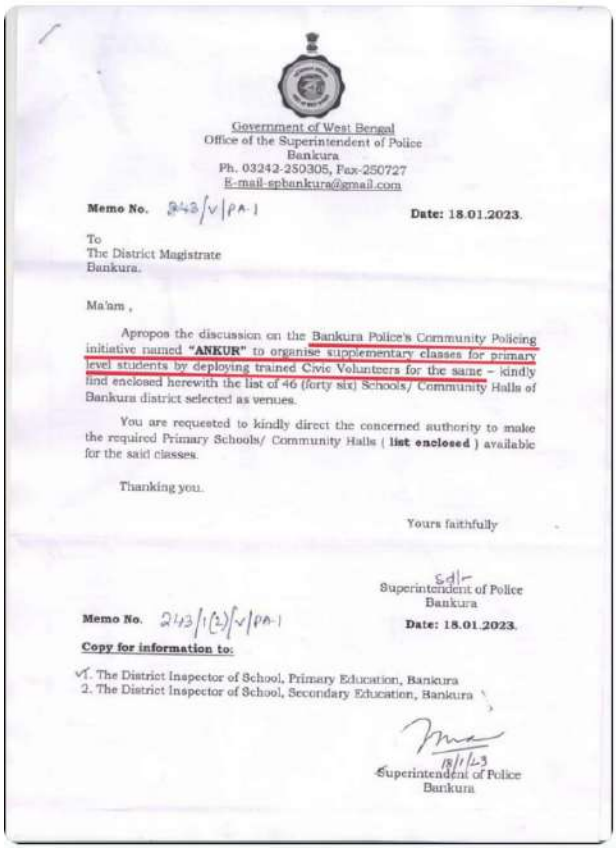


**6.3 Subhasini Kosish School, Jaigaon** **6.4 Ramjhora Kosish School**



**6.5 Radhanagar Adivasi Kosish School, Kalchini**

## Exhibit 7



Government of West Bengal
Office of the Superintendent of Police
Bankura
Ph. 03242-250305, Fax-250727
E-mail-spbankura@gmail.com

**Memo No.** 243/V/PA-1 **Date: 18.01.2023.**

To
The District Magistrate
Bankura.

Ma'am ,

Apropos the discussion on the Bankura Police's Community Policing initiative named **"ANKUR"** to organise supplementary classes for primary level students by deploying trained Civic Volunteers for the same – kindly find enclosed herewith the list of 46 (forty six) Schools/ Community Halls of Bankura district selected as venues.

You are requested to kindly direct the concerned authority to make the required Primary Schools/ Community Halls ( **list enclosed** ) available for the said classes.

Thanking you.

Yours faithfully

Superintendent of Police
Bankura

**Memo No.** 243/1(2)/V/PA-1 **Date: 18.01.2023.**

**Copy for information to:**

1. The District Inspector of School, Primary Education, Bankura
2. The District Inspector of School, Secondary Education, Bankura

18/1/23
Superintendent of Police
Bankura

**7.1 Ankur Initiative for Supplementary classes in Bankura**

**Statement Regarding Ankur Community Policing Project of Bankura Police**

The Ankur Community Policing Project was launched by the Bankura district police in association with the Nanritam foundation as part of our efforts to reach out to the community and common citizens in remote and rural areas. Through this project, we aim to bring positive change in the lives of small children and build a better relationship with the future generation. Some individuals have portrayed this initiative as an attempt to replace regular school classes, which is entirely false and incorrect. The coaching classes provided under this project, which use international standards of pedagogy, are in addition to the regular school classes and are completely voluntary.

More than 65% of the centers identified fall under the LWE affected PSs. Such community policing projects are regularly undertaken by the police. We have been conducting coaching classes in such PSs for many years, and we also organize blood donation camps, eye check-up camps (under our 'Palak' project), 'Uttaran' project for training candidates for competitive exams, ration distribution (during the Covid pandemic), and interview guidance for UPSC/WBCS/Police constable exams, among other things.

The present initiative has no connection whatsoever with regular school classes, and as already stated, will be conducted after the school hours. Additionally, these classes will not be held in the school premises and will be conducted at venues selected as per the convenience of small students and their parents after due consultation with the competent authority. Bankura police will continue to work for the common citizens of the district. We welcome any constructive feedback in this regard.

**7.2 Statement issued by Bankura Police after the media mayhem**