Collaborating: a key component to transform early childhood and primary education in India and a step towards achieving SDG-4

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Most of the children in India start their schooling in languages other than their mother tongue in primary school but unfortunately some of them end up as dropouts in the later stages as they fail to understand what is being taught to them in textbooks.

Hence, in the educational context, language is important for comprehension because reading and learning in one’s own mother tongue at primary level would lay a foundation for cognitive growth, scholastic achievements, and transition to other languages. Mother tongue reading creates interest in children as they are familiar with the sounds and easily comprehend the meaning of the words they read to gain knowledge. This interest and achievement leads to reducing the dropout rate.

Surveys conducted in Jharkhand state on the impact of multilingual education proved that Santali-speaking children of Dumka and other parts of Jharkhand could learn very fast if the medium of education was their mother tongue. Since the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to primary education in one’s own mother tongue, it’s the primary responsibility of Government/teachers, NGOs, and parents/communities to ensure this constitutional right benefits children.

This paper presents multiple approaches initiated in Dumka and Sahibganj districts of Jharkhand, exploring how government and NGO joint efforts in creating a variety of materials (flash cards, letter-cards, word-cards, phonemic-cards, pocket-books, flip-books, and chapter-books), reading-awareness workshops for parents, reading camps for children, and training events for teachers can all together contribute to promote the lifelong learning outcomes in early grade and primary education.