

**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF *SANGATI*
IN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS OF MUMBAI:**

PERSPECTIVES, PERCEPTIONS AND PROCESSES



2008-09

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Introduction

The *Sangati* series comprises a set of six interactive teaching-learning kits to be used at the middle school level. Introduced in schools of the Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (henceforward MMC) in 1990, Sangati aims to help teachers to enrich and supplement the regular curriculum, facilitate children to make linkages between school knowledge and the knowledge they develop from their lives outside schools, build analytical and decision-making skills, encourage children to listen to different opinions while forming and expressing their own, and to foster values that promote social consciousness and harmony, and affirm diversity. Each Sangati kit consists of a manual for teachers and a set of visual aids. These are currently published in Hindi, Marathi English.

Sangati emphasizes development of perspectives in children to help them to understand and analyze the world around them. Rather than imparting facts, the curriculum focuses on linkages between specific themes. The methodology emphasizes the active participation of children and teachers through group work and discussion. These are intended to develop skills of communication, critical analysis, problem solving and decision making. Activities such as drawing, colouring, writing, singing and drama encourage children to explore and express their creativity. Flipcharts, posters, stories and games are an important aspect of the curriculum directed towards classroom discussion and other activities. Worksheets, given to children at the end of each session, help them explore the themes in each session in relation to their experiences outside the school.

The Sangati programme was started in a single school (Mahalaxmi Mandir Municipal School, Hindi, Classes 3-7) of the MMC in 1990. As the programme got a good response from students, Sangati was upscaled, and from 1995 onwards, implemented in 25 schools in MMC – 22 in D Ward and 3 in the Mahalaxmi Municipal School Building.

In 2000, the programme was revamped and implemented in Classes 5 to 7 (G South and G North). Between 2000 and 2004, the programme was developed further. From 2006, the programme was implemented in all MMC schools. This was enabled by the positive

responses of school teachers, as well as through active facilitation by certain officers of the MMC. Over the years, Sangati has been used by a range of teachers and children – in municipal schools in Mumbai, in Zilla Parishad schools in other districts of Maharashtra, and in several private schools all over India.

From the academic year beginning June 2006, Sangati was introduced in all the 923 schools (including 18 special schools) run by the Mumbai Municipal Corporation. In this fourth phase, the entire material (Kits 1-6) has been taught in Classes 5 to 7. It was felt that this was an appropriate juncture to take stock of the impact of the programme on the MMC schools.

Studies of Sangati

Following the first phase, an evaluation study of the Sangati (then ABACUS) curriculum was done by Leena Abraham and Padma Velaskar of the Unit for Research in Sociology of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Another evaluation study was conducted by the Research Department of MMC during the second phase of the study. The first study was done at an initial stage of the programme, prior to its first upscaling, and, more importantly, when the teaching of the curriculum was done by facilitators and not regular school teachers. The study examined the curriculum, in relation to the class backgrounds and lived realities of children, critically appraising it in terms of its content, conceptualization, design and classroom delivery, within the context of the experiences of children of the urban poor. It expressed several concerns about the cultural relevance and appropriateness of the curriculum. The study recommended re-conceptualisation of the curriculum to reduce some of its complexity and make efforts to contextualize it within the lifeworlds of the children, move away from a direct value transmission model by providing experiences outside the school, and also focus on building basic skills and language capacities in them.

The programme was upscaled to all schools in two wards (G North and G South), covering 185 schools, in the year 2000. In 2004, a study by Kurrien and Patwardhan looked at teachers' perceptions of the impact of the Sangati curriculum on children and their perceptions of it as an enrichment of the regular curriculum found that it was

generally viewed as a valuable supplement to the regular curriculum. In comparison to the regular curriculum, teachers saw Sangati as a vibrant, exciting programme with new ideas and thoughts. There was appreciation of the teaching-learning materials (only Kits 1-4 were being used at the time), the activities, information and knowledge which were viewed as having a positive impact on children - in sustaining their interest, encouraging self-expression, social responsibility. Teachers also appreciated the concept of children's files and how they treasure and maintain them. Some felt that the worksheets were an unusual learning resources facilitating self-expression and stimulating imagination. In general, teachers felt that Sangati had positively impacted children, that were interested and involved in Sangati sessions, could better express themselves, become more inquisitive and had improved self-confidence, thinking skills and general knowledge.

The study also pointed to certain areas of concern. Concerns were raised by teachers with respect to relevance, comprehension and age-appropriateness, although there was no clear consensus on what constituted these terms. Teachers' perceptions of the Sangati curriculum were largely a product of their own understanding of the session, how it is taught, their own understanding of the issues/ concepts and their value system. The study pointed out that teachers' understanding of usefulness of the Sangati curriculum was often framed in relation to examinations and their workload, legitimate concerns for government school teachers.

The present study

This study aims to understand the impact of Sangati curriculum on children and teachers – those at the core of the intervention – within the context of its acceptance and embeddedness through implementation within the MMC system and the curricular practices of government schools. While assessing the impact of Sangati, we were concerned not to design the study around perceptions alone – although these are critical to its effective implementation – but also to examine perspectives and, importantly, processes involved in implementing the programme within the specific site of urban government schools. Towards this, we attempted to interact with all those involved in making Sangati a part of children's school experience. The study involved classroom observations, qualitative in-depth interviews with teachers teaching Sangati, group

discussion with children undergoing Sangati programme, interviews with MMC administrators and group discussions with AVEHI observers and coordinators who are responsible for continuous monitoring and implementation of the Sangati programme in the schools. Checklists and interview schedules were developed for the data collection, details of which can be found in Annexures 1-6 of this report.

The study did not explicitly analyse the content of the Sangati curriculum; however, familiarity with content was necessary to analyse classroom observations of Sangati sessions and discussions with teachers. The study involved interviewing teachers both before and after their sessions to get a sense of how they were engaging with the material and their reflections on sessions conducted.

The sample

The study was conducted in 28 schools based in 8 buildings of MMC run schools in 8 wards in Mumbai, one school building in each ward. The 28 schools encompassed English, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Gujarati, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil language mediums. Sangati runs in Classes 5, 6 and 7. Therefore, these were the classes in focus for this study.

38 classes were observed (40 sessions, with two teachers doing double sessions). Most of these (33) were Class 7 sessions; 5 sessions of Classes 5 and 6 (Kits 1-4) – 2 Class 5 sessions and 3 Class 6 sessions, which were observed only in one school in N ward. 39 teachers who taught these sessions were interviewed. We could not observe the Sangati session of one of these teachers for reasons beyond our control. There were 13 group discussions with children after sessions; 3 separate discussions in three schools - C, G, and K. 3 Administrative Officers and 5 Beat Officers of MMC were interviewed. One official from the Public Partnership Project cell of the MMC was also interviewed. Two separate group discussions were conducted with Sangati observers.

Limitations of the study

Data collection in the sample schools was conducted between December 2008 and March 2009, when most schools had completed several sessions of Sangati. For example, Kit 5

and 6 are to be taught in Class 7. Between December and March, almost all classes observed were teaching middle and latter sessions of Kit 5 and early sections of Kit 6, which was introduced in schools during the course of our study. Since the study did not span the entire year, we were only able to focus on a few sessions for observation and interaction with teachers and students.

In the year 2008-09, Sangati was officially being taught only in Class 7. Those teachers who taught it in Classes 5 and 6 undertook this voluntarily. We were able to observe these sessions in only one school.

For various reasons, it was not possible to interact with children outside the school setting to examine their perspectives and understanding of Sangati's relevance to their lives. This had been envisaged to be a significant dimension of the study, and that it is absent is to our minds a serious limitation.

Contexts of learning Sangati

In this study, we attempt to understand the impact of a curriculum intervention like Sangati within the context of children's and teacher's experiences. The municipal school children who are taught the Sangati curriculum and are exposed to its perspectives and distinct world-view come from poor, working class families of Mumbai, India's largest metropolis and financial capital. Many children supplement family income, either by assisting adults, or plying some small trade, or direct piece-rate wage work. Teachers by and large come from or have ascended to middle-class status and this predisposes them to viewing the children and their position as pedagogues in distinct ways. Many see their roles as moral educators, uplifting children from their situation of impoverishment, and education as a prime means to do so. Others see these children as intrinsically ill-equipped to achieve mobility through education, often citing their 'backgrounds' as constituting an insurmountable constraint. At the same time, teachers are aware of the many constraints that poverty imposes on these children, especially the girls. It is true that dropout rates after Class 7 are high in municipal schools, since there are few government schools beyond this stage, leading to what has been termed a 'blocked chimney' phenomenon (Juneja 2007). Parents keen on seeing their children beyond this

stage have to resort to private schools and coaching classes, which involve high expenditure. Although we have not examined empirical data, it is likely that in such a context household-level decisions regarding children's education at higher levels are likely to be skewed in favour of educating boys over girls.

In recent times, the MMC has introduced several incentives to ensure retention in schools. Significant among these is a set of twenty-seven items for children's daily use, including books, stationery, uniforms, shoes and socks, hot carriers for the midday meal, school bags and water bottles.

The eight wards selected by AVEHI for this study have different demographic profiles. Common to all, however, is the social and economic vulnerability of residents, most of whom stay in slum settlements, and the multiple deprivations they are subject to such as lack of health and sanitation facilities, food insecurity and low-wage, often hazardous, work. For most families there is an ever-looming shadow of eviction and involuntary resettlement elsewhere in the city as a result of land clearance for urban infrastructure and other projects. As studies have shown (CEHAT 2006), involuntary resettlement entails much more than physical displacement, traumatic in itself: a great deal of apprehension marks the period before physical shifting, a long period of settling down in the resettlement colony, in which access to basic health care and other facilities can be even more precarious than earlier and new restrictions operating on girls' and women's mobility. Increased financial burden accompany these relocations, with wages lost as adults stay home for necessary documents to be prepared before resettlement, delays in finding work in the new areas and increased expenditure on transport and basic commodities. Since evictions inevitably take place during the school year, and often towards the beginning, in the monsoon, schooling of children is severely affected. School materials are lost in the shifting, and there is increased expenditure on transport for children to attend their older schools till admission to schools closer to the resettlement areas, if they exist, is obtained.

The MMC schools are influenced by the demographic shifts brought on by resettlement of slums in the city, as the populations they were originally meant to serve have shifted to

other areas. The general trend within the MMC system has been that of decreasing enrolments. Since the mid-1990s, several municipal schools have rented out empty classrooms to NGOs and other organizations, even private trust-run educational institutions. In some areas where resettlement colonies have been set up, local municipal schools have been able to increase enrolments and thereby prevent closure.

The other major pressure on municipal schools has been the demand for private schooling and withdrawal of children from schools. There has been a profusion of private schools set up by educational entrepreneurs to meet demand in these areas. Typically, like in other cities across India, these newer, often unregulated and unrecognized private schools charge low fees, pay teachers low salaries, and hold out the promise of education in English. Several teachers report that they are often initially operated from small spaces, even residences, and even offer money to parents and scholarships to children as incentives.

By and large, the school buildings in our sample housed from between 4 to 8 schools in the various MMC mandated mediums of instruction. They were typically large, three to four storeyed structures, with one to two schools on each floor. All schools had walls with posters, paintings, and school notices; in some greater care was taken to maintain these. There was a great deal of variation in the condition of school buildings and classrooms. Some were clearly given more attention than others by teachers and administrators, and although it is not possible to confirm this without greater scrutiny, in general we found that the physical condition of the school bore some relationship to its location: the poorer the area, the worse off the school. In one school, an open area within the school had been converted into a garden. Another school was temporarily housed in a run-down building with no proper school furniture; yet another had no proper approach road in the monsoon when the ground around the school flooded.

In the following section, we give a brief description of the wards in which the sample schools were located and the children's backgrounds. This section is based on information given to us by AVEHI, and our interaction with teachers of these schools.

School D, M/East ward

This is a large ward covering Govandi and Mankhurd areas where the most marginalized sections of Greater Mumbai reside. This ward has 53 municipal schools. It covers many communities situated around the Deonar dumping ground. Many families have migrated from Uttar Pradesh, and the area has a predominant Muslim population. The slum communities situated in these areas lack basic amenities, which are also reflected in the schools in the area. Many of the families residing in the slums have been displaced as a result of demolition drives undertaken by MMC in other wards. Despite it being a densely populated area, there is not a single Secondary Municipal School in this ward.

Educational levels are low in the area and many children of the school are first generation learners. Their parents are engaged in low-income jobs: small businesses, like selling knick-knacks, construction work, and other daily wage labour like truck loading. Children collect things that get left behind by trucks on the highway and sell them. Children also pick up paper, scrap, plastic, bottles from the dumping ground and sell them. Criminal activity and violence is reported from the Shivaji Nagar area, where many of the children come from.

Mirroring the demographic profile of the area, enrolments in Hindi and Urdu medium schools are high. The latter has such high enrolments that classes are held in the corridors. Nonetheless, teachers reported that although many of the schools in the building were saved from closure because of large numbers of children enrolling from a nearby resettlement colony, numbers had been seeing a decline. Many teachers spoke about the private schools that have sprung up in last few years in the area. As there are few municipal schools in this area and none after Class 7, many parents prefer to already admit children in the private schools.

Teachers, many of whom do home visits and have seen the poverty within which the children live, told us that what the children do in school is basically all they study. Their parents are daily wagers and out of the home all day so there is no adult supervision of their studies or possibilities of support for their studies at home. The girls have a lot of

responsibility including looking after younger siblings. One teacher said that she sometimes let the children bring their younger siblings to the class.

School C, A ward

This ward has 7 schools and is spread between Colaba and Crawford Market in south Mumbai. The area is primarily a business and commercial area. The schools in this ward have very few students because of this and also because it is largely an upper middle class and elite area of Mumbai, with several elite private schools. Near the Colaba municipal school, there are a few colonies of fisher folk, with a sizeable Koli population. The non-Maharashtrians in the area are largely migrants who work as domestic workers, street vendors, etc. while others work in the police department or MMC.

Reflecting the relative economic prosperity in the area and the social demand for English education, the English medium school in this building has very high enrolment, with children in classrooms sitting on the floor right up to the teachers' feet. Children attending the school are generally from financially stable backgrounds. Most children belong to families associated with the nearby Naval offices and residences, as domestic labour or as lower-level staff. These children get dropped and picked up from school by their parents on their way to work and back. Some children also come from the slums in the area. Children of MMC workers residing in the area study here, probably because it is English medium. Many of the older children work after school.

School M, E Ward

E ward has 32 schools covering Byculla, Mazgaon and Reay Road areas. A sizable population of this ward is Muslim. This school which was part of our sample was shifted from Agripada to a temporary building. This school building is in bad physical condition. Cattle are tethered at the entrance of the school. Classroom infrastructure is in bad condition with broken desks, insufficient fans etc. Although the rooms are quite large and there are wide corridors, these are not maintained well.

