Notes from the Field Visits to School Education Projects (the Program) of
Tata Steel Foundation and ASPIRE
18-23 August 2022

I. Introduction

1. The notes are based on observations, discussions, and insights from the field visit of the School Education Program (the Program) between 18-23 August 2022. The Program is supported under the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of Tata Steel. It is supported by <u>Tata Steel Foundation</u> (Foundation) and implemented by <u>Aspire (A Society for Promotion of Inclusive and Relevant Education)</u> in Jajpur and Kendujar in Odisha state and West Singhbum in Jharkhand state. The primary purpose of the field visits was to learn from more than eight years of the Program implementation.

2. The note also touches upon the people's socio-economic status and explores ideas to improve the overall quality of life, including the livelihoods of the poor in these districts. The list of team members, the facilities visited, and the itinerary followed are in **Annexure 1**. Selected photographs taken during the field visit are in **Annexure 2**. The team thanks the staff of Aspire, Tata Steel Foundation, and stakeholders who generously gave time to the team to discuss the details of their lives and the work done by the Foundation and Aspire.

3. **Overview of School Education Program:** The objectives of the Program are to increase universal access to primary education and ensure that no child is left behind by strengthening school attendance, improving learner achievement, and creating child labour-free villages. The interventions strategies under the Program include (i) household surveys and Village Education Registers (VERs); (ii) Residential Bridge Courses (RBCs) and Non-residential Bridge Courses (NRBCs); (iii) Cluster Education Resource Centers (CERC); (iv) Learning Enhancement Programme (LEP); and (V) school management committees (SMCs) and panchayat strengthening towards improving school governance and universalisation of education in the villages. The Program works is under three broad pillars: Access, Learning and Governance simultaneously on scale.

4. The remaining note will follow the SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework to discuss the insights of the field visit team. The analysis presented by the team should be considered within the limitation and constraints of the short field visit, selective stakeholders met, and the limited expertise of the field visit team, among others. The note is, at best, just a perspective. For robust inferences for midcourse correction or any other major changes to the Program, the field notes can be considered as one of the inputs interpreted within the limitations of the study methods (mainly field observations, focus groups, key informant interviews, and stakeholder consultations).

II. Findings: SWOT Framework

A. Strengths

5. **A balanced approach: demand and supply**: The government's main focus in education has been on the supply side—teachers, school buildings, textbooks, and furniture. There are issues with the quality of supply-side interventions—for example, the availability of an adequate number of well-trained school teachers. The governments are much weaker on the demand side, especially mobilising the communities, ensuring their participation in the delivery of the services, and customising the service delivery according to the local needs, more so among difficult-to-reach populations.

6. The Program has a strong focus on demand-side interventions, which include strengthening school management committees (SMCs), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), youth groups, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and self-help groups. Capacity building exercise has been undertaken for SMCs on the right to education (RTE), child rights and SMC's roles and responsibilities. Post training, SMCs hold meetings and plan action to improve education in their respective villages. PRI

members have also been oriented. Overall, community mobilisation and participation are the key strengths of the Program. This has led to quality education and social outcomes, including child labour-free zones. SMCs have contributed to the enforcement of child labour-free zones (CLFZ). Panchayats have celebrated CLFZ conventions as mass public functions and pledged to ensure all children's enrolment and continuation in schools. The SMCs have become active in monitoring Mid-Day-Meals, keeping the school premises clean, developing vegetable gardens, and motivating parents to regularly send their children to school and finish high school.

7. **Survey and Village Education Registers (VERs).** The Program created social demand for education by tracking the children and sharing the data with local communities. The household surveys[1] and development of VERs help track children out of school, ensure universal enrolment, and track progress. The VERs contain information about all children of 0-18 age in the surveyed villages. VERs get aggregated at the panchayat level into Panchayat Education Registers. All education facilities have been mapped out in every panchayat so that any child dropping out or leaving the village will be tracked through the VER, which is updated almost quarterly. Transition at different levels, starting from Aganwadi to grade 1 onward is tracked and supported annually. School Management Committee (SMCs) subsequently use and maintain the VERs. Panchayat and SMC members use the VERs to monitor educational progress in collaboration with Program functionaries. The transfer of ownership and initiative to local communities is probably the most critical Foundation upon which the Program's success is built and has become an important feature of Program implementation with widespread participation of parents, the local community and members of PRIs.

8. **Community mobilisation:** Each Gram Panchayat has a community mobiliser for social mobilisation, which involves contacting each household in all villages and the tolas of the panchayat. All sections of the community (especially tribal hamlets), all stakeholders, including tribal leaders (Mundas and Mankis), PRIs, school teachers, local leaders, women and youth groups are mobilised. The Program has also built relationships with block and district officials, local political leaders, non-government organisations (NGOs), CSR, media, etc. The social mobilisation exercise under the Program has paved the way for organising the community and community groups around education.

