

ENSURING CHILDREN LEARN

SHEOPUR, MADHYA PRADESH

A PROJECT OF NAANDI FOUNDATION

REVIEW REPORT

(Draft)

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Naandi Foundation, in partnership with the Sir Ratan Tata Trust and the Government of Madhya Pradesh, has been **working in 3 blocks of Sheopur District since July 2005**. The objective here has been to address issues existing in the rural educational scenario with a focus of bringing quality education to every child in the age group of 6-14 years, within the framework of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The strategy adopted by Naandi project consists of three main components namely, academic support to children, assessment of learning levels and community mobilisation.

Objectives of the Review

The objective of the review were

1. Review the progress of the project “*Ensuing Children Learn*” against the plan for the past one-year.
2. Make recommendations for strengthening the design and implementation.

General Observations

1. The programme, ‘**Ensuing Children Learn**’ implemented in Sheopur District, Madhya Pradesh is true to it’s word at the conceptual level. The project in Sheopur has definitely gained from the previous experiences of the Naandi projects carried out in other states of the country. The preliminary work carried out by the project staff at Sheopur is reflected in the initial planning of the district. A careful analysis of their planning strategy clearly indicate that they have incorporated the learning from their previous experiences of implementing of similar projects. In addition, the discussions with the team and the activities carried so far also show that they are a part of a larger network at the National level and have explored opportunities to draw on the resources of other NGOs working in similar areas. The drawing of the expertise of organizations like the Educational Initiatives, Ahmedabad, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education Mumbai and Pratham ,Mumbai to provide learning materials and training is evident as a part of their programme.
2. The **identification of the district, namely Sheopur, is in itself a challenge** for more than one reason. Sheopur is one of **the most backward districts in Madhya Pradesh** in terms of development(for eg., **Female literacy 12.27%**). It is a district with a **high percentage(21%) of scheduled Castes population** situated at the border of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. **Border districts** by their very definition are neglected areas, and to add to this, **Sheopur is a new district** that was born after the division of Morena District in 1998.
3. Given the fact, that the **district has very poor infrastructure**, coupled with the factors mentioned above, the scope of the project to cover 338 schools in the three blocks of Sheopur is rather too ambitious within the proposed time frame.
4. **The project has definitely benefited by the district manager, who brings with him the experiences of being part of several National and International initiatives in the field of primary education.** He has had wide experience in understanding the field realities of

Madhya Pradesh as a region as well as has been an insider to the governmental programmes in the state. His experiences are most useful to the project since he knows exactly how the thinking in the education departments as well as among teachers' work. The importance of building interventions after a thorough understanding of the crucial actors namely the educational administrators and teachers will be far more effective and relatively more sustainable in the long run.

5. ***The project is led by a dynamic, supportive and a democratic leadership and the selected team consist of young committed youth who have given impetus to the entire programme.*** During the field visits it was observed that the district manager gave ample scope to each of the functionaries to develop themselves, which has been instrumental in their growth in such a short period. The Project Manager balances between the level of decentralization among the project staff as well as being informed of activities at the field level. This suggest a particular role model for emulation among the young project staff.
6. ***Motivation of the staff, school children and community members has received a great deal of attention.*** While motivating the administrators and teachers as part of their programme is initiated, it could be further expanded, streamlined and monitored. Motivation has been key to the success of the implementation of primary education programme anywhere in the country and sustaining this on a long-term basis remains a challenge.

▪ ***Role of Balmitras***

1. ***The training given to the Balmitras of ten days duration regarding the conduction of the reading writing camps appears to be effective and its translation at the field level is good.*** Maybe over time, with greater focus on reviews and subsequent planning, it has the potential to become more effective. The linkage of these skills with classroom textbooks are crucial. During our discussions with the District Manager and the team from the National Office, the linkage has been thought of during the subsequent stages. The reading writing camps are treated as a preparatory phase. While the strengthening of the Balmitras is crucial to ensuring children learn, their role can be only supplementary to formal school education. This has been clearly articulated at the conceptual level, and reiterating this at all levels including the community as a matter of caution cannot be over emphasized.
2. ***While the initial training given to the Balmitra, in training children to read and write is good, honing their skills for teaching different learning competencies has to be chartered along the same lines.*** It may be useful to develop these skills within a multi-grade context since most schools within this region suffer from acute teacher shortage. It is also believed, that a teacher trained in a multi-grade context has relatively little difficulty in teaching in a single grade-teaching context, and this may not be true vice versa.
3. ***Training the Balmitras to actually engage in competency based teaching learning process is also proposed as a part of the changed strategy of Naandi.*** In the discussions, with the strategizing team of Naandi, they raised concern over the extent of loss in the content of learning to students through these hierarchical training. While it is recognised that this is a genuine concern, it may be useful to also consider the fact, that reaching out to teachers in the primary schools of the country itself is large in terms of numbers.

Moving beyond that to students will only multiply that number and may result in impacting a limited number of students during a particular time frame. It is suggested, that working with the children directly can be used as a demonstration to teachers that the adopted methods lend themselves to building competencies among children and could also feed into the onsite support for the teacher.

▪ **Teaching Learning Process**

- 1. The project has given ample opportunity for children to express themselves in the form of reading, writing, story telling, arts, crafts, drama and singing. This, in turn, has resulted in making the reading writing camps very interesting for the children and hence, has been instrumental in attracting more children to these camps.**
- 2. It has been observed that the reading writing camps in this district have taken off well. In most programmes across the country, the success of the initial phase of such programmes have been fairly good, but building on this for higher levels of learning competencies has always remained a challenge.**
- 3. The preparation of a comprehensive set of teaching learning materials along with the teachers manual, and students worksheets by the National Office of the NAANDI Foundation has been a response to this challenge. However one needs to wait and see to what happens at the field level during the implementation of the programme. The long term use of these materials and its integration into formal education will still be a challenge.**
- 4. The summer camps in the village schools is an innovative idea and has larger implications in building the bridges between rural and urban children. The low cost, and yet making the camps effective will go a long way in realizing the right to education. These camps also open opportunities for children who other wise will do little to engage in productive activities in their individual homes. The summer camps could be gradually designed to be more recreational that the routine reading writing camps since, then, the difference in the two will also make a positive impact on the child. Variety holds the key to motivate children and hence, the variation can have a positive impact on the children.**
- 5. The beautification of the school is yet another idea that has gained popularity in several programmes across the country. The use of walls to provide space for children to write is indeed very useful. The school can also be made attractive from the outside and community participation in this regard can be encouraged to develop a sense of ownership of the village school.**
- 6. The exposure visits as part of the project activities help children meet their counterpart in other villages. The visits to the post offices, police stations and banks have been very useful. While these visits have been entertaining to children, with better planning, it can be made more effective. Periodic reviews of exposure visits conducted across the project area can be carried out to help project staff to plan exposure visits beyond visits to post offices and banks.**