Children coming to this school come from impoverished families. The children all work after school hours. Many sell vegetables which have been discarded by vendors in the

nearby Byculla market. Some children work in garages; others do leather cutting work, and make purses. Many of these children remain out of school during festivals. The communities around are constantly under threat of being evicted from their slums. There is a perception that these children do ‘dirty work’, and we heard about how they often had to be sent to be washed and cleaned before entering the class. We also learned that teachers sometimes spend their personal money on children’s books and notebooks, and children are seen as enthusiastic to learn.

School G, F/North ward

One of largest wards in Zone 1, F North ward has 57 municipal schools. It covers Wadala, Antop Hill, Sion and Matunga Central areas. A large migrant population resides here. The economic condition of the parents is poor and they work primarily as manual labourers, street vendors and in low paying petty trade. Many also work in the large unorganized recycling industry in Dharavi.

There are few facilities in the school. In the monsoon, the open area outside the school building gets flooded, and the school is forced to shut down. The ground and first floor is often submerged in water. A pipeline runs just outside the school. Teachers would earlier put benches on the approach way to help children reach the school. More recently, they have used Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan funds to build a road which can take the children inside the school during monsoons.

This is a large school, a big building and colourful from the outside, and has high enrolments of children. Some Hindi classes have as many as 70 children, crowding the room so much that the teacher cannot even reach the last benches. Observers have noticed that some children sit at the back of the class and play cards. There are more girls than boys in the school; apparently boys are transferred to private schools before they finish Class 7.

Children come from the many slum settlements around the school. Many come from communities engaged in pig-rearing. The approach to the school is through areas where sex workers work. There is a beer bar near the school which, according to observers, are

frequented by older children. Many children work after school hours selling vegetables and several boys work in garages nearby. Teachers and observers commented that many children, exhausted by the work they are engaged in, are often found sleeping during classes.

Quite a few children (both girls and boys) are overage and, according to observers, are not particularly interested in studies. Early marriage is a big issue for many of the girls. Among many boys, especially from the Hindi medium school, there is an overt attempt to project a distinctly urban macho image. Children have been given school uniforms, but the boys come to school in jeans, with dyed hair, carrying (and exhibiting) mobile phones. Some children in this school have made a deal with the tea vendor, where they go and distribute tea to teachers and in turn, get some money. According to observers, the boys use this money to smoke. They also sell off milk and other items that they get in school. There are incidences of petty theft. Some of the children sell off the 'raddi' (question paper, answer sheet) to earn money. Although teachers believe that children are interested in studies, they also see family background and adverse social environment as major impediments to the children's motivation to study.

School S, N ward

This ward covers Ghatkopar, Vidyavihar and Vikhroli (West) areas. Many of the school buildings in this ward are being repaired with the SSA funds. The sample schools are housed in two buildings, at a short distance from each other. The new school building has an interesting design, with classrooms set off at angles to the main corridors. This building also has a large hall and a terraced garden. The older building is not in as good a condition as the newer one.

Parents of children coming to this school are daily wage labourers, small vendors, plumbers and rickshaw drivers; mothers are domestic workers. Some 30% of the children come from families where the monthly income is low but more or less secure. A principal said that parents come when they are called by teachers. Many teachers reported that children were bright and interested in studies, but came from disadvantaged backgrounds that could not provide the necessary motivation to children.

School V, K/East ward

This is one of the largest wards in this zone, covering Andheri, Vile Parle and Jogeshwari areas. There are 60 schools in this ward. For administrative purposes, it is divided into two sub-wards.

School V is located between Andheri and Jogeshwari. The area around the school is forest (jungle) land. This school is spread over a large area, and the building is a single-storeyed structure with brick and tin walls and an asbestos roof. It is clean and tidy, nicely decorated with potted plants and *rangolis* in certain places. The children belong to economically poor backgrounds. Parents of many children from this school do daily wage work, scavenging, tailoring work and street vending. Children are also involved in some of their parents' work like tailoring and domestic work. They sell paper and take up cleaning jobs after school. It is difficult for parents to come to school to check on their child's progress.

School A, R/S ward

The ward covers Kandivali east and west area with 27 schools. Children come from far off areas (Damu Nagar, Hanuman Nagar, Borivali National Park) to the school. Many of the children who lived nearby have now been shifted to far off areas. Enrolments in schools have seen a drastic decline because of the slum demolitions. Still there are many children who come to the same school, but after traveling a long distance. Some children walk to the school from their resettlement areas, if these are not too far away. Parents cannot afford bus fare everyday for all children of the family. Many teachers and principals said they have been demanding bus passes for children from MMC. In fact, in one of the schools in this building, teachers and principal have been collecting money and giving it to needy children for bus fare.

This school, housed in a large building, has the reputation of being a good school, where teachers are known to concentrate on teaching. This is the reason parents prefer to send their children here even when they have been relocated to distant areas. Also resettlement

areas often do not have good school facilities, making long distance traveling the only option for many children.

There are some children who have been resettled near the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, and are constantly in danger of being attacked by wild animals. These children, mainly from the Telugu and Hindi medium schools, are among the regular absentees. Sometimes only one or two children from the family are sent to school. Many of the morning school children work in the afternoons; many of the Muslim children are engaged in cap-making, other children make bindis and do other home-based work, and some also work in Chinese eateries /stalls.

School K, H/E ward

This ward covers Bandra, Khar and Santacruz areas and has 44 schools. There is a sizeable Muslim population in this area. The students who come here belong to the lower and lower-middle income groups. Children in this school come from nearby areas and some from further off. They walk or take the bus to school. Most of the population around the school is from Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The school building was under renovation at the time of observation. Observers report that several children in this school do not avail of the mid-day meal, preferring to bring their own lunch. Some of them also buy stuff from the vendors outside the school. There are a lot of children in the Hindi medium school. The school observer also feels that there is some kind of competition between the Hindi and Marathi medium schools, in which children as well as teachers seem to take part.

Teachers in this school were concerned about the non-participation of the parents with regard to education of their children and felt the urgent need to take up community development programmes by NGOs so as to improve the home conditions of these children. One teacher complained that parents of only around 10% of the children give them adequate attention. Another teacher felt that unless the children's backgrounds change, they cannot develop. She felt that non-government organizations should do work to develop the communities to which these children belong.

Overview of the report

This report documents and analyses our interviews with teachers, children, AVEHI observers, principals and administrators in MMC, and classroom observations of Sangati sessions. We attempt to classify the data as indicating impact of Sangati on children and teachers, in relation to various aspects of Sangati, like materials, training, and implementation. We have tried to point to the various perspectives and approaches of teachers and administrators to Sangati in terms of its pedagogic value and place in the school system, as well as concerns related to its effective implementation and transaction in classrooms.

Teachers and Sangati

We interviewed 39 teachers from the eight wards, teaching Sangati in Classes 5, 6 and 7 in order to get an understanding of the significance they attached to the teaching of Sangati: as a perspective to understand issues as well as its content and methodology . The following table (Table 1) shows the profile of the teachers interviewed.

Table 1: Profile of teachers

| Years exp | Under-graduate | Graduate | Post Graduate | Total |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 0-5 years | 1 | | | 1 |
| 5-10 years | | 4 | | 4 |
| 10-20 years | 1 | 12 | 12 | 25 |
| 20-30 years | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| 30 and above years | 2 | | | 2 |
| Total | 5 | 18 | 16 | 39 |

Teachers' perceptions about students and of teaching and learning

Teachers saw their own role as crucial to the development of students. A few teachers felt that they are facilitators and guides and children learn on their own. Some others also felt that teachers are society's builders and that they shape children. They saw themselves as role models, in parental roles within the school - guiding children in their learning and as friendly adults in their personal lives. Many teachers felt that students respected and followed them, even more than their own parents, making it imperative that they live a disciplined life, a life with values.

'Background' constantly featured in teachers' descriptions of the children in their classes, generally as a sole impeding factor to educability and prospects of progress and mobility through education that they wished for them. There was a sense that their backgrounds –

environments not ‘good’ for them, the absence of adults to guide them, with both parents working and often disinterested in the education of children, inability to study at home – could be overcome if good facilities are provided in schools, since these provide the only spaces of academic engagement for children of the poor. A few, however, thought that not all changes can be brought about in the school and some efforts must be made to improve their ‘backgrounds’ so as to make the interventions in school meaningful and sustainable. Teachers also pointed out the difficulty with maintaining regular attendance of students in their class and the personal efforts they have to put in order to achieve it. Most teachers felt that given their circumstances, the students are ‘average’, interested in studies, are aware of their surroundings and are curious. A few teachers characterised their students as bright, participatory and enthusiastic. Many teachers spoke about students being good in extra- curricular activities. Maths, Science and English were identified as school subjects where students have the most difficulty.

Teachers identified the following pre-conditions for children to be able to learn at school: they must have good background (space at home, involved parents), must listen well, be sincere, pay attention and concentrate, be interested, be curious, be able to engage in self- study, ask questions and engage in discussions and group learning. A few teachers stressed the importance of life skills, and learning to respect others. Overall, studying well, the marker of the ideal student, is seen as a means to overcome their backgrounds, and to bring out their potential. As one teacher told us:

“They are bright and participatory children. They need motivation. They can rise a bit above their parents’ status—don’t aim unrealistically, but some change for the better can happen with paying attention to studies” (NT1)¹.

Teachers shared their varied interests with us and their keen interest in teaching school subjects Mathematics, Science, Languages, History and Geography. They told us that children too liked the different subjects taught in the school, mathematics and languages (English, Hindi, Marathi, and Urdu) being their top interests. Some children also enjoyed

¹ Each teacher will be identified by the ward, language medium and a unique number given by us to schools with the same language medium in a particular school building. For example, a teacher teaching in a school building in N ward in one of the two Hindi medium schools will be named NH1 or NH2.

studying Science, History and Geography. According to most teachers, many children in participated in extra-curricular activities like art, craft, music, sports and physical training.

Teachers' perceptions about Sangati

Teachers perceive Sangati in many different ways but feel that it is impacting some or the other part of children's lives. It was rare for teachers to talk about the impact of Sangati on themselves but a few did comment on it.

Relevance to children's lives

Some teachers felt that Sangati – its stories, pictures, morals of the stories – are related to children's lives. Sangati takes situations from daily life; therefore it becomes relevant for the children. Sangati helps children to learn about society, brotherhood and about themselves. Since Sangati raises issues and problems which children face in their day-to-day lives, Sangati teaches them coping strategies which will help them to progress. Teachers indicated that they often give examples from children's backgrounds to bring out the relevance of sessions; many said that issues in Sangati have a deep resonance with their lives, and helps them to understand issues of society, development and change better. One teacher (NU1, Class 7) commented:

“They understand that someone who sits on a chair earns more money than someone who does physical work. They understand that if they don't study, they will earn less money. They know that if they study, their financial problems will go. They get to know that they can live a better life”.

Another teacher (MM1, Class 7) pointed out that:

“It brings about social awareness. We teach a lot of ideals in the formal curriculum. Children tell us how difficult it is always to be ideal. Sangati helps children in developing their thinking ability. They can think negative and positive aspects of various things, for example, development”.

One teacher (HG1, Class 7) shared with us what happened a few days back in his class: “We spoke about how and why many of these children moved to Bombay. That was big change for them. They gave me lot of answers. These kinds of topics are relevant to children ”

After we finished observing his class, one teacher (FH2, class 7) said, “What happened in today’s skit (place to stay or place to play) is a reality for these children.”

One of the teachers thought Sangati to be relevant for children in order to prepare them better for their future and therefore it must be introduced earlier: “It is important for MMC children. Our hard work is not getting rewarded, there is no output. I think Sangati should be started from Class 1, it should definitely begin earlier. Parents of these children don’t give much attention to them. They don’t even have money- they have to take a bus and come to school, which they find difficult. They are going to go to other schools after Class 7, they have to be better prepared. ” (RM2, Class 7).

Role in bringing about change in society

Teachers have varied perceptions of Sangati’s pedagogic importance and value in schools. It is clear from the teachers’ narratives that there is a general perception that the content covered by Sangati is required for everyday living and also for ‘progress’ of children. They felt that children are the best initiators of change towards a better society and have to be at the centre of conceptualising such change.

According to one teacher (HH2, Class 7), “Sangati has things from daily life. They [the children] can read and understand. The practical things are useful, it is not like morals. It is conveyed through practice. These children are the beginning of change for a good society. If we want to be better, we have to start with them. Look at the corruption around us. They are the units. From now on things should improve. New generation should be good. In that respect, Sangati is very useful.”

A teacher pointed out (RT1, Class 7) that “knowledge should be in the right direction, which Sangati gives. Sangati has helped me think further on my own experiences. I have

taught it for three years now (Classes 5-7) and it gives children a good sense of nation and identity. ”

Another teacher (MU1, Class 7) said: “These children are smart. They know things that children from middle and upper classes don’t know. They also need to cope as well as progress.”

“Through Sangati children learn certain things like not to throw garbage on the roads”. (MK1, Class 7)

“It is related to children’s lives, it talks of science, doing away with superstition. It leads to development of children. It teaches that there is no good or bad profession. It gives them strength and solutions to different things. They get mentally prepared for difficult things. Their knowledge also increases.” (RH1, Class 7)

“It relates to their lives. They know about things and it’s important for them to know. Even if its talking about poverty, and less access, then these children would know that they will have to progress to access these facilities.”(MH1, Class 7)

Connection with school curriculum and engaging children in the classroom

Many teachers felt that Sangati is useful for children as it has links with formal school curriculum like Environment, Science, History, and Geography, and therefore children benefit from it. They felt that aspects of pollution and global warming are very important today and children should know about these. Children also get aware of current developments and debates, which will help them to lead their lives ahead. Some of the comments by teachers in this regard are given below:

“Sangati itself means ‘to be together’. It helps to learn more, as it is relevant to everybody’s life, so it also helps to develop new thoughts. ” (NH1, Class 7)

“The formal syllabus that we do ties one down. In Sangati classes, children can talk freely of their feelings. Objectives of syllabus match Sangati’s objectives. Sangati is related to other subjects too. Children are interested, it creates confidence in children.” (RU1, Class 7)

“It induces internal development of children. They learn to express themselves, they do various activities. It helps the students. It also provides historical information, this also leads to development.” (RH2, Class 7)

A few teachers saw Sangati as a multifaceted curriculum which is changing children’s views/ attitudes towards society, providing relevance to their own lives as well as to school curriculum, exemplified by the following statement:

“It’s relevant to all the subjects. I like it. It is filled with social values and understanding. I connect it with curriculum and teach it. It is praiseworthy, doing good to and for society and helping to enhance level of society. It is completely related to life. It brings society as a whole, goes beyond caste, class. ” (HH1, Class 7)

Almost all teachers felt that children understand and enjoy it, and even otherwise introvert children speak in Sangati classes. The form of Sangati is inviting for children:

“They understand and enjoy it. Even introverts speak. They are afraid of other things but engage themselves with this” (NM2, Class 5).

