**School Education and Literacy Department,
Govt. of Jharkhand**

Jharkhand Education Project Council

School Re-Organization in Jharkhand

Context

Rapid expansion in school construction since the 1990s has resulted in significant advancement on access and enrolment. This is driven by transformative national policies such as Sarva Shikhsa Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyaan (RMSA) and the Right to Education (RTE), which have advocated taking the school to the doorstep of every village and hamlet.

As a consequence, India currently has the largest school footprint in the world, with ~261 million students studying in 1.5 million schools out of which 1.1 million are public schools.[1] India has nearly six times[2] the number of schools as China while catering to a lower overall population base.

The situation in Jharkhand was particularly dire in 2018.**45%** of schools had <60 students enrolled and **65%** of schools had just 1 or 2 teachers. Such schools are called sub-scale schools and result in poor learning outcomes. Four **key challenges** of sub-scale schools are:

- **Lack of child specific attention due to multi-grade and multi-level teaching**: Sub-scale schools typically have 2 or less teachers for all of classes 1-5 (in primary schools) or classes 6-8 (in middle schools). Teachers have to simultaneously teach all subjects to children across multiple grades and diverse learning levels. Teachers are usually able to focus on students of one grade only and find it impossible to deliver structured education to all students in such environments.

- **Limited time available for teachingdue to admin tasks:** In small schools, the teacher is also responsible for admin & clerical work, supervising MDM, responding to data requests etc. Our in-field studies indicate that in sub-scale schools, studying only happens for the first 3 periods of the day, after which teachers focus on administrative tasks. Additionally, when a teacher is absent or is called away for election duty, the school almost ceases to function as there is little to no cover.

- **Sub-scale schools typically do not have learning infrastructure**: Infrastructure in these schools is often inadequate and is limited to 2-3 classrooms. Governments also typically tend to prioritize bigger schools for libraries, labs and computers etc.

- **Monitoring & Governance also tends to be limited**: From a system standpoint, the very large number of schools make any visit-based monitoring/ accountability efforts by block/ district officials difficult to execute. The focus of most programs thus inevitably is larger schools.

Solution

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[1]U-DISE 2016-17
[2]China Statistical Yearbook 2018

The only solution to addressing the large number of sub-scale schools is to consolidate nearby schools to create larger schools. The graphic below from Jharkhand shows that nearly 60% of the Gram Panchayats (GP) in Jharkhand have more than 5 schools. A typical Gram Panchayat has a population of 7000-8000 people and hence ~1500-2000 students. If even 20% of these students go to private schools, one does not need more than 5 schools to accommodate the students. Yet, in any GP one will find 5-7 primary schools (if not more) & a host of middle and secondary schools.