9. **Identification of high-risk children and customising solutions:** Out-of-school and at-risk children have been identified, and various strategies have been adopted to bring them to school. The 6-7-year-olds are brought to the school through direct enrolment. Short dropouts are brought back via short-term non-residential bridge courses (NRBC). Long dropouts and never-enrolled through longer-term residential bridge courses (RBCs). The children in the third category lived in the most difficult circumstances – working at construction sites, in dhabas and repair shops, in transportation and mining-related activities, etc. Many are orphans and children of single parents, facing alcoholism and crime. Once in the RBCs, they get an environment of respect and dignity, nutrition and care, a lively peer group, and the opportunity to learn, engage in sports and arts, be creative and have fun.

10. **Residential Bridge Courses (RBCs) and Non-residential Bridge Courses (NRBCs).** The bridge courses have been very helpful in overcoming learning deficits among children. The project followed two types of bridge courses - short-term non-residential bridge courses (NRBC) to bring back the dropouts and residential bridge courses (RBCs) for the non-enrolled children. These two interventions have successfully brought many children back to school and socialised them in schooling and learning. We visited several RBCs and NRPBc, which allowed us to see and experience the activities in the centres and programmes planned and witness the benefits of hard work put in by the project staff. The efforts by the project team succeeded in bringing all non-enrolled children to schools; 97% of these were from tribes and scheduled castes, highlighting the need for special efforts to make services work for the extremely excluded groups.

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[1] In mid-2015 a comprehensive household survey was initiated, covering 1.5 lakh households, that made available a data set covering every child, in every household and habitation in these six blocks.

11. **Cluster Education Resource Centers (CERCs):** The CERCs are organisational arrangements to teach rural children digital literacy and skills in handling computers. The CERC we visited were filled with different designs and prototypes made with the materials provided to the students.

12. **Learning Enrichment Program (LEP**): LEP vertical encompasses interventions to address the issue of learning deficits among children attending schools. LEP has developed more effective and efficient pedagogies. LEP starts by focusing on children in grades III-V and targets children with low age or grade-appropriate learning. LEP classes are organised for two hours daily on the school premises, before and after school. The LEP classes are also organised level-wise. The level-1 course implies competencies to be mastered in grades 1-2, level 2 implies competencies to be attained in grades 3-5, and level 3 implies the middle school level competencies. The additional inputs and support are for six months at each identified level. The subjects taught in level 1 include maths and language, while at level 2, teaching includes Science and English in addition to Language and Maths. At level 3, knowledge areas beyond the curriculum, such as gender and environment awareness, are also included. LEP teachers are youths selected from the same or nearby village, trained and provided intensive on-the-job support to grasp the teaching techniques. This has a tremendous effect on student performance and their levels of learning in schools.

13. **Ashram schools:** We visited a few well-run Ashram schools run by the state governments, where RBC children are mainstreamed. They are supported under the Program to function more effectively. The students were neatly dressed and regular in school attendance. The premises are also kept clean and tidy. We had time to interact with students, especially those staying in Ashram schools. Many of them aspire to become teachers. Some aspire to become police to ensure public services such as water reach their villages. Many of them have seen the hardships faced by their parents and experienced poor living conditions. They have developed empathy for helping others who have been suffering like them in their villages. What is interesting to note is that they not only wanted to improve their future but also the villagers and the community around them.

14. **Relevance:** Tribal districts in Central India are probably the poorest districts in India. As per the wealth index analysis from the recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS) fifth round, West Singbhum district, for example, comes out as the *second poorest district in India*. The Program is very relevant to development outcomes, given its implementation in some of India's poorest regions (see Figure below).

Figure: Poorest 100 district of India as per the wealth index analysis of NFHS-V includes West Singhbum and Kendujhar districts
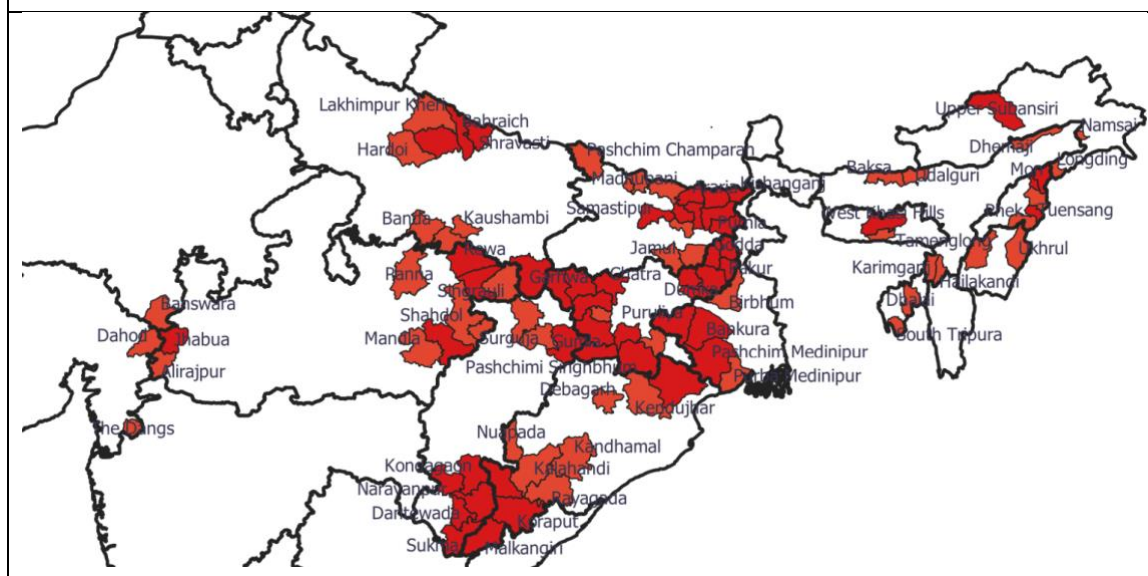
15. **Government relationship.** The organisational arrangements under the project are well planned and are working well. The project allocated one community mobiliser (CM) for each GP. However, an