Another comment was: “They listen more because there are stories in Sangati.” (NM3, Class 6)

Some felt that Sangati was not only initiating children into thinking about issues and expressing themselves but was also encouraging them to study well as seen in this comment:

“Sangati helps the students to see both sides of the story. They have been introduced to both progressive and destructive changes. They become aware. With the teaching aids, their interest increases. I find children interested in this. Even children who never spoke, participate in Sangati class. They have also become more interested in studies in school.” (FH2, Class 7)

Sangati as value education

Sangati is seen by many teachers as embodying moral values, essential to good conduct in life. In the words of one teacher: “Morality, love, relation- without these, education is useless. Cooperation and love is true education, and that is what Sangati teaches.” (RH2, Class 7). We heard many other comments from teachers about Sangati and its importance in building a society which emphasizes values. For some of them, values meant moral/humanitarian values, which are fixed and passed on from one generation to another. For some others it had a broader meaning incorporating ideas like thinking, understanding, and criticality of thought. Below we give some examples of how teachers thought about Sangati vis-à-vis values.

“Sangati is very close to my own values, so I think I can communicate the ideas well. I don’t see any negativity in the material, I think it helps children to look at all sides of a situation, evaluate, sharpens their understanding. No contradictory messages.” (RT1, Class 7)

“It is important for children to understand moral values. Knowledge of subjects is not enough. They should have morality. Not like those terrorists!” (NH2, Class 7)

“I see myself as an ideal for the children. We should have values, then only children will follow. Our own behaviour must be good. I do not like to beat children. We have to attract them by love.” (KM2, Class 7)

“Children can become good citizens if they follow values taught by Sangati.. Our contribution to make India poor or bad is equally important. We should ask questions like how to make India better. We should not only know about good things.” (FM1, Class 7)

“They change their opinions/ values, acquire good values, learn to love, they keep engaged. The things in Sangati are relevant to their lives.” (NH1, Class 7)

“I like Sangati. This is behavioural. $2+2=4$ can be told by illiterate. But it goes beyond it, talks about manner, values.” (KH2, Class 7)

“Many people have researched and then have come up with Sangati. It’s a good thing and children get to learn about society. Because of people who have come up with Sangati, these values are in front of children. In curriculum, it is all hidden. ...Contradiction is always there in values. The situation given in the story today was very artificial, but if it is the matter of a friend’s life and death, then I’ll obviously lie. It won’t be a lie if I save someone’s life.” (HH2, Class 7)

“Sangati is related to children’s lives. Honesty is a value, it is important for children to know about it and Sangati has lessons about honesty.” (NU3, Class 5)

Teaching Sangati

Experiences of Sangati Training

Teachers teaching Sangati usually go through two trainings, one for each kit to be used in the year. 31 out of 39 teachers in our sample had attended Sangati training. Most of these teachers felt that the training was useful. It exposed them to the curricular objectives and methodology in conducting sessions. They saw the kits and the materials being demonstrated; and they themselves carried out exercises on conducting sessions. They were also oriented to the linkages between Sangati and other subjects in the school curriculum.

Many teachers said that training should be continuous as they learnt a great deal and it would keep them motivated and interested in teaching Sangati.

“It was helpful, we got to understand Sangati. Training should be continuous. We learn more, teacher would be in touch and would remain interested.” (NU1, Class 7)

“It was helpful and interesting. The people who conducted the training are very fine people. They kept the teachers very interested. We were from 30-40 schools and were engaged for 3 days. They told us about correlation of Sangati and other subjects. They also gave us information about how to do sessions.” (NH2, Class 7)

A few teachers felt that the training was not very helpful as they do not have much time in the school to do the activities as were done in the training. One teacher (FM1, Class 7)

also pointed out that the training could have clarified more sharply what was expected of children after they have gone through the Sangati curriculum.

Experience of teaching Sangati

Most teachers said that they were confident of conducting Sangati sessions but not all of them felt satisfied with their work. Some teachers conducted the session in the free periods, or when children were bored and in need of enlivening; some managing 1-2 sessions per week and some others 1-2 sessions per fortnight. Some taught Sangati whenever there was an overlap between a Sangati theme and a specific topic in a school subject. A few of them were happy to do this, despite the hectic schedule of the school and multiple responsibilities. The dissatisfaction of a large number of teachers could be traced to their not being able to spare adequate time, and they viewed Sangati as an intrusion into their schedule as an additional burden.

"I am not able to do it very well. There is no timetable for Sangati. There is no time for teaching this, or give it our best." (NU1, Class 7)

Despite these difficulties, a few teachers shared the ways in which Sangati has improved their own abilities and knowledge: "My information also increases, which is nice. I can also correlate it to other subjects." (AE1, Class 7).

In the context of the particular sessions we observed, teachers in general reported being comfortable and happy with their teaching. There were a few teachers who were not comfortable because they had not prepared for the session as they had no time or were not used to taking Sangati classes. Some felt the burden of being 'monitored' by the research team. Some of them said that they did not have enough time to delve deeper into the session or that they had to take Sangati class instead of a formal subject class.

Teachers seemed to appreciate the depth and breadth of Sangati, the materials provided in the kits (especially, posters, flipcharts), information and discussions, children's enjoyment with the stories and skits, their responses and enthusiasm, their views on problems and solutions, the values being taught through Sangati, the relation of the sessions to children's lives and building on their existing knowledge. A few teachers

added that the issues which are raised by Sangati cannot be handled in any other class, like in the science class, as they go beyond information and facts. However, there were a few who did not feel the need to teach Sangati separately, as these ideas are constantly spoken about in the classrooms.

A few teachers felt that they could further improve their teaching of Sangati with respect to including more activities (e.g. dramas, role plays, group debate) in the classroom rather than lecture, engaging children in projects and practically carrying out certain tasks (like using computers). A few more felt that more time for preparation, reading the manual and bringing in one's own ideas and examples would make the session better.

Sangati material and preparation

Teachers were all praise for the materials provided in the Sangati kits. Everyone unanimously felt posters and flipcharts were well-designed and effective in attracting children's attention and interest. They also found the posters/flipcharts as useful teaching aids for other classes/subjects too. We were told that children looked at the material on their own whenever they were free and teachers also encouraged this.

Teachers found the manual simple and the description interesting with lot of new information, knowledge, stories which can be easily appreciated by children of that age. For those who had not gone through any training, the manual was the only way to understand Sangati's aims. The manual was visible on the teacher's desk in all the classes we observed, whether or not the other materials to be used for the session were there or not. However, some teachers felt that the manual is bulky and has lengthy explanations that are hard to read in the limited time they can spare for Sangati. In these circumstances, the manual is cursorily looked at before the class; posters and flipcharts being more frequently used for conducting the session. This is reflected in the range of time teachers reported they spent reading the manual for preparing the session – 5-10 minutes to 1-2 hours (one teacher said she spared a day in the week to read and prepare for the session.) Many teachers felt that after years of experience in teaching, one does not take too long to read the manual. For some, the difficulty arose due to lack of time in school. As the manual is available only in English, Hindi and Marathi, teachers in

schools with languages mediums other than these (Urdu, Kannada, Telugu and Gujarati) had to make time to translate from these versions. Some teachers pointed out that they used lunch breaks, travelling time in trains and weekends/ holidays at home for preparing for the session.

Teachers' concerns about Sangati

Teachers who were positively inclined towards the Sangati curriculum expressed certain reservations about its content. Their concerns ranged from larger areas of discomfort with the broad thrust of the curriculum to teaching specific content areas. These need to be taken on board because they provide insight into the teacher's perceived capacity and confidence to deal with the content effectively and also as possible points of focus for teacher training.

Concerns related to the focus of the curriculum

One reaction we encountered was ambivalence about the representation of social problems in the Sangati curriculum. Some teachers were ambivalent about the content of Sangati particularly with reference to its projection of social problems and their solutions. Teachers felt more secure when solutions were offered; ambiguity, they felt confused children. While comprehending that this confusion is important to understand complex realities, some teachers questioned the aim of including these in Sangati. One teacher (AE2, Class 7) said that some stories are good, as they 'awaken'. She told us: "Various urban problems are there in Sangati. Increase of population, caste problem in villages and class problem in cities are spoken of....It is frightening. I want some solutions to these problems. What will it bring in children?" She felt Sangati gave knowledge about environment and that children could be confused by this information. "There is a fear of what will happen in the future. It's a reality for them. When we can't bring answers to these problems, what do we tell these things for?" She added that the story of corrupt leaders is another example of this confusion. "Children know these things. But what should they do after learning this story?"

As mentioned earlier, the teachers who expressed these concerns were those committed to teaching Sangati and perceived its relevance as a curriculum intervention in schools.

Underlying their critique was the concern that children of the urban poor whose lives and experiences are circumscribed by many of the situations depicted in Sangati, require inputs that affirms positive self-image and a sense of security, a 'way out' as it were. One teacher (MU1, Class 7) said that the children need to cope as well as progress. According to her, although they live with these issues, it is important for them to learn and know about them. She felt that even if Sangati talks about poverty, and less access to facilities for the poor, these children would know that they will have to progress to access these facilities. She felt that Sangati is emphasizing "darkness" in the end. She said that Kit 5 made children realize that change and progress helps and benefits elite classes. She wondered what happens to children who come to MMC schools when they learn that changes help others (rich) more than themselves. She knew that through these classes, awareness about surroundings might happen but is worried about the effect of such realization on children.

A teacher (FM1, Class 7) said that teaching Sangati makes her sometimes feel that children are really changing, but actually there are no lasting effects. She felt that parents should be given such lessons, only then can children be really impacted. On the same lines, another teacher felt that Sangati is not doing enough to change children's lives. If change has to happen, she felt, it needs to happen at a larger level. "Just talking of change in school is not enough for these children. Lot of girls here do housework and then come to school. Some children just don't change, whatever you might teach them. They all sleep late, watch TV; play till late at night because of their home conditions." (HM1, Class 7)

Teachers also expressed the concern that such awareness may not be appropriate for young children. One teacher (MM1, Class 7) felt that there are lots of negative points in Sangati. She said, "I feel sometimes that it shouldn't be so negative, as these children are too small. These children already live difficult lives. In fact, these children have much more exposure than the children in private schools. For these children, Sangati is related too much to the reality. In this age group, some innocence should remain. We should give children some idealism." She further voiced her concern by saying: "If the values in Sangati are different from the teacher's own values, wrong message can go sometimes.

When the values don't match their personal beliefs, don't take those classes. It depends on the teachers.”.

Difficulty level of content

Teachers felt that there are some sessions in Sangati which are too difficult for children to understand. One teacher gave examples of greenhouse effect, ozone layer, computers and the use of internet for marriages. “They don't use them or see them in their lives, so it is difficult for them to follow.” (FM2, Class 7)

Some teachers felt that students may have problems relating to the content since it demanded a higher order of comprehension. They put such content down as being too ‘difficult’, especially when it does not relate to children's own experiences. “They don't understand the problem of increase in population. They themselves have many siblings. They might find it difficult to relate to this. It is a bit high.” (NU1, Class 7). Another teacher was of the opinion that if they study from today, it is beneficial for them, for their future. “They are going to face these problems; it will help them handle these. Some things are difficult to teach.” (RM1, Class 7)

Some teachers, even those who conducted sessions in an engaging manner in the observed classrooms, expressed discomfort with the sessions on democracy and politics. One teacher (FTm1, Class 7) said that although she told the children that India is one and everyone is equal and that it is important to vote for better people, she found this session more difficult than similar content in textbooks. Some teachers found it difficult to discuss politics and religious tolerance. Referring to a session in Kit 5 (Session 3: “I am what I want to be”), a teacher (EU1, Class 7) said that she found it difficult to talk about Hindu-Muslim conflicts to children. “I keep the children and myself away from politics. I do teach civics but engaging with today's politicians it is not worthwhile.”

An area of almost universal discomfort was discussions around the body. These ranged from outright rejection as inappropriate, to realising its basic significance and teaching the sessions in sex-segregated groups. The sessions on the ‘Body and its Changes’ in Class 5 came in for a great deal of discussion. One teacher (NU3, Class 5) said, “Body

parts lesson is difficult because no one wants to talk about it, though it is very important.” Another (NM3, Class 5) pointed out the difficulties in teaching chapters like ‘body’ with both girls and boys. “It is not needed here. Children do not relate to it, as they have not yet faced any of it. In Class 7, they will relate to it better.” Some teachers felt that talking about these things between teachers and students is difficult. While some teachers said that they did not take the session, others said that observers took the session separately for girls and boys. There were a few teachers who felt this session is very important and they taught it in their classes. One teacher (NK1, Class 7) said: “I taught the chapter on bodies this year, even though many teachers objected. I even showed them the posters. I feel that we protect our children from all this, but these children live in small one room tenements and see everything, so its better that they get the correct information so that they can protect themselves.”

Need for a tighter relationship between Sangati and official curriculum

Many teachers felt that Sangati is an enriching programme, but there is very little time for teaching it within the constraints within which they operate. A teacher (MM1, Class 7) who had actually taken a very engaging session, commented during the interview: “It is time-consuming. We are not so much in favour of such a programme. Yes, I do enjoy when I do the sessions, but that is my style of teaching. I have to enjoy the lessons that I take. But there is a lot of burden on teachers, and Sangati increases the burden. AVEHI people should teach Sangati.”. On the other hand, one of the teachers strongly felt that ownership of Sangati by the teachers was the only way by which children would take it seriously: “I like it. But I think teachers should be involved in it. Only then children will take Sangati seriously. For the last two years in this school, I didn’t see teachers taking Sangati classes much. Mostly, AVEHI people have taken the classes. It should be introduced into the formal timetable for at least once a week.” (MM2, Class 7). A few feared that if they give it importance and time, the Beat Officer reprimands them for slow progress in other subjects. A few more felt that if these lessons would be part of formal curriculum, then it would be helpful. Some felt that the lessons do not tally with the formal curriculum, but are important for children to learn. A teacher, while acknowledging Sangati’s contribution in generating interest among students, said that

“Sangati is like an entertainment but not very much relevant to the school syllabus. One has to make it more scientific (factual information must be reliable) and related to school curriculum.” (FH1, Class 7).

Sangati in classrooms

We observed one Sangati session each in 38 classrooms of Classes from 5-7 in eight wards of the MMC. Since it is not mandatory to teach Sangati in Classes 5 and 6, we could observe these sessions in only one school building (total observations: 5) where teachers teach Sangati voluntarily. A large number of the classroom observations were done in Class 7 (total: 33). The following table (Table 2) gives the breakup of the total number of sessions observed by ward/ school building, number of schools and class.

Table 2: Profile of school sample

| Ward | School Building | No. of schools | Class | | | Total |
|----------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| M/E | D | 5 | | | 5 | 5 |
| A | C | 1 | | | 1 | 1 |
| E | M | 1 | | | 1 | 1 |
| F/N | G | 4 | | | 5 | 5 |
| N | S | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9 |
| K/E | V | 4 | | | 5 | 5 |
| R/S | A | 6 | | | 7 | 7 |
| H/E | K | 3 | | | 5 | 5 |
| 8 | 8 | 28 | 2 | 3 | 33 | 38 |
| | | | 38 | | | |

In this chapter we will give an overview of trends/ patterns we observed in the various classrooms, followed by a more detailed description of a few classroom sessions. A few of the Class 7 Sangati sessions were observed by us repeatedly in various wards and schools and we chose these particular sessions for more detailed analysis as they were

enacted in the different classrooms vis-à-vis their conceptualization reflected in the teachers' manual.

