

# Journey from Tools to Pens.....

This is the story of children engaged in carpet weaving in Naktapur village. It is one of the child labour intensive villages of the project. 130 families living in Naktapur village belong to scheduled caste and carpet weaving is the main source of their livelihood. 178 children in the age group of 6-14 years are working with their families and weaving carpets. Majority of the children in their formative years of life are missing education and other child rights.

During community self-assessment, it emerged that out of 178 children, 140 children (78%) were enrolled but 49% of them were not attending the school and remaining 51% were attending the schools but not regularly. 38 (22%) children have dropped out of school an year before. 140 enrolled children were also heading towards dropping out of school due to their increasing absence in the school. This problem was prioritised and brought in the village action plan formulated by the community after five days intensive participatory process which the implementing organization Sarathi Development Foundation named as Village Integrated Planning.

Community volunteers were oriented on counselling of the parents for enrolling and sending children regularly to the school. Twelve children including ten girls who were dropped out of school were re-enrolled in school in October 2019. While mobilising the parents for enrolment of the drop out children, the next challenge emerged at school level. To address it, community volunteers and parents visited the school several times for re-enrolment of their children but did not succeed. Teachers were asking affidavits and other documents to avoid the enrolment. This issue was escalated to senior public authorities at district level for support and action. Basic Shiksha Adhikari (Head of Education Department at district level) and he issued a letter for schools in the project area for enrolment of the drop out children in month of September 2019. He appreciated project initiatives and assured to provide all support for encouraging education in child labour intensive carpet belt of Bhadohi district.

It has regenerated hope among children for their development and better future. They are regularly going to school and mobilising other children as well. More and more parents are getting aware of the importance of education. It is an important step for reducing child labour among children so that they can shape their future and make essential life choices. Value of community based strategies in influencing behaviour and building linkages with the government are slowly getting established.