equally important role is gaining the confidence of the teachers and educational administrators at the block and district levels. The teachers and state education officers used to look at NGO activities with suspicion in the past. The Aspire and Tata Steel Foundation functionaries gained the confidence and trust of the government. This has helped implement the project successfully and helped in attaining the project objectives. The SMCs have been game changers. Once they become aware of their roles and responsibilities and exercise power vested in them, schools show definite improvement. All interventions by ASPIRE and Tata Steel Foundation in the school, such as starting LEP classes, introducing new pedagogy in regular classes, are done through resolutions passed by SMCs inviting these interventions. SMCs also outline the responsibilities that they will take to make these interventions successful. Hundreds of SMCs have made School Development Plans and accessed funds for school infrastructure from government schemes.

16. **Long-term focus.** Achieving universalisation of school education in tribal belts of India is probably one of the most challenging tasks. It involves both supply and demand side challenges of higher order. A long-term perspective over two decades is necessary to ensure sustainable gains. The Program has been invested for more than eight years, which is one of the key strengths of the Program. The Program needs to be invested for more than a decade looking forward, given the social and economic backwardness of the districts in which the Program operates, to help sustain the gains from the past efforts and build toward more sustainable outcomes.

17. **Highly motivated and experienced team**. The state and block coordinators are staff of exceptional experience, commitment and leadership. The selection process is based on tapping into a vast network of socially committed and technically competent leaders with rich experience. The key staff have already worked in very challenging and difficult-to-serve areas. As a result, the staff have dealt with difficult situations (close encounters with Naxals), navigated challenging political economy and neutralised local established vested interests.

18. **Building on best practices of past decades**. The Program builds on some of the best learning from decades of efforts to improve primary education in India. In particular, the surveys, VER, school mapping, among others on the demand side and employment of local youth with solid backup training and mentoring Program have been tried and tested in successful initiatives of Shiksha Karmi, MV Foundation, among others.

19. **Tata Steel Foundation – partnership beyond funding**. Our interactions with the Tata Steel Foundation officers and the Foundation's engagement in the field make it clear that the partnership is much more than funding. Tata Steel Foundation's values and commitment to the tribal communities are commendable. The focus of the Foundation currently is on health, education, preservation of tribal culture and language, and skilling. The Tata Steel Foundation staff have contributed to improving the quality of education outcomes. The commitment of the Foundation to long-term engagement and collaboration with committed community-based organisations is also very commendable. Joint monitoring mechanism involves quarterly meetings to review progress for taking course correction, if required. Flexibility in terms of revising and reallocating budgets within the overall approved annual budget helps the Program to respond quickly to changing context and innovate.

20. **Social dimension – child labour, adolescent girls, Saranda, empowerment of communities.** Access to school education and learning outcomes achievements are deeply intertwined with social and economic factors at the household level. Poverty with limited access to quality education forces households to make hard choices between enrolment and child labour. The Program has built strong foundations for access to school education by unbundling and addressing pressing social and economic issues. These include child labour, child marriage, child trafficking, special concerns of adolescent girls, and giving a voice to marginalised communities. Lack of entitlement documents creates barriers to educational institutions, and facilitating government clearances, certification, and other processes are tasks that the Program supports families with. Over the years, the communities have begun to trust the Program, have a better understanding of children's rights, and are willing to step up to protect child rights.

21. **Enabling government functionaries**. Most of the interventions by CSR and other philanthropies in education and health care operate outside the scope of government programs. A major issue with such programs running parallel outside the government schemes in silos is that the impacts are limited and not scalable. Improving government investments with the help of interventions at the margins by CSR and philanthropies makes immense sense. Support to the government programs to build capacity, track outcomes, and build strong community connections will increase public expenditure efficiencies. However, working with governments will need special skills, commitment, patience, facing risks of political economy, and others. Working with the government exposes the Program to higher and more risks, and speed of execution and delivery outcomes might take more time. The Program has taken a tougher route of working with the governments and has made significant headways. The government officials appreciate the Program's support. The local school teachers and officials have moved from the initial indifference and suspicion to comradeship and collaboration with the program staff, leading to improved school performance. The support provided by the Program to the government functionaries at block and district levels has also facilitated their work and improved their results, leading to positive relationships and stronger alliances. In the field, the support provided by the Program has empowered and enriched the government functionaries, resulting in higher levels of motivation and capabilities.

22. **Linkages with Anganwadi Centres**. The Program support to selected Anganwadi centres complements the efforts the governments make to turn Anganwadi centres into early childhood care and learning centres. The Program has been supporting the Anganwadi workers through training and providing joyful teaching learning material. The orientation of mothers in this regard is of special value.