We observed Sangati sessions in eight different language mediums. The following table (Table 3) shows the number of sessions observed according to the language mediums. The maximum number of sessions were observed in Marathi and Hindi medium schools (total: 25), and the rest in other language mediums (total: 13).

Table 3: Sample schools by language medium

| School | English | Hindi | Urdu | Marathi | Kannada | Tamil | Gujarati | Telugu | Total |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| D | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | | 5 |
| C | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| M | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| G | | 2 | | 2 | | 1 | | | 5 |
| S | | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | | | | 9 |
| V | | 2 | | 3 | | | | | 5 |
| A | | 2 | 1 | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| K | | 2 | | 2 | | | 1 | | 5 |
| Total | 1 | 11 | 6 | 14 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 38 |

Barring a few sessions which we observed from Kits 1 and 4 (used in Classes 5 and 6), the majority of the sessions observed dealt with Kits 5 and 6. In all, we observed 40 Sangati sessions in the 38 classrooms (two teachers took double sessions). Although we interviewed 39 teachers, we could not observe one of the teacher's classes due to reasons beyond our control. The following table (Table 4) gives the details of the sessions observed by kit number, session number, title and the number of times a particular session was observed.

Table 4: Details of sessions observed

| | Kit no. | Session no. | Title | No. of times observed |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1. | Kit 1 | 17 | Mind and senses | 1 |
| 2. | Kit 1 | 22 | Who is responsible? | 1 |
| 3. | Kit 4 | 3 | The world in my family | 4 |
| 4. | Kit 4 | 8 | The wall we build | 2 |
| 5. | Kit 5 | 9 | Bringing the world closer and closer | 1 |
| 6. | Kit 5 | 10 | Economic changes | 1 |
| 7. | Kit 5 | 11 | Political changes | 1 |
| 8. | Kit 5 | 13 | Changes in environment: the world picture | 2 |
| 9. | Kit 5 | 16 | Different angles, different views | 2 |
| 10. | Kit 5 | 17 | Assessing change: understanding progress | 4 |
| 11. | Kit 5 | 18 | Place to stay or place to play | 2 |
| 12. | Kit 6 | 1 | When tomorrow comes | 1 |
| 13. | Kit 6 | 2 | Who am I ? | 3 |
| 14. | Kit 6 | 4 | Exploring values | 3 |
| 15. | Kit 6 | 5 | Life skills for daily use | 1 |
| 16. | Kit 6 | 6 | Trying to connect | 3 |
| 17. | Kit 6 | 7 | Crossed wires | 5 |
| 18. | Kit 6 | 8 | Please wait...connecting | 2 |
| 19. | Kit 6 | 10 | Conflicts within | 1 |
| Total | | | | 40 |

Classroom observations: an overview

In the classroom observations, we focused on the content of the class, the way it is conducted – means of introduction, the use of materials/ activities in the classroom, the level of engagement of children and teacher, gender aspects and conclusions drawn by the teacher.

Introduction

In the classes observed by us, teachers began the session in slightly different ways. Most of the teachers began by using the poster, flipchart, first exercise or story. There were a few teachers who spoke of the topic of the day briefly and what children will learn through it before beginning the session. A few teachers tried to arouse curiosity among the children about the theme they were going to explore through questions. Sometimes, teachers got students involved in the use of Sangati materials, making them read the story, hold the flipchart or enact some roles. However, most of the teachers read aloud from the manual or the text behind the flipchart/ poster. A few narrated the stories in their own words.

Materials used

The most commonly used materials from the Sangati kit were the Teacher's Manual and Flipchart/Posters. The teacher largely stood in front of the class and showed the poster/flipchart to the class. There were a few teachers who moved around in the class, so that everyone could clearly see the pictures. There were a few times when it was observed that the teacher could not find the kit bag or the materials prescribed and thus the teacher continued the session with the help of the teachers' manual. A few teachers also used the blackboard in order to record important points which they thought needed to be emphasized or children to copy in their notebooks. 'Kites of Change', an important material which was to be created by the students as they went along the Sangati sessions, was seen in only two classes. Some teachers during the interview reported using additional material in class, as and when they could. We also realized that the factsheets and worksheets were distributed in bunches due to many practical constraints and thus were not usually discussed immediately after the session was over. It was a welcome sight to see this happening in one of the classrooms we observed.

Activities used

It was more difficult to see activities recommended in the manual getting carried out in the classrooms, with more than half of the observed classes not carrying out even one

activity. Even when activities were conducted, not all the prescribed ones were done. Due to space and other constraints of the teachers, they chose activities which suited them or the class organization, like activities/ tasks which children could do while remaining seated in their places rather than moving around in the class. A few teachers were seen to get the students engaged in role- plays and group discussions, but these were very few.

Engagement of children and the teacher in Sangati classes

Children by and large were very enthusiastic about Sangati sessions. They listened to the teacher attentively, responding to questions raised by the teacher as and when required. Generally, they answered the questions raised by the teacher in chorus or individually when pointed to a particular student. Use of flipcharts/ posters, group work, discussions, role plays saw a marked increase in the participation and enthusiasm of children, irrespective of whether questions were asked or not. In a few classes, children were fairly distracted with no response to the teacher's questions or managing to give responses in spite of not listening to the teacher. We learnt that sometimes students read the manual on their own in their free time. This allowed them to get acquainted with the content of the sessions and also respond to the questions when needed.

Students' participation and engagement was related to teachers' own engagement and preparation for taking the Sangati session. Most of the teachers conducted the classes conventionally through the lecture mode, having done prior preparation, barring a few who had not prepared for the session. One teacher categorically told us that he does not do Sangati classes and that he was totally unprepared for the class. Teachers explained the content of the sessions at length, often bringing their own examples and explanations to communicate the ideas better to the students. There were a few teachers who were more enthusiastic, who did not read directly from the manual and made special attempts to engage the students. They asked many questions, encouraged students to answer, elaborated their answers with examples and reasons, and facilitated active discussions. It was the nature of questions posed by the teacher which facilitated or hindered student participation. Open-ended questions allowed students to give reasons and examples

relevant to what was being discussed in the class, otherwise they were restricted to giving 'one word'/ 'yes'/ 'no' kind of responses.

Several sessions we observed only partially reflected Sangati's aims and intentions. The teachers used the content (in part or full) from the manual but did not necessarily follow the methodology. Often the content was selectively handled and filtered through the teacher's own value and belief systems.

Gender dimension in the classroom

In general, teachers faced both girls and boys while taking the session. They posed questions to both girls and boys and were encouraging to both. There were a few classes where a teacher paid more attention to boys and posed questions only to boys. Similarly, there were some other classes where girls were more enthusiastic about answering questions and were more attentive than boys. It is possible that the topic under discussion affects levels of attention but we have very little data to substantiate this. In a class observed on computers and its uses, boys responded much more; whereas in another class on environment only girls responded to questions.

Concluding a Sangati session

The sessions were concluded in varied ways. Some teachers drew out lessons from the stories and activities and concluded the session. Others read the last part of the manual and treated that as conclusion. In these instances, the conclusions were more closely related to the session. Many a times, conclusion became the teacher's idea about the session and contained the values/ morals which they felt are important for children to imbibe. Many teachers concluded by pronouncing ways in which children can develop themselves. The conclusions included ideas like studying hard to earn money and access to a better life, coming to school regularly, population control, developing ones own interests and qualities, saving money, respecting elders, living in harmony and unity with neighbours, purity of mind for a healthy society, equality of men and women, list of values to be imbibed. These were either very remotely related or at times unrelated to the crux of the session. On occasion they went against the very objective of the session.

We will now describe in detail a few sessions which we observed three and more times in the different schools. This description will also substantiate the analysis presented in the previous sections.

Description of select Sangati sessions

Kit 5, Session 17 – Assessing change: understanding progress

(Summary of the session: This session aims to assess the changes that have happened in the country since independence from different points of view. The visual aids through two activities show four different Indias, pointing to the underlying reasons for such differences and discriminations. The session brings about the idea that there is a wide gap between different sections of people in India and true progress would happen only when everyone is equal.)

This session was observed by us four times, in three different wards A, F, N, and in four different language mediums, namely English, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil. The English class was the biggest in terms of number of students (44) whereas the Hindi class had the least number of students (25) with more girls than boys. The Tamil class too had more girls than boys and on many desks one could see a girl sitting with a boy. All these classes had fairly good infrastructure, there were enough desks for children to sit on, and they were well lit and ventilated. The children in the English school were particularly enthusiastic about Sangati sessions and they on their own started to share their experiences with Sangati and things that they remembered from Class 5. The question about why Class 5 was remembered so well by children two years down the line is something we wondered about: was it related to the persona of the teacher, or the relative lack of complexity of the concepts? Children in many other classrooms also seemed to remember sessions from Class 5, knowledge about body being one of them. This class also stands out in our memory as children spontaneously discussed about their friends in the class: who is a ‘scholar’, who does math well, who is good in sports, which students are appearing for the scholarship examination. They were fond of their school, and some children had a sense of achievement in being ‘good’ in some aspect which the school valued and also others took pride that some of their classmates were considered ‘good’ in academics, sports or other activities.

The session was conducted in slightly different ways in the four classrooms. In the English class, the teacher gave an introduction to the session together with asking some factual questions about British rule on India, so as to look at progress from the time we got independence till recent times. She in fact combined the previous session and this one in one session (Sessions 16 and 17). The Hindi teacher, on the other hand, started the class by very general comments about the value of Sangati in children's lives (directed at us) and straightaway began the discussion on 'four Indias' from the poster. The teacher in the Marathi class connected the session with the earlier one and began discussing about 'four Indias' using the poster/ flipchart. The Tamil teacher too started by using the flipchart.

All the classes were highly teacher-centered. The teachers in the four classes asked children to describe/ interpret the flipchart/ poster and describe what they could see. Two of them stood in front of the class and children jumped to see it as well as to respond to what they could see, and the other two (Marathi and Tamil) moved around in the class to ensure that children could see the poster. The children were enthusiastic, interpreted the poster/ flipchart and responded to the questions whenever the teacher gave them the opportunity. Interestingly, the four teachers drew out different essences from the session. The English teacher emphasized the need to study well and be educated in order to earn money and progress. A student in the class also pointed out that poor people in spite of working very hard do not earn as much money as an educated person sitting in a plush office. To bring home the contrast in today's India and India of the yesteryears (coupled with her own values), she brought in examples like grandparents studying by oil lamps and today's generation not studying despite electricity, no telephone lines connecting villages and today misuse of mobile phones, not adequate sanitation facilities even today and use of open spaces as toilets. Without sufficient discussion the session turned into a descriptive one, where in spite of her examples, there was nothing more to understand than the increasing difference between rich and the poor and education being a means to bridge this gap (she combined the previous session with this one).

The Hindi teacher in a very rhetorical manner began by elucidating the difference between the different classes of people who belong to the four different Indias from the

students by asking various questions. In the process he told them how the rich waste natural resources like water, whereas poor are left wanting. He carried forward the discussion by bringing forth his values, namely how mental pollution is destroying the society and how its effect is worse than environment pollution. He explained another dimensions of the rich-poor divide: the innocence and benevolence of the poor and the greed of the rich. In the absence of opportunities, the poor do not get to study and work, a responsibility which, according to him, the rich should take to help the poor. He further told the students that different people in the society possess different kinds of knowledge and that this knowledge is not only created in schools but also outside. The conclusions drawn by him were largely about human nature; a sense of humanity and love for others as keys to building shining India. For him, Sangati is about morals and values and that is why it is making progress.

The Marathi teacher stuck much more closely to the manual and conducted the session by bringing out the contrasts between the different sections of society and drew the conclusion with the help of students that India has still not progressed. She carried out the debate on ‘place to stay or play’ and also tried to create a situation of dilemma for students (combined the next session). But she enacted the role of municipal commissioner, thus retaining the authoritative power of declaring the final decision. One got a feeling that such amicable solutions are simple to arrive at! In the Tamil class as well the posters/ flipcharts were shown and discussed and the conclusion was a bit simplistically drawn saying that if everyone is provided with the facilities of electricity and water, then our country will become developed like America. She emphasized the need for preserving natural resources.

Kit 6, Session 7 – Communication 2 - Crossed wires

(Summary of the session: The first activity – Chinese Whispers demonstrates how messages get distorted in the process of reaching the receiver. In the second activity, a game, children interpret pictures, differently from each other. The third activity is about two students reading two stories, which are two perspectives about the same incident.)

We observed this session 4 times in two different wards: R and H, carried out in three different language mediums: one class each of Telugu, and Hindi, and two classes of Gujarati. All classes, other than the Hindi class, were relatively small. There were 12

students in the Telugu class, 53 in the Hindi class, and 26 and 14 students in each of the two Gujarati classes. The classrooms had decent infrastructure facilities and a few of these classes, due to the special efforts of the teacher, were decorated with charts and drawings on the boards fixed to the walls. One of these classes also had the kites of change hung on the wall. One of the Gujarati teacher conducted the class in Hindi, which we were told was a usual practice in this class, the manual being in Hindi.

There were some differences in the way the teachers introduced the session to the students. All the four teachers tried to give an overview of the topic they were to do in that session and one tried to raise some curiosity among children about aspects of communication. The Telugu teacher introduced different forms of communication and illustrated how in the news for the hearing impaired actions rather than words are sufficient to enable communication. The Hindi teacher used the blackboard to write the main points of the session, emphasizing the need for concentration in order to learn and understand better. The other teachers largely stuck to some aspects of the session as is given in the manual. They recapitulated the earlier session/s, connected it to what they had been learning recently and one of them explicitly drew the students' attention to kites of change and how what they are going to learn in the session is also related to change – change in communication.

The session was more or less completed by each teacher and not much deviation from the main ideas of the session was seen here (unlike the session *Assessing change: understanding progress*). The Hindi teacher used the poster and the Jayu-Parveen story to conduct the session but neither could engage the children nor did the children participate in the discussions. There was no interaction in the classroom and the teacher repeatedly emphasized the need for concentration in order to listen, understand and analyze. He was quite an authoritative figure, not hesitating to use mild physical punishment in order to draw students' attention to what was written on the board. The Telugu teacher, on the other hand, made the purpose of the session clear and the importance of good communication, maintaining eye contact and attentive listening across various spheres, from diplomacy to interviews. She also cited examples of communication from epics as well as from the more contemporary film *Slumdog Millionaire*. She discussed the

importance of experience in life, which the poor children have in abundance and which makes it possible for them to raise to higher levels. She added that experience needs to be complemented by sharp observation, understanding, confidence and good communication. She spontaneously enacted roles to convey her point. She was an animated teacher, a good communicator and very encouraging to students to express themselves. She finally highlighted the importance of two values - equality for all and talking and communicating with each other. She carried out all the activities of the session to illustrate how each individual sees and hears different things. The students also enthusiastically participated in the session.