Learning Corners

1. *The open school libraries under a banyan tree in schools where there are no buildings need to be appreciated. It is also a demonstration to teachers in formal system that despite the absence of a classroom, teaching and learning can happen if one is motivated. The community support to prepare an alternate place for running these centers gives a sense of belonging to the community, who now view this make shift school as their very own. Giving an opportunity for children in these villages is much more important since they are the most deprived among the deprived.*
2. *The learning corner has made a very good beginning in the villages of the project. It has always not been difficult to provide teaching learning materials during the initial phase. These materials have by and large, been developed by several organizations. What is more important is to develop in the children the freedom to use these materials. **The Balmitra will have to continue to take a proactive role in developing among children the freedom to use the teaching learning material as well as use it carefully and understand the responsibility of borrowing community resources.** Providing for materials for children of different age group/learning levels and maintaining a continuous flow of new materials to read is a challenge.*
3. *As fallout of the learning corners in several villages community libraries in a small scale has been developed owing to the demand from the community for reading material. It is suggested if these community libraries/learning corners are provided with the daily newspaper, it may have a far reaching effect in keeping the community informed about current news and also foster the habit of reading among children and adults in the village.*

- **Community Participation**

1. *Community Awareness and Mobilization has always been the key to the efficacy of the delivery of basic services, be it education or health. The **Sandesh Vahini Dal** has been well conceived and consists of motivated and talented women and men(mostly youth) from the community. The team has been given initial training, after which, they independently develop their programme based on contextual issues in the village. The short skits and songs enacted by them have themes that are located within the village context. Watching the performance, there appears to be a sense of identification with the characters amongst the community members.*
2. *The organization of the **show with a mix of narration, songs and drama** has also been responsible to hold the interest of the community members. **Exhibiting the work – art,crafts of children** during the show also is very encouraging to the children and their parents. Very often in these shows, the school teacher, and Cluster Resource Coordinator and Block Resource Coordinator of the Education Department also participate in this activity. The performance of the Sandhesh Vahini Dal concludes with a **discussion amongst community members**(who are the main audience). The Balmitra, Cluster Coordinator and Block Coordinator of the Naandi Project act as facilitators of these small group discussions. This has been one of the useful mechanisms of building community support.*
3. *These **discussions are held separately for men and women.** This arrangement is useful, since it gives greater opportunity for women to speak. However, these small group discussions could be better streamlined and further strengthened.*

4. *The entire team of Sandesh Vahini Dal, work in coordination with the Balmitra ,cluster coordinator, and block coordinator in organizing the show. The Sandesh Vahini team reviews the show, after each performance. The Sandesh vahini team also meets in the district office once a month, and they share experiences between the three block teams. New ideas and scripts are thought of, to make the show more effective.*
5. *The Sandesh Vahini Dal team has been to Ratlam district, where another project of Naandi is underway. They were there for a week, during which they put up a performance on each day, and also **trained a new Sandesh Vahini Dal locally**. The fact that they performed as trainers really boosted their confidence.*
6. ***The Shiksha Sangam, Mahila Jagriti Manch** are all important ideas which has been initiated in a few villages in the project areas on an experimental basis. This needs to be expanded to all villages in the project area. The potential of these informal networks cannot be underestimated. These networks will play a key role in strengthening the elementary education in the project area.*
7. *However, **considerable work needs to be done with the Parents Teachers Association, Gram Panchayats, Shiksha Sangams and Mahila Jagruti Manch**, to empower the community members to demand quality education from the formal school system. Community mobilization to create a demand for education and thereby ensure that the teacher does his/her job needs to take off in a big way to translate it to a movement mode. Parents need to be made aware that the teachers are teaching not as an obligation but it is a right of every child to demand for quality education. This must be the framework towards which one needs to work with the community.*
8. ***The Sandesh Vahini Dal team that has been developed by the project has been used to spread awareness about health and other areas.** The visibility of the team has substantially increased and furthers the willingness of other governmental departments to understand the potential of community awareness. The realization among team members that education cannot be singularly developed and the improvement of health will positively impact education is a positive sign.*
9. ***The Community Black Board** is yet another **powerful innovative technique** adopted by the project to encourage **all stakeholders to participate** actively in the school activities. The Community Blackboard earmarks different spaces on the black board for different kinds of information. **Information regarding the attendance of students and teachers, reasons for teacher absenteeism, public opinion regarding the functioning of the school** and many others find their way to this board, that is placed in a central place in the village. While there has been some pressure on the teachers and parents to discharge their responsibilities to their children, it could be further strengthened. For example, regarding students and teacher attendance, the community blackboard could be used to give a consolidated picture. It is more likely that a teacher will be more uncomfortable if the board reports that the teacher was absent for 10 days in a month, rather than reporting his/her absence for a day. The consolidation and refinement of the data can be undertaken periodically, to explore the potential of this practice. This could be presented in the Shiksha Sangam meeting and critical issues can be discussed. **The NAANDI Trust could undertake small research studies to examine the effectiveness of such practices.***
10. ***The Parents Teachers Association need to be made more effective in their functioning.** Facilitating the reconstitution of the committee, providing them with training and building their capacities for monitoring the school activities is extremely important in*

this district. This was particularly felt, since a large number of the community firmly believed that the teacher was coming to the school for some days during some hours.

Interface With Formal Education

- 1. The interface of the NAANDI Project with the formal education system has been visualized and articulated very clearly in their project planning.** For the last year, the project has identified 40 teachers as resource persons from the block and sent them for a 7 days training to Bodh in Jaipur. After their return, they have, in turn, trained a total of 193 teachers in eight groups for a period of five days using the 40 resource persons. The DPCs, BRCs and CRCS have also accompanied the team several times during community meetings along with the project staff. The District Manager has often been invited by the DPCs to be a part of their trainer group during the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) training. In more than one occasion, the community issues have been resolved on the spot with suggestion given by the community.
- 2. The interphase of the Naandi Project with the formal education system has been visualized in the project planning.** Initial activities in this regard has also been carried out. However, this aspect is yet to gain momentum at the field level. The real challenge is the sustainability of ensuring children learn which rests on the efficiency of the formal education system. Hence serious attention needs to be paid to this aspect.
- 3. There is a need for planned sustained interphase between the teachers and education department for the long-term sustenance of the programme.** It has been planned for this academic year, that the project will pay greater attention to this aspect since the materials required for the same has almost been finalized.
- 4. The project has also planned for providing greater on-site support for teachers through the creation of the Cluster Academic Coordinators. The move from giving periodic residential training to on-site training for teachers is a definite shift, and results of the same needs to be watched carefully.** It still remains a question whether residential training for teachers are more helpful than on-site training. It may also be useful to examine if both kinds of training are required and in what proportion.
- 5. The translation of the project vision to create a sustainable model for Ensuring Children Learn rests on the implementation at the field level.** Teachers in formal education system and the Education Department are integral part of this model. While the articulation of the plan is clear at the project planning stage, it's translation at the field level is yet to be seen. The real challenge therefore is the sustainability of the model on a long-term basis. The success of the model weighs heavily on the teacher, teacher administrators and serious attention needs to be paid to this aspect.
- 6. Motivating and training new cadres, of Balmitra, and other ancillary staff is not difficult as it is directly under the control of the NAANDI project. However, the real challenge is facilitating the teachers and Education Administratoras to de-learn and then re-learn which is an uphill task. If NAANDI project, during the following year pays close attention and demonstrates that this can happen, it definitely will be a break through.**
- 7. The Balmitra, Cluster Resource Coordinator, Block Resource Coordinator, the Sandesh Vahini Dal and other informal networks like the Shiksha Sangam, and Mahila Jagruti Manch working through the several activities described above have indirectly created pressure of teachers of formal schools to deliver.**