23. **Digital, art, and wholistic development**. A combination of NRBC, RBC, LEP, CERC, and other interventions is helping the students to bring out their hidden natural talents. The teaching-learning prepared by the students demonstrates artistic talent and teamwork. Schools and RBCs have become centres for reviving interest in indigenous art forms. Overall, the Program ensures the wholistic development of the students.

24. **Covid 19.** Covid 19 led to school closures in March 2020. The Program used its network of dedicated local staff and community engagement to conduct a quick survey to find that only 14% of children had access to smartphones. This led to the launch of a hybrid model of teaching-learning, reaching 2653 villages in 19 blocks of Odisha and Jharkhand. Learning tasks were redesigned to engage the child alone, at home, using the internet and resources in her local environment. The focus was on children learning science in the kitchen and on the farms, collecting tribal stories and games, making puppets, and plotting the daily weather map. Overall, due to strong local networks and well-established communication and community support, the Program was very fast to design and implement locally appropriate interventions to keep teaching-learning momentum going even during the harshest lockdowns and over the two years of Covid 19 disruptions.

25. **Data and analytics**. A massive amount of valuable data is being collected and used. The village communities use much of the data in a decentralised manner for tracking children's education outcomes, which is refreshing. In governments, a lot of data is collected and sent to central authorities, with limited data used for field purposes, a suboptimal use of data. The strength of the Program is to convert data into a form that empowers local communities and enables the communities' participation in school management and children enrolment. This is done to a great extent through school mapping—visualising the data so that even the illiterate household can also understand and locate their houses and participate in the decision relating to the location of schools or learning centres, etc. In the Program, data is the basis of all planning and every new initiative. Each new initiative starts with a data exercise by the field teams. The data were used effectively and quickly during Covid-related lockdowns. Teachers could quickly map their students spread across various habitations to figure out how to reach the students during the lockdown and do the review of outcomes.

B. Opportunities

26. **Improving data analytics and data-based decision making**. However, in the Program, there is much scope to improve data, analytical, and using data for program management and policy advocacy. The village education registers are maintained in hard copy, which could be digitised slowly to make the data accessible anywhere, anytime and reduce the redundancies of repeating the same data entry required in hard copies. However, hard copies of data have strengths at the school and community levels. Before switching to full digital mode, a detailed understanding of the implications of such digitisation on community participation, the burden on the frontline workers (teachers, staff of Aspire) and effectiveness in delivering outcomes should be carefully thought through.

27. Although the team did not have time to examine the data system, analytics and operational research aspects of the Program, based on limited observations, the following are the opportunities for using the data for better analytics and research inferences. First, the data must be standardised and digitised across all the districts and states. Second, the data capturing should be done using smart devices so that real-time quality checks of the data collected and additional machine-generated data is also captured (GPS coordinates, etc.). Third, effort should be made to create relational database systems that build on a hierarchy of relevant data (village-household-individual one-time data-individual panel data to capture progress on school education). Various datasets need to be interlinked through common IDs (village, household, individual, facility) to obtain additional value for available data. Tools like PowerBI and Tableau could be considered for off-the-shelf creation of dashboards, data analytics, and visuals, among others, for higher level, block level, panchayat level and village level geographical insights.

28. **Research and peer-reviewed publication**. A layer of robust econometric and statistical analysis of these datasets can then throw operationally relevant findings for improving program implementation and policy advocacy. These data sets should be made available to researchers and academia, and the Program should support operational research and publishing in peer review journals.

29. **Evidence to demonstrate results- Independent, verifiable results**. Much of the inferences of the impact of the Program are based on qualitative methods of focus group discussions with stakeholders and key informant interviews. Some insights are also from visits to the schools and other facilities. The team did not come across any independent evaluation reports of outcomes and impacts of the Program. For the Program to gain more visibility and policy influence, it is important to institute regular concurrent evaluations and rigorous impact evaluations by a credible independent third party. To do justice to the wide array of impacts of the Program, the theory of change and logical framework for evaluations need to capture all the possible impacts at multiple levels beyond learning outcomes that have been highlighted in this field note.

30. **Livelihoods, vocational linkages and economic growth**. The tribal communities the team visited are stuck in a very low social and economic growth equilibrium. Tribal families in West Singhum lead subsistence living with single crop and forest produce as main sources of subsistence in addition to casual labour opportunities. The agriculture productivity is very low, with almost negligible mechanisation and diversification. Animal husbandry, pisciculture and horticulture have a high potential to boost the local economy. The Program can help mobilise other partners interested in livelihood, vocational education and economic growth. The Program can help these interested partners build on the strong community mobilisation work and a good understanding of local language, culture and traditional community leadership. Forward linkages with markets of the forest produce to get better prices for the tribes will also help.

31. **Themes: Climate change, Women's empowerment, Nutrition**. The Progam can leverage its foundational work of community mobilisation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders to introduce and work on important and related themes, including climate change, female labour force participation, and nutrition.