Both the Gujarati teachers were fairly encouraging to the students of their class and followed the manual. One of the teachers got his class to repeat the role plays they had done in their earlier class (we were supposed to observe his class the next day but agreed to do the session for us a day in advance) and pointed out the different forms/ modes of communication. He told them some characteristics of communication from these role plays, that it includes questioning, convincing, body language and facial expressions. Both of them engaged their students, probing, prompting, questioning them. Both the teachers concluded from the Chinese Whispers activity that lack of attention and poor speech quality lies at the core of poor communication and often leads to misunderstanding and could have serious consequences. They further tried to show how our feelings, interests affect what we see, hear, attend to. The Jayu -Parveen story created a good ground on which the students could discuss positions held by different individuals, its impact on communication, how it could lead to misunderstanding and conflict in the absence of communication. One difference which could be seen in the two classes was that in one of them, the students focused more on the individual positions held by Jayu and Parveen and their correctness/ incorrectness while the other focused on the need to establish better communication in all situations and the need to think before speaking so that misunderstandings are reduced.

Kit 6, Session 6 – Communication 1 - Trying to connect

(Summary of the session: This session brings about the idea that communication is a skill that everyone has, we can enhance and improve it, and that it is a two way process. The visual aid in the first activity introduces the idea that we communicate differently.

The next activity of role play lets children enact different kinds of communication that we all engage in. The last activity explains how communication is a two way process.)

This session was also observed four times in four wards: H, K, N, R. These classes were held in three different language mediums: Marathi (2 classes), Hindi and Kannada. The Marathi class in ward R was the biggest with 51 students, and the Kannada class was the smallest with 6 students. It was actually a multi-grade class with 10 students from classes 4-7 sitting in the same room. The other two classes had 25-30 students. The classes were lit and ventilated, spacious with enough place to sit. The girls and boys in general sat in separate rows and columns. The Kannada classroom was full of charts and posters; it also had the kites of change and even the colourful Sangati world map.

The teachers handled the session differently, the difference here was more in methodology than content. The Kannada teacher asked certain questions, not directly connected to the session, but to arouse curiosity. The teacher told how one must not while away time by watching entertainment serials on the television but informative programmes like news, Discovery and National Geographic channels. She told the students that it is important to gain knowledge and earn money, in order to live in this “partial” society. Then they will be able to fight the corruption which stops people from getting their due. One of the Marathi teachers (ward K) introduced the session by asking them to define the word ‘samvaad’ or communication and give examples of places where it happens. The other Marathi teacher (ward R) recapitulated an incident from the previous day when the students in the class asked many clarificatory questions from a student who was describing her residential address. She then announced that the session will be devoted to understanding such issues of communication skills. The Hindi teacher on the other hand asked students about communication, knowledge, the role and importance of ‘guru’ in imparting knowledge, the things that are used in the process (blackboard, chalk). He also told them that much of knowledge is gained through sensory experience and expressed using other body parts. He then read the introductory paragraph from the manual.

The Kannada teacher read from the manual and discussed the points with the children by asking questions. She engaged children in interpreting the flipchart and followed by

discussion. She had a rhetorical style and enacted roles whenever needed and encouraged the students also to imitate her. She then elaborated on the changes that are seen as children grow into adults. Her personality could infuse life in the class and one could see the effect of a Sangati session in a classroom when the values of the teacher matched Sangati's. The Marathi teacher in ward K gradually took the students through the different pictures in the flipchart, asking them what they can see, what could be the situation and how they inferred it. She however did not wait much for the responses and went on to read the interpretation from the back of the flipchart. She held the flipchart in a manner that only half the children could see it clearly, the girls trying hard to see the pictures and answer. In spite of some children raising their hands, she often did not create enough opportunities for them to express. Further, a few role plays were enacted by a few girls, as described in the manual. She ended the session by pointing out that all the role plays were examples of communication. She did not seem very comfortable with taking the session, although she completed the activities suggested for the session.

In contrast, the Marathi teacher in ward R took a fairly long time to discuss the flipchart, stopping at each picture for students to describe what the participants are doing/ feeling, why they are doing/ feeling so and reasons for their inferences. She ensured that each student in the class got an opportunity to participate in some part of the session (the flipchart or role plays or Chinese whispers) and students reciprocated the enthusiasm in the classroom, although a bit shy to begin with. She was particular that the students did not answer in chorus or gave responses which did not correspond to the question. She disapproved of a statement by a male student who said that the woman leader in the picture outside a locked factory could be taking money from the owners. She explained the different ways of communication like gestures, posters, advertisements besides verbal communication. She gave examples to show how change in tone indicates our mood/ behaviour to others and how it is possible for us to understand the relationship between two people engaged in a communication. She also discussed the criteria when communication is possible (the need for more than one person, silence between them not being a criterion, proximity, clarity in speech, need to pitch it at the age/ level of the person etc.). She drew a figure to discuss these points. She ended the session by

discussing the worksheet for this session, a first for us. It was one of the few instances when a teacher completely covered the session as is recommended in the manual.

The Hindi teacher could not find the flipchart and thus used the manual to show the pictures. He moved around with the manual so that children could see the pictures but often did not wait for them to answer. The children were enthusiastic but did not get enough opportunities to speak but participated in whatever was happening. He read out the interpretations from the manual. He translated 'sampreshan' to dispatch in English (as in the post office) and also told that communication is give and take of knowledge which involves a messenger and a receiver. He too explained what are the different ways of communicating and the fact that we engage with it without our knowledge, that we can improve it all through our lives. He got the students to enact the role plays and made a boy 'daadi', which was vociferously objected by this boy but the teacher did not change his opinion. Being a poet (writes on contemporary issues), he admired certain performances, asked some others to repeat. This was one class where the role plays did not seem to be rehearsed and one saw a very nice effort by the students to help each other construct dialogues spontaneously.

Kit 6, Session 4 – Exploring values

(Summary of the session: This session focuses on values. The first activity demonstrates to students, values that we are taught as children and the ones that we pick up through experience. The second activity is a series of stories that are read out to children that allow them to explore their own values, regarding what they will chose to do in certain situations. The third activity is a craft activity where each child writes one value and then these are linked together.)

We observed this session in three wards: H, K, R. One was a Marathi medium class and the other two were Hindi medium classes. Both the Hindi medium classes were big (40-50 students) and the classrooms were crowded, with not much light in the room. All the teachers carried out the activities as recommended. But the session being on values, everyone went on tell what values they prefer or believe in great detail and did not discuss the difficulty in choosing values at all. All dilemmas were very simplistically resolved. We heard sentences like 'the values are to be imprinted in our computer like mind'. Even when there were children in the class who were saying that theft may not be

bad in all circumstances, the teacher did not pay any attention to it and went on to say that 'stealing is bad'. Values like 'speak the truth', 'be good to others', 'do not steal', 'god is in everyone, respect everyone', 'work hard and earn money', 'do not pay attention to people who seek attention', 'do not eavesdrop on adults' matter but not a problem if they do it in yours', were heard often in these classes, in short, do the 'right' things always and be obedient. Two of them actually made children write some values or copy them from the blackboard, lest they forget. One of them spoke about narrowness of values which are applicable only to human beings but not animals which are ruthlessly tortured. According to them, the country will make progress if we all follow the values. Some of them were good narrators and students attended to them and sometimes said some things in unison. In some classes girls were more enthusiastic and attentive; in some others boys were more eager.

Kit 6, Session 2 – Who am I?

(Summary of the session: This session is about self image and how that is based on what we think of ourselves and what others think of us. The first activity is about reading out a story about a girl. Three students talk about this girl – from her perspective, her mother's perspective and the grand mother's. In the second activity, the teacher explains the concept of Johari window to students and how other people's reading about ourselves can change as we reveal more about ourselves to them. In the third activity, children write what they think about each other.)

This session was observed thrice in two wards: K, N. All the three were Marathi medium schools. Again the teachers largely completed what was expected in the session but not much discussion happened around the idea of self-image, construction of the self-image, influences on it and changes with time. All of them got the students to read the narratives of Shamu, her mother and grandmother and then summarized. This was followed by questions on the story of Shamu. There was one instance of gender stereotype: the teacher asked why Shamu was called a boy and a male student said that 'because she played and talked with boys'. The teachers raised a few questions given in the manual but not all.

The essence of the session differed in all the classes. One of them stressed the difference between the status of women/ girls in earlier days and now, saying that women today are at par with men in all respects – they have freedom and choice, they gets education, can

take up sports. She stated the hardships of Savitribai Phule and P.T Usha's achievement as an athlete and *kho-kho* player. Another teacher restricted herself to the story and the questions which followed and the students answered when called upon. The third teacher conducted the session to a large extent, involving the students to read the story and asking questions once in a while. She stressed the fact that they must know their interests, dreams and try to fulfill them by their own efforts. She asked a few boys and girls what they wanted to be.

Classroom observations: Concerns

As seen from the above description of many Sangati classes, there often appears a mismatch between Sangati's objectives and how a session gets transacted in the classroom, in terms of both content and methodology. While Sangati sessions are designed to open up discussion of issues that otherwise find no place in classrooms, and actively gives legitimacy to the problems and concerns of children of the urban poor, issues and dilemmas get treated in ways the teachers feel and think about them.

The classes were usually teacher governed and conducted in the lecture mode, with very few discussions and group work observed in the 38 classrooms we visited. The result was that they turned into factual lessons, rather than being exploratory in nature. Student participation was generally limited to answering questions raised by teachers and participating in activities chosen by the teacher. Very few teachers actually carried out all the activities recommended in the manual and most of the times they were rehearsed prior to the session, in some ways compromising students' spontaneous thinking.

We described in the previous section through the classroom observation of particular sessions, ways in which the content of the session changes during translation in the classroom. Most of the teachers said that they prepare for the session by reading the teachers' manual. Although they do refer to some if not all of the main ideas at the outset, in the course of the session the larger perspective presented tends to get accommodated within their subjective understanding of the theme. At the time of observation it appeared as if the teachers were not necessarily absorbing the objective of the sessions.

In the “Assessing Progress” session (Kit 5, session 17), we saw how the teachers simplified the content of the session and projected education or access to some other facilities as ways to move from the “underdeveloped India” to “developed India”. One of them went on to talk about rich-poor divide, humanity and human nature and an egalitarian conception of knowledge. Although, these interpretations are not out of context, the main aim of the session got lost. It is also noteworthy that in sessions which critique developing urban spaces for shopping malls and cineplexes (Kit 5 Session 10: “Changes in Society: Economic Changes”), the children’s attention was most marked when visuals of these were shown. Though the teacher could competently discuss the section on new developments, he did not touch on the other side of such development, or Buddhiram’s disappointment. Buddhiram, a character who questions new paradigms of development, appears in various sessions in Kit 5. In this session, he feels disappointed to see malls in place of mills in a newly "developed" area.

In terms of the objectives of Sangati- fostering inquiry, problem solving and decision making – we found that the content of sessions were filtered through the normative frameworks of teachers, in which education played a critical role in self development and, importantly, social mobility.

Similarly, the sessions on “values” got completely transformed into teachers’ ideas of values, largely moral values, important for children to learn. While many morals are discussed in Sangati, they are presented as life situations with inherent dilemmas. The contradictions of daily lives, dilemmas people go through to truly follow values are discussed. This emphasis on dilemmas was rarely engaged with; in most of the classes observed, values and morality were the principal issues focused on by teachers. Our interviews brought out clearly that many teachers understand Sangati as a curriculum aimed at teaching values to children (seen in many of their statements earlier). They see values as dichotomies - good/ bad, right/ wrong and shades of grey, a dimension that Sangati consistently projects as a critical way to understand social reality, is completely missed out. One teacher pointed out the connection between individual, education and society: “Values are a vast topic, it is not narrow. Humanity is to understand values. Education is to build a good society. We need money and therefore education. But

myself, education and society are connected.” (HH2, Class 7). This is an example of both how many of them understand the session as well as how they find its relevance for children. One of the teachers teaching this session, on further probing during the interview, seemed to appreciate the complexities involved in choosing values but was quick to point out that it was beyond children’s abilities to comprehend.

Another example of this subversion of aims was seen in a class where despite a very enthusiastic and vocal group of Class 6 students, gender stereotypes were legitimized by saying that girls should not go out of their homes after evening and they should not work in certain work places like modeling industry and film industry. But it is worthwhile to note that the girls actively argued against this statement and one can possibly say that a space was available to discuss such issues openly. However, more descriptive content of Sangati and values which are not likely to be contested like discrimination, pollution, different access powers of different people, importance of cooperation, living together, sharing, finding solutions to the problems, need for togetherness, fairness, division of labour, sharing of responsibilities, helpfulness were fairly well done by teachers.

The teachers seem to have understood the objective/ main idea of the session as introduction of a particular topic to children and not necessarily delving into nuances, dilemmas and contradictions that many sessions aim to bring forth for discussion. The Sangati teachers’ manual also does not state these things explicitly in the ‘main ideas’ of the session and one is supposed to gather this implicitly from the way the session is structured and organized in the manual. This in turn, runs the risk of dilution of the content and change in methodology of conducting the session.

Ideal teachers for Sangati

We did find teachers who were able to handle Sangati sessions better. They spent time in understanding the aims of Sangati and the objectives of the sessions and thus were also able to generate discussions, raise issues and convey the content well. It is probably true that when Sangati’s value framework comes close to that of the teacher, then sessions come alive with meaning. We describe a few such teachers below.

One such teacher was NM2, with a teaching experience of 34 years (Classes 5-7) and also teaching Sangati to Class 5 for the past 3 years. She was not highly qualified, having done SSC and D.Ed., but she had fairly progressive ideas about teaching and learning, gathered through her years of experience. She made girls and boys sit next to each other and learn to help each other from the very beginning. She was encouraging to the students and believed that they were good in academics and extra-curricular activities, more interested in the latter than the former. She also knew that most of the learning for these children happened in the school, home environment not being very conducive. Her own concern was that the children should learn and she tried to gauge their learning by asking questions at various points and listening to their responses. Keeping in mind the complexity of ideas in Sangati, she said that she spent enough time preparing for it and did it slowly with children, discussing issues of language, ideas/ issues, connections with other subjects. She told us that she brings in her own stories, flipcharts and other aids whenever required. She completed the session (“Who is responsible”, Kit 1, session 22) in one period when we went to observe her class; but she indicated that the ideas were fairly complex for children and it would take a couple of more periods to understand the issues. She asked many questions to the children to keep them engaged with the story and added her own explanations and children responded to her in chorus most of the times. She felt the factual details of the story are more amenable to children but not so much appreciation of the circumstances which lead to such situations or relate to mental agonies of a person in a difficult situation. She was reflective in her teaching practice and she could articulate the changes that she makes in a session in order to reach the students.

