

# AKRSPI Madrasa Teacher Training

Facilitated by

## Tarraqi I Foundation

March 12 to March 14, 2015, Patna

### Workshop Report



#### 1. Introduction

**Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, India (AAKRSPI)** organized a Madarsa teacher training workshop from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in Patna which was facilitated by the **Tarraqi I Foundation (TiF)**, New Delhi.

The three main objectives of this workshop were to:

- *Build capacity of the heads and teachers of participant Madarasas*
- *Train Madarsa heads and teachers on the basic concepts & principles of pedagogy regarding teaching and learning*
- *Initiate a discourse on the role and relevance of Madarsa education*

A group of 22 Madarsa teachers/leaders from six Madarasas and project facilitators/volunteers came from across Patna, Muzzafarpur and Samastipur.

It was heartening to see the group's enthusiasm and sincerity to know and understand ways to enable both 'deeni taleem' Religious education and 'duniyavi taleem' worldly/general education in a balanced way at their Madarasas.

The trainers from TiF: Mr. Amir Abidi, Ms. Seema Wahi and Ms. Nikita Yadav, who have been working for many years to develop child friendly and experiential learning in schools and Madarsas, were very happy to see the active participation, especially of Madarsa leaders.

The 3-day workshop was very fulfilling, both for the trainers and trainees for the following main reasons:

1. Awareness was raised about child friendly education and how corporal punishment and harshness is detrimental for young learners. Trainees seem to have realised it and made a commitment to keep this in mind in future.
2. Importance of empathy and compassion in relationships with students, colleagues and parents was felt and discussed at length.
3. A strong appreciation for activity based learning/learning by doing.
4. Understanding and practice of lesson planning and using low/no cost Teaching Learning Materials.

## 2.) Session Details-Day 1

### 1. Introduction: Setting the mood and tone of the workshop

The workshop started with a presentation by Tarraqi-I-Foundation (TiF). The presentation included a display of pictures of student and teacher community from Madarsas and schools across India where TiF has worked in the past as well as working currently. This presentation was supported by the soulful rendition of an inspiring dua "**Lab pe aati hai dua banke tamanna meri...**" by Allama Iqbal.

This sensitive and sublime start to the workshop helped in earning trust, respect and empathy from the participants as these are the core values to bond on before getting down to discuss and develop technical skills of teaching/learning.

This was followed by a round of **introductions** where apart from sharing their names and institutions, participants also made a dua for what they looked forward to achieving from the workshop. Participants were also encouraged to share their dua from individual sessions. This gave insights into their expected learning outcomes. Some of their duas are shared below:

- ***"Bachho ko duniyaavi taleem se kaise asani se jode"*** (how to connect students to general education in an easy way)– Baby Tabassum
- ***"Shiksha ke madhyam se kaum ka vikas kaise ho"*** (To make education the medium for community's betterment) – Nurul Warsi
- ***"Duniyaavi aur deeni taleem ko ek sath kaise leke chala jae"*** (how to transact general education and religious education together in parallel) – Sharif Masood
- ***"Kuchh aise tareeke seekhe jaen jisse bachho ki kamyabi ho"*** (to learn such activities which could help us enable our students more) – Md. Israfi
- ***"Urdu aur Arabi ko padhane ka asaan tareeka kya ho sakta hai"*** (what can be easy methods to teach Urdu and Arabic) – Md. Muktasar Aalam

- **“Bachhon ko buniyaadi taleem mile jisse wo apne haq samajh sake”** (may children get basic education so that they understand their rights better) – Md. MuktasarAalam
- **“Quran zabaani kaise yaad karai jaae”** (how to help students learn Quran by heart) – Md. Shahid
- **“Bachhe khud apna bhavishya dekh sake aur us ki taraf badh sake”** (may children see their own future and take steps towards achiving it) – Javed
- **“Kam se kam waqt mein taleem kaise di jaae”** (how to teach well in limited time) – Md. Shaqeeb
- **“Bachhe baat ko asaani se aur jaldi samajh sake”** (may children understand quickly and better) – Md. AamirHussain
- **“Kitab, kalam, kagaz bachho ko di jaae (children be given book, pen and paper)**

The participants seemed to have a fair understanding of the theme of an integrated approach towards learning; bringing together ‘deen’ and ‘duniyavi’ taleem. They prayed for the success of not just their students but for every student of the Nation. One of the participants shared *“na sirf mere bachhe, balki*