32. **Local youth – future leaders – leadership development**. The Program engages close to 2000 local youth for implementation. Unlike traditional jobs in the government or private sector, where the community awareness and mobilising elements are not highlighted much, in the Program, you are exposed to cultural, anthropological, geographical, economic, and other dimensions of social development. The training and exposure provided by the Program to the 2000 youth are, in a way developing strong local social leadership. More advanced leadership training can be provided to the local youth for their potential role as future leaders of the region.

33. **Lifestyle changes – drinking and tobacco:** Another important issue was men's drinking habits, which adversely affected their health and attitudes towards their children's education. It was pointed out by women (and men agreed) that Handia drinking is a common practice in the area, and many men are under its influence most of the day. A behavioural change campaign can be undertaken to explain the adverse health, social and economic impacts of drinking and tobacco use.

34. **Partnerships.** The Program has built an interesting partnership, which it can leverage further to deliver high-quality outcomes for the region and the tribes. The partnerships include the ones with **the** National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) to train teachers and caregivers in child and adolescent mental health practices; the University of Turku, Finland, for collaboration in teacher education, content creation, and capacity-building toward school development; University of St Andrews, Scotland to research effective decentralised governance; Homi Bhabha Center for Science Education for Science teaching in schools; and PARI Foundation to showcase student's agency and their stories on their website.

C. Weaknesses

35. The Program may like to address some of the weaknesses perceived by the team. These include:

36. **Website:** The website of the Program is not reflective of the high-quality work both in scope and scale. The website does not showcase the expansive network of staff, community mobilisation, good case studies, or advocacy material. Matrix teams across the organisation should be established to bring cross-functional teams to improve the website with rich content.

37. **Communications:** The Program certainly has good internal communications that have resulted in a very cohesive and effective cadre of staff. The weakness in communication is with external stakeholders, including others working in the area of universalisation of communication. The weakness in communication adequately with key external stakeholders has reduced not only the visibility of the Program but also the impact it could have created on expanding the best practices.

38. **Branding:** There is a need for branding the Program that emotionally connects and communicates the vision of the Program to various stakeholders, which is separate from the brands of the sponsor and the implementation.

39. **Human resources:** Given the scale and scope of operations, there is a need for consolidation and strengthening of human resources. The second rung of leadership needs to be developed to maintain leadership continuity and strengthen the management team. The second rung of leadership can do the day-to-day operations and occasional crisis management while getting groomed as future leaders in impact space by learning strategy, and funding, among others. Competent chief operating officers could help the Secretary focus on strategy and quality, while the COO can focus more on administration and finance. More midlevel managers may also be required as the Program expands further. The adequate focus should be on building more capabilities among the mid- and bottom-level managers and leaders through multiple channels: MOOC, webinars, workshops, external training programs, field visits, visits to the Delhi office, etc.

40. **Data analysis and presentation:** As mentioned earlier, much of the collected data is used at the village level by the communities, which is the strength of the Program that needs to be continued. There is scope for strengthening data analytics for deeper data based program management at the program level, demonstrate program outcomes, among others.

41. **Retention – dropouts due to distance and other factors:** The Program needs to examine the dropouts carefully at various levels due to distance from the facility and other factors to keep

findings appropriate solutions as the Program moves towards universalisation of access. One of the major issues that came up during the discussions was the non-availability of upper primary schools and secondary schools in the locality. The parents felt that many children drop out of school after grade 5 since there are no upper primary schools nearby. The demand for more upper primary schools to be established in the area needs to be a priority intervention in the next stages of project implementation.

D. Threats

42. **Government relations:** The Program's success depends much on its relationship with the governments of Jharkhand and Odisha, especially at the district, block and panchayat levels. Notwithstanding a couple of occasions where the plight of villagers from the Program area got highlighted through media that had the potential to deteriorate the trust and relationship with the government of Odisha, the excellent relationship survived. A lot of credit goes to the mature relationship handled by the Aspire and Tata Steel Foundation functionaries, and equal credit goes to the government of Odisha and Jharkhand for their commitments to better outcomes with the help of civil society groups and corporate. However, the Program has to invest in and carefully monitor the government relationship and continue to build upon past success and experience. The Program needs to be acutely aware of the fragile nature of the relationships built upon individual relationships. However, strong community ownership and relationship with Panchayati raj institutions are the foundations of the strong government relationship.

43. **Financial sustainability:** Tata Steel will remain the largest funder in its operations, which are the Program areas. No other funding source can replace Tata Steel funding. The biggest threat to the Program is the premature withdrawal of Tata Steel funding. Tata Steel CSR can only mitigate this risk. However, the Program proponents also need to mitigate the risk proactively by engaging with Tata Steel CSR to ensure that the Program outcomes are documented well; the Program continues to be a model in service delivery and helps Tata Steel build its brand and better linkages with the local communities. All the stakeholders should work harmoniously so that everyone comes out as a winner and the biggest winners are the local tribal population. This is possible only when there is maximum trust and synergy between society, the government and the private sector. The Program brings all the different stakeholders together daily. This is one place where the relationship can be cemented and trust built. There will always be occasions where these relationships will be tested. It is important to prepare for such scenarios and build adequate institutional mechanisms and processes to proactively reduce stress and get back to normal quickly without erosion of trust. Diversification of the source of funding will be an important step. Normally, modest user fees are recommended, but it will be unfair to expect indigenous tribes living on a subsistence level of economic activity to pay.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