Another teacher was RM1 who also had been teaching Sangati for the past 3 years (Classes 5-7) and had a long experience of teaching (23 years). She had at some point worked with Stree Mukti Sangathan, a women’s organization, which influenced the way she understood the aims and objectives of Sangati. She believed ‘internalization of life skills’ as a must for these children and recognized the potential of Sangati to foster this. She understood that even if the level of content is a bit high for the children, it is beneficial for them as they have to deal with the problems early in their lives. All students in her class were engaged with the topic under discussion (“Communication 1 – Trying to connect”, Kit 6, session 6); she connected it with previous learning and

explained and elicited various aspects of communication, which reflected a good reading of the manual. She did not hesitate to discipline them once in a while, telling them about general values of listening to each other, not speaking in chorus, speaking to the point and then connected them with ideas they were discussing in communication. She was the one who finished all the activities as recommended and even discussed the worksheet.

NK1 was a teacher who acted as the principal of a Kannada medium school with 18 children overall and also was the teacher for the 10 students studying in the multigrade classroom with children from Classes 4, 6 and 7 (no student in Class 5). She was deputed to this school to close it down because of low enrolments but managed to convince the authorities to keep it going. She had taken pains to make the classroom cheerful, with posters and charts on the walls bought from the Rs. 500 given under SSA, and 6 large and bright 'Kites of Change' made by the children. There are two world maps on the wall, the colourful Sangati world map also being there. The teacher once again told the children about the value of using time effectively, gaining knowledge and money to progress. The class was abuzz with activity as the teacher started the session ("Communication 1 – Trying to connect", Kit 6, session 6); the children were involved in interpreting visuals, giving examples, reasons, sharing experiences. She used the material creatively and in an animated manner. She was one of the few who was willing to teach Sangati despite all troubles and did not want AVEHI observers to teach it.

RT1 had 16 years of experience and had also been teaching Sangati for the last three years to Classes 5-7. She has been awarded the Adarsh Shiksha Award under NPEGEL of the SSA and actually got this school reopened after 20 years of its closing down. She did a house-to-house survey and got 90 children to attend school, the first batch passed out only last year. She was very positive about the material and shared her interest in reading it thoroughly. She and her husband had been municipal school students and worked hard to get to this position, starting from similar backgrounds as the children in the class. She thus relates to them better and motivates the children in her class to study well and rise above parent's positions, which is possible according to her. She considered her role as teacher in helping children see all sides of a situation and evaluate situations. Sangati's curriculum and its values matches with hers, no contradictions and gets

translated well in the classroom. Her classroom reflected the engagement and enthusiasm and she communicated the importance of communication (“Crossed wires”, Kit 6, session 7) in ways so that children understood it and related to it.

HM1 and HM2 were two other teachers who had years of experience in teaching (30 years and 27 years respectively) but were teaching Sangati for the first time. They ensured that all children participate in their class, and managed to get children to do group activities in classrooms which were crowded and kept children’s interests alive throughout the various activities and discussions. Children looked engaged even when they were not directly participating in an activity and there was enthusiasm visible even in non-Sangati classes (we had reached early and peeped into the class). They both asked for examples and descriptions from time to time and talked about values they must emulate (e.g. cooperation, togetherness, equality, non-discrimination, saving money for further education, cleanliness, responsibility as a citizen). They brought in their own examples and experiences to share with children. However, both of them felt that nothing much can be done unless there is some improvement brought about in their home situation and surroundings. HM2 did not think the need for Sangati in the school and was a bit harsh on students admonishing them repeatedly, reminding them of what they did not have access to and what consequences they would have to face if they do not improve their behaviour or do not come to school regularly and study.

Children and Sangati

An objective of the study was to interact with children currently studying the Sangati curriculum. The following table (Table 5) shows the number of discussions with children on the Sangati curriculum after classroom observations (12) and two which were held outside school hours.

Table 5: School-wise discussion with children

| S.No | Schools | No. of classes where discussion happened |
|--------------|---------|--|
| 1 | D | 0 |
| 2 | C | 2 |
| 3 | M | 1 |
| 4 | G | 3 |
| 5 | S | 3 |
| 6 | V | 2 |
| 7 | A | 1 |
| 8 | K | 2 |
| Total | | 14 |

Discussions with children after Sangati sessions

Group discussions were conducted in 12 classes where children were being taught Sangati. The focus of these discussions was to understand children's perceptions of the Sangati curriculum. The aim was also to understand what they like about it; if and why they feel Sangati is different from other formal subjects. Children largely spoke of the three things, which they felt they had received from Sangati – information, moral values and awareness of social values and problems.

Information

Children listed out the various things they have read in Sangati about 'body' in Class 5, about 'earth' in Class 6 and about 'change' in Class 7. Many also responded by saying it

gives them knowledge. They said that they get information about old and newer times, and learn ‘good things’ – like cultivation of agriculture, medicine, life expectancy, education/ literacy, pollution. They also enjoyed learning about evolution, how the earth was formed, different kinds of lives of people. They found the information in Sangati to be useful for other subjects. Sangati was seen as a welcome supplement to the regular curriculum; all the children said that this information is not given in any other textbook, or is presented in another manner. One child said “From our curriculum, we get knowledge of history, like Shivaji. But the information in Sangati is different from the curriculum”. Another student said that “There are many things about which we don’t know much. Sangati will help us get general knowledge, which will help us in job interviews.”

Children seemed to enjoy the stories and the pictures which are new, interesting and different and allows them to relate to them better and thereby remember them. One child said that he taught his neighbours about Sangati and they too liked it. Interestingly, they were relieved that there was no examination associated with Sangati, making it undoubtedly more pleasurable than the regular curriculum.

Moral values

Children seemed to remember a lot of moral values mentioned in classes. Many said, “We should love others, cooperate with others, we should speak the truth and not tell lies, share our happiness as well as our sorrows.” Children shared many of their personal experiences in which they see Sangati to have played a role. One boy shared that how after a fight with a friend, he went and said sorry to him and the matter ended. Others said that they have learnt about good behaviour, truth, hard work, helping others, respecting others, maintaining cleanliness in school and home surroundings. One boy said that he has learnt that “We should not misguide others, come to school regularly, listen to elders”. Another said that they help their neighbours. A boy said that they help the blind cross the road (their music teacher is blind and they daily escort him to the station) and don’t trouble people. In the context of a classroom discussion on values, one child had made the remark that stealing money is bad and that by hard work one can undo the

damage (in this case, replacing a pair of sunglasses which had been broken by a child). During the discussion, he clarified with the help of some others that the accused could do some work like drawing, painting and sell them to earn the required money. They further talked about non-violence and non-discrimination as values they have learnt.

Children have also been affected in their eating habits. A child confided how he has stopped eating *vada pao* and wafers which he has learnt are bad for health, but are temptingly advertised on the TV. A girl narrated her story of not throwing her *roti* after learning how the *roti* reaches ones plate. “It is a long chain of effort”. Children said they use these learning in their daily lives whenever they can.

Awareness of social values and problems

Students seemed to have learnt the extent of discrimination in society on the basis of caste, class and religion through Sangati. There is discrimination between India and Pakistan and politicians like Raj Thackeray discriminate between people on the basis of language. Many said that they learned that there are a lot of disparities between rich and poor – the poor are deprived of food, clothing, money and employment. Several children were able to see this as a systemic social problem, something that Sangati does aim to explain. As one child said, “No one gives work to the poor. The rich have more education, more knowledge and have more work also. People get different kinds of wages, farmer less, bosses more. Then they take loans and are always indebted. There are difficulties of access to basic facilities, like villages still do not have adequate food, medicine, water.”

They also realized that some progress has been made by the country, like literacy rates have increased, and there is some equality between boys and girls in terms of education. They see progress in themselves as “we study more now and know what is wrong and right”. A Class 7 boy said, “There is no more discrimination and fighting in our class”. Many children said that equality is the key to India’s progress. Some felt that if all 4 Indias become the same then there will be progress. One student said that it is possible to make 1 India. “Do not discriminate, live in harmony. If all are equal, then it is possible”.

They felt that they are now more aware and that they knew about corrupt politicians and felt empowered enough to improve the situation. In one class, children said, “We have turned good now. Earlier we were naughty and illiterate. We have turned into *Buddhiram* from *Buddhuram*.” Children seemed to have understood the dichotomy between *Buddhuram* and *Buddhiram*, though simply, the latter as becoming thinking and more knowledgeable. Sangati projects *Buddhuram* as someone who does not question the new paradigms of development, while *Buddhiram*, the wise one, is a questioning person.

In a few of the discussions, children proposed solutions to the problems they had been studying in Sangati. With respect to the divide between rich and poor, they thought that the rich should give education and money to the poor as they have the resources. Children further continued by saying that the rich should give work to poor, set up industries in villages; provide electricity, schools and hospitals. The government should also have incentives for the poor. One girl said that the government or the rich should build houses with water tap for the poor.

In another discussion, on displacement, (Session18, Kit 5: “Assessing change, getting actively involved with change (Place to stay or place to play?)”), one boy narrated the experience of being shifted from Antop Hill station area. Another child spoke of protests within his area against efforts to move them. They could manage to ward off trouble as the adults in the area knew someone influential. Some children spoke about fights that break out in such situations. When asked whether it is acceptable to use unfair means and violence on such issues, they all said that it is being done by their parent’s generation and they will not do it when their time comes.

One Class 7 girl felt that we can solve most of the problems when people do their duties, and individuals take necessary steps. This girl, when posed with the problem of dirty toilets in their slums, said that the cleaner does not do his duty and clean it properly. If he does it then things will be fine.

There were a few children who were not sure of the relevance of Sangati and were not sure if it was necessary.

Other discussions with children

The study had initially aimed to have discussions with children in the community setting. However these were not possible to organize due to lack of time and difficulty in coordination with children outside school hours. Instead, discussions with children, in three classes from two schools (C and G) were organized. Sessions observed in these classes were the framework for discussion. Certain questions were prepared for each group discussion (Annexure 6).

School C

The discussion was on Session 17, Kit 5: “Assessing change, Understanding progress” (Four Indias).

Few children were able to recall the session. Rich and poor, literate and illiterate, basic requirements (shelter, improper food, lack of water) were seen as the principal differences. Significantly, children felt that the cause for the differences is due to good education and private schooling for the rich, as compared to government schooling for the poor.

To the children, ‘progress’ meant good school/ education, houses, fulfillment of their needs and a good and supportive government. There should also be no discrimination and everyone should have a respectful and accomplished life.

School G

The discussion was on Session 18, Kit 5: “Assessing change, getting actively involved with change” (Place to stay or place to play?)

Children recalled the session we had observed in this school, probably because they had conducted a role play for that session, for which they had practiced.

The worksheet that succeeded this session was related to a situation where the municipality decides to raze a hutment dwelling and is contemplating whether to build a municipal hospital or a five star hotel in its place. Our motive was to understand what

children thought about the worksheet - how they did it and whether there were some discussions around it in the class. Through children's responses it was clear that not all children had done this worksheet assignment. Among those who had completed it: some felt that a hospital should be built while some others felt that a park should be built. According to them, either of these would help people who live around.

Many children knew people whose houses have been broken and had been shifted to far away places. Although they agreed that it was good to live in buildings, they felt that these people had to travel longer for work, which was a negative impact of moving to distant places. It was clear to these children that only houses of the poor are demolished.

Children could not respond well to the question of how such conversations affect or help in their daily lives. They reiterated their learnings about history, geography, beginning of railways in Bombay, values, etc. when asked about the things they learnt from Sangati. One child spoke about coping mechanisms - that when he gets angry or friends provoke him, he counts backwards to keep calm. They all said that they never fight with their parents.

Sangati Observers

AVEHI's school observers play a crucial role in implementation of Sangati in schools. They interact with teachers closely, providing information, having discussions on content and methodology and monitoring the conduct and sequencing of sessions. In our observations it was clear that the 'AVEHI teacher' as the observer is called in schools, has come to be seen as part of the experience of schooling. As part of the present study, two discussions were held with observers and coordinators associated with the sample schools. (See Annexure 7).

Role and function of observers

Observers are trained for their role by the Field Coordinators who in turn are trained by the Chief Programme Coordinator and Core Team Members of AVEHI. In-house training sessions are conducted every six months, and aim to get the observers acquainted with the kits. Observers are oriented with kits and sessions. The content of the kits and linkages with other subjects are discussed. There are also discussions based on experiences of class observations during the training. Film screenings on social issues and book readings are part of the training. Newer observers are also trained in rapport building, speaking to children, talking to and convincing authorities. Participants raise issues for the senior members to discuss. Observers are exposed to the kind of questions and views they would come across from various people and the kind of answers that would be needed to satisfy them.

As regular workshops could not be conducted in the last two years, it was the observers' responsibility to encourage teachers. They built rapport with them and demonstrated how to do Sangati sessions. One of the observers said, "Teachers do have time limitations. They like the Sangati curriculum. We tell them that some of their students might never study again, and that they should give as much as they can to them. It's true that teachers are burdened."

Observers provide pedagogical scaffolding to the teachers. They clarify the objectives of each session, help them in preparation if necessary, and discuss forthcoming sessions. They observe sessions to see if AVEHI's vision and purpose is communicated, and have discussions with teachers after the sessions if they feel these that there have been deviations. When teachers do not have time to prepare for a session, observers help them by sharing notes on the session. Often

when observers are unable to attend a particular class, a follow-up class is taken with students to assess how much they have understood.

Observers share a special rapport with the children, with whom they interact on a continuous basis, more in the role of mentor than teacher. Children's responses to the sessions are monitored and gauged through interactions and experience sharing by children. Observers maintain case studies of children in certain classes, through which monitoring of change is made possible in children and teachers, both at the personal level as well as in terms of classroom interactions. Worksheets are completely handled by observers. These are distributed and explained to the children and also checked by observers.

Observers observe four classes in a day, and a particular class only once in a week. Sometimes, when the teacher does not take a session, or is absent, the observer also has to return to this class. "We don't always sit in classes of teachers who take Sangati really well. Children in these classes respond well...we only go to these classes in the beginning of the year..." An observer said that some teachers do not like anyone coming in to observe them. In such classes, observers go only for follow up. Also, some teachers feel that observers are too young to tell them anything or correct them.

Observers have to balance their role of academic support and monitoring with the oft-placed demand for teaching Sangati themselves. Only in extenuating circumstances do observers take Sangati classes, mainly when a teacher is called away on some other work mid-session, or feeling unwell to complete the session. "If we balance well, and make it clear to teachers that it is basically their job, then we can fill in sometimes for them. On some days, when teachers are over-burdened, we help them out with the classes", says one of the A Zone school observer.

Observers maintain weekly and monthly reports of sessions -- questions, examples, answers children or teachers give/ ask in the classroom, how they connect it with the curriculum and to their lives. These reports help to build case studies and monitor changes in children and classroom interactions.

Observers' perception of Sangati's impact

AVEHI observers feel that Sangati is having some impact on children. Through their regular interaction with them, they have noticed things that children do or say, which suggests the impact of Sangati on them. They spoke of how children are remembering, using and thinking about some aspects of Sangati in their own lives.