60% of Jharkhand's Gram Panchayats have more than 5 Schools

Area of focus for consolidation

Number of GPs / Urban wards
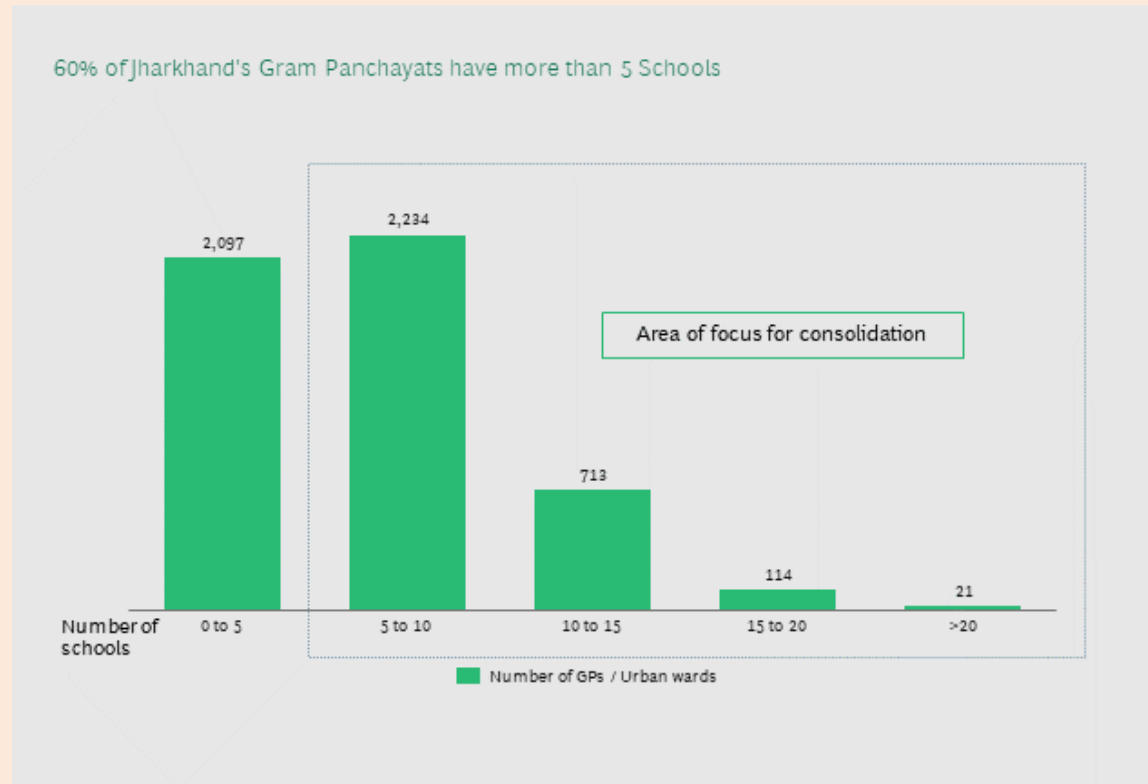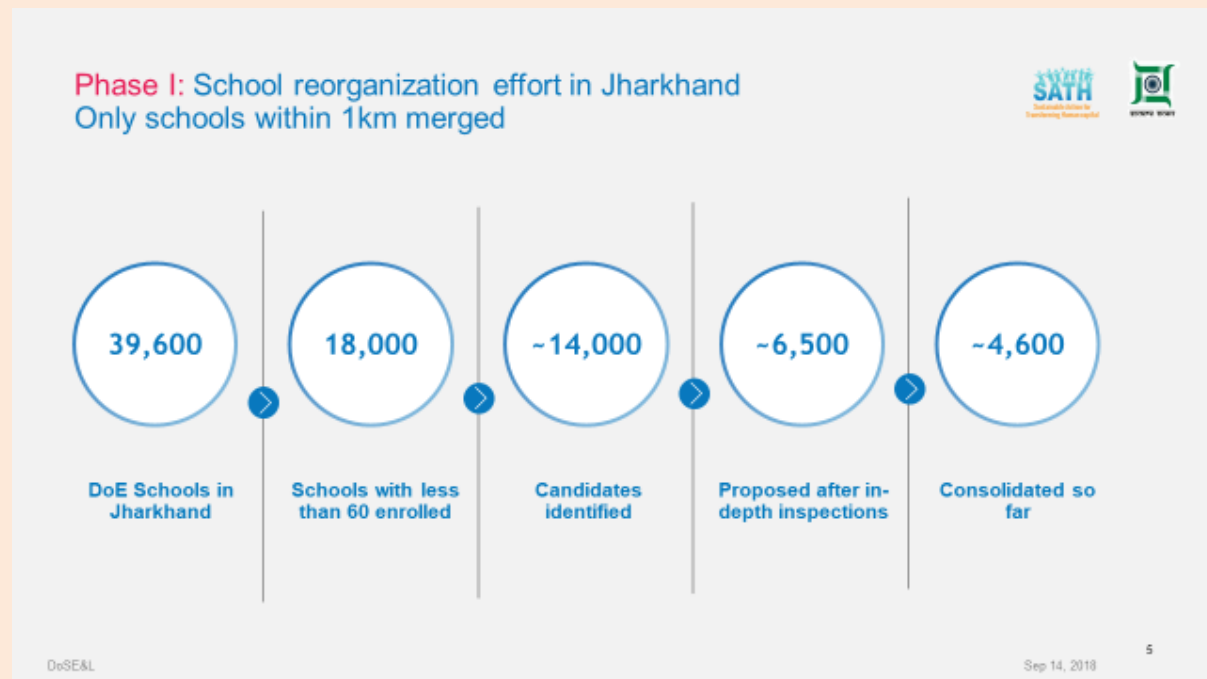
Process Followed in Jharkhand

Step 1: GIS based geo-analytics to identify a list of consolidation candidates - Most states now have the GIS locations of all their schools. A centralized & prescriptive process based on enrolment and distance analytics helped identify 13,000 candidates for school reorganization. Schools identified for re-organisation were within RTE norms:

- Primary schools with <60 students and within 1 km of host school
- Upper primary schools with <60 students and within 2 km of host school
- Same-campus schools within 100m of each other

Step 2: Field verifications of identified candidates - A database generated list is typically far from accurate and needs field verification. Parameters including real enrolment, actual distance, terrain in-between schools, host school capacity, socio-economic & demographic

constraints – e.g. language etc. need to be field verified. To ensure rigour and honesty, in Jharkhand an unbiased cross-district action team undertook a second level of verification over and above the local team (BRP/CRPs). There were therefore two-levels of field verification of the candidates

Step 3: Obtaining necessary approvals for mergers - The verified list of schools was processed for approvals through 2 levels of formal committees at the block and district level which consist of teachers, elected representatives, as well as officials from departments..


