

Democratization and Empowerment of Local Self- Government Bodies



*A Society for Promotion of
Inclusive and Relevant
Education*

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Acknowledgement

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Attribution

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Translations

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From the Co-founder's desk

Dayaram,
Secretary and Executive
Director,
ASPIRE, India

A careful analysis of the public-school system in India brings to the fore the twin challenges it faces — failed governance and archaic pedagogic practices. Various programmes and organisations have attempted pedagogic renewal in the past few decades. These efforts have failed to attain the desired result in the absence of efforts to improve the governance of schools. The public-school system remains highly centralised and has almost no accountability towards its users or beneficiaries.

There have been efforts to decentralise management of schools and bring about change in the accountability framework of the school system during the past two–three decades, but without much success. In the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, pertaining to PRIs and the RTE Act, 2009, planning and management responsibilities have been vested in School Management Committees (SMCs). The SMCs, which consist primarily of the parents of school children, are efforts towards decentralising planning and management within the school system. The meagre provisions made for capacity building of the SMCs and PRIs, though, along with the fact that the entire task of capacity building has been left with the education bureaucracy, which lacks both the will and the expertise, will make sure that these institutions fail in getting strengthened.

The RTE Act provides a constitutionally mandated space for civil society organisations to work with community institutions like SMC and Panchayats, and help restore the community's role in planning and management of schools. The Committee, headed by former education secretary Anil Bordia, worked towards synchronisation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) with RTE, has made very clear recommendations for civil society engagement. It has clearly identified areas where civil society ought to engage to support the implementation of RTE. Training and mentoring of SMCs is one of the key areas identified in the report. The Ministry of Human Resource Development needs to encourage states to step up the process of creating mechanisms and a facilitative environment for civil society engagement.

A genuine partnership model is required whereby both sides have clearly laid down responsibilities as well as accountabilities. The current terms of engagement are extremely bureaucratic and more in the nature of subcontracting work to civil society organisations (CSO) rather than a genuine partnership based on the complementarities of both partners. Coupled with efforts towards improving governance of schools, pedagogic renewal efforts also need to be initiated. But these pedagogic renewal efforts should again not be with a 'top-down', 'one size fits all' approach.



Abbreviations

ABEO: Assistant Block Education Officer

BC: Block Coordinator

BDO: Block Development Officer

BEO: Block Education Officer

CERC: Community Education Resource Center

CF: Community Facilitator

CLFZ: Child Labor Free Zone

CRC: Cluster Resource Coordinator

CRPF: Child Rights Protection Forum

GCPF: Girl Child Protection Forum

GPCM: Gram Panchayat Community Mobilizer

HM: Headmaster

LEP: Learning Enrichment Program

LF: Learning Facilitator

NRBC: Non-residential Bridging Course

PRI: Panchayat Raj Institution

PTA: Parent Teacher Association

OoS: Out of School

RBC: Residential Bridging Course

SDP: School Development Plan

SHG: Self Help Group

SMC: School Management Committee

TSF: Tata Steel Foundation

About ASPIRE

ASPIRE, a registered non-profit organisation, was started in 1997 with an aim to ensure high quality school education for all children, within the Right to Education framework. Our vision is to develop a replicable and scalable model of improving public schools, which includes universalising access, addressing learning deficits of children, improving school governance, improving government teachers' skills to deal with early literacy and numeracy of first-generation learners, and eventually leading to completion of schooling cycle by all children.

We select a complete administrative unit, usually a block, as our area of operation, to bring in large-scale reforms and engage all actors in the school education ecosystem. This also gives us an advocacy advantage in influencing the education system.

The five pillars of our work are – universal access and participation, quality of learning, school management and governance, school completion innovative practices in government schools and sustainability through Community Education Resource Centers (CERCs).

This report focuses particularly on the role of governing bodies and governance in public school education in marginalised areas

Our Programmes

"It is not the poverty of people but the poverty of the government that its people are uneducated" – **Former NCPCR Chairman Shanta Sinha**

In a nation as populated and as diverse as ours, inequities are rooted deep within the centuries-old layers of gender, caste, class, ethnicity and religion. Governing bodies and their policies become a patchwork of schemes aimed at appeasing specific interest groups and often fail to benefit the marginalised communities that need it the most. ASPIRE believes that a new model of governance, run by local communities themselves, is needed to overcome these issues.