An observer who goes to school K, mentioned a boy in Class 7, who feels very angry, and cuts himself with blade in anger. As the observer interacted with him over a period of time, and spoke to him about this, he confided saying that the session, “Why Do I Get Angry?” really helped him in controlling his anger. Another bunch of girls felt that they related to the story of Jayu and Parveen from Kit 6, which talks of different perspectives on a single issue and the likelihood of misunderstanding in the absence of communication. These girls felt that communication is very important to them, so that misunderstandings don't happen between friends. One of the girls interacting with the observer told her that after one of the Sangati sessions (Kit 6, Session 10: “Tanaav Samasya”), she garnered courage and got support from her mother and grandmother to persuade her family to not get her married.

Another observer felt that “mentality of children is slowly changing”. She has observed that many back benchers have started sitting in front rows now and are more vocal in other classes too. She feels that writing skills of children through worksheets is also improving.

Implementation of Sangati in the schools

School observers feel that teachers find Sangati curriculum both enjoyable and important. Barring the constraint of time, teachers try to help each other out, especially those of Class 5 and 6 helping the overburdened Class 7 teachers. According to the observers, the response in Class 7 is better due to the training they have received. Teachers' questions were answered in the training, like what are the kits, who has developed Sangati, how do they work, who funds it, etc. Observers feel that teachers recognize the importance and relevance of Sangati and its unique place in school learning since no one else will give the information and knowledge the curriculum encompasses. Observers feel that teachers are more positive now. One observer said: “They used to be difficult in Class 5, but now they are better. Teachers have been changing. ”

Observers go to a class after fixing the time and date with the teacher. This is a practice which was started when the programme was launched the first year in 2006. Observers have also noted that some teachers take Sangati sessions only when observers go to the class, while others take even twice a week. Some do it whenever they have time and some others keep postponing the sessions, and classes are not happening at all.

36 Sangati sessions are planned for the academic year. Sessions are held, depending on teacher's motivation and other factors, between once and thrice a week. The order from the Beat Officers was to take it twice a week, but teachers make their own schedules. Some teachers have a fixed time and day in the week. In case they fail to conduct the class at that time, another slot is fixed up with observers.

Teachers who try to avoid taking Sangati classes, are pressurized by the observers through Principals, BOs and AOs. Observers also try to understand reasons for teachers' reluctance and then try and persuade them. Once observers encourage them, many teachers agree. Some AOs are interested, they ask principal about Sangati and therefore, they encourage teachers. This pressure works. Many D.Ed teachers have been handed over the responsibility of Sangati along with other subjects. Teachers sit in these classes, and speak sometimes while the intern teacher teaches.

Difficulties in implementation

Each Sangati session is planned for an hour. Mostly teachers give only one period for a session, thus giving only 35 minutes, which is a difficulty according to the observers.

Senior experienced teachers, and those on the verge of retirement, are often difficult as they do not give importance to anything, not even to their own studies and do not want to make efforts to learn something new. They like to take long breaks, take up work outside the classroom and ask observers to do certain portions of Sangati. The more smarter teachers also can be difficult as they do not like any intervention. "Many teachers are closely involved with Union, and they always create difficulties for us. We try and convince them by saying that most of the teachers are taking Sangati classes, so why should only they protest against it? Many of them tell us that their leaders have told them not to take these classes and that this is one of the things they could protest against, and so are not willing to take Sangati classes.". Some of these teachers want

observers to take classes, some just don't take. Some teachers take the classes, but never in front of Sangati observers. "We know this because children from some of these teachers' class respond well to Sangati observers. These teachers keep this to themselves, as they don't want to go against Union's demands and decisions".

Observers need to handle any mis-match between the aims/ objectives of a session and a teacher's translation of it in the classroom or omission of ideas from a session. They have to often diplomatically handle it as some teachers do not like to be interrupted in between the class. Some teachers, after the discussion, explain the session again to the students. Sometimes, observers do decide to interfere (depending on the nature of the teacher) in the class proceedings and explain certain concepts so that the children learn the correct message.

The observers laid out the characteristics of ideal teachers for Sangati: those who like Sangati, who understand and feel that Sangati is important, who take it regularly, who give examples, relate it to children's current lives, who involve all children in the classroom and where children answer confidently, who help children in keeping their files, check them regularly and give ideas to fill the worksheets. The messages in these classes reach children, teachers make effort to make things simple to understand for children, they take children towards positivity and children seem to change.

Suggestions by observers

- Teachers' burden needs to be reduced.
- Sangati period in the timetable is very important.
- Teacher training needs to be regular.
- Kit 6 has very few flipcharts. As they really help, we could change this kit a bit.
- There should be one clerk for each school so that unnecessary burden on teachers can be removed.
- People on top must be convinced about Sangati. Lot of new people are enthusiastic but are completely discouraged by older teachers.

- Teachers who don't want to do Sangati need not do it, but they should not badmouth it. There should be action against people who do such a thing.
- There should be storage space in schools for Sangati material.
- Personality development as part of their own training, as they have to attend AO's monthly meeting, speak to BOs and HMs, and they should be able to present well.

Principals and administrators

Principals

Sixteen principals of MMC schools were interviewed for the study. They were asked about the progress of Sangati in their respective schools.

School's experience with Sangati

Most of the principals said that they feel that the programme is good. Three principals said that they see the Sangati classes and know the nature of Sangati kits. Many said that Sangati is different from formal curriculum and children learn a lot through Sangati and that it helps children become better, moral and good. Two principals said that children are interested in Sangati and enjoy it as well as helps increase their confidence. Some also felt that the material of Sangati – the kits and the pictures are good teaching aids. There was 1 principal who did not know much about Sangati but said that the teachers have told her that it is an important programme.

Seven principals said that managing Sangati is difficult. They said that teachers are already burdened and Class 7 proves to be especially hectic for them with scholarship exams. These principals said that due to shortage of teachers, administrative burden on teachers and no formal time for Sangati, they would prefer to have AVEHI staff teach Sangati in the schools. One principal highlighted the problem of storage of kits in the office. A principal in K ward also felt that this programme is for girls only and did not see much use of it. He was of the opinion that this programme can be run after school hours by AVEHI staff and children, and those who are interested can come for it, the way children come for karate and other physical education classes.

Five principals said that Sangati is going on well in school and that they find no difficulty in running the programme. Some felt that when the programme started earlier, things were new to teachers, but now they have settled into it. One of the principals said that they allow flexibility in

their timetable and do Sangati when it is possible. He said that, “We have to have positive outlook. It is related to children’s lives. We must do things which help them. It is not difficult to run it. We have to adjust.”. Another principal said that all round education is the aim, which Sangati helps fulfill.

All principals said that they don’t have to do regular reporting of Sangati to any official. Sometimes Beat Officers ask in meetings about Sangati’s progress, but nothing more.

Administrators

Five Beat Officers and 3 Administrative Officers were interviewed to understand their perception of Sangati and its progress in schools. Two of them had attended a training organized by AVEHI three years back.

Sangati is one of the almost 100 programmes run by MMC under Public Private Partnership (PPP). Pratham, Vande Mataram, Nandi and many other NGOs run programmes in MMC schools. Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, National Literacy programmes, balwadis run by Community Development Organisations are some of other organisations/groups running programmes under MMC Public Private Partnership scheme. These programmes are literacy programmes, extra classes for weaker children, classes run especially for girls, anti-tobacco and other health related programmes. We were told that any programme which “improve quality of education” are selected for MMC schools. Not all administrators think that running lots of programmes in MMC schools is difficult and is often left to the Head Masters (Principals) to manage it within the timetable and school hours. One said that “The aim of all these programmes is child’s development. This is what MMC wants too.”. Sangati is understood as having the aim of enhancing the quality of education, and thus implemented in schools. There were a few who felt that within the time constraints, fewer teachers and acknowledging the disadvantaged background of children, managing multiple programmes in schools is difficult, especially when children do not get benefited by a programme and it disturbs the timetable.

In general, BOs visit schools regularly and speak to teachers and children about what they study in the class. They look at the curriculum, teachers’ and students’ work, while AO looks at the administrative side of work of MMC. AOs need to know the educational programmes being run

in both aided and unaided schools. Their visits are also regarding health and sanitation issues. BO's responsibilities include looking at the quality of education, keeping records, educational matters, discipline, cleanliness, providing books in time and looking at the quality of the 27 items to be distributed to children. Although BOs are supposed to go to classes weekly, they fail to do so regularly due to increased work load (after decentralization) and paucity of time. Sometimes they go at random, sometimes they go to seven classes in a day and some other times, none.

One BO pointed out that it was easier for her to observe Sangati classes as a principal than in her current position; another AO commented that she could see Sangati classes as BO. So now they satisfy themselves by asking the teachers about the progress in Sangati in their schools. Sangati observers too keep BOs informed about the progress of Sangati and approach them in case of any difficulty. Both Headmasters and BOs report to AOs in the monthly meetings and review meetings, but there is no compulsion of reporting about Sangati to the AOs. They are briefed about it whenever they want to know about Sangati.

Perceptions of Sangati

According to a MMC administrator, Sangati is a syllabus based programme, it is supportive. "Their method is story telling and discussions. Children get more involved. Both children and teachers get knowledge.". According to one administrator, Sangati makes MMC teachers active by using them as teachers for Sangati sessions, unlike the other programmes run in MMC schools.

Apart from one AO, who said she did not know enough about the programme, all other administrative officers felt that Sangati is an important programme. All felt that Sangati kits are attractive and helpful teaching tools. Some see Sangati as a supplementary project and related to other subjects in the formal curriculum. They felt that the material is able to provide information easily to children and pictures capture their interest. Some felt that the children in MMC schools also know things and through Sangati get to know them deeply. Children learn about love of the nation, history, geography, natural resources, continents, how different people live in different places. One BO, who has been looking at Sangati classes for 7 years, found the information on development, physical changes in children as very important. "Teachers are not able to give out this kind of information by themselves. Children get extra information through Sangati.". An AO

said that, “It is helpful for certain exercises and spellings. Children would get knowledge, vocabulary and sentences.” She felt it provides awareness to students. Also, it is good for Class 5, 6 and 7 as these children can understand and co-relate Sangati with other subjects.

Some others found the value of Sangati in developing children’s personalities. One officer said that Sangati develops the hidden abilities in children, improves vocabulary, enhances reading capability, and makes children creative. A BO said that there are different kinds of children in schools and through this programme, improvement has been seen in some children. Another BO said that the programme builds confidence, it makes children active. One BO commented, “Education works through various methods. Sangati takes different aspects of education like group discussion, group work, games and stories. All these activities help children learn.”. He felt that if a child is 10% in performance, Sangati makes the child 11%. This 1% improvement is significant. There is a process of improvement and betterment. Sangati helps children overcome hesitation, shyness.

A few officers were happy that Sangati teaches children values, when in today’s society children don’t respect others and is much needed for the development of society. One administrator felt that Sangati helps children become good citizens and develops critical thinking in them.

One BO pointed out the relevance of activity based classes for children’s understanding: “Just lecture does not work for children. Smart children understand lectures, but others don’t.”. However, he was disappointed with the very few responses which he gets from children about what they learn in Sangati.

Concerns with implementation of Sangati in schools

All officers felt that Sangati is doing well in the schools. Yet, almost all spoke about time being the only hindrance for teachers teaching Sangati regularly. Whenever possible, AOs also encourage teachers to use Sangati, as it helps children. An AO spoke of an incident in her ward where she had to intervene for Sangati programme. “Some time back, some teachers from 2 schools complained and said that they did not want to conduct Sangati, as it was disturbing their time table. I was called in to solve the problem. I told the principal and teachers that this programme was sanctioned by BMC and that other schools did not have a problem with conducting these classes. They agreed finally.”. Another officer was appreciative of the fact that

the organization provides support to teachers through school observers and teachers can give feedback to AVEHI.

Some others felt that there were some problems in the implementation of Sangati. A BO remarked that “Earlier AVEHI teachers used to teach, but now they don’t. They only give material now. They should also take the lesson. They used to do it, but not now”. Some felt that teachers consider it a burden.

Another BO felt that Sangati is not as effective as it could be due to constraints and burden on teachers: “Teachers are supposed to finish the Sangati curriculum within 50 classes. It depends on teachers how they do it, if they follow it chronologically etc. As more burden comes on teachers, they slacken on the Sangati front.” But, she added, there are some teachers and schools which are doing Sangati very well. She also felt that lack of space also becomes a factor in whether these programmes are effective or not.

Teachers also motivate each other. When teachers see others doing well, they change, start doing Sangati and get involved in it. We heard that there is a move to make Sangati part of the timetable. Many administrators and teachers felt that if Sangati is part of the time table, it’ll be easier to manage and it will happen regularly and in a more streamlined manner.

Suggestions

Administrators gave some suggestions to make the implementation of Sangati smoother. One suggestion is that if administrators get reports of Sangati’s progress and evaluation reports, it would be better. “We (AOs) would gain much more understanding of the programme and issues in its implementation. Presently, AOs don’t get any written reports neither are they supposed to provide reports to higher authorities.”. However, there was no unanimous opinion about the usefulness of submitting written reports on functioning of Sangati to MMC, some feeling that no one has the time to read them.

Another suggestion is that AVEHI and MMC should sit together and plan better. Some administrators felt that Sangati’s content is too large, it should be made less. One BO said that Sangati should remain compulsory, like it now is. “That should not change because some teachers just won’t do it then.”

There were two administrators who felt that AVEHI school observers should give more direction to the teachers. “If AVEHI teachers can be with the teachers in the class, and take some portions while the teacher is present, it would help the teachers.”. Another said that school observers should help teachers more. “Volunteers should teach. Anyways, we have fewer teachers. We have a backlog. We want to get help from outside to teach in schools.” An administrator said that she tried to gauge Sangati’s progress and in her interaction with teachers she felt that many teachers want school observers to take Sangati classes.

One administrator emphasised that training for teachers should happen every year. Another MMC administrator said that more training is not required as much of teachers’ time is spent in trainings of various kinds

Concluding comments and recommendations

Most teachers, principals and administrators of MMC were appreciative of the relevance of Sangati for children's lives as a curriculum that relates to their experiences and one that helps in building a better future and a better society of morally responsible and socially aware individuals. They see the Sangati curriculum as supplementing the school syllabus with more information, knowledge and awareness, increasing children's participation and engagement in classroom processes and providing a space for children to voice their opinions. Moreover, it teaches children values, which they feel is important in today's society.

There was unanimous appreciation of the Sangati materials, which are seen as instrumental in addressing students' interests and attention, through the imaginative use of stories in a language children can relate to. Many teachers used the material as aids for their regular teaching in the classroom.

Children look forward to Sangati classes and find these spaces to talk about and share their own experiences and realities. They are enthusiastic about these classes and enjoy the posters, flipcharts, stories and activities. Our interactions with children suggest that retention of knowledge and information regarding various topics in Sangati. Children also expressed that they had gained awareness about social issues and moral values through the Sangati sessions.