Phase I: School reorganization effort in Jharkhand
Only schools within 1km merged

39,600	18,000	~14,000	~6,500	~4,600
DoE Schools in Jharkhand	Schools with less than 60 enrolled	Candidates identified	Proposed after in-depth inspections	Consolidated so far

DoSE&L   Sep 14, 2018

This is in addition to ~1300 zero enrolment schools that were consolidated in 2017.

Step 4: Grievance redressal mechanisms - A robust time-bound grievance redressal process where all stakeholders could register grievances each of which are tracked, re-investigated and resolved at district level was conducted to maintain transparency and take corrective action in case of exceptions.

Step 5: Post-mergers tracking - After schools were formally approved for mergers and shifting began, the process of shifting was monitored and tracked very closely. This involves real-time tracking & corrective action on 2 things namely:

- **Administrative processes** like transfer of money & closure of bank accounts, SMC re-organization, and re-use of vacated buildings.
- **Status of students shifting from merged to host schools**was tracked on a school by school basis. This was followed by targeted community engagement and interventions in schools with lowest rates of student shifting (usually because of inadequate awareness or poor verification). 180 'red-flag' cases were identified and detailed personal visits by state officials were conducted to red-flag cases to engage with the community and resolve local issues or reverse the order if necessary.At the end of the

effort, 98% of students shifted to nearby schools. The remaining 2% may be long term absentees, fake enrolments etc.
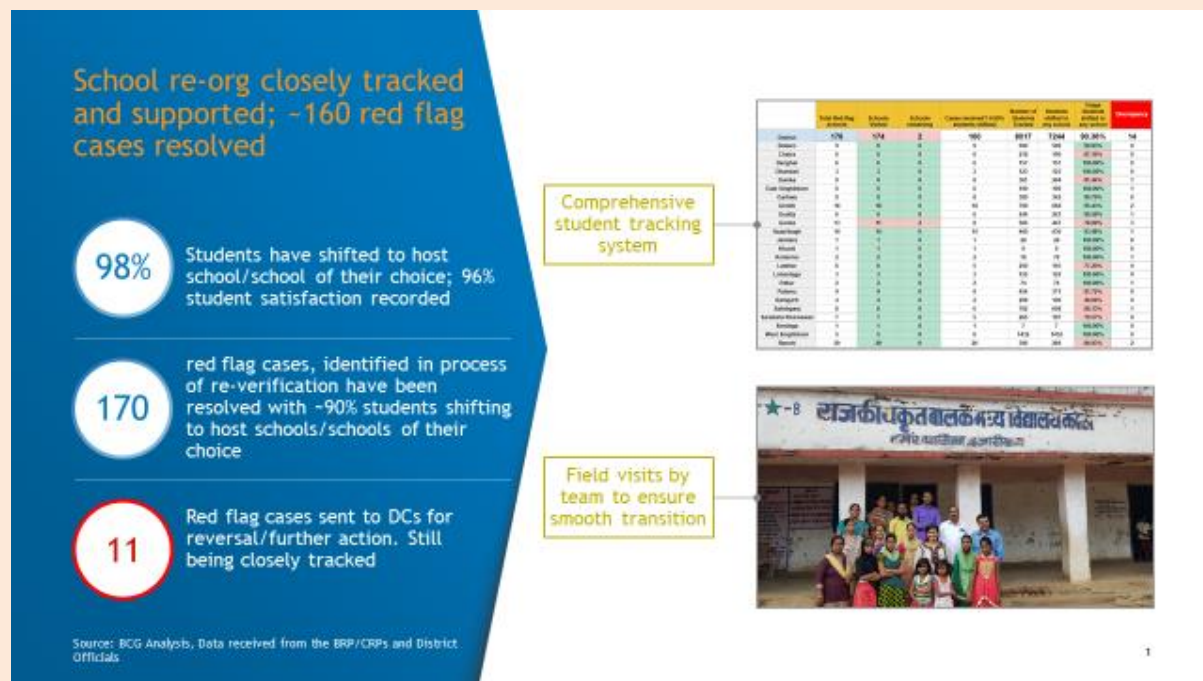
Step 6: Teacher Rationalization - Once mergers are executed, the exercise resulted in significant numbers of surplus teachers or headmasters/principals in several schools. These teachers were rationalized to improve PTR.