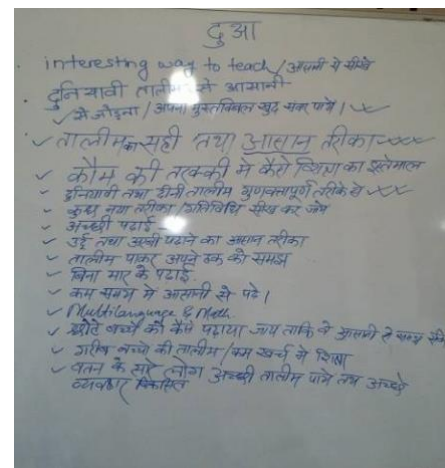


Figure 1 sharing dua; dua (on right)

*vatan ke saare bachhe achhi taleem paae”* (Md. Shahadat Hussain). Participants shared their views on the importance of education to understand one’s rights and duties and also to discharge them. The workshop helped in understanding the steps they need to take to make it possible.

## 2. Quiz: Muslim’s Role in the Development of World Civilization with a special focus on India

Mr. Amir Abidi conducted a short and well-researched quiz wherein through a fun activity Mr. Abidi attempted to convey to the participants that Muslims in India and across the world, throughout history as well as in modern times have contributed significantly to the development of the world and the Nation. He gave examples of pioneers who have played a positive and pivotal role in the fields of Science, Arts, Economics and many other fields. These achievements have been accomplished by both men and women. A few such examples are those of: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: the first education minister of India, Justice Fatima Biwi: the only lady Chief Justice of India so far, Khushboo Mirza: a young

lady scientist of ISRO's Chandrayan team. The purpose of this activity was to help participants understand that instead of feeling an inferiority complex about their social and economic status and inequities, they must look at the many role models within the community who rose to excellence despite all odds. The core message of the session was that Muslims must proactively and enthusiastically rise above their present conditions to chart a better future, more illustrious than the past and again play a leading role in contributing to the development of the country as well as strengthening world civilization and peace.

After the quiz, Mr. Abidi gave a brief introduction of TiF and how he and his team have worked with Madarsas in the recent past. He also showed a video of RELO English teachers' training workshop that TiF has conducted for the last 3 years for the American Centre.

### **3. Activity – Alphabetical Seating**

Post lunch there were some energizers. Thereafter, TiF facilitators, Mr. Amir Abidi, Ms. Seema Wahi and Ms. Nikita Yadav conducted an activity titled 'alphabetical seating' to set the tone for activity based learning! In this activity, the participants were asked to quickly stand around in the right alphabetical order of their names as soon as that as the facilitators said 'go'. At the same time, mementos (namecards with flowers) were placed in the hall in the correct alphabetical order. Participants were then asked to turn around and see if they were standing at the right place as per the mementos or not. The purpose of this activity was to help them communicate with each other and finish the given task in the given time.

### **4. Connecting to the child within**

With this theme, Ms. Seema Wahi facilitated a thought provoking session where she took everyone in the room, trainees and trainers, on a journey of their own childhood. Closing their eyes and thus shutting out the rest of the world for the time being, participants were asked to go down memory lane. They were then encouraged to share one good memory "*meri sab se achhi yaad*" and one bad memory "*meri sab se buri yaad*" from their childhood.

