

Oxfam India Bihar factsheet

Rapid survey on violations by private schools

Executive Summary

During the peak of the pandemic, 84% households suffered a fall in their household income. Despite this, Oxfam India's study in 2020 found that 40% private schools hiked their fees. However, such violations have existed long before the pandemic. Even the National Education Policy 2020 recognizes that the current regulatory regime has failed to prevent profiteering and commercialisation by private schools and calls for more effective regulation.

While there have been multiple media reports of violation of the rights of private school parents, there is no national level data to explain the scale of the problem. Oxfam India's rapid survey was conducted to fill this gap. It covers close to 3500 private school parents from across 36 states and union territories. Broadly, the survey sought to understand the

1. Key concerns of private school parents and instances of violations by private schools
2. Experiences of parents and children with learning during the pandemic, and reopening of schools
3. Recommendations by private school parents to ensure effective regulation of private schools

Key Findings from Bihar

Exploitation of parents, harassment of children and violation of norms by private schools

- 84% parents report that government has been unable to regulate private schools effectively
- **Illegal charges during admission:** 35% parents had to pay capitation fees at the time of admission
- **Screening of students:** 65% children had to appear for a test/interview prior to seeking admission in the school, for any grade below 8th
- **Excess fees and hidden charges:** 65% parents forced to buy school supplies from a specific vendor; 66% parents had to pay additional charges that were not part of declared official break-up of fees
- **Harassment and abuse by school staff and students-** 41% children have faced harassment and abuse by either the school staff or their fellow students.

Parental voice and experiences with complaint resolution

- **Inadequate action in school:** 98% parents who complained to the school said that they were not satisfied with the action taken by the school
- **Inadequate action by education department:** Only 50% parents satisfied by action taken by education department over complaint
- **Absence of collective spaces:** Under 10% parents report that their school has a parent teacher association.

Fee hikes during pandemic

- **Hiked fees:** 65% parents report having to pay hiked fees for the AY 2021-22

Failure of government regulation and recommendations for effective regulation

Private school parents from Bihar made the following recommendations for effective regulation of private schools:

- 89% parents want the government to regulate school fees and ensure that private schools comply
- 83% parents want private school finances to be made more transparent by giving parents access to audited accounts of the school
- 83% parents want the government to prevent schools from forcing purchase of textbooks, uniforms from specific vendors
- 80% parents demand that all private schools must meet minimum norms of infrastructure, safety and quality to remain open
- 79% parents want a formal say in fixation of school fees by creation of fee regulation committees at school and district level
- 78% parents demand that the complaint processes to be made easier and complainants' children to be protected from harassment
- 73% parents demand protection of children from discrimination, bullying, or other harassment based on parents' income, class, caste, gender, disability, and other forms