8. ***The DIETS and Teacher Training have to take off and is a crucial aspect of the programme. As the project is of a three- year period, postponing this interphase may not be wise. In fact, to achieve all that is stated in the three-year project proposal may be unrealistic in terms of time frame, given the ground realities. Experiences across the country has shown that the resistance from the DIETS as well as integration of the programme with the formal education system has remained a challenge.***
9. ***Very often the teachers report that they have a lot of work load and hence unable to do justice to teaching. It may be useful to conduct a small study in the project area to test the validity of this claim. The project area may have teachers who work despite these compulsions. It may be useful to highlight ways in which some teachers in the same district address these problems. The study may also be used to examine ways in which the burden on the teacher could be reduced as the project plans to work with the government.***

▪ ***Linkages With Other Programmes***

1. ***The linkage of the Nanhi Kali Programme of Naandi Foundation to the project of Ensuring Children Learn has been key to encourage the education of the girl children in this backward district of Madhya Pradesh. While financial assistance in the form of providing uniforms, books etc is important, working at changing attitudes among parents and community members is as essential if not more in the universalisation of girls education. Community mobilization is central to this project of Ensuring Children Learn and hence in the process, more girl children will become part of formal education.***
2. ***While the Nanhi Kali Programme provides financial assistance to the girl child to complete her school education, which in itself is a good thing, it may be worthwhile for the NAANDI Project in Sheopur district to look at factors outside of economic factors that impact the education of girl child beyond fifth standard. For example, there are range of completely different sets of factors like distance of the school, lack of toilet facilities, sexuality, child marriage etc., that come into play during the post primary education. It may be useful to examine the possibility of evolving community support for girl child education beyond standard V.***
3. ***The Early Childhood Education(ECE) is integral to the whole project and is well stated in the proposal. The need assessment in this regard is also completed. The recommendations of the need assessment will have to form the basis of the ECE component of the project. The interlinkages of ECE with primary education will have to be developed.***
4. ***The School Health Programme as a part of the project has to be focused since the general population in the district visibly suffers from very poor health. The health aspect can form a significant part of the project without much delay. The Gram panchayat funds can be tapped for providing the schools with toilet facilities and good drinking water.***

Areas Of Concern

1. ***Given the fact, that the district is very backward in terms of development indicators, a border district which is new and with very poor infrastructure, the scope of the project***

to cover 338 schools in the three blocks of Sheopur is rather too ambitious within the proposed time frame.

2. *The Sheopur project that is one of the many projects carried out by NAANDI Foundation gains from the insights of other similar projects. **The Educational Resource Group of NAANDI Project is constantly engaged in reviewing and re-strategizing based on their review reports.** For instance, they propose to reach out to students, since these multi-level training does not impact children learning sufficiently. While this may be true, one needs to be cautioned with the kind of numbers one is engaging with if the focus shifts from teachers to students. Teachers by themselves are large numbers.*
3. ***The preparation of a comprehensive set of teaching learning materials along with the teachers manual, and students worksheets by the National Office of the NAANDI Foundation** has been a response to this challenge. However one needs to wait and see to what happens at the field level during the implementation of the programme. The long term use of these materials and its integration into formal education will still be a challenge.*
4. ***Linkages with other programmes** like the Early Childhood Education, promotion of girl child education(Nanhi Kali), health and nutrition programme, and other informal networks like the Shiksha Sangams, Mahila Jagruti Manch need careful planning, review and further strengthening to ensure children learn.*
5. ***The whole programme rests on the motivation of the Balmitras and subsequently on the motivation of teachers.** As far as the motivation of the Balmitras are concerned , it is very high since they are here by choice, but upscaling it may not necessarily result in a team that is as motivated as the present one. This, the Core group of the project is aware of. However, keeping the motivation alive is yet another challenge the project has to face.*
6. ***The translation of the project vision to create a sustainable model for Ensuring Children Learn rests on the implementation at the field level.** Teachers in formal education system and the Education Department are integral part of this model. While the articulation of the plan is clear at the project planning stage, it's translation at the field level is yet to be seen. The real challenge therefore is the sustainability of the model on a long-term basis. The success of the model weighs heavily on the teacher, teacher administrators and serious attention needs to be paid to this aspect.*
7. ***The phasing out aspect of the programme needs more clarity.** While it may be too early for them to state it, one needs to constantly engage with it, since it is that alone that speaks of sustainability of the programme.*

In conclusion, the project 'Ensure Children Learn' is well conceived and has the merits of being a potential project to realize universalisation of elementary education. The synergy it derives due to its linkages with various initiatives in the country and the in built mechanism to respond to changes lends dynamism to the project. The innovative strategy adopted by the project, managed by a highly motivated team renews hope of realizing the right to education of every child in this country.

Naandi Foundation, in partnership with the Sir Ratan Tata Trust and the Government of Madhya Pradesh, is **working in 3 blocks of Sheopur District since July 2005**. The objective is to address issues existing in the rural educational scenario with a focus of bringing quality education to every child in the age group of 6-14 years, within the framework of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

The Education team at Naandi had engaged itself in an intensive review exercise in March 2006. The objective was to critically assess the work done in the field of education in all the three states(where projects are undertaken), understand the challenges, assess impact and, on the basis of these, revisit thier strategy. Each component of Ensuring Children Learn was analysed and its role in ensuring children learn assessed. What emerged from the brainstorming exercise was a revised strategy for their quality education interventions, which is different from the previous one by bringing some activities into much sharper focus than before.

Accordingly, the road ahead for Naandi's Ensuring Children Learn programme will follow this revised strategy, consisting of three main components namely academic support to children, assessment of learning levels and community mobilisation.

- **Academic Support**

It is proposed to provide **academic support** to children in government primary schools. Local youth/school teachers volunteering to join this effort, will be trained on both pedagogy and subject by Naandi to conduct these classes. The methodology followed in these classes will be activity-based and focused on fun for the children, so that they are attracted to school, one hour before school time every day. In these circumstances, when the teacher of the formal school arrives, she has students already in class and learning, she just needs to take over from the volunteer. The school teacher also follows the same teaching methodology. The academic support thus ensures higher attendance figures and reduces wastage of teacher's teaching time (because she does not have to wait for all children to arrive and settle down). The local youth involved in these classes will become a community-based cadre of 'barefoot educationists', referred to as '*Baal Mitras*' as their work profile will include involving the parents/community in tracking learning levels of their children on a periodic basis. In our direct intervention with children, there will be a special focus on girl children. They will receive additional academic and material support, as we believe support of this nature will go a long way to ensure that the girl children do not drop out of school.

To support the group of *Baal Mitras* and to provide schoolteachers in-class support, there will be a qualified team of 'expert professionals' referred to as Academic Resource Coordinators (ARCs). The two primary responsibilities of the ARCs will be to provide hands-on support to the school teacher /volunteer and monitor the learning of children.