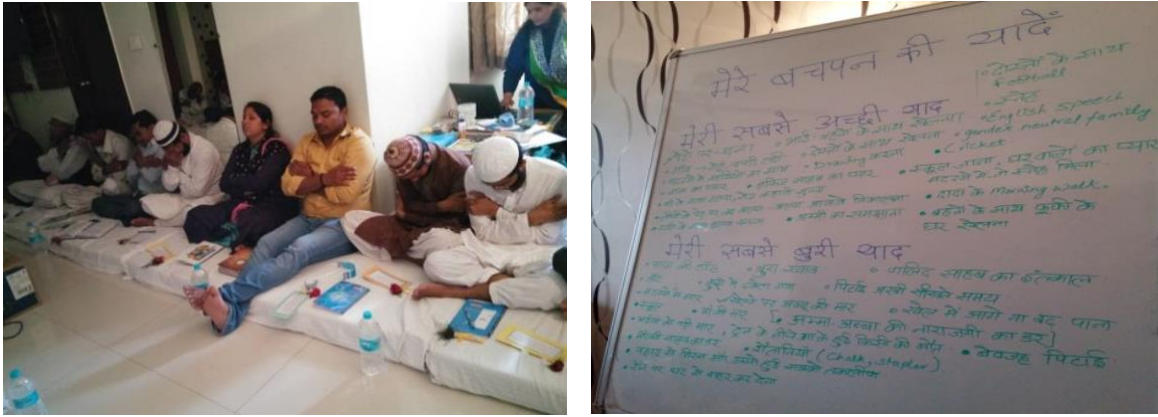


Figure 2 connecting to the child within; participants sharing their childhood experiences

This activity resulted in a very intense round of discussion that filled the room with mixed emotions of joy and sadness. What was very clear was that the participants were so overwhelmed to have an avenue to share openly that some even cried. Most of our schools (and Madarasas) do not have an avenue for respectful and empathetic sharing for children or adults, thus the emotions mostly stay bottled up. When there is a platform like the one provided to the participants through this activity, it resulted in some intense sharing, realization and an opportunity to understand the emotional needs of children that our participants are working with, in a new light. What also came out forcefully was that majority of the participants had some bad memory of being beaten up or bullied by an adult, be it a family member or a teacher at school/madrassa. Facilitators took a note of this point as they saw the need for a deeper discussion on the matter in the following days.

This session was followed by the presentation of a short video “Do flowers fly?” The video is about a child and his experiences in school where his voice/inquiry is crushed under the drill of rote learning, and his natural inquisitiveness/yearning to go out in the open and learn through/about Nature. It also reflected on parental expectations and the stifling environment of schools in general. A lively discussion followed this presentation where various facets of child friendly/unfriendly teaching-learning emerged: the importance of teacher-student relationship, experiential learning, learning from nature, etc; were discussed.

5. Learning Carousal

Participants were divided into four groups and five learning corners were set up to do the following activities as a part of this ‘experiential learning’ session: 1) Float or sink, 2) Math fun (tangrams and wheel game), 3) Build a sentence (using word cards), 4) Feel and guess, and 5) Story cubes (build a story using pictures that come on top upon rolling five dices). Each of these corners were designed to give participants a feel of experiential learning and introduce them to a set of activities that will serve as their learning take-away to practice with students and thus find new ways to make learning easier and fun in their classrooms.

A discussion followed on the relevance of activities, rationale behind them, inter-linkages among subjects/topics, using activities as a hook to generate curiosity/interest in a topic, etc. The activities not just covered subjects like Language, EVS and Math but also Life Skills such as team work, creative thinking, using resources and time optimally.

At the end of the day, participants were told to reflect on the day's learning and note three new things that they will start doing and three that they will stop, based on their learning.



Figure 3 learning centers; (from left to right) make a sentence, float or sink, math fun, touch and feel and story cubes

## 2.) Session Details-Day 2

### 1. Circle Time

The second day started with Circle Time where all participants were asked to express how and what they were feeling. Facilitators emphasized on the skill of **listening** - the importance of paying attention when any group member speaks and how it strengthens interpersonal as well as inter-group communication.

### Drawing together



Figure 4 make a body activity



This activity involved several steps – as a first step, participants were asked to draw a cap in the top 1/6<sup>th</sup> portion of the paper ensuring that the person sitting next to them doesn't see it. Thereby fold the paper in such a way that the part on which the cap is drawn, is not visible; and pass it to the person sitting on their right. As Step 2, they were asked to draw a face - a smiley or a round/oval shape in case someone didn't wish to draw a face, and fold again.

Steps 3, 4 & 5 involved drawing upper body, lower body and shoes respectively; each time folding and passing the paper. Once these five steps were completed, participants were asked to return the paper unfolding it at each step so that it came back to the person who started the activity. Participants had a hearty laugh looking at various figures (cartoons) that emerged.

Aim of this activity was to help participants to collaborate in a joyful way, understand each other, express themselves creatively, communicate and follow instructions properly. Also, the activity highlighted how each person has their own point of view and approach and as such, why it is so important to communicate proactively.

