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A Report on Community Level Participatory Design Development Workshop for Bridge Schools

Community Development Centre (CODEC)

Report on Community Level Participatory Design Development Workshop for Bridge Schools

A Workshop Report

Editorial Panel

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BACKGROUND

Community Development Centre (CODEC) is in the process of designing new educational facilities (Bridge Schools) to support drop-out students and engage them back in education as an activity of the "Shopner Thikana" or "Quality Education for Dropout Girls & Boys in Vulnerable Coastal Areas of Bangladesh" project. This project will be implemented in two coastal districts of Bangladesh: Bagerhat and Patuakhali. Under the Bagerhat district, Mongla and Sharonkhola sub-districts are selected, which have a very high percentage of school dropouts at the secondary level (Ashikuzzaman M., 2022). For Patuakhali district, Galachipa sub-district (Rangabali and Char Biswas) are selected, which also have a similar situation.

Fig1: Group activity of children in the workshop in Sharonkhola

Fig. 2: Group discussion with children in Mongla

The key target group of this project includes school dropout girls and boys who have completed their Primary Education Completion Examination (i.e., Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE) Examination is a national examination in Bangladesh administered by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and taken by all students near the end of their fifth year in primary school) but failed to continue their secondary school. The age group of the students will be adolescents (age 10-16). From the initiation of the project, each year 40 students in our 8 bridge schools will be enrolled in grade VI, and they will continue their education up to grade VIII. A total of 960 students (70% girls) will be supported by our Bridge Schools. There will also be "Songlap" centers, and other extracurricular and student club activities in our bridge schools.

COMMUNITY LEVEL PARTICIPATORY DESIGN DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR BRIDGE SCHOOLS

A participatory design process is an approach that ensures the active involvement of all key stakeholders in the design process as a means of better understanding the actual needs. It's a bottom-up approach that can be very useful in developing innovative design solutions that fulfill the aspirations, expectations, and thoughts of the community and stakeholders to promote ownership of the project.

Fig3: Group discussion with children in Mongla

To facilitate this participatory approach, CODEC has arranged two "Community Level Participatory Design Development Workshop for Bridge Schools" in Sharonkhola and Mongla Upazilla of Bagerhat district. The aim of these workshops was to brainstorm and articulate the needs, ideas, and expectations of the key stakeholders (i.e Dropout school children, Parents, teachers etc) to initiate the design process of the bridge schools. All sessions of the workshop were designed and facilitated to maximize the participation all members attending the workshop. The outline of the workshop is provided in **Annex-A**.

Fig4: Group discussion with caregivers, children in Sharonkhola

The workshop was designed in two phases. In the first phase, discussion and sharing were made about joyful learning, quality education, environment of education, health hygiene, access for PWD (Person with disability), disaster resilience and more. The participants proactively provided their ideas and feedback regarding these issues. The second phase was focused more on the initial design development of the bridge schools through drawings and model making. During this phase, the participants were divided into three groups.

Two groups consisted of children, and one group consisted of parents and teachers. At first, the groups pointed out the ideas, requirements, and thoughts of their dream school. Then they drew their dream school and finally built model schools, including all the facilities they wanted in their school.

During this session, the secondary school teachers provided feedback on the drawings and models. They discussed the difference between existing schools and the schools designed by the children. They also pointed out a few suggestions that CODEC may wish to consider in the design. Participants accepted their feedback proactively and tried to incorporate it into their drawings and models.

Fig. 5: Group discussion with children in Mongla

Fig. 6: Group discussion with children in Sharonkhola

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

- Need assessment for Bridge school
- Express dreams of bridge school for the children
- Extract ideas for a joyful learning environment.
- Articulate ideas for WASH Facilities from Children
- Ideas for disaster resilience

Workshop Participants

60%   40%
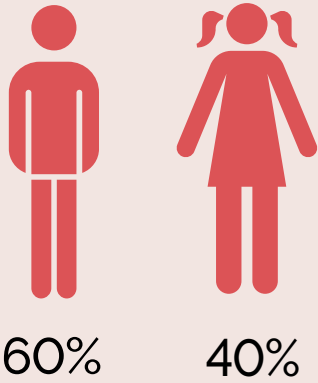
The participants of these workshops were from Mongla and Shoronkhola upazilas of Bagerhat district. Dropout children who did not continue their study due to poverty, distance from home, learning difficulties, etc. Parents and school teachers participated in these workshops. 60% of participants were female, and 40% were male. Amongst all the participants, 70% were dropout students, and the rest of 30% were a combination of caregivers and secondary school teachers.