44. To conclude the Program is very relevant. It addressed the education needs of the some of the most marginalized groups in India. The indigenous tribes and scheduled castes in southern part of Jharkhand and norther part of Odisha need the type of focused intervention that the Program has successfully provided over the past 8 years. The Program is making significant impact. However, the journey has just begun. There is need for consistent and dedicated efforts over next one decade to ensure sustainable and long term development outcomes. While the Program has been successful in universalizing access to high quality school education, it needs to be followed up with consequent development requirements—giving right type of vocational and technical skills for in demand jobs. This also entails need for creating jobs and linking the local educated youth with job markets in India and abroad. The educated youth and community awareness created by the Program can also be leveraged to improve the agricultural productivity and more value for the producers through right market linkages.

45. The team has few recommendations for the Program to consider for improving efficiencies and deliver expanded scale of the program more effectively:

46. **Human Resources Development:** The Program is unique and has many strengths. It has developed an effective model to provide high-quality school education in collaboration with the government, private sector, and communities in some of the country's most challenging areas. This is not possible without dedicated and high-quality teams. The Program can do more to strengthen the human capital of its team to build more managerial efficiencies on the one hand and build future program leaders for the country. The Program should be a source of field exposure and training for scholars in academics and research. It should also collaborate with academic institutions for public policy research and exposure for people siloed in cities and academic settings. Policymakers in Delhi need to visit indigenous tribes in Saranda forest to understand the real living conditions in which programs have to operate and the headwinds that continue to constrain service delivery. The Program should invest in building more human capital for expanding program delivery. It should also facilitate the use of the Program outreach to facilitate public policy research, program management training, and operational research.

47. **Annual Conference-Bring Academic Stakeholders Together**: An annual conference or workshop may be organised by the Program to bring together academics, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, political leaders, and others to share experiences, highlight the challenges in service delivery, share research and operational lessons, etc. The workshop or conference should be an occasion for calling for research and programmatic papers for release as a compendium of the proceedings. The conference or workshop should be focused on unique needs, challenges, and solutions for districts with large tribal populations.

48. **Access to data and data analytics**: Much of the data is decentralised, which is good. It is used for decentralised decision-making, which is program strength. However, there is some value to be created in digitising some of the data and using the data for high-level data analytics for program decision-making and responding more agilely at the organisational level. Good data analytics and infographics and readily available information on the data through user-friendly dashboards are also important for policy advocacy, credibility, and decision-making. The Program should scan hardcopies of rich data and information (VEC, school mapping, teaching material) and upload the data to the intranet and some to the internet. It should digitise some data and link the time series data to survey data for panel data analytics to track progress. Some geocoded data can also be used to achieve geographical insights for optimising service delivery facilities and opening new ones in unserved areas. The Program can develop information platforms for providing health and education services to dispersed and remote indigenous tribal populations across the country.

49. **Communications and better website**: The current website hardly reflects the depth of work undertaken by the Program. More can be done to improve communications and access to rich content through the website. Rich audio-visual material should be recorded and hosted on platforms like youtube through separate youtube channels. Village-wise data on VEC, SMC, facility improvement, RBCs, NRBCs, LEP, etc., should be available through the geographical mapping system and drop-down search menus. The website should make all the guidelines, protocols, teaching-learning material, and other relevant material available for other organisations that could benefit from the Program's experiences.

50. **Matrix organisation – Community mobilisation, teaching, etc**. The current organisational structure is vertical and focused more on geographical service delivery. This leads to silos and suboptimal use of resources. There should be a layer of matrix structure that focus on cross-cutting themes. The matrix structures that can be used to improve the performance include human resources, website, teaching material, community mobilisation, government relationships, economic growth, tribal cultural preservation, research, information technology, archiving, communication, documentation, use of smartphones, etc.

51. **Building a learning organisation**: Documentation of knowledge, experiences, and best practices, both in written and multimedia formats, is a clear weakness. The Program should do more to document guidelines, toolkits, case studies, and standard operating procedures. It should use youtube channels to record events and case studies for wider dissemination within the organisation and outside. All the teaching-learning material should also be preserved and documented. The

Program should have a solid intranet and decent internet to archive and disseminate the valuable knowledge that the organisation is generating. The staff should be incentivised and motivated to document and write. Regular workshops and annual conferences could be considered to facilitate documentation, publications and dissemination.

52. **Impact Evaluation**: The Program should have a long-term partnership with credible third-party institutions to conduct concurrent and occasional impact evaluations. It is very difficult to discern the Program's contributions as there are many other initiatives by the State and the households without proper controls. With triangulation of findings from ACER, NAS, NFHS IV and V, among others, it is possible to compare the outcomes and impacts of program area to nonprogram area to figure out at the household level the impacts one can observe in terms of children out of school, retention and continuation, learning outcomes, among others.