In our core areas of operation – 6 blocks in Odisha and 2 blocks of Jharkhand, the demography is densely tribal where 96% of the 200,000 children that we reach out to fall under Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, and Other Backward Caste. We work in under-resourced tribal regions where people, especially children, have limited access to basic sustainable facilities, such as clean drinking water, toilets, libraries, books and even functioning schools.

The Thousand Schools Programme, Odisha and Jharkhand

Thousand School Programme is the flagship educational intervention project run jointly by ASPIRE and Tata Steel Foundation since 2014. The programme runs in one of the most under resourced tribal regions of India. It serves as a catalyst in educational interventions ensuring universal access to schools, correction of learning deficit and strengthening of public schools through community action and scientific teaching.

Coverage Area

The Thousand School Programme has superseded its own relative expectations by successfully working in 1384 schools in Odisha and Jharkhand. The programme covers 2,03,089 households in 159 Gram Panchayats and 29 urban wards in 6 blocks of Odisha (Harichandanpur, Joda in Keonjhar district; Danagadi, Sukinda in Jajpur district and Koira, Kutra in Sundargarh district) and 2 blocks of Jharkhand (Noamundi, Jaganathpur in West Singhbhum district), impacting 2,00,000 children.

Programme Goal

The goal of the programme is to ensure *equitable and quality education for all children through a revitalized public education system and enabling them to realize their full potential.*

Programme Objectives

- Ensure universal access by identifying out-of-school children, providing them with remedial classes and hostels and mainstreaming them back into government schools and *ashramshalas* (residential schools).
- Ensure 100 percent transition rate by monitoring the passage of children from primary school to high school.
- Learning deficit is eliminated and schools adopt effective pedagogic practices leading to quality learning outcomes.
- Bridge the gap between mother language and school language by focusing on adoption of technology and including local cultural practices, language and knowledge into the formal education system.
- Training teachers in constructive learning principles and demonstrate to the schools and community what an alternative class looks like and how children can show hugely improved learning outcomes if engaged differently. Digital technology will be introduced for upgrading quality of transactions in the classrooms as well as in trainings teachers.
- Improving school governance by strengthening School Management Committees (SMCs) and Panchayat Standing Committee on Education as envisioned under the RTE Act.
- Make learning the agenda of the entire community by working with Panchayats, SMCs, Youth Groups and Self-Help Groups.

Magic Bus Project, Delhi

In Mandawali and Shakurpur areas of Delhi, we work with 2,341 children in ten government schools and two community learning centers. The project is in partnership with Magic Bus Foundation and is supported by Hero Moto Corporation. The goal of the project is to enable first-generation adolescent learners from underprivileged households to complete their formal education and acquire employability skills.



All round School Improvement Project, Delhi

With support from our partners, TATA-AIG, we work in ten government schools of Delhi, covering 4,039 children. Remedial classes are given to all children who are lagging behind in their studies and training workshops are held for government school teachers, School Management Committee members and headmasters to improve their functioning and management skills.



Democratization of local self-government bodies

Governance encompasses the non-negotiable values of accountability, transparency and partnership. We follow this approach with each individual or group that we work with. We enable dialogue and create consensus among stakeholders by facilitating our 1000+ trained local staff to build trust between local governing officials and community and inform them about our proposed interventions and their roles and responsibilities in meeting our shared goal —public education for all. And for that, governance is key!

Our programme success is built on our efforts to ensure that governing bodies, primarily School Management Committees, Panchayati Raj Institutions, *angandwadi* staff, Self Help Groups, among others, perform their duties diligently.

Bringing the school and community together for school governance not only brings improvement in school management, but ensures effective use of existing human, physical and financial resources, thus raising the overall performance of schools. Moreover, when SMCs and parents, the primary stakeholders of the school, support the teachers, and restore their respectable place in the community, remarkable changes are witnessed in the schools. SMC training put special emphasis on creating a healthy teacher community relationship, restoring respectable position of teachers in the community and breaking the existing negative spiral and defeatist mindset.