Periodic training will be provided to ARCs based on the needs identified by them through their interaction with the Balmitras and school teachers. Gradually, this will help build capacities of the Cluster Academic Coordinators in the district. There will be a focus on development of special teaching methodologies in identified 'hard spots' of learning. As a source of encouragement, the best *Baal Mitra* and the best ARC (judged on the basis of the children's learning achievements) will be awarded at the end the academic year.

- **Periodic Assessment**

The objective of academic support to government school children is to help them achieve grade-specific competencies. Periodic assessment of learning levels of children will be an integral part of the program, to understand how much the children have progressed. Assessment includes helping parents/community track learning levels of their children. Regular feedback to parents and teachers will also ensure the program is viewed as a support framework for teachers, parents and children. Assessment of children's learning levels will be done on a monthly as well as annual basis.

In December 2005, Naandi Foundation entered into a partnership with Educational Initiatives, Ahmedabad. Educational Initiatives (EI) was formed with a mission to work towards qualitative improvement of India's educational system. For this, they form a team of persons, who continuously engage in building expertise by networking, reading, documenting best practices and devising and sharing experiences focused on quality improvement and effective learning. This team offers products and services to private schools, NGOs, municipal school boards and governments.

For Naandi, Educational Initiatives has developed a set of tools that will measure learning levels of children from Class 2 to Class 5. These tools were discussed in detail with leading NGOs working in the field of education and educationists of the country before finalisation. It was later field-tested in Naandi's intervention areas at Hyderabad. Based on the field tests, the tools were refined and the final set of tools will be used for assessment in Sheopur.

- **Community Mobilisation**

Promoting and increasing community awareness and participation is an essential part of Ensuring Children Learn. Naandi believes that this creates a long-term demand for quality education at the village level, which will help sustain the movement for quality education. Among their other strategies, the Open Blackboard has emerged as one of the most effective ways of empowering and involving the community. The Naandi project will explore the full potential of the Open Blackboard and focus on it as one of the important means of community mobilisation efforts.

Regular meetings will be conducted at the community level. These meetings will be a platform for children to demonstrate their academic abilities to their parents and others.

In addition, the school day will be celebrated once a year, in each cluster of 5 schools. During the school day, there will be fun and games, and children will display their reading and math skills. At the end of each year, an award will be given for the best/most proactive community in that cluster.

▪ Programme Management

A core team of educationists with long years of experience in the field of education will provide constant guidance to the team in Sheopur. The team at Sheopur is headed by a manager with long years of experience of training teachers in pedagogy as well as working with the government. The core team and the manager will together develop a effective systems of monitoring and quality control.

PROFILE OF SHEOPUR DISTRICT

Sheopur was declared a new district in the year 1998. Sheopur is located at the Northern part of Madhya Pradesh. The district is poorly connected by Road & Railways network. The important rivers like Chambal, Seep and Kuno run across the district. The Chambal, which originates in the Indore district, forms the northwestern boundary of Madhya Pradesh with Rajasthan. Rail and road transport are common means of communication. Rail or bus routes connect about 15% of villages, while most of villages depend on local transport like, tractors and carts. A large number of villages do not have basic facilities like drinking water (depend more on hand pumps), primary health, and electricity. Only proper roads connect the tehsil headquarters. Sheopur lies on the main trunk Nero gauge railway route of central railway joining Gwalior.

The three blocks in the district are Sheopur, Karahal and Vijaypur. Karahal and Vijaypur block headquarters is respectively around 45 and 150 Kms away from Sheopur District headquarters. Karahal and Vijaypur block has a higher percentage of tribal population. The main occupation in the district is agriculture, and majority of the population are landless labourers and marginal farmers. This has resulted in widespread poverty in the villages with a high incidence of unemployment. The total literacy rate in the district is 27.55 %. It records perhaps one of the lowest female literacy rate of 12.27%.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The objective of the review was as follows

1. To review the progress of the project “Ensuing Children Learn” against the plan for the past one-year.
2. To make recommendations for strengthening the design and implementation.

▪ Methodology

The team adopted the following methodology as a part of the review process. The team extensively reviewed all the existing documents related to the project to get an insight of the project under review. The documents consisted of the proposal submitted by the Naandi Foundation to the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, the earlier review report submitted by Dr. Jyotsna Jha that was carried out before the commencement of the project and the field visit report of Mr. Krishna Kumar. The interim review reports submitted by the project to the Trust were also studied carefully. Based on the examination of these reports and the terms of reference of SRTT ([Refer Annexure I](#)), an initial meeting of this review team consisting of Dr. B.K. Anitha and Mr. Shivkumar had an initial meeting to draw out their plan of action.

As per the plan, Mr. Shivkumar's visit to the field was organized two days prior to Dr. B. K. Anitha. During the first three days, Mr Shivkumar, visited the villages and met the project team members, Department officials (BEO, BRC, CAC's, Teachers), Community members (PTA's, Sarpanches), Balmitras, Sandesh Vahini artists and more importantly students. He also surveyed a sample of the several activities conducted in the project area.

A formal meeting with the project manager, members from the head office, Naandi Foundation and Mr. Shivkumar and Dr. B. K.Anitha was organized on the evening of the third day. The meeting primarily reviewed the field visits and based on the field insights of Mr. Shivkumar, the plan of action for the next three days was drawn. It was decided that some more field visits would be carried out so as to ensure that all activities are adequately covered in the three blocks of the project area. Dr.B.K. Anitha also made separate field visits to a sub sample of all the activities of the project. In all, 8 villages were visited spread over the three blocks, interacted with 1 exposure visit team, observed 2 Sandesh Vahini Dal performances and interacted with the team. For a detail of the field visits please see Annexure -II

The review team then met representatives of the Sheopur team (at all levels) as well as from all blocks (For a detail of the organizational structure see ([Annexure –III](#)). Detailed interaction with the team provided greater clarity of the activities carried out at the field level. Separate meetings were organized with the Project Manager as well as the Education Resource Team from the Head Office. The field visit concluded with the review team sharing their observations of the project with the entire team. Discussions during this session helped bring greater clarity to the observations made.

The process of sharing of the observation with the entire team not only helped in validating the observations but was also a learning process for all the participants. Discussions held during this session provided greater clarity, both at the conceptual and

methodological levels. The principle purpose of sharing the observations with the team was to make this process participatory and ensure that the team owned the entire process. It may be added that the team was very open to the observations and responded positively to the suggestions made. The discussions also revealed the democratic functioning of the team. Wherever needed evidences to support the observations were made by the project/review team. The draft report was later prepared and finalized.

PROJECT REVIEW

The project of Naandi Foundation in Sheopur district is based on a clear understanding of the range of problems that effect learning outcomes of children in government schools namely, high pupil-teacher ratio, high student-classroom ratio, large number of single teacher schools, resource-scare learning environment and a high incidence of teacher absenteeism. The project area is characterized by a long and difficult history of socio-economic isolation and neglect. Hence, physical and social infrastructure in the operational area is grossly inadequate that makes the working in the area more difficult.

For over a decade, the government of Madhya Pradesh has upheld universal education as a priority, and has recognized the need for a pluralistic approach to ensuring quality in its educational system. The Jan Shiksha Adhinyam (People's Education Act) is one such policy that emphasizes the need for teacher training, curriculum revisions, parent teacher associations (PTA), envisaging a holistic approach to education.