However, many comments by teachers, observers and administrators together with our class observations indicated the source of difficulties/ concerns regarding Sangati curriculum.

Despite the interestingly designed Sangati kits, teachers felt that it was vast (especially, the teacher's manual). The lengthy explanations in the manual are hard to read in the limited time they have. Time was a concern expressed almost by everyone we spoke to and seemed to be a major impediment in the efficient implementation of Sangati curriculum in schools. The increased burden on teachers and administrative officers in

MMC, with little or no clerical support, seemed to impact the quality and frequency of teaching Sangati in schools as well as frequency of administrators observing Sangati classes and ensuring its regularity.

Some teachers also questioned the age-appropriateness of the content in the Sangati curriculum. They felt that some of the content was too complex and difficult for children to understand, especially when it was beyond their immediate experience. For some other parts, they were not clear about what Sangati expected children to learn through the discussions. Many teachers felt it was important to give solutions instead of only raising issues which are socio-economic-political in nature, children's lives being embedded in these very contexts.

Some solutions which the teachers and the administrators seemed to be proposing were inclusion of Sangati in the school time-table and the need for a closer match between Sangati and school syllabus. A few also felt that ways must be explored to incorporate the core ideas and specific areas covered in Sangati in the school syllabus itself. Many expressed the opinion that given the burden on teachers, AVEHI observers should take Sangati sessions. Some teachers expressed the need for more continuous training and interaction with AVEHI to keep them interested and motivated.

One of the difficulties in implementation of Sangati in the schools is that classroom transaction is essentially teacher-driven. The result is that the classes often become factual and descriptive, with communication of teachers' ideas of the session rather than analysis of situations which Sangati envisages. Thus, one often finds a mismatch between Sangati's aims and the actual translation in the classroom by the teacher, both in terms of content and methodology. The underlying rationale or guiding framework for including themes, topics and ideas is not available to teachers in the manual. This could add to the mis-match mentioned above.

The study in 2004 conducted by Kurrien and Patwardhan had reported similar findings: ambiguity with respect to the role, relevance and utility of Sangati in schools (enrichment curriculum to providing holistic understanding of the world and integrating various disciplines). They saw themselves as implementing the programme and not concerned

with its larger objectives. Thus, their interest and involvement varied, from an unwelcome imposition in the light of the burden they carry to something which can be done when time was available.

Both interviews with teachers and classroom observations indicated the predominant perception of Sangati as conveying morals and values and thus its relevance for children's upbringing as well as a better society.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following to be considered for better implementation of the Sangati curriculum in schools:

Administrative

Sangati should be included in the official timetable of the school syllabus so that there are fixed slots in the week exclusively dedicated to teaching sessions.

Some clerical/ administrative support to teachers would make them more efficient in handling their academic duties. Space for storage of materials is absolutely necessary. AVEHI could think of designing low-cost storage of these materials in schools.

Content and transaction

A review of the content of Sangati would be required to analyze its connection with school syllabus. Such a review could address teachers' concerns about age-appropriateness as well as explore areas in the school curriculum where Sangati's methodologies to enhance critical thinking can be applied.

Communicating the broader aims of Sangati

Efforts should be made to provide continuous training for teachers to increase their potential and capacities. Emphasis in training at all levels should have, in addition to sessions on task-oriented skills, an explicit focus on perspective-building. This will help to reiterate Sangati's wider objectives to teachers and also help them develop a professional stake in being Sangati teachers.

The teacher's manual should also spell out the aims of teaching a session more clearly, so that teachers can take them as guidelines for conducting the session.

Assessment

Assessment is one area where there is scope for some improvement. Currently, the observers take the responsibility for ensuring the completion of worksheets and generally monitoring children's engagement with sessions. We recommend that some processes be put in place to assess outcomes of 'learning' Sangati.

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Annexure 1

Teacher Interview prior to Classroom Observations

Ward:

Language Medium:

Morning/Afternoon:

Kit: Session: 1/2:

Interview No.:

Date:

Name of School:

Name of Interviewer:

1. Name of the Teacher: _____
2. Educational Qualifications: _____
3. Teaching Experience: Primary Middle Senior
Total number of years: _____
Years teaching Sangati: _____
4. Number of years in the current school: _____
5. Designation: Class Teacher/Subject Teacher/Assistant Teacher
6. Have you undergone Sangati Training? For which class? How did it help to plan a session?
7. If you have not undergone any training, how do you plan the sessions?
8. The class that you are teaching currently: Standard: Division:
9. How would you describe your class? (bright, engaged, participatory, interested in studies)
10. What qualities do you think make a student a good learner?
11. What are the subjects that children in this class are interested in?
12. If given a choice, which subjects would you like to teach?

13. How do you see your role in helping children to learn?
14. Do you think the values taught in Sangati are relevant values for children to learn?
15. Is the Teacher's Manual easy to use? In what ways is the Teacher's Manual difficult to use?
16. Do you use the manual to prepare for the session? How? How much time does it take you to prepare? Do you bring in additional material into the class?
17. How do you plan to use the posters, flipcharts?
18. How do you plan to use the worksheets? What instructions are provided by you to the children for filling up the worksheets? Are the children expected to bring the worksheets in the next session for discussion?
19. Are you happy/ satisfied with your teaching of Sangati?
20. Which session are you going to be taking today? What preparation have you done for today's session?

Annexure 2

Observation Schedule for Sangati classes

Date: Observation
No.:
Name of the School:
Name of the Teacher: Name of
Observer:
Std: Start Time:
Division: End Time:
Period: Single Double
Total number of students:
Girls: Boys:
Number of students present: Location of
class:
Girls: Boys:

Topic: (First
Day/Continuation)
Stated Objective(s) of the class:

Classroom setting: (Seating arrangement, Position of Teacher/Teacher's Desk, Position of Blackboard, Position of Observer/self)

Classroom environment: (Lighting, Space, Ventilation, Bulletin Boards, Sangati material)

Observations made of Teacher

1. The teacher begins the class by:
 - Issuing general conduct instructions
 - Providing an overview of the topic
 - Arousing curiosity about the topic

Comments:

2. The teacher makes clear to the students:
 - The purpose of the lesson
 - The lesson's tie to preceding and other session

Comments:

3. The teacher starts the session by :
- Directly reading from the material
 - Asking students to volunteer to read
 - Selecting specific students to read

Comments: (who gets selected by the teacher?)

4. The teacher discusses the theme:

Yes
No

Comments:

5. The teaching aids used during the class:

- Blackboard Charts
- Reference Materials
- Maps
- Models
- Sangati material
- Flipcharts
- Posters

Comments:

Gender and classroom interaction:

6. The teacher involves both boys and girls in an uniform manner for the greater part of the class by way of:

| <u>Teacher directed:</u> | Boys | Girls |
|--|------|-------|
| Asking them to read aloud | | |
| Encouraging them to express themselves | | |

Students:

- Asking questions
- Answering questions

Comments: (who does the teacher address, face, and on which themes; differential gendered behaviour)

Observations made of Teacher

7. The teacher's questions require the students to:

Frequently

Occasionally

Rarely

Answer in yes or no

Describe (how, when, what)

Give examples (which, what)

Give reasons (why)

Offer explanations other than in the text

Comments:

8. The teacher is able to:

Frequently

Occasionally

Rarely

Get students to reflect on their responses

Provide opportunities for students to apply a concept

Be positive and encouraging in her responses

Encourage independent thinking

Encourage cooperative learning

Comments:

9. The teacher responds to the students' questions about the topic:

Mostly

Sometimes

With interest

Dismissively

Comments:

10. The teacher draws attention to/emphasizes values pertinent to the topic:

Yes

No

How?

Comments: (observe when teachers introduce contradictory messages and values and personal beliefs)

Observations made of Students

11. The students appear involved by way of:
- Listening to the teacher
 - Showing interest in the discussion
 - Participating in the discussion

Comments: (gender)

12. Students exhibit initiative by:
- Asking questions
 - Sharing experiences/examples
 - Giving reasons
 - Proposing explanations other than in the text

Comments: (gender)

Activity:

13. Does the teacher use any activity?
- Yes
 - No

Do these activities happen in:

- Groups
- As individuals

Comments:

14. The materials for the activity are:
- As specified in the book
 - More than those specified
 - Less than those specified
 - Clearly visible to all students from their position
 - Allowed to be used by the students

Comments:

Annexure 3

Teacher Feedback following a Class Observation

Ward:

Language Medium:

Morning/Afternoon:

Kit: Session: 1/2:

Interview No.:

Date:

Name of School:

Name of Interviewer:

Date:

Name of Teacher:

Standard:

Division:

1. How do you feel about your today's class?
2. Was there anything in particular that you enjoyed about today's class?
3. What did the students seem to enjoy about today's class? Who participated (in terms of gender, caste)?
4. Thinking back on your class, is there anything that you wish you had done differently?
5. Is there anything you would like to change for your next class?
6. How comfortable did you feel about the content for today's class?
7. How much time did it take to prepare for it? How did you prepare for it?
8. Any other comments/reflections about your class that you would like to share:

9. Will the children use worksheets given out today for the next class? Do children get it in time?

10. What do you think about the level of difficulty of the session for these children?

11. Do you think today's content relates to children's lives?

Annexure 4

Administrators

1. Do you feel that Sangati is an important programme? Why or why not?
2. How is Sangati's progress in MMC schools?
3. How relevant is such a programme for municipal schools and its students?
4. How do you look at this programme vis-à-vis other programmes being run in MMC? What are the other programmes being run in MMC currently that are part of your responsibility?
5. What are the monitoring mechanisms for the administrators? Are there regular meetings or such things that are organised?
6. What is the role of Beat Officers/Administrative Officers? How do they manage different language medium schools?
7. How often do BOs/AOs visit the school? Do they also visit the classes and Sangati sessions?
8. What does MMC demand of the BOs/AOs?
9. What are the abilities that such a programme develops in children?
10. At what level is difficulty in implementation felt, especially with other programmes being run in MMC?
11. At what level can this programme be strengthened? Does the corporation need to give more support?
12. Has AVEHI conducted workshops with MMC administrators? Who attends such meetings or workshops? What are the gains of such a training, if at all?

Annexure 5

Principals

1. How many children are enrolled in the school?
2. What is the ratio between boys and girls?
3. What are the programmes being run in the school presently?
4. What is the experience of this school with the Sangati programme? Are there any difficulties in implementation?
5. What classes get allocated for the programme?
6. What kind of assistance is required of the principal for the smooth functioning of the programme?

Annexure 6

Discussion with AVEHI observers/ coordinators

1. What is the role of the AVEHI observers in the school in providing support to the teachers?
2. Give us a profile of the school that you work in.
3. How often in your school ‘Sangati’ classes happen?
 - a. What arrangements do you make for making the observation in that school/ class?
 - b. How often do you observe a class by a teacher ‘x’ in your school?
 - c. Which are the periods which get allotted for teaching ‘Sangati’?
 - d. Do you always know which session is going to be taken in a class?
4. What are your experiences with these teachers and the schools where you are an observer?
 - a. Which teachers need more scaffolding than others?
 - b. In what circumstances you take up a session, part of a session – games/ activities?
 - c. What are the kinds of discussion that happens with the teacher?
 - i. Does discussion about the content feature in those discussions?
 - ii. What do you do when teachers’ teaching of a session does not match the objectives of Sangati?
 - iii. Do you also talk about the larger issues which Sangati wants to bring forth with the teacher?
 - d. Is there a difference between different medium schools and the way Sangati runs there?
 - e. Relation of Marathi schools with other language medium schools.
 - f. What are the kinds of problems that you face with teachers or schools?
 - i. What kind of resistance is seen in such cases?

- ii. What do you do to resolve the situation?
- 5. When do you think that a teacher is “good” in teaching Sangati? What are your criteria to arrive at that judgment?
 - a. Can you give an example of a teacher who you think is an ideal teacher for ‘Sangati’.
- 6. What kind of support would you want from your organization?
 - a. What kind of training have you been given by the organization?
 - i. How frequent are they?
 - ii. To what extent are they helpful in discharging your duties?
 - iii. Which are the areas which you think need to be addressed in order to better run ‘Sangati’ or to increase your potential?

Annexure 7

Number of children in each class where Sangati session was observed:

| School | Medium | Class | Class size | Total Boys | Total Girls |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------|------------|------------|-------------|
| M Ward, D School | Marathi School No. 1 | Std VII | 48 | 22 | 26 |
| | Marathi School No. 2 | Std VII | 36 | 20 | 16 |
| | Hindi School | Std VII | 64 | 36 | 28 |
| | Urdu School No. 1 | Std VII | 56 | 22 | 34 |
| | Kannada School | Std VII | 22 | 12 | 10 |
| N Ward, S School | Urdu School | Std VII | 31 | 10 | 21 |
| | | Std VI | 28 | 6 | 22 |
| | | Std V | 17 | 5 | 12 |
| | Hindi School | Std VII | 25 | 10 | 15 |
| | | Std VI | 32 | 14 | 18 |
| | Marathi School No.6 | Std VII | 38 | 18 | 20 |
| | | Std VI | 36 | 20 | 16 |
| | | Std V | 34 | 17 | 17 |
| | Kannada School | Std VII | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| E Ward, M School | Urdu School | Std VII | 37 | 14 | 23 |
| F Ward, N School | Marathi School No.1 | Std VII | 34 | 18 | 16 |
| | Marathi School No.2 | Std VII | 38 | 10 | 28 |
| | Hindi School No.1 | Std VII | 53 | 35 | 18 |
| | Tamil School No.1 | Std VII | 40 | 14 | 26 |
| | Hindi School No.2 | Std VII | 58 | 30 | 28 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------|----|----|----|
| K Ward, V School | Marathi School No-1 | Std VII | 35 | 17 | 18 |
| | Marathi School No-2 | Std VII | 32 | 17 | 15 |
| | Marathi School No-3 | Std VII | 32 | 15 | 17 |
| | Hindi School No.-1 | Std VII | 47 | 30 | 17 |
| | | Std VII | 38 | 20 | 18 |
| R Ward, A School | Marathi School No. 1 | Std VII | 43 | 15 | 28 |
| | Marathi School No. 2 | Std VII | 51 | 24 | 27 |
| | Hindi School | Std VII | 58 | 31 | 27 |
| | | Std VII | 56 | 29 | 27 |
| | Gujarati School | Std VII | 14 | 7 | 7 |
| | Telugu School | Std VII | 12 | 3 | 9 |
| | Urdu School | Std VII | 30 | 5 | 25 |
| H Ward, K School | Marathi School | Std VII | 40 | 22 | 18 |
| | | Std VII | 36 | 16 | 20 |
| | Hindi School No.1 | Std VII | 39 | 23 | 16 |
| | | Std VII | 42 | 25 | 17 |
| | Gujarati School | Std VII | 26 | 16 | 10 |
| A Ward, C School | English School | Std VII | 80 | 38 | 42 |
| | | Std VII | 49 | 26 | 23 |