## **2. Nature walk**

The group went for a nature walk to a nearby park. The facilitators encouraged participants to observe their surroundings on their way to the park and again on reaching there. They were asked to think about how their observations, photos and writings can be used for learning. They were given about 10-15 minutes for this purpose. Thereafter, they were taken to a quiet section of the park, asked to sit in a circle with eyes closed and focus on the sounds they heard. As a next step, they were asked to lie down quietly on the grass and observe Nature: sky, clouds, birds, trees, other greenery, et al. All participants enjoyed this activity. This was evident from the calmness on their faces.

Thereafter, participants were asked to walk around again in the park to find an object with which they identified themselves the most and reflect upon it. (They were asked not to pluck flowers or leaves). Upon their return, there was a follow up discussion where participants expressed their thoughts on how they identified with the chosen object. One of the participants brought a stone; she shared with the group that she identified with it because she thought of herself "as strong as a rock which has faced everything in life with a strong heart". Later a collage was made by the participants using all these objects.

Relevance of nature walks in academics was also discussed. Such walks can be a very useful exercise to learn from the surroundings/environment, especially EVS.



Figure 5 nature walk

### 3. Video Screening: Udan Khatola

Back from the nature walk, the participants needed to relax; hence, a video screening was arranged for them. **Udan Khatola** is a short film about a creative child who is fascinated by the aeroplane. However, the class teacher's focus is on rote learning and completing the syllabus quickly. He doesn't appreciate the child's interest, rather reprimands it. As the film progresses one day the teacher realizes the child's potential and his own folly. The film ends on a positive note about a change in the teacher's approach to learning.

Having experienced many teachable moments/materials/topics in all sessions before lunch, participants were deeply influenced by the importance and benefits of experiential education.

### 4. Innovating Teaching-Learning Materials

Post lunch session was about innovating **Teaching-Learning Materials** – understanding how anything and everything can be used as teaching-learning material provided it is relevant to the topic and is being used thoughtfully and appropriately. Participants created some TLMs using waste products including **pocket calendars**. They appreciated the assortment of TLMs brought by the facilitators.

The session began with an energizer game 'hahaha' followed by a story session by one of the participants, Firoza. The story called '**matku mendhak**' was to help students understand numbers and number operations.

### **5. Recap from Day 1**

By the end of Day 2, facilitators felt that they had built sufficient rapport with participants to take up the sensitive topic of bullying by adults for further discussion. Relating to the learning outcomes of Days 1 & 2, facilitators took up this topic as it had come out strongly in sharing by participants from their own childhood experiences on Day 1. In this context, they discussed the consequences of punishment, labeling and comparisons by adults - both teachers and parents. The impact of labeling, stereotyping and punishment on a child's mental health was discussed at length in the light of the fact that most participants had some bad childhood memory ("buri yaad") that had not faded after so many years and had the power to impact them in their adult life; thus making it more real for them to empathize with the emotional needs of children as well as appreciating the relevance of affirmative steps that make teaching-learning a more positive experience for their own students.

### **3.) Session Details-Day 3**

#### **1. Connecting with the teacher within.**

The final day of training began with revisiting the video Udan Khatola and relating it to the theme for the day – connecting with the teacher within. While this film focused on the different learning abilities of a child, it also looked at the teacher's dormant desire to break out of the mould of a conventional teacher who is expected to stick to chalk and talk and be strict and authoritative. The learning from watching this short video film raised some important questions among participants: i) How do we understand a child's ability? and ii) How can we help slow learners in the class in such limited time? These concerns were discussed in the light of the **Multiple Intelligences** theory.

**Phal, phool, subzi** - One of the participants facilitated this game on learning the names of fruits, flowers and vegetables as well as developing life skills such as alertness, quick response and team spirit. While it served as another interesting example of activity based learning for primary students, it was also appreciated by all other participants as an energizer after an intense discussion!

#### **2. Circle Time**

To take stock of the day so far, participants sat in a circle and shared **'how am I feeling today?'**

This was followed by the facilitator narrating a touching story of a teacher and her perception/attitude towards one of her students who was always withdrawn, inattentive and careless. Once while preparing the class' midterm results, she came across this student's past year portfolio. On reading it, she understood the reasons for the student's gradual transition from a bubbly and active student to his present form. As she became more sensitive towards him and her perception of him changed, so did her responses. As her relationship with the student improved, she noted that it triggered improvement in him as well as her. This story was narrated by Mr. Abidi who then also talked about the radical impact a teacher can have on his/her students and how fundamental it is to be sensitive and empathetic not just as a teacher but in all relationships.