SMCs, along with the Panchayats and community members, must decide to ensure that no child remains out of school in their school catchment area and Panchayat. Child Rights Protection Committees must be a functional body in every village, panchayat and block that are actively working to declare their area Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ).

School Management Committees

What it is

Article 21 of the RTE Act mandates the formation of a School Management Committee in every government-funded school to encourage community and parental involvement, and perform the following functions:

- (a) monitor the working of the school
- (b) prepare and recommend school development plan
- (c) monitor the utilisation of the grants received from the appropriate government or local authority or any other source
- (d) perform other such functions as may be prescribed

The SMC is to monitor the working of the school, prepare the School Development Plan (SDP), and monitor the utilisation of the grants received. SMCs bring community into the decision-making process.



Where it lacks

On paper, the roles assigned to SMCs and local authorities constitute the most important provisions in the Act towards governance reform. In practice, however, SMCs came into force without proper preparation. The neglect of School Development Planning exercise by the SMC reflect a frivolous attitude towards the move to decentralise education governance by the governments at all levels. Even today, there are no clear guidelines on accountability and grievance redressed within the education structure.

We need to recognise that in absence of people's mobilisation and the capacity building of local community and institutions, the RTE Act stands to lose significant power.

Our involvement with SMCs

When we reached out to SMC members in Odisha and Jharkhand, we found that most of them were not even aware that they were a member of SMC. Consequently, no meetings were being held and resolutions, if passed, were decided by the headmaster alone.

Therefore, we started to communicate with the SMC members and inform them about their roles and responsibilities to enable smooth functioning of the school and the powers bestowed upon them by the state government. Our gram panchayat community mobilisers (GPCMs) regularly coordinate with the school headmaster to look into the functioning of the school and mobilise members to attend the SMC meeting. In 1384 government schools, where we work, SMCs meet at least once a month and hold discussions on implementation of SDP.

We hope with continuous engagement, SMCs become game changers as they realise the power that RTE Act vests in them. They can take decisions on school improvement initiatives. A positive alliance will grow between schools, community and government officials to propel the education agenda forward.

Child Rights Protection Forum

We create a committee with a group of volunteers working to ensure that all children are regularly attending school and no child is engaged in child labour. Each village has one such committee called Child Rights Protection Forum (CRPF) or *Shishu Adhikar Suraksha Samiti* (SASS). While there is no cap on the members the committee can have, it generally ranges between 10 and 20 with an even number of men and women. CRPF meets weekly or monthly, depending upon the nature of employment of its members.

Other than this, members make surprise visits to schools in small groups to do a headcount of the children present. This is done to understand the average attendance in a school. In the weekly or monthly meeting, observations recorded from head count and habitation tracking are discussed to prepare a plan for further development. For dropout children, CRPF members first examine whether they have the learning capacity to be enrolled in their age-appropriate classes. If not, the CRPF asks the parents to send their children to our Residential or Non-Residential Bridge Course centres.

Panchayati Raj Institutions

Article 243G of the Constitution acknowledges panchayats as institutions of local self-government and mandates them to prepare plans for economic development and social justice. Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of local administration. A panchayat is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the RTE Act. The sarpanch handles all education-related issues through different committees formed at three levels – habitation, school and panchayat. It is to be noted that various committees for education are interlinked and share few common members.

At habitation level, the CRPF monitors the problems and needs of children. Some PRI members, who are also members of the CRPF committee, raise the issues at Panchayat meetings or at the general body meeting.

At school level, every school has its own SMC composed of 19 members where one member is a warden or councilor or corporator of the Gram Panchayat/municipality/municipality corporation in which the school exists. Similar to CRPF committee, the PRI members who are part of the SMC take points to be discussed with sarpanch and present them in PRI meeting. The same SMC prepares a School Development Plan and submits it to the Standing Committee on education. Panchayat collects SDPs from every school and submits it to block officer and higher authorities.

At Panchayat level, the sarpanch forms a standing committee on education to work with all schools in the gram panchayats.

By intervening at all these levels and ensuring the smooth functioning of all groups, we ensure governance first in the village, followed by habitation, cluster, block and finally district.