Fig.7: Children writing their thoughts about bridge school.

Table 01: Demography of the participants

Participants	Female	Male	Total
Children	16	12	28
Parents/Caregivers	8	2	10
Secondary School Teachers	0	2	2

WORKSHOP FINDINGS

A total of two workshops were conducted in Sharonkhola and Mongla Upazila including 40 children, caregivers, and teachers, who expressed their needs. The participants actively engaged in different sessions of the workshop and provided their feedback. They actively participated in group work incorporating drawing, and model building exercises. The overall findings of the workshop are noted briefly in the following section.

Fig.8. : Children writing their thoughts about bridge school.

WHY DO DROP OUT CHILDREN NEED TO COME BACK TO SCHOOL?

The key findings, derived from the responses of the participants in the focus group discussion, are briefly described below.

- Completing their school education will provide them with education and certificates, which can help them to get jobs or find suitable work.
- Education can make their future more successful.
- Education is important in their daily lives.
- Education can provide better income-generating opportunities than they are currently engaged in.
- Education also gives a good social status and acceptance.

Fig.9: Parents are also writing their thoughts about bridge school.

WHAT A DREAM SCHOOL CONTAINS

The participants were divided in three groups for this session. Children, parents, caregivers, and teachers articulated their thoughts and requirements of a dream school. On the final segment they drew pictures and created model schools with help of the facilitators that contains all the facilities they dream of in a school.

Perspective of Children

- Basic school equipment like benches, tables, fans, whiteboards, and markers and so on.
- A playing field where they can play.
- A pond or tube-well where they can wash.
- Enough dustbins with a cover for all the classrooms.

Fig.10: Children building models of their dream bridge school.

- A green and clean school.
- A good office for teachers.
- Special menstrual hygiene facilities for girls.
- Pure and clean drinking water facilities.
- Gender segregated toilet facilities.
- A fence around the school.
- A flower garden.
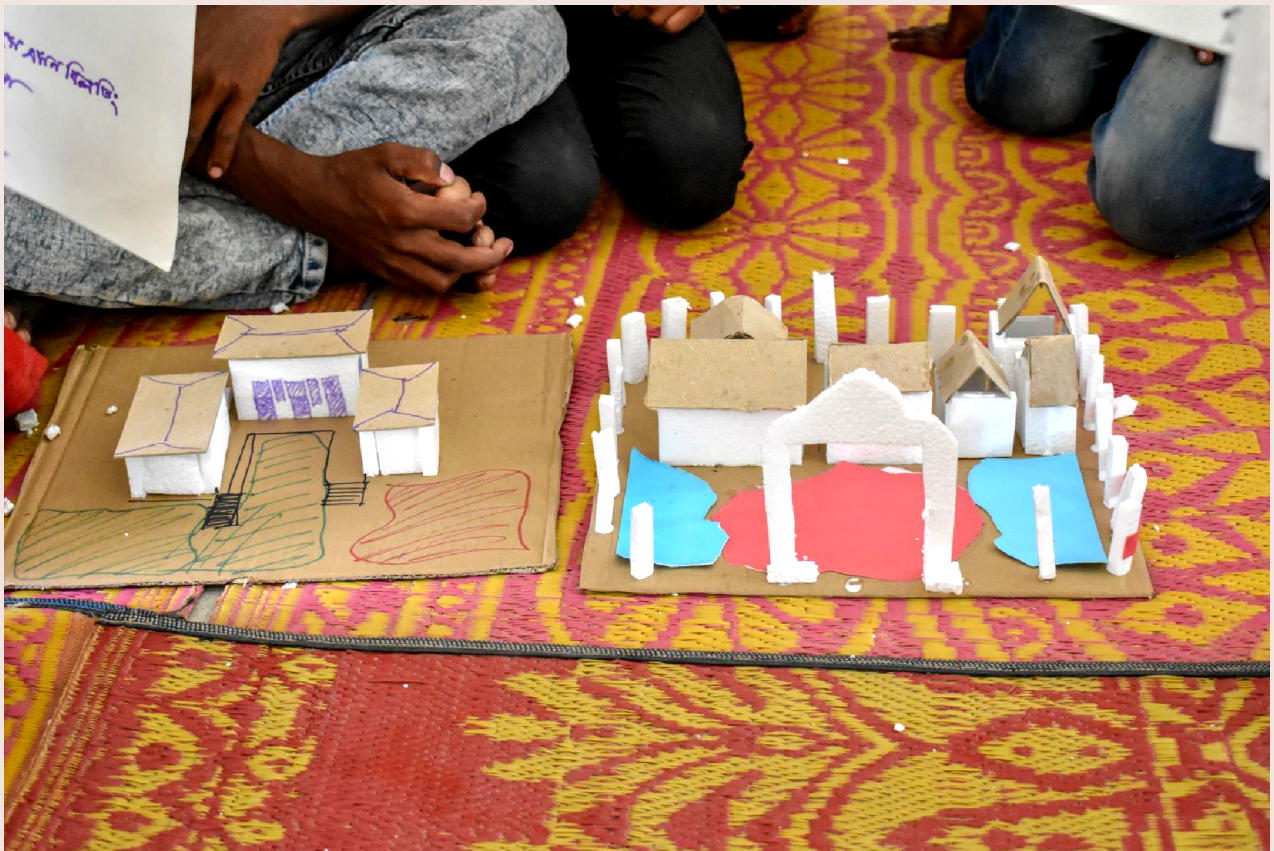
Fig.11: Children building model about their dream bridge school.

