

Peer support

One of the EIA Teachers' Training and Support activities is peer support between school partners and Teacher Facilitators (TFs) from the same upazila. EIA always encourages teachers to take part in pair work as well as to share and/or reflect on their classroom practice, challenges and success with their partners. But how effective is this practice? It was a question in my mind for a while and I got the answer at the recent Extended Cluster Meeting (ECM) held on 8-9 November 2010 at Lalmonirhat (Secondary). Here, we only had one TF, Mr. Abdur Rafi, for the last few months; the other TF, Mr. Rafiqul Islam, was already involved as a master trainer in another project. At the first Cluster Meeting (CM), Mr Islam expressed his apologies for not being able to continue both jobs at the same time. So we had no choice other than to run our programme with one TF.

Gradually I found that the existing TF, Mr. Rafi was becoming demotivated. While talking with him, he said *"I feel scattered, as I don't have any partner in my cluster. It's true that usually I can ask for support to you over phone or in the Cluster Meeting. But having a partner is much more helpful to discuss about the modules, about classes and about everything regarding EIA"*.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rafiqul Islam was getting updates about EIA from the different schools in Lalmonirhat involved in the programme from time to time and he was so inspired by the EIA activities that, after four months, once again he applied to join EIA. When I asked him the reason for his interest, he said the CLT techniques suggested by EIA, seemed very scientific to him. I particularly liked one of his comments, which is really inspiring for EIA, *"I don't know whether I'll be a good TF or not, but by being involved with EIA, then in the long run I'll certainly be a good teacher and that is my actual target"*.

According to him, besides various CLT techniques practised in the classroom, one of the attractive features of EIA is its partnership approach to working with peers, which made him courageous enough to rejoin after five months, when the other participants were already far ahead of him. At the last ECM Mr. Islam conducted a session with confidence and when I complimented him on what was his first work he again mentioned the partnership approach of EIA. Rafiqul said that he and the other TF, Rafi, always share their new ideas and challenges over the phone or by meeting up. Our already continuing TF, Mr. Rafi expressed the same opinion regarding his partner adding, *"Now working with EIA seems to me more trouble-free and enjoyable, as I can share any problem instantly with my partner"*.



Though competition between peers is also observed, I should call it a healthy competition which is leading to constructive learning. I came back from Lalmonirhat this time with a feeling of relief and contentment.

Mostan Zida Al Noor

Teacher Development Coordinator
English in Action