Standing Committee on Education

The standing committee on education is the local authority to oversee operationalisation of RTE Act and looks after school education. The committee consists of all the key stakeholders of education system in a GP – the sarpanch as the chairperson, naib sarpanch as the vice-chairperson, one elected samiti member as the co-chairman, ward members, headmasters of government schools, chairman of SMC, a person with 5-7 years of experience in education sector, one member from NGO, one health worker and one *anganwadi* worker.

We ensure that the committee meets at least once every three months to discuss education-related issues, review SDPs of schools, resolve issues related to SMCs, monitor teacher attendance and take necessary actions for the implementation of activities and schemes introduced by government through notifications.

During these meetings, the school headmasters put forward the needs and requirements of their schools to the sarpanch.

Training and Orientation

We conduct training and orientation sessions for all the members mentioned above. Here is the breakdown:

SMC members: Elected members of SMC get one-two day training on their roles and responsibilities in running a school and about the provisions under RTE Act that they can make use of.

PRI: We organise training sessions for PRI members to educate them on their roles and responsibilities according to the RTE Act, 2009 guidelines. Every fifth year, new members are elected to the institution and we conduct fresh training for them. We also conduct trainings when new amendments are brought in to the RTE framework or when need arises.

Headmaster: A headmaster must be capable, innovative and creative in order to make the school a better place for children. The orientation, conducted every six months, is geared for this very purpose. Issues related to learning, infrastructure, basic facilities like drinking water or functioning toilets, quality of food provided for mid-day meals, interaction of teachers with students and overall development of the school are discussed in the training.

The headmasters are trained to track the progress of children, devise a follow-up strategy to overcome learning deficit, take steps for knowledge retention and help SMC prepare a school development plan. We give inputs and consultation in terms of how to take it forward, what to focus on and how to maintain accountability for mid-day meal, among other interventions.



Magic Bus and All Round School Improvement Project

Mandawali and Shakarpur areas in East Delhi; 10 government schools in South and West Delhi



Coverage in numbers

State	District	Block	Project Name	Gram Panchayats	Municipal Corporation	Urban wards	Habitations	Total HH
Odisha	Keonjhar	Joda	1000 Schools	19	2	29	508	40391
		Harichandanpur	1000 Schools	25	0	0	505	32676
	Jajpur	Danagadi	1000 Schools	23	0	0	238	25738
		Sukinda	1000 Schools	25	0	0	224	31431
	Sundargarah	Kutra	1000 Schools	16	0	0	332	11040
		Koira	1000 Schools	15	0	0	432	19506
Jharkhand	West Singhbhum	Noamundi	School Improvement	18	0	0	413	21393
		Jaganathpur	School Improvement	16	0	0	354	21305
Total				157	2	29	3006	203480

Section 4: Our Annual Expenditure

Our Annual Expenditure

Aspire A Society for Promotion of Inclusive and Relevant Education

ASPIRE
Statutory Audit FY 2017-18

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 2018

	Schedule	Amount (Rs.)						Amount (Rs.)	Amount (Rs.)
		TATA THF	IGL	SDMC	TATA AIG	TATA STEEL	RC	31st March 2018	31st March 2017
I. FUNDS AND LIABILITIES									
Project Fund		3,339,550	1,599,922	(8,657)	1,096,509	11,905,947	11,499,999	31,460,435	14,878,053
Corpus Fund		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. NON CURRENT LIABILITIES									
a. Other long term liabilities		-	-	397,686	-	816	-	398,505	402,160
3. CURRENT LIABILITIES									
a. Sundry Creditors	2	-	-	-	-	2,359	-	2,359	-
b. Short Term Provisions	3	150,268	48,363	-	-	619,011	44,115	918,998	525,929
c. Short Term Loans (Imprest)		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL		3,489,818	1,648,285	389,029	1,096,509	12,528,132	11,544,114	32,780,297	15,806,142
II. ASSETS									
1. NON CURRENT ASSETS									
a. Fixed Assets									
Tangible Assets	4	1,709,640	134,125	89,296	624,635	9,679,797	45,227	12,846,765	4,268,191
Intangible Assets		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b. Investments	5	-	-	-	-	-	1,123,581	1,123,581	1,053,939
2. CURRENT ASSETS									
a. Cash and Cash Equivalent									
i. Imprest Accounts	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13,673
ii. Cash at Bank	7	1,735,095	1,512,560	277,733	440,874	2,640,471	9,963,857	18,061,381	9,567,003
b. Other Current Assets	8	45,083	-	22,000	31,000	207,863	13,735	349,256	301,176
c. Short Term Loans and Advances		-	1,600	-	-	-	397,715	399,315	402,160
TOTAL		3,489,818	1,648,285	389,029	1,096,509	12,528,132	11,544,114	32,780,297	15,806,142