- A pond or tube-well where they can wash themselves.
- Enough dustbins with a cover for all the classrooms.
- A water tank where they can preserve fresh water.
- A classroom that is not extremely hot in summer or extremely cold in winter.
- A classroom that will be decorated by them (children).
- A library where they can read and take books.
- Supply of other health hygienic kits like soap, detergents etc.
- A multimedia classroom.

- A common room where they can rest when they feel sick.
- Some musical instruments like the Harmonium, Tabla for
  entertainment purposes.
- A clean space where they can at least wash their hands, face etc. A
  wash block can be very useful.
- A good educational environment.
- A flower garden for them. There can also be vegetable and fruit
  bearing trees.
- A playing field where they can play.

Fig.12: model making at Mongla workshop

- A strong building that would not be torn apart in times of natural
  disasters.
- Ramp facilities to ensure access of persons with disability along
  with the stairs.
- A classroom that has enough supply of air and light with sufficient
  doors and windows.

- Boundary walls along with a big gate.
- A room for extracurricular activities.
- A computer room with computer facilities.
- Uninterrupted electric supply. A solar electric supply can be useful.

We need segregated sanitation facilities. We also need a flower garden, a common room, and a library room.

A 14 years old gril from Mongla

We need pure drinking water facility. we do not have adequate drinking water soruce in summer season, we cannot get pure water.