In 2004, Naandi Foundation and the Government of Madhya Pradesh, entered into a MoU to launch a quality education initiative in Sheopur district. The program was jointly conceived by the Department of Education, Government of Madhya Pradesh (in consultation with the education department officials from RSK, SCERT, DEO, BRC and CRC of Sheopur), as a program that had multiple components to affect quality improvement. The public-private nature of partnership placed the responsibility on Naandi to bring in resource support required for the program.

This fundamental belief that guides the partnership between Naandi Foundation and the Government of Madhya Pradesh and Sri Ratan Tata Trust is making education a real part of every child's life irrespective of caste, creed or gender.

The objectives of Naandi's Ensuring Children learn program is to enhance quality of education in government primary schools in Sheopur district and ensure that children learn. NAANDI's strategy has 3 nodal points:

1. Work directly with children – through reading and writing camps, fairs and competitions, exposure visits and sports activities.

2. Work directly with teachers and teacher educators in terms of improving their skills.
3. Work directly with communities through a variety of activities including Community Blackboards.

▪ **Preparatory Phase for Project Launch**

The project is characterized with more than adequate preparation at the field level before it was made operational. The period of time was roughly between the months of April and December 2005. During this period, Naandi Foundation initiated various activities through some of its key members from the central office, Hyderabad. Among other activities, they systematically trained Volunteers, who later constituted the core team of the project in Sheopur.

The focus of the training was to prepare local master trainers on who will rest the operationalisation of the project. The training concentrated on developing skills with regard to organization of Reading Writing Camps, Demonstration Reading Writing Camps, Training of Resource Teachers for teacher training, Training of teachers, Training of volunteers for Reading Writing Camps (Balmitra), Training of Trainers in Mathematics, Science and language and organization of teaching learning materials workshops.

During this time, they interacted with the HBCSE, Pratham, Educational Initiatives and other organizations and used their expertise to develop the necessary material and provide training to their local team. These initiatives have made a substantial contribution and impact on the project program.

▪ **Organisational Structure**

The organizational structure in the project have inbuilt mechanisms to enable participative planning review and monitoring. The monthly project review with the entire team has not only helped in strengthening the team but also to set right problems that arose during the implementation phase. For the organizational structure see Annexure III.

The project activities during the first year have largely been in tune with the project plan. A dynamic leader, who is supported by his team, leads the project. The organizational structure, monitoring mechanisms and the financial monitoring systems is well conceived and enables the effective implementation of the project. During the first year, the various activities carried out by the project can be broadly classified into 3 major intervention areas. They are:

1. Interface with the Government and various Institutions and NGOs

2. Interface with the School – working with children and teachers
3. Community interface – PTA's, Sandesh Vahini Dal, Mahila Jagruti Manch, Skiksha Sangam.

▪ **Interface with the Government**

One of the important activities that have directly helped the planning of the project has been the Quality Assessment Survey. The database created can form the basis for comparison at different stages of the project to measure the periodic progress. The Quality Assessment Survey that was conducted was very comprehensive keeping the objectives of the project and the Education scenario of the District. The data analysis unfolds important information and observations, which can be the basis for revisiting the plan and developing appropriate strategies for effective implementation of the project. So far, the findings have not been shared with the Department of Education, Madhya Pradesh. However, it has been informally shared with district education officials. It would be meaningful if the project team and the Madhya Pradesh government use the observations to jointly develop strategies to facilitate effective implementation of the project.

On the training front, several training was conducted by organizations working in the area of primary education for the project staff. Efforts to develop capabilities and building a strong team have received a great deal of attention. The project had organized a workshop on quality education at the district level. Many department officials representing Education and Tribal Welfare Department along with the CEO and District Collector were present in that workshop. The workshop also had representatives from the Homi Bhabha Science Centre, Pratham and Bodh Shiksha Society and other Non Governmental organisations. This was followed by a series of workshop to build the capacities of the entire team.

▪ **Interface with School**

The focus of the past year has been to enhance the learning environment. It was evident that the reading writing camps have helped a great deal to improve the reading and writing competencies in children. This activity was extended to summer camps with additional inputs on co curricular activities. These activities have created interest in children, which was obvious during the field visits. Despite the fact that attending the summer camps was optional, most children were in the schools.

The project has concentrated on beautification of the school and provision of running blackboard on the walls of the classroom to create space for children to work in small

groups. The classrooms were filled with several colourful charts prepared by the children, creating a learning environment. Negotiating with the Education Department to allot one period for engaging children in the library activities during school hours is one of the achievements of the project. This activity has induced the reading habit among young children. The exposure visits, summer camps, introduction of new methods of teaching learning have not only generated interest to learn among children but have also resulted in actual learning.

▪ **Interface with the Community**

The project has identified the community as a key player in the project “ Ensure children Learn . In any effort to strengthen the formal education system, the attitude of the community members plays a key role in motivating parents to send their children to school. One of the focus area of the project is to mobilize communities to change their perception about schools. The highlights of some of the important activities undertaken by Naandi project in this direction are: They conduct village level community meetings initially before any project intervention in the village. Conscious efforts are made to include the Education Department Officials in these meetings that are held at the village level. The community black board is kept at the village chowk or outside the school premises. Teachers, students and community members actively participate in the exercise of providing relevant information on this black board.

Sandesh Vahini Dals – There are three Sandesh Vahini Dal teams, one in each block. Youth from the blocks are identified and provided training by Professional teams. The Sandesh vahini Dal has proved to be a very powerful tool to raise community awareness in the village. Among others, the central message revolve round the universalisation of quality education in the village. The show is organized in the form of songs, small skits and narrations. After each performance, the project team along with the artists, initiate a discussion with the community members on the relevance and importance of education. These discussions are carried out in small groups separately for men and women to encourage participation. They have had a real impact in raising awareness about the importance of education among the members of the village.

Community libraries has been one of the offshoot of the learning corners initiated in the schools. Books from community members are collected in one of the houses in the village and a volunteer from the community takes the responsibility for the operation of this community library. In some of the villages the **Paalak-Baalak-Shikshak Sammelan (Shiksha Sangam) AND Mahila Jagruti Manch** are formed. This informal network has started working with the Parent Teachers’ Association of the village school.

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section on the critical observations is broadly categorized under the following headings.

- **General observations**
- **Role of Balmitras**
- **Teaching learning Process**
- **Learning Corners**
- **Linkages with other programmes**
- **Community Participation**
- **Interphase with formal Education**
- **Areas of Concern**

Each of the observations are linked with either appreciation or/and specific suggestions that could strengthen the over all programme. Decontextualising the suggestion/recommendation from the observation will require one to refer to the specific observation for clarity. However, the critical areas of concern are listed separately for greater emphasis.