Significant Accounting Policies
The accompanying notes are an integral part of the Financial Statements

1

For PARM and Associates LLP
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

(CA. Rakesh Kumar Gupta)
Partner
M.No. 085967
F.R. No. 507094C



Dayaram
Daya Ram
Secretary

For and on behalf of ASPIRE

Madhumita
Madhumita Bandyopadhyay
Member

Sd.
Binoy Acharya
Treasurer

Aspire A Society for Promotion of Inclusive and Relevant Education
ASPIRE
Statutory Audit FY 2017-18

Receipts and Payments for the Year Ended March 31, 2018

Particular	Schedule	Amount (Rs.)							Amount (Rs.)	Amount (Rs.)
		TATA THF	IGL	SDMC	TATA AIG	TATA STEEL	ASPIRE RES	MBIF	31st March 2018	31st March 2017
Receipts										
Opening Balance										
Bank Accounts		2,407,654		291,509	241,861	3,180,459	3,445,519	-	9,567,003	10,938,134
Cash-in-hand		-		-	833	10,535	2,306	-	13,673	368,498
Current Assets		2,810		189,506		2,155,061	2,013,914		4,361,291	4,885,339
Current Liabilities		235,570	55,187	290,150	178,649	7,426,585		183,078	8,369,219	
Non Current Assets				-		24,944			24,944	
Non Current Liability		1,010		-	263,200	124,810			389,020	
Direct Income		18,605,061		2,442,396	4,000,000	116,408,195	180,500	5,464,634	147,100,786	97,726,577
Indirect Incomes		180,081	5,241,950	-	53,360	492,414	212,147	38,453	6,218,405	757,232
Indirect Expenses		85,655		9,685	9,339	1,947,248	6,809,522	218,413	9,079,862	
Total Receipts		21,517,841	5,297,137	3,223,246	4,747,242	131,770,252	12,663,907	5,904,578	185,124,203	114,675,780
Payments										
Current Liabilities		16,435,899		221,676	139,912	19,632,863		246,002	36,676,352	16,765,684
Current Assets		572,151	48,166	170,991		8,046,811	1,961,799	146,502	10,946,420	6,876,527
Non Current Assets		-	145,000	-	356,300	4,726,789		553,624	5,781,713	3,318,603
Non Current Liability		110,459	11,832	320,967	334,690	604,129		601,142	1,983,219	
Indirect Expenses		2,664,237	3,579,579	2,231,879	3,475,466	96,119,188	738,251	2,866,517	111,675,110	78,134,289
Total Payment		19,782,746	3,784,577	2,945,513	4,306,368	129,129,780	2,700,050	4,413,787	167,062,822	105,095,104
Closing Balance										
Bank Accounts		1,735,095	1,512,560	277,733	440,874	2,597,984	9,963,857	1,489,635	18,017,738	9,567,003
Imprest Accounts Receivable/(Payable)		-	-	-	-	42,487	-	1,156	43,643	13,673
Cash and Cash Equivalent		1,735,095	1,512,560	277,733	440,874	2,640,471	9,963,857	1,490,791	18,061,381	9,580,676
Total		21,517,841	5,297,137	3,223,246	4,747,242	131,770,252	12,663,907	5,904,578	185,124,203	114,675,780

For PARM and Associates LLP
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

(CA. Rakesh Kumar Gupta)
Partner
M.No. 085967
F.R. No. 507094C
Place: New Delhi
Date: 20 August, 2018