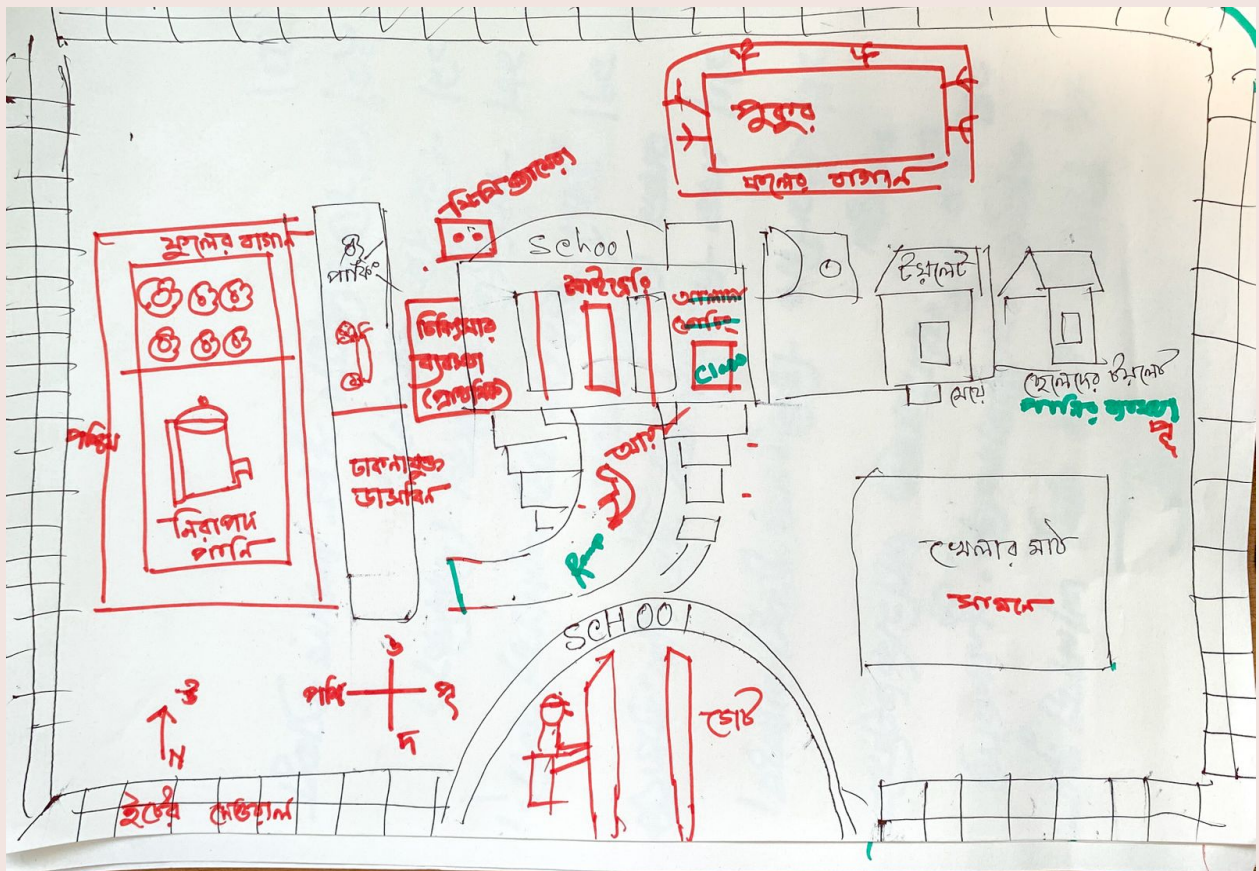A 10 years old boy from Sharonkhola

Fig.13: Children drawing about their dream bridge school.

Perspective of Teachers

- Female washroom inside the common room.
- A multimedia classroom.
- A school where students can do physical exercise.
- A separate common room for both genders.

"

We have many lackings in school facilities, but we always try our best to provide a good service.

A Teacher of Pak-Khali Primary School

Fig.14: Teacher sharing their opinions about dream bridge school.

Perspective of Parents/Caregivers

- School boundary for security purposes.
- Only Rainwater harvesting will not be enough. An alternative source of safe drinking water.
- A big gate with watchman is needed. A CCTV camera setup can also be beneficial.
- Coaching support for slow learners.
- A Martyr Monument where children can pay respect.
- A strong and big school gate.
- A tank to store rainwater.
- A room for the office support staff.
- A canteen for the students where they can eat clean and hygienic food. And flower gardens.

DRAWING AND
MODEL MAKING WORKSHOP

After discussion about dream school, all children participated in a physical workout schedule. Where they drew their thoughts about bridge school and make models of their drawings. In their drawing and model, they tried to incorporate all their dreams, desires, and necessities about bridge school. They focused on all their issues, such as playground, common room, WASH block, library and so on. Also, they tried to create models. This workshops were held in two different areas. One was located at Mongla and other was located at Sharonkhola.