- ***General Observations***

7. The programme, '*Ensuing Children Learn*' implemented in Sheopur District, Madhya Pradesh is true to its word at the conceptual level. The project in Sheopur has definitely gained from the previous experiences of the Naandi projects carried out in other states of the country. The preliminary work carried out by the project staff at Sheopur is reflected in the initial planning of the district. A careful analysis of their planning strategy clearly indicates that they have incorporated the learning from their previous experiences of implementing of similar projects. In addition, the discussions with the team and the activities carried so far also show that they are a part of a larger network at the National level and have explored opportunities to draw on the resources of other NGOs working in similar areas. The drawing of the expertise of organizations like the Educational Initiatives, Ahmedabad, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education Mumbai and Pratham , Mumbai to provide learning materials and training is evident as a part of their programme.
8. The **identification of the district, namely Sheopur, is in itself a challenge** for more than one reason. Sheopur is one of **the most backward districts in Madhya Pradesh** in terms of development(for eg., **Female literacy 12.27%**). It is a district with a **high percentage(21%) of scheduled Castes population** situated at the border of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. **Border districts** by their very definition are neglected areas, and to add to this, **Sheopur is a new district** that was born after the division of Morena District in 1998.

9. Given the fact, that the **district has very poor infrastructure**, coupled with the factors mentioned above, the scope of the project to cover 338 schools in the three blocks of Sheopur is rather too ambitious within the proposed time frame.
10. **The project has definitely benefited by the district manager, who brings with him the experiences of being part of several National and International initiatives in the field of primary education.** He has had wide experience in understanding the field realities of Madhya Pradesh as a region as well as has been an insider to the governmental programmes in the state. His experiences are most useful to the project since he knows exactly how the thinking in the education departments as well as among teachers' work. The importance of building interventions after a thorough understanding of the crucial actors namely the educational administrators and teachers will be far more effective and relatively more sustainable in the long run.
11. **The project is led by a dynamic, supportive and a democratic leadership and the selected team consists of young committed youth who have given impetus to the entire programme.** During the field visits it was observed that the district manager gave ample scope to each of the functionaries to develop themselves, which has been instrumental in their growth in such a short period. The Project Manager balances between the level of decentralization among the project staff as well as being informed of activities at the field level. This suggest a particular role model for emulation among the young project staff.
12. **Motivation of the staff, school children and community members has received a great deal of attention.** While motivating the administrators and teachers as part of their programme is initiated, it could be further expanded, streamlined and monitored. Motivation has been key to the success of the implementation of primary education programme anywhere in the country and sustaining this on a long-term basis remains a challenge.

▪ *Role of Balmitras*

4. **The training given to the Balmitras of ten days duration regarding the conduction of the reading writing camps appears to be effective and its translation at the field level is good.** Maybe over time, with greater focus on reviews and subsequent planning, it has the potential to become more effective. The linkage of these skills with classroom textbooks are crucial. During our discussions with the District Manager and the team from the National Office, the linkage has been thought of during the subsequent stages. The reading writing camps are treated as a preparatory phase. While the strengthening of the Balmitras is crucial to ensuring children learn, their role can be only supplementary to formal school education. This has been clearly articulated at the conceptual level, and reiterating this at all levels including the community as a matter of caution cannot be over emphasized.

5. While the initial training given to the Balmitra, in training children to read and write is good, **honing their skills for teaching different learning competencies has to be chartered along the same lines.** It may be useful to develop these skills within a multi-grade context since most schools within this region suffer from acute teacher shortage. It is also believed, that a teacher trained in a multi-grade context has relatively little difficulty in teaching in a single grade-teaching context, and this may not be true vice versa.
6. **Training the Balmitras to actually engage in competency based teaching learning process is also proposed as a part of the changed strategy of Naandi.** In the discussions, with the strategizing team of Naandi, they raised concern over the extent of loss in the content of learning to students through these hierarchical training. While it is recognised that this is a genuine concern, it may be useful to also consider the fact, that reaching out to teachers in the primary schools of the country itself is large in terms of numbers. Moving beyond that to students will only multiply that number and may result in impacting a limited number of students during a particular time frame. It is suggested, that working with the children directly can be used as a demonstration to teachers that the adopted methods lend themselves to building competencies among children and could also feed into the onsite support for the teacher.

▪ *Teaching Learning Process*

7. **The project has given ample opportunity for children to express themselves** in the form of reading, writing, story telling, arts, crafts, drama and singing. This, in turn, has resulted in making the reading writing camps very interesting for the children and hence, has been instrumental in attracting more children to these camps.
8. It has been observed that the reading writing camps in this district have taken off well. In most programmes across the country, the success of the initial phase of such programmes have been fairly good, but building on this for higher levels of learning competencies has always remained a challenge.
9. **The preparation of a comprehensive set of teaching learning materials along with the teachers manual, and students worksheets by the National Office of the NAANDI Foundation** has been a response to this challenge. However one needs to wait and see to what happens at the field level during the implementation of the programme. The long term use of these materials and its integration into formal education will still be a challenge.
10. **The summer camps in the village schools is an innovative idea** and has larger implications in building the bridges between rural and urban children. The low cost, and yet making the camps effective will go a long way in realizing the right to education. These camps also open opportunities for children who otherwise will do little to engage in productive activities in their individual homes. **The**

summer camps could be gradually designed to be more recreational that the routine reading writing camps since, then, the difference in the two will also make a positive impact on the child. Variety holds the key to motivate children and hence, the variation can have a positive impact on the children.

11. **The beautification of the school is yet another idea** that has gained popularity in several programmes across the country. The use of walls to provide space for children to write is indeed very useful. The school can also be made attractive from the outside and **community participation in this regard can be encouraged to develop a sense of ownership of the village school.**
12. **The exposure visits** as part of the project activities help children meet their counterpart in other villages. The visits to the post offices, police stations and banks have been very useful. While these visits have been entertaining to children, with better planning, it can be made more effective. **Periodic reviews of exposure visits conducted across the project area can be carried out to help project staff to plan exposure visits beyond visits to post offices and banks.**

Learning Corners

4. **The open school libraries under a banyan tree in schools where there are no buildings need to be appreciated.** It is also a demonstration to teachers in formal system that despite the absence of a classroom, teaching and learning can happen if one is motivated. The community support to prepare an alternate place for running these centers gives a sense of belonging to the community, who now view this make shift school as their very own. Giving an opportunity for children in these villages is much more important since they are the most deprived among the deprived.
5. The learning corner has made a very good beginning in the villages of the project. It has always not been difficult to provide teaching learning materials during the initial phase. These materials have by and large, been developed by several organizations. What is more important is to develop in the children the freedom to use these materials. **The Balmitra will have to continue to take a proactive role in developing among children the freedom to use the teaching learning material as well as use it carefully and understand the responsibility of borrowing community resources.** Providing for materials for children of different age group/learning levels and maintaining a continuous flow of new materials to read is a challenge.
6. **As fallout of the learning corners in several villages community libraries in a small scale has been developed** owing to the demand from the community for reading material. It is suggested if these community libraries/learning corners are provided with the daily newspaper, it may have a far reaching effect in keeping the community informed about current news and also foster the habit of reading among children and adults in the village.