53. **Economy.** From a livelihood perspective, the economy is still predominantly dependent on the primary sector when few large mineral-based companies and mining are set aside. The agricultural productivity is very low with a single crop, no mechanisation, and limited use of abundant water resources. The forest produce provides some income, but everything is still a subsistence economy. Modern roads, modern industry, and smartphones don't seem to make many dents in the productivity of the agricultural economy and livelihoods of the locals. Some of the locals resort to migration. The implementation of government-sponsored livelihood programs like MGNREGA is weak in these districts due to limited capacities and less awareness. The market linkages for local produce are limited to local hats, which means the producers might not be getting the most remunerative prices. Agricultural diversification into animal husbandry, pisciculture, poultry, horticulture, etc., is also very limited. Youth unemployment and underemployment are major emerging challenges that can adversely impact regional social harmony. The Program has built strong community connections for school education. The same can be used to deliver other services, including improving agricultural outreach and livelihoods. The Tata Steel Foundation can leverage the management and marketing depth of Tata Group to transform the lives of local tribes by better market linkages, branding, packaging, and skilling of the local tribes and their forest produce.

1.   The **team members** included:

- Daya Ram, Secretary, ASPIRE
- Smita Agarwal, Head, Education, Tata Steel Foundation
- Sekhar Bonu, Senior Fellow, NITI Aayog
- Praveen Khanghta, Associate Director and Head, Strategy and Portfolio Development, The Convergence Foundation

2.   The **list of different institutions and stakeholders met by the team** is listed below:

a.   **Residential bridge course centres (RBC)** in Gobarghati, Sukinda block of Jajapur district, Odisha.

b.   **Non-residential bridge course (NRBC)** in Rangring, Saranda forest, West Singbhum, Jharkhand; Cherwalore, Saranda forest, West Singhbum, Jharkhand; Bengtghar, Manoharpur, West Singhbum.

c.   **Learning Enhancement Program (LEP),** Kaduabandi, Sukinda block of Jajapur district, Odisha; Bandhashahi, Ostapal, Danagadi tehsil, Jajapur district, Odisha.

d.   **Foundational Learning and Numeracy (FLN)** in Kalimati, Harichandanpur block, Kendujar district, Odisha.

e.   **Community Resource Center** in Kharadi, Sukinda block of Jajapur district, Odisha; Harichandanpur town, Kendujar district, Odisha; Junga, Harichandanpur block, Kendujar district, Odisha.

f.   **School Management Committee** and Higher Secondary School in Jantari, Banswal block, Kendujar district, Odisha.

g.   **Adolescent girls centre** in Katgarh middle school, Noamundi block, West Singhbum, Jharkhand.

h.   **Ashram School** in Bhagmunda, Harichandanpur block, Kendujar district, Odisha.

i.   **Anganwadi centre**, Kanodia, Banspal block, Kendujar district in Odisha.

j.   **Health and Wellness Centre and Sub-Centre** in Pandapada, Ghatgaon block, Kendujar district, Odisha.

k.   **Panchayati Raj Institutions** in Pimudia, Sukinda block, Jajapur district, Odisha; Kiajhar, Danagadi block, Jajapur district; Pitapiti, Harichandanpur block, Kendujar district, Odisha; Tonto, West Singhbum, Jharkhand; Nakti, Monoharpur block, West Singhbum.

l.   **Munda meeting** in Chaibasa, West Singhbum.

m.   **Tribal village** – Gonasika, Banspal block, Kendujar district, Odisha; Rangring, Saranda Forest, West Singbhum, Jharkhand; Cherwalore, Saranda forest, West Singhbum, Jharkhand;

n.   **State officials:** District Magistrate, West Singhbum, Jharkhand and Chief Secretary, Jharkhand.

o.   **Industrial Traning Institute**, Jagannathpur, West Singhbum,

p.   **Tata Steel office** in Noamundi, West Singhbum, Jharkhand.

3.   The **itinerary included** the following:

18-Aug-22		
11:30am to 1pm	Girls Residential Bridge Course (RBC), Gobaraghati	RBC class observation, Interaction with children and staff (teaching and non-teaching)
2:15pm to 3:15pm	Community Education Resource Centre (CERC), Kharadi	Class observation, Interaction with committee, Children and Adolescent Group
3:40pm to 4:50pm	Pimpudia Panchayat Bhawan	PRI and SASS (Discussion about CLFZ, Access process, Migration stop) and Learning Support (LEP, LL and FLC)
5 pm to 6 pm	Learning Enhancement Program (LEP) School (UGME Kaduabandi)	Class observation, Interaction with children and SMC, Parents
19-Aug-22		
8am to 9am	PS Bandhasahi, Ostapal	LEP class observation
9:15 am to 10 am	CERC Tomka	PRI, SASS and SMC Interaction meeting
10 am to 11:30 am	Ashram School Bhagamunda	Interaction with mainstreamed students and govt. Teacher and observation of FLN supporting class
11:30am to 1pm	GP Bhawan Pitapiti	CLFZ, VER, SASS interaction, SDP
2 pm to 3 pm	UPS Kalimati or PS Makka sukila at Manohapur Panchayat, Hcpur	Observation FLN class and supporting system
3:20pm to 4:20pm	RK high school Pitapiti	Interaction with mainstream students who are continuing study and Interaction with some FLC volunteers
4:20pm to 5:45pm	Meeting with govt. Teachers and CRCC	Meeting with govt. Teachers and CRCC regarding support structure in learning programs, like - LEP, Library, FLN, Attendance, Transition etc
20-Aug-22		
7:30 am to 9:15 am	Pandapada , PHC and Sub Centre	PHC and SubCentre
9:15 am to 10 am	PS Pandapada	Library class and FLN class
10:40 am to 11 am	Jantri School	Community meeting
11:15am to 11:45am	HS Hatishila, LEP Class observation	LEP class observation (Juanga Sahi)
2 pm to 3 pm	Haladihi Sahi NRBC Center	NRBC Center, Interaction with children and community
3pm to 4:15pm	Kadukalan GP Bhawan	Meeting with PRI and community person
21-Aug-2022		
10:00am to 11:00am	RangRing	Interaction with NBC mainstreamed children and Stakeholders
11.45 pm to 12.45 pm	Cherwalore	Interaction with NBC mainstreamed children and Stakeholders on present challenges