Fig.15: Children drawing about their dream bridge school.in Shoronkhola

In this session of model making and drawings, different types of spatial, functional arrangements and forms were developed by children for their dream bridge school. A group of children drew their school as a liner type of form where they very placed their classrooms in a central location and service functions were at the end of the building. This clearly shows that they are also thinking about space sequencing of service and classroom areas. They also placed their form in such a way that creates opportunities for cross ventilation and a soothing environment for students.

Another group of children drew their dream school layout in a horseshoe shape. In the center, they placed their playing field with a flower garden and a "shahid minar". They considered that; the central playfield can make them very cheerful during the class period. Also, the central playing field provides ample opportunities for natural light and ventilation in the bridge school.
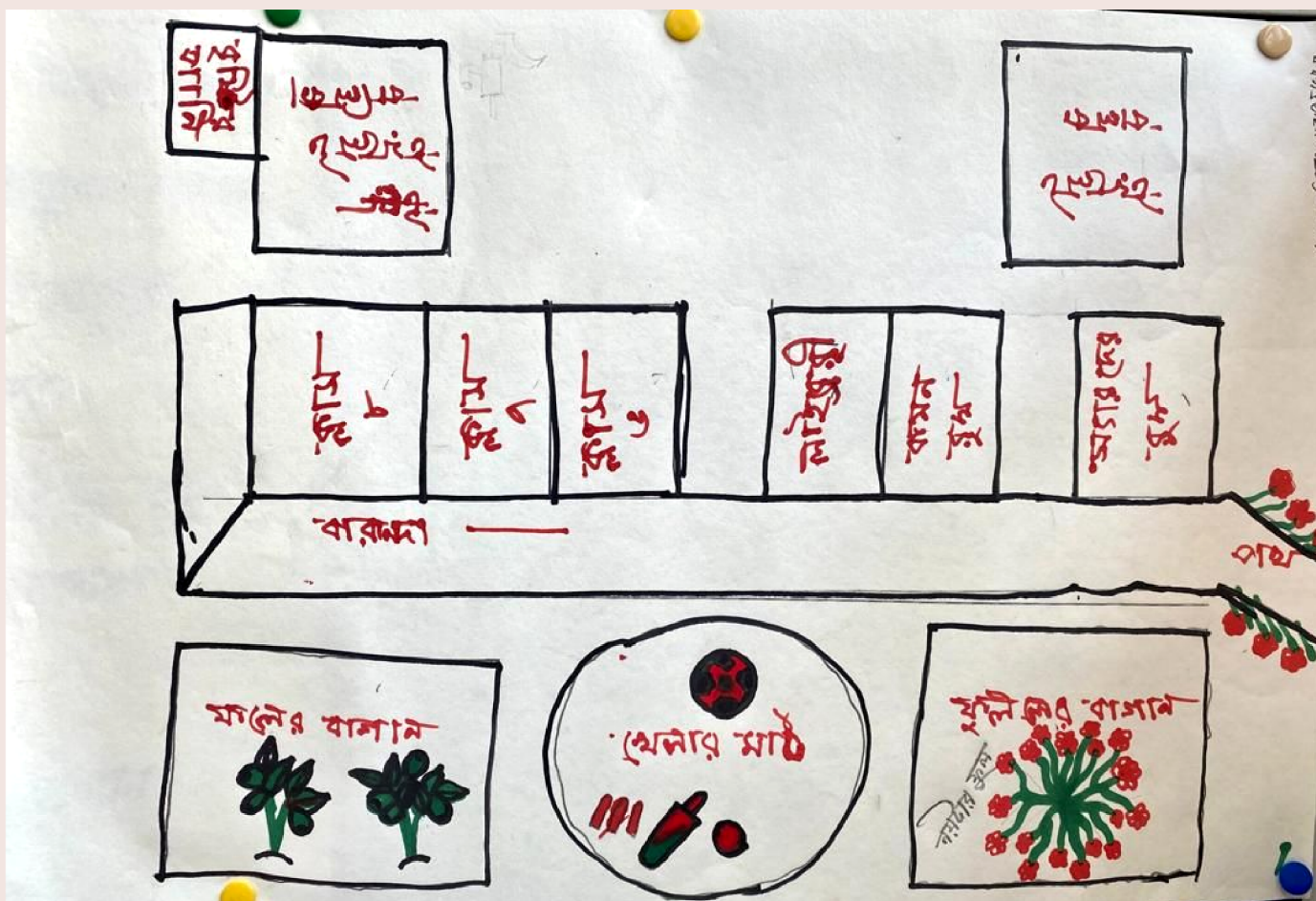