Dayaram
Daya Ram
Secretary

Madhumita
Madhumita Bandyopadhyay
Member

Sd.
Binoy Acharya
Treasurer

Section 4: Our Annual Expenditure

INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED March 31, 2018

Particular	Schedule	Amount (Rs.)							Amount (Rs.)	Amount (Rs.)
		TATA THF	IGL	SDMC	TATA AIG	TATA STEEL	ASPIRE RES & KBM	MIBF	31st March 2018	31st March 2017
INCOME										
Grants/ Donations Received	9	18,605,061	5,241,950	2,442,396	4,000,000	116,408,195	180,500	5,464,634	152,342,736	97,726,577
Net Grants/ Donations Received		18,605,061	5,241,950	2,442,396	4,000,000	116,408,195	180,500	5,464,634	152,342,736	97,726,577
Other Income	10	125,915	-	-	53,360	492,414	289,529	38,453	999,671	884,016
Total Income		18,730,976	5,241,950	2,442,396	4,053,360	116,900,609	470,029	5,503,087	153,342,407	98,610,593
EXPENDITURE										
Salaries and Allowances	11	12,245,603	2,448,007	1,611,648	1,969,959	58,521,037	-	2,041,356	78,837,610	59,267,405
Teacher Training & Learning Expenses	12	597,732	162,738	245,053	13,156	10,041,156	-	7,966	11,067,801	8,747,513
Project Implementation Expenses	13	1,111,602	50	220,208	386,677	11,565,740	(6,073,654)	-	7,210,623	2,238,862
Children Learning Expenses	14	2,024,795	211,793	575	182,968	21,734,595	-	688,879	24,843,605	13,398,276
Travelling & Convoynage Expenses	15	-	8,434	10,271	112,934	412,665	-	41,718	586,022	735,861
Office Expenses	16	840,792	615,467	86,785	581,888	1,568,805	2,296	448,844	4,144,876	1,366,418
Consultancy Exp	17	7,827	-	-	-	499,313	(1,000)	-	506,140	139,351
Auditor Remuneration	18	14,540	6,000	-	-	-	-	-	20,540	4,313
Bank Charges	19	566	-	920	266	1,450	78	-	3,280	223
Staff Welfare	20	-	17,316	14,930	24,954	-	-	100	57,300	50,636
Rent Expenses	21	236,000	-	85,000	131,160	841,500	-	125,000	1,418,660	1,133,676
Telecommunication Expenses	22	-	-	17,957	18,510	6,564	-	-	43,031	77,203
Provident Fund	23	721,763	161,348	345,501	76,079	3,810,509	-	55,758	4,970,958	2,587,614
Net Expenses before Depreciation during the Period		17,801,220	3,631,153	2,438,848	3,498,550	109,003,334	(6,072,281)	3,409,621	133,710,446	89,747,352
Depreciation during the year	4	301,187	10,875	15,656	141,861	2,503,909	9,789	66,301	3,049,579	1,266,770
Total Expenses during the Period		18,102,407	3,642,028	2,454,504	3,640,412	111,507,243	(6,062,491)	3,475,922	136,760,025	91,014,122
Surplus/ (Deficit) during the period		628,569	1,599,922	(12,108)	412,948	5,393,366	6,532,520	2,027,165	16,582,382	7,596,471
Balance at the Beginning of the Year		2,710,981	-	3,451	683,561	6,512,581	4,967,479	-	14,878,053	7,281,582
Balance Transferred to Balance Sheet		3,339,550	1,599,922	(8,657)	1,096,509	11,905,947	11,499,999	2,027,165	31,460,435	14,878,053.00