2pm to 3:00pm	Toybo	Interaction with new NRBC children and parents meeting
4:30pm to 5:00pm	Chota Nagara	Interaction with Munda manki, mukhiya on Balmela, NRBC and FLN
22-Aug-22		
9.30 am	Tata Steel Office, Naoumundi	Atul Bhatnagar, General Manager, Tata Steel
10.20 am	Katgharh Middle school	Adolescent girls interaction
12.00 noon	Jagnnathpur, ITI	Visit ITI, Jagannathpur
1.20 pm	Tonto, Gram Panchayat	Interaction with PRIs
3.00 pm	Chaibasa, Munda Meeting	Interaction with Mundas
5.00 pm	Collectorate, Chaibasa	Discussion with Collector, Chaibasa
23-Aug-22		
11.00 am	Bengatghar, West Singbum	School, NRBC,
1.00 pm	Nakti	PRI Meeting
6.00 pm	Chief Secretary, Jharkhand	Meeting with Shri Sukhdev Singh, Chief Secretary, Jharkhand

Annexure 2: Photographs from the field Visits

Girls Residential Bridge Course (RBC), Gobarghati, Sukinda block, Jajapur district, 18 August 2022

CERC, Kharadi, Sukinda block, Jajapur district, 18 August 2022

Panchayat Meeting, Pimpudia village, Sukinda block, Jajapur district, 18 August 2022

Learning Enhancement Program (LEP), UGME Kaduabandi, Sukinda block, Jajapur district, 18 August 2022

Photographs from the field Visits: 19 August 2022

LEP, Bandhashahi, Ostapal, Danagadi Tehsil, Jajapur, 19 August 2022
GP Meeting, Kiajhar, Danagadi block, Jajapur district, 19 August 2022

Ashram School, Bhagamunda village, Harichandanpur block, Kendujhar district, 19 August 2022

Anganwadi Centre, Kanodia, Banspal block, Kendujar district, 19 August 2022

GP Meeting, Pitapiti, Harichandanpur block, Kendujar district, 19 August 2022

Foundational Learning and Numeracy, UPS Kalimati, Harichandanpur block, Kendujar district, 19 August 2022

Community Resource Centre, Harichandpur town, Kendujar district, 19 August 2022
Principal, Secondary School, Harichandpur

Health and Wellness Centre, Pandapada PHC, Ghatgaon block, Kendujar district, 20 August 2022

Community Resouce Centre, Junga Higher Secondary School, Harichandanpur block, Kendujar district, 20 August 2022

Higher Secondary School, Jantari, Banswal block, Kendujar district, 20 August 2022

Gonasika Village, Banspal block, Kendujar district, 20 August 2020

Sub-district hospital, Champua, Kendujar, 20 August 2022

View from Block Office of Aspire, Champua, 20 August 2022

Photographs from the field Visits: 21 August 2022

Non-resident Bridge Course, Rangring, Saranda Forest, West Singhbum District 21 August 2022

Tribal women, Rangring, Saranda Forest, West Singhbum District 21 August 2022

Village gathering, Rangring, Saranda Forest, West Singhbum District 21 August 2022

NRBC, Cherwalore, Saranda Forest, Manoharpur block, West Singhbum district, 21 August 2022

Tholkabad Forest Guest House, Saranda Forest, Manoharpur block, West Singhbum district Lunch, 21 August 2022

Photographs from the field Visits: 22 August 2022

Tata Steel Office, Noamundi, Noamundi block, West Singhbhum, 22 August 2022

Adolescent Girls Program, Katgarh Middle School, Noamundi block, West Singbhum, 22 August 2022

ITI Jagannathpur, 22 August 2022

Panchayat Samiti Tonto, Tonto block, West Singhbhum, 22 August 2022

Munda meeting, Chaibasa, Chaibasa block, West Singhbhum, 22 August 2022

District Magistrate, Chaibasa, 22 August 2022

Dayaram in Chaibasa Aspire Office, 23 August 2022

Dilapidated Primary School, Bengtaghar, Manoharpur block, West Champaran 23 August 2022

NRBC, Bengtghar, Manoharpur block, West Singhbum, 23 August 2022

Panchayat Samiti Meeting, Nakti, Manoharpur block, West Singhbum, 23 August 2022

Secretariat, Ranchi, Jharkhand, 23 August 2022