Impact

A survey was conducted with the students, parents and teachers who had shifted to new host schools and 96% of the stakeholders reported that they were happy and satisfied with their new school. Students were engaged in discussions during field visits by all department officials (SPD, Director Primary, DSEs/DEOs, ADPOs etc.). Students showed excitement and enthusiasm towards their new host schools because of the multiple facilities available in the school such as playgrounds, library, better toilets, classroom infrastructure etc.

School consolidation has provided multiple benefits to the students in form of

- Better teaching facilities with dedicated teachers for each grade
- Improved disciplinary and academic environment in schools
- Access to schools with better infrastructure
- Larger peer group which has resulted in better attendance
- Access to effectively administered schools with more resources

- Improved school monitoring and scheme supervision etc.
- Dedicated administrative support and increased teaching time in classrooms

Today, the impact of school re-organisation in Jharkhand is already visible. It has resulted in significant cost savings, vastly improved PTR, reduced MGML in classroom, and most importantly, better learning outcomes.
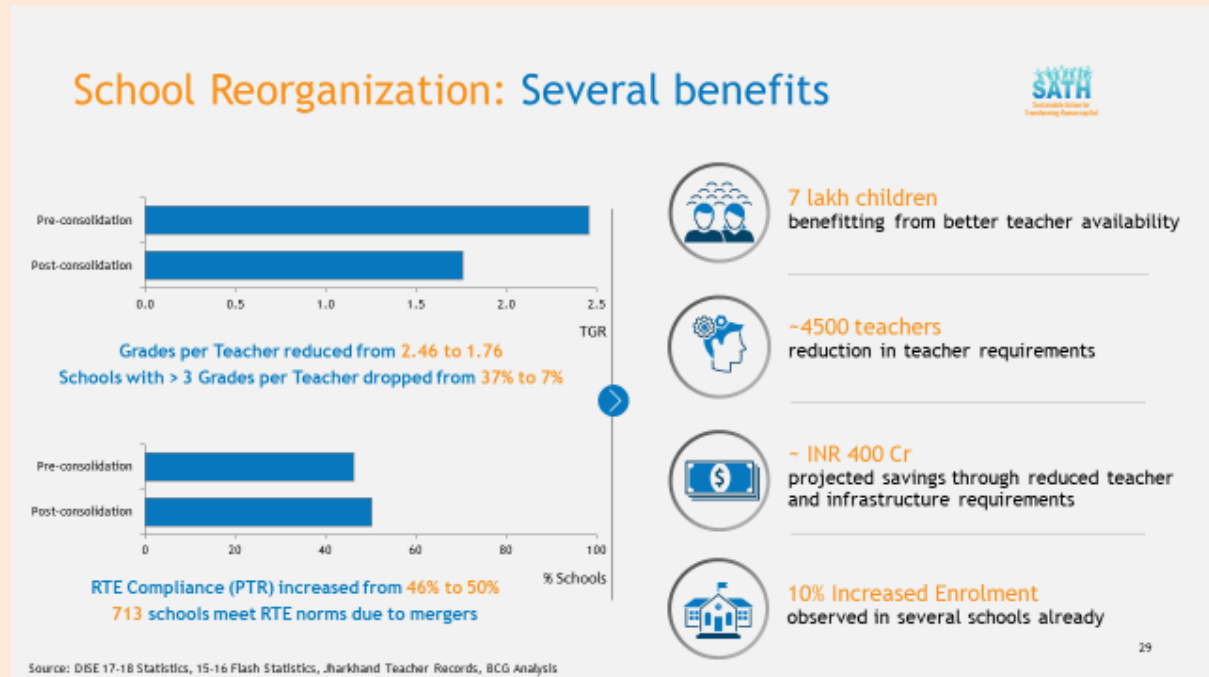
Learning data collected from over 2 Lakh students clearly indicates that larger host schools are delivering significantly higher learning outcomes than smaller sub-scale schools.