▪ *Community Participation*

11. **Community Awareness and Mobilization** has always been the key to the efficacy of the delivery of basic services, be it education or health. The **Sandesh Vahini Dal** has been well conceived and consists of motivated and talented women and men(mostly youth) from the community. The team has been given initial training, after which, they independently develop their programme based on contextual issues in the village. The short skits and songs enacted by them have themes that are located within the village context. Watching the performance, there appears to be a sense of identification with the characters amongst the community members.
12. The organization of the **show with a mix of narration, songs and drama** has also been responsible to hold the interest of the community members. **Exhibiting the work –art,crafts of children** during the show also is very encouraging to the children and their parents. Very often in these shows, the school teacher, and Cluster Resource Coordinator and Block Resource Coordinator of the Education Department also participate in this activity. The performance of the Sandhesh Vahini Dal concludes with a **discussion amongst community members**(who are the main audience). The Balmitra, Cluster Coordinator and Block Coordinator of the Naandi Project act as facilitators of these small group discussions. This has been one of the useful mechanisms of building community support.
13. These **discussions are held separately for men and women**. This arrangement is useful, since it gives greater opportunity for women to speak. However, these small group discussions could be better streamlined and further strengthened.
14. **The entire team of Sandesh Vahini Dal, work in coordination with the Balmitra ,cluster coordinator, and block coordinator in organizing the show.** The Sandesh Vahini team reviews the show, after each performance. The Sandesh vahini team also meets in the district office once a month, and they share experiences between the three block teams. New ideas and scripts are thought of, to make the show more effective.
15. The Sandesh Vahini Dal team has been to Ratlam district, where another project of Naandi is underway. They were there for a week, during which they put up a performance on each day, and also **trained a new Sandesh Vahini Dal locally**. The fact that they performed as trainers really boosted their confidence.
16. **The Shiksha Sangam, Mahila Jagriti Manch** are all important ideas which has been initiated in a few villages in the project areas on an experimental basis. This needs to be expanded to all villages in the project area. The potential of these informal networks cannot be underestimated. These networks will play a key role in strengthening the elementary education in the project area.
17. However,**considerable work needs to be done with the Parents Teachers Association, Gram Panchayats, Shiksha Sangams and Mahila Jagruti Manch**, to empower the community members to demand quality education from the formal school system. Community mobilization to create a demand for education and

thereby ensure that the teacher does his/her job needs to take off in a big way to translate it to a movement mode. Parents need to be made aware that the teachers are teaching not as an obligation but it is a right of every child to demand for quality education. This must be the framework towards which one needs to work with the community.

18. **The Sandesh Vahini Dal team that has been developed by the project has been used to spread awareness about health and other areas.** The visibility of the team has substantially increased and furthers the willingness of other governmental departments to understand the potential of community awareness. The realization among team members that education cannot be singularly developed and the improvement of health will positively impact education is a positive sign.
19. **The Community Black Board is yet another powerful innovative technique** adopted by the project to encourage **all stakeholders to participate** actively in the school activities. The Community Blackboard earmarks different spaces on the black board for different kinds of information. **Information regarding the attendance of students and teachers, reasons for teacher absenteeism, public opinion regarding the functioning of the school** and many others find their way to this board, that is placed in a central place in the village. While there has been some pressure on the teachers and parents to discharge their responsibilities to their children, it could be further strengthened. For example, regarding students and teacher attendance, the community blackboard could be used to give a consolidated picture. It is more likely that a teacher will be more uncomfortable if the board reports that the teacher was absent for 10 days in a month, rather than reporting his/her absence for a day. The consolidation and refinement of the data can be undertaken periodically, to explore the potential of this practice. This could be presented in the Siksha Sangam meeting and critical issues can be discussed. **The NAANDI Trust could undertake small research studies to examine the effectiveness of such practices.**
20. **The Parents Teachers Association need to be made more effective in their functioning.** Facilitating the reconstitution of the committee, providing them with training and building their capacities for monitoring the school activities is extremely important in this district. This was particularly felt, since a large number of the community firmly believed that the teacher was coming to the school for some days during some hours.

Interphase With Formal Education

10. **The interphase of the NAANDI Project with the formal education system has been visualized and articulated very clearly in their project planning.** For the last year, the project has identified 40 teachers as resource persons from the block and sent them for a 7 days training to Bodh in Jaipur. After their return, they have, in turn, trained a total of 193 teachers in eight groups for a period of five days

using the 40 resource persons. The DPCs, BRCs and CRCS have also accompanied the team several times during community meetings along with the project staff. The District Manager has often been invited by the DPCs to be a part of their trainer group during the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) training. In more than one occasion, the community issues have been resolved on the spot with suggestion given by the community.

11. **The interphase of the Naandi Project with the formal education system has been visualized in the project planning.** Initial activities in this regard has also been carried out. However, this aspect is yet to gain momentum at the field level. The real challenge is the sustainability of ensuring children learn which rests on the efficiency of the formal education system. Hence serious attention needs to be paid to this aspect.
12. **There is a need for planned sustained interphase between the teachers and education department for the long-term sustenance of the programme.** It has been planned for this academic year, that the project will pay greater attention to this aspect since the materials required for the same has almost been finalized.
13. The project has also planned for providing greater on-site support for teachers through the creation of the Cluster Academic Coordinators. **The move from giving periodic residential training to on-site training for teachers is a definite shift, and results of the same needs to be watched carefully.** It still remains a question whether residential training for teachers are more helpful than on-site training. It may also be useful to examine if both kinds of training are required and in what proportion.
14. **The translation of the project vision to create a sustainable model for Ensuring Children Learn rests on the implementation at the field level.** Teachers in formal education system and the Education Department are integral part of this model. While the articulation of the plan is clear at the project planning stage, it's translation at the field level is yet to be seen. The real challenge therefore is the sustainability of the model on a long-term basis. The success of the model weighs heavily on the teacher, teacher administrators and serious attention needs to be paid to this aspect.
15. Motivating and training new cadres, of Balmitra, and other ancillary staff is not difficult as it is directly under the control of the NAANDI project. **However, the real challenge is facilitating the teachers and Education Administratoras to de-learn and then re-learn which is an uphill task. If NAANDI project, during the following year pays close attention and demonstrates that this can happen, it definitely will be a break through.**
16. The Balmitra, Cluster Resource Coordinator, Block Resource Coordinator, the Sandesh Vahini Dal and other informal networks like the Shiksha Sangam, and Mahila Jagruti Manch working through the several activities described above have **indirectly created pressure of teachers of formal schools to deliver.**
17. **The DIETS and Teacher Training have to take off and is a crucial aspect of the programme.** As the project is of a three- year period, postponing this

interphase may not be wise. In fact, to achieve all that is stated in the three-year project proposal may be unrealistic in terms of time frame, given the ground realities. **Experiences across the country has shown that the resistance from the DIETS as well as integration of the programme with the formal education system has remained a challenge.**

18. Very often the teachers report that they have a lot of work load and hence unable to do justice to teaching. **It may be useful to conduct a small study in the project area to test the validity of this claim.** The project area may have teachers who work despite these compulsions. It may be useful to highlight ways in which some teachers in the same district address these problems. The study may also be used to examine ways in which the burden on the teacher could be reduced as the project plans to work with the government.