Fig.16: Children drawing about their dream bridge school in Mongla

Some drawings showed a double-layered functional arrangement. In the first layer, they placed their classroom, office room, teachers' room, after that in the second layer other recreational functions like a library, common room, "songlap room" indoor games, computer lab was placed.

One thing that was highly remarkable was that every participant group focused on the need for hygienic toilet facilities and access to safe drinking water. In their school, they also want to establish rainwater harvesting system and waste management system. Children groups also indicated placing gardens and ponds in their school area in their drawings.
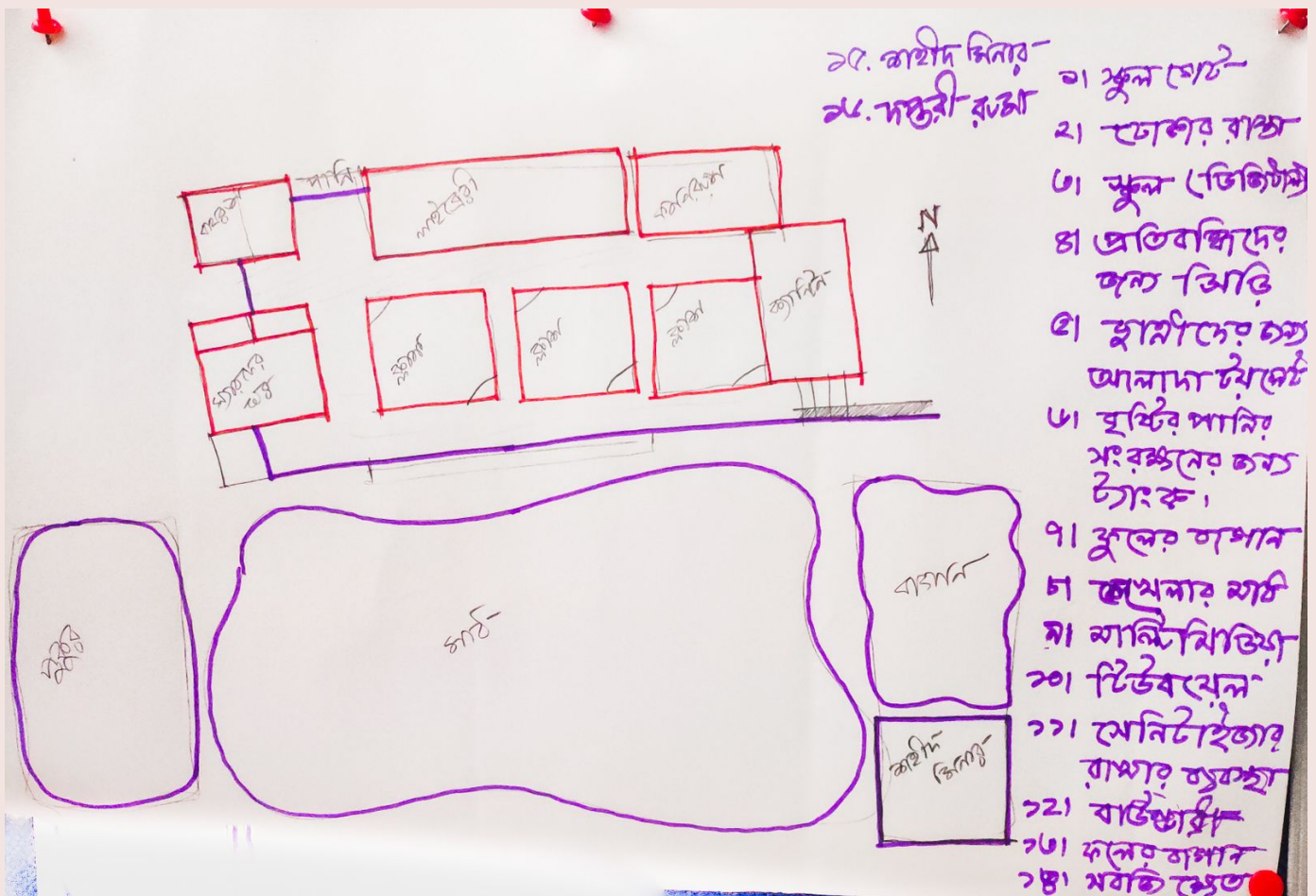