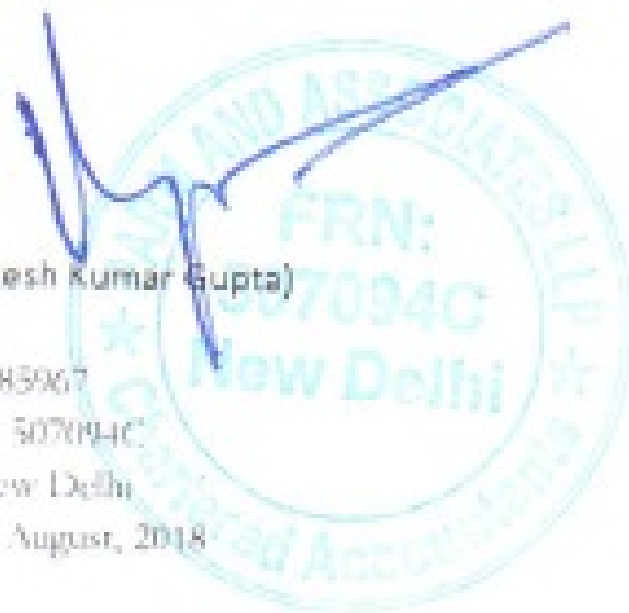
Significant Accounting Policies

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The accompanying notes are an integral part of the Financial Statements

For PARM and Associates LLP
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

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Place: New Delhi
Date: 29 August, 2018



Dayaram

Daya Ram
Secretary

Madhumita
Madhumita Bandyopadhyay
Member

Sd.
Binoy Acharya
Treasurer

Stories of Change

The forgotten village of Baunru

It is through governance that one can provide children learning and access to school. And we have shown that by setting up a school in a remotely-habited Baunru village in Harichandapur block, Keonjhar district, Odisha.

In April 2017, we were mobilising school management committees, Panchayati Raj Institution, anganwadi centres, self help groups, youth members and other local actors in the community to understanding the importance of governance in providing education. If does not know which villages have little-to-no access to schools, how will one help them?

Therefore, with the help of the local community, we began mapping the distance of schools from each of our six blocks in operation under Tata Steel-funded 1,000 Schools Programme. The 20-odd families who inhabited the village were surprised, even scared, to see us for they were not used to visitors. But since we had local government bodies with us, they entrusted us with our sole intention of providing education to their children. Thus, the opening of the school followed in mid-April in a mud house spacious enough to hold 30 children. We have one teacher who helps children read and write in the Juang and Odia languages and do basic Mathematics. Prior to this, children would have to walk 5 kilometres through the jungle to reach the nearest primary and upper-primary school. Naturally, barely child opted for that and instead indulged in labour activities.

Baunru school is one amongst the 1000 schools that we have set up under our flagship programme. However, setting up schools is not our only goal. We track and govern the progress of children, ensure their learning and mainstream them in their nearest ashramshala (residential school) if schools are not available.

We believe that that it is only the government that can provide education on the scale needed in this country. But NGOs can play an important role in helping the government bridge gaps in development work.

Stories of Change

‘Always dreamt of being a teacher’

To directly educate nearly 50,000 children in our six blocks operation, we needed at least 500 teachers. While some of the people hired came with experience, others were trained to acquire the skills for effective pedagogy. In our efforts to uplift the rural community, we believe in hiring locally.

Thus, we came across 32-year-old Binapani Mahanta in Joda blocks of Odisha's Keonjhar district. Once a housewife, she now teaches 60 children twice a day in our Learning Educational Programme (LEP) classes. Once confined within the boundaries of her home, she now rides a cycle or takes a bus to the government school where classes are held.

"“From childhood I dreamt of being a teacher. It was the one thing I wanted to do in life. So this is a dream come true for me. When one of the community mobilisers told me that there is vacancy for teachers, with no previous experience mandatory, I put in my application,” says Binapani.

After she was selected, she had to undergo six days of training. It was the first time she had left her family.

She is from the Other Backward Caste and has studied till Class 10. Her husband is a fitter at a mechanic shop. They have an 11-year-old son and a six-year-old daughter who go to a private school in the village.

“Government schools are good but the teachers there don’t teach,” she says.

“So, we send our two children to a private school though it costs us more.”

Binapani is a confident woman who brings her own innovative methods in teaching, knows the importance of personal savings and having more than one income in a family and really wants to raise the teaching standards in schools.

“I feel very happy to be teaching children and seeing them learn to read and write. It gives me a lot of personal satisfaction,” she says.

In financial year 2017-2018, we have trained 180 teachers who had no prior teaching experience. From keeping detailed records of children to using interactive methods of teaching, we understand that a teacher is the key person in actually educating children. Improving teaching in government schools is one of the primary goals of our programme.



A Society for Promotion of Inclusive and Relevant Education

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