### **3. Lesson Planning**

A session on lesson planning looked at various aspects of lesson planning – consistency, time management, types of lesson plans (yearly, monthly, weekly and daily) and steps to write a lesson plan (objectives, expected outcome, duration, activities, TLM, actual outcomes in class, reflection). Some participants who had made lesson plans earlier on, shared that **Reflection** was a new learning for them. They appreciated its relevance when Ms. Seema Wahi explained it to them. The objective of the lesson/learning is beyond just seeking/getting knowledge - there was a good discussion on this point and about ensuring how three areas: Knowledge, Skills and Attitude are addressed in lesson planning over a period so that there is tangible progress in learning objectives and outcomes.

Participants were then divided into four groups according to the Madrasas they came from. Each group was asked to prepare a lesson plan for the class, subject and duration of their own choice. They were encouraged to include activities. Out of the four groups, one group worked on EVS (animal theme), the second on Math (number understanding 1 to 4), third on Urdu language (teaching 'Alif') and the last group worked on Hindi.

Subsequently, all four groups presented their lesson plans demonstrating some activity using the TLMs prepared by them in the given time. Each group presentation was followed by feedback/queries from their peers and workshop facilitators.



**Figure 6 lesson planning session**

#### **4. Closing session**

The closing session of the workshop was reserved as an open forum for feedback from participants. In this session, they were also asked to share one thing they would start doing from now onwards and one thing they will stop doing/reduce upon returning to their Madarsas. Some of the responses are listed below:

##### **Start**

- Learning by doing
- Friendly and compassionate to students “dostana vyavhaar”
- Write Reflections regularly.
- Ensure that students are understanding (not just completing the lesson/syllabus) “bachhon ko samjhunga”
- Give space and time to students to solve problems/inquire/think “bachhe ko karne ka mauka dunga”
- Will take students to nearby areas for exposure visits “aas paas ka exposure dunga”

##### **Stop**

- Scolding/beating/scaring students “daantna/daraana”
- Rushing through lessons and tasks “jald baazi nahi karunga”
- Won't do the activity for students to complete it in a hurry, will give more time and opportunity to students in the class/lesson. “Khud kam karunga, bachhon se zaada karwaunga”

- Undue and unnecessary strictness “bewajah sakhti nahi karunga/karungi”



#### 4.) Endnote:

It was heartening to see that most participants shared with great conviction that they will stop beating/harshly scolding their students. A few were honest enough to admit that they will reduce it and avoid it to the extent possible and use it judiciously, only as a last resort!

All participants were appreciative of the fact that lessons are more meaningful and interesting with experiential activities. They promised that they will use activities they learnt during the sessions with their students and make TLMS.

Many ideas of TLMs were shared and the participants also created some especially for the lesson plans they made in groups.

Participants were convinced about the need for lesson planning and why it is important to consider the students' will and prior knowledge before lesson planning.

Quality Circle Time (QCT) where participants shared about their childhood, aspirations and fears in an environment of trust and respect constantly stressed by the facilitators had a profound impact on all participants. All of them promised that they will work on building a healthy and warm environment for their students using the QCT approach.

Given the limited time of this training workshop and the fact that TiF facilitators were interacting with the group for the first time, this workshop has successfully laid a strong foundation of trust between various stakeholders; appreciation for child centered, experiential and activity based learning. With sustained support, these Madarasas can become role models and mentors for others around them as the ownership and enthusiasm for learning was tremendous.

The AKRSPI team (coordinators and supervisors) was enthusiastic and participative. They had a good rapport with Madarsa heads and teachers. It was heartening to see the good camaraderie between everyone as it is an extremely important aspect of outreach and capacity building.

As expressed by participants and felt by facilitators, this effort should be taken forward and further strengthened with long-term, periodic training and also onsite mentoring and supervision support. Needs for books, workbooks, sports equipment, art & craft materials, etc were also mentioned. Hence, there is a clear need for a comprehensive long term training/mentoring plan supported with relevant manuals and training tools. Given the ownership and the sincere/passionate desire to learn, these Madarasas have the potential of becoming models of good learning.

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