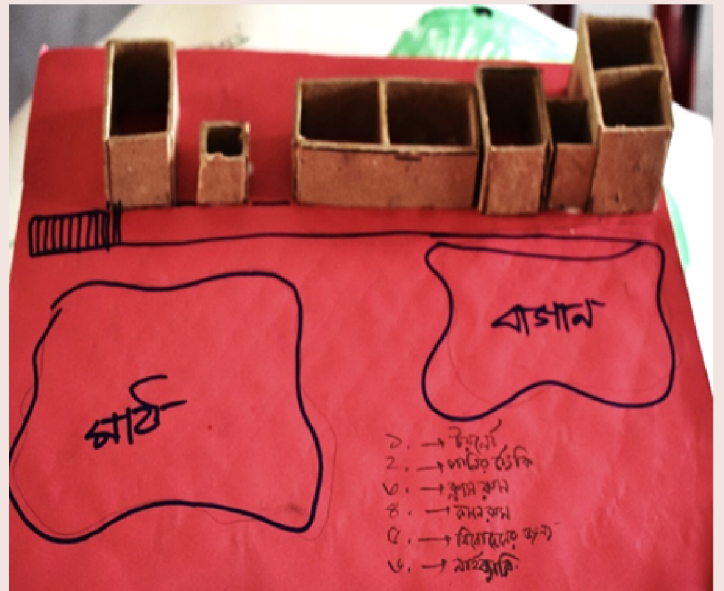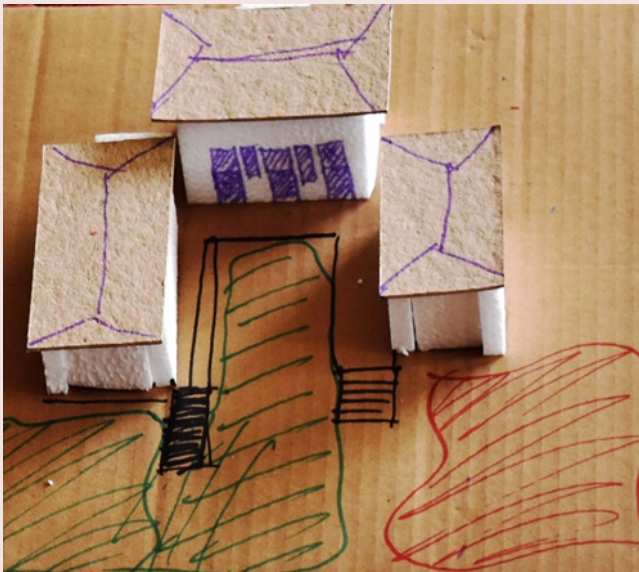Fig.17: Children drawing about their dream bridge school.

Fig.18: Children building model of their dream bridge school.

Conclusion

Education in the coastal areas of Bangladesh has always been challenging. The context of education status in coastal Bangladesh is much different than in other regions of Bangladesh. Access to formal education is very constrained for the children of the coastal areas. In some of the remote and detached islands, formal education is as close to being non-existent as it gets. Due to frequent natural disasters, the regular classes are interrupted. Communication failure, reduction in family income, and damaged school buildings are the key reasons for children not attending school (BBS, 2015). Poverty becomes very dominant resulting in child labor, school drop-out, child marriage, and climate change-induced migration. The coastal areas are facing a higher rate of school drop-out in secondary education than other areas of Bangladesh. In addition to the existing problem, Covid -19 has become a new and vibrant challenge in implementing education services, especially in a densely populated country like Bangladesh.