Learning data indicates that larger schools are outperforming sub-scale schools
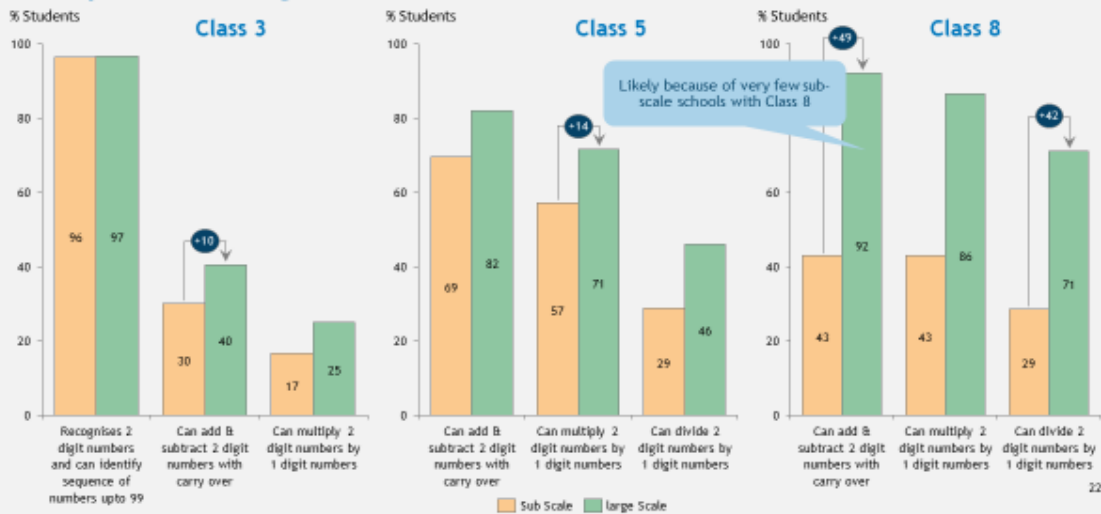
Example of Success Story: MS Talab, Sahiganj

Govt MS Talab in Sahibganj district of north eastern Jharkhand has recently seen a huge influx of students – its enrolment has jumped from 160 a few months ago to 254 now! The genesis of this sudden rise in enrolment can be credited to the recent school re-organisation initiative launched by the government of Jharkhand under Project SATH. The government has taken the bold step of merging small, dysfunctional schools with larger host schools nearby to create large, integrated and more vibrant centers of learning which can also be more efficiently administered. MS Talab has emerged as a champion case of this process, recently being visited and praised by officials from the state government and NITI Aayog as well.

As a part of the re-organisation, MS Talab absorbed 52 students from Govt PS Banpar Tola and UPG PS Ambedkar, 2 small schools that used to operate just a few hundred meters away. However, an additional 40+ students have also left nearby private schools in search of better education. Rather than spend out of pocket to send their children to private schools, the local community now has a renewed faith in public education because of the dramatically improved academic environment at MS Talab. 5 teachers from the 2 merged schools have joined the host schools, taking the total teacher strength to 12 teachers across 8 grades. Instead of a single teacher teaching 3 different grades in the erstwhile schools, the new host school now has grade-

wise and subject-wise teachers which dramatically increases the attention and relevant instruction given to each child. Female teachers have also been a fortuitous beneficiary of the re-organisation process. While it was very difficult to be absent from school in 1 or 2 teachers schools without compromising learning, they can now avail of their legally mandated special leave more easily given a total of 12 teachers. Moreover, the school has also benefited from an infrastructure boost with benches, desks & other infra that has been brought in from the merged schools.

Another catalyst behind the transformation in MS Talab is the principal, Manoj Kumar Ray. Formerly, one of 2 teachers in a much smaller school Banpar Tola, Manoj Kumar Ray has re-energised MS Talab. He has brought in a sense of discipline amongst the teachers and actively engaged the local community, distributing flyers and posters to educate parents about the improved teacher strength and infrastructure in the new school. As enrolment grew, the school has invested in piped water, cleaned up the dumping ground by appealing to the Nagar Palika with increased parent strength & pressure, and raised funds to give all the walls a new paint job. A small library and reading room has also been opened up to benefit younger students, most of whom seem delighted to be in a school with a large playground and the opportunity to make newer friends. This has manifested in a gradual improvement in the rate of attendance over time.

As the Principal noted, "Baccho mein bhi padhai ki ruchi aa gayi hai. Those who are not doing politics understand the benefit of the school re-organisation process." He is confident that over time, MS Talab will be a standout example and rival the best of private schools in the district.