▪ ***Linkages With Other Programmes***

5. The linkage of the **Nanhi Kali Programme** of Naandi Foundation to the project of ***Ensuring Children Learn*** has been key to encourage the education of the girl children in this backward district of Madhya Pradesh. While financial assistance in the form of providing uniforms, books etc is important, working at changing attitudes among parents and community members is as essential if not more in the universalisation of girls education. Community mobilization is central to this project of Ensuring Children Learn and hence in the process, more girl children will become part of formal education.
6. While the **Nanhi Kali Programme provides financial assistance to the girl child** to complete her school education, which in itself is a good thing, it may be worthwhile for the NAANDI Project in Sheopur district to look at **factors outside of economic factors** that impact the education of girl child beyond fifth standard. For example, there are range of completely different sets of factors like distance of the school, lack of toilet facilities, sexuality, child marriage etc., that come into play during the post primary education. It may be useful to examine the possibility of evolving community support for girl child education beyond standard V.
7. The **Early Childhood Education(ECE)** is integral to the whole project and is well stated in the proposal. The need assessment in this regard is also completed. The recommendations of the need assessment will have to form the basis of the ECE component of the project. The interlinkages of ECE with primary education will have to be developed.
8. The **School Health Programme** as a part of the project has to be focused since the general population in the district visibly suffers from very poor health. The health aspect can form a significant part of the project without much delay. The Gram panchayat funds can be tapped for providing the schools with toilet facilities and good drinking water.

Areas Of Concern

1. Given the fact, that the **district is very backward in terms of development indicators, a border district which is new and with very poor infrastructure**, the scope of the project to cover 338 schools in the three blocks of Sheopur is rather too ambitious within the proposed time frame.
2. The Sheopur project that is one of the many projects carried out by NAANDI Foundation gains from the insights of other similar projects. **The Educational Resource Group of NAANDI Project is constantly engaged in reviewing and re-strategising based on their review reports.** For instance, they propose to reach out to students, since these multi-level training does not impact children learning sufficiently. While this may be true, one needs to be cautioned with the kind of numbers one is engaging with if the focus shifts from teachers to students. Teachers by themselves are large numbers.
3. **The preparation of a comprehensive set of teaching learning materials along with the teachers manual, and students worksheets by the National Office of the NAANDI Foundation** has been a response to this challenge. However one needs to wait and see to what happens at the field level during the implementation of the programme. The long term use of these materials and its integration into formal education will still be a challenge.
4. **Linkages with other programmes** like the Early Childhood Education, promotion of girl child education (Nanhi Kali), health and nutrition programme, and other informal networks like the Shiksha Sangams, Mahila Jagruti Manch need careful planning, review and further strengthening to ensure children learn.
5. **The whole programme rests on the motivation of the Balmitras and subsequently on the motivation of teachers.** As far as the motivation of the Balmitras are concerned , it is very high since they are here by choice, but upscaling it may not necessarily result in a team that is as motivated as the present one. This, the Core group of the project is aware of. However, keeping the motivation alive is yet another challenge the project has to face.
6. **The translation of the project vision to create a sustainable model for Ensuring Children Learn rests on the implementation at the field level.** Teachers in formal education system and the Education Department are integral part of this model. While the articulation of the plan is clear at the project planning stage, it's translation at the field level is yet to be seen. The real challenge therefore is the sustainability of the model on a long-term basis. The success of the model weighs heavily on the teacher, teacher administrators and serious attention needs to be paid to this aspect.

7. **The phasing out aspect of the programme needs more clarity.** While it may be too early for them to state it, one needs to constantly engage with it, since it is that alone that speaks of sustainability of the programme.

In conclusion, the project '**Ensure Children Learn**' is well conceived and has the merits of being a potential project to realize universalisation of elementary education. The synergy it derives due to its linkages with various initiatives in the country and the in built mechanism to respond to changes lends dynamism to the project. The innovative strategy adopted by the project, managed by a highly motivated team renews hope of realizing the right to education of every child in this country.

Annexure I

Terms of Reference (ToR)

End of the grant review of one year grant to Naandi Foundation “Ensuring Children Learn” being implemented in Sheopur

Background: Registered in 1998 as a charitable Trust, Naandi Foundation (Naandi) is a not for profit organization committed to working in the areas of education, health and livelihood for serving underprivileged sections of society. Naandi was set up with the initiative of four corporate houses in response to the appeal of the Andhra Pradesh government to initiate public-private partnership for contributing towards the development sector. Naandi works in partnership with the government, to strengthen existing programmes/schemes to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness. It also works directly with the community to build capacities of community members for effective participation in the development process. Naandi’s annual expenditure in 2004-05 was Rs 147.17 million, with support received from Government of Andhra Pradesh, contribution from Naandi and individual / local donors.

In July 2005, the Trust sanctioned a grant of Rs. 4,250,000 to the Naandi Foundation, Hyderabad for the project “Ensuring Children Learn” in the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh. The project is a collaborative effort between the Naandi Foundation, Sir Ratan Tata Trust and the Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP). The total project cost is Rs. 13.33 million, of which the Trust has contributed Rs. 4.25 million (32%), and GoMP/Naandi would provide Rs. 9.08 million (68 %). The Trust has supported the project initially for one year and after reviewing the progress in the activities of the project, would take a decision for supporting the project on a longer term. The key components of the project are: (i) Quality Assessment Survey (QAS) and Analysis, (ii) Enhancing the Learning Environment, (iii) Strengthening the Community-School Bond, (iv) Promotion of Science and Mathematics, (v) Promotion of Language Skills, (vi) Capacity Building for Planning, Monitoring & Motivation, (vii) Early Child Development, and (viii) Other Components - Girls Education, School Health and DIET Strengthening. The project would reach out to 3 blocks, 61 clusters and 900 schools in the Sheopur district. Focus in the first phase would be 338 primary schools. In the first year of the project, Naandi has interventions in 110 schools of the three blocks of Sheopur, Vijaypuri and Karahal.

A brief explanation on each of the project components is given below:

- a. **Quality Assessment Survey (QAS) and Analysis:** A comprehensive survey of schools in Sheopur district would be conducted to gain better understanding of the quality parameters, including teacher student ratio, learning environment, teaching-learning material, student attendance record, classroom sex ratio and learning levels. Comprehensive data would be collected for a representative sample of 338 primary schools, which would be analysed, documented and disseminated at district and state level.

- b. **Enhancing the Learning Environment:** A vibrant and stimulating learning environment can make important contribution to children's learning levels and motivation. Poor infrastructure and uninviting physical environment hampers process of learning. Without making large-scale investments in infrastructure, Naandi plans to provide inputs that motivate children to attend school, help children and teachers maintain their surroundings and make learning an engaging process. This would be achieved through: (i) workshop for stakeholders on low cost methods to enhance the learning environment; (ii) creating learning corners within schools for children to study in groups; (iii) upgrading classroom facilities including provision of blackboards, improved lighting etc; (iv) creation and maintenance of basic infrastructure: storage cabinet, dustbins, toilets, drinking water facilities; and (v) enhancing school environment by creating playgrounds and gardens.

- c. **Strengthening the Community-School Bond:** In any village-based situation, attitudes of community members play a key role in motivating parents to send their children to school. Naandi hopes to mobilize communities to improve their perceptions regarding the value of education. This would be attempted through (i) training to Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members to facilitating the formation and strengthening of parent-teacher committees and introducing a set of structured interactions between teachers and parents