Fig.19: Children with their building model of bridge school in Sharonkhola .

School closures since the start of the pandemic have accelerated the dropout/irregularity problems of children, especially leading to child marriage and child labor. During the "Community Level Participatory Design Development Workshop for Bridge Schools" workshop, many of the challenges faced by the coastal communities, especially the educational challenges faced by school dropout children, parents/caregivers, and teachers, were discussed. The participatory approach of the workshop helped us to realize and document the aspirations, expectations, and thoughts of the community and key stakeholders regarding the need for secondary level education and ways to overcome the challenges that they face. Also, during the drawing and model-making phases, the participants proactively participated in design development and provided valuable suggestions and guidance for spatial arrangements, functional requirements, the masterplan, resilience, and services of their bridge school.

Fig.20: Children with their building model of bridge school in Mongla.

These workshops have already created a sense of ownership in the communities where they were held and will further facilitate the process of bridge school design development and construction. Also, the workshops provided ample learning for CODEC Knowledge Management, Program Development & Technical team. It was quite beneficial for the CODEC team to understand the actual needs and requirements of the stakeholders and their thoughts about the design of the bridge school. This will further facilitate the implementation of the upcoming "Shopner Thikana" Project. Through the project eight bridge schools will be established for ensuring quality education for dropout girls & boys in vulnerable coastal areas of Bagerhat (Mongla ,Sharonkhola) & Patuakhali (Rangabali, Charbiswas). We are planning to do another similar workshop in Patuakhali (Galachipa).

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If I get chance to study in school, I'll able to get a job in future, I'll be able to support my family and have a say in the decision making of my family.

A 13 years old girl
from Mongla

COMMUNITY LEVEL PARTICIPATORY DESIGN DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR BRIDGE SCHOOLS

Number of Participants: 30   **Time: 2 Hours & 45 minutes**

Participants: Children, Caregivers, architectures, engineers, project team members and other beneficiaries

Objectives:

- A Need Assessment
- Express dreams of bridge school by the children
- Extract Ideas for Joyful Learning Environment
- Articulate Ideas for WASH Facilities from children
- Ideas for Disaster Resilience

Activities	Short Description	Time	Materials	Responsible for
1. Introduction	- Introducing everyone - Introduction of CODEC - Sharing objective of this workshop	15 Minutes		
2. Preface joyful Learning concept	- Documentary show On joyful learning.	10 Minutes	Video link, Multimedia	
3. Joyful Learning Articulation by Children	This can be group activity where facilitator will divide the children into 3 groups. Students will discuss amongst themselves for 5 minutes on what they have learn about joyful learning. Then for the next 10 Minutes they will write down the elements of joyful learning. Then each group will share what they have written to the large group in 5 minutes to the large group.	30 Minutes	Poster paper, Marker	

1.	**Wash Facilities Information**	A small discussion on health hygiene and wash facilities will be run here. Discussions on existing wash facilities and it's limitation in the communities and educational Institutions.	5 Minutes	
2.	**Discussion on Disaster Resilience**	A discussion session on disaster resilience can be conducted here. This could be a dialogue session where facilitator will articulate the idea on the board by taking ideas from children.	10 Minutes	
3.	**Ideal Wash facilities list down**	Children will pop-up the ideal wash facilities required for them by popcorn method and facilitator will list them down.	15 Minutes	White Board, Marker
4.	**Discussion on an ideal school**	-Story Telling of schools - Experience sharing (positive/negative) -	10 Minutes	Video link, Multimedia
5.	**Dreams express Session**	Facilitator will ask the students to close their eyes and think about their dream schools with probing questions. They will hang the components of their dream schools in the sticky note and then hang on the tree. Facilitator will discuss the component in brief.	30 Minutes	Banner, Sticky note, pen
6.	**Creating a dream school**	Children will be again divided into three groups and will create their dream school by using drawings, using sola, crafts etc.	30 Minutes	Clay, Poster paper, art paper, glue, pencil, rubber etc.
7.	**Closing Remarks**	Thanking everyone and bade good bye	5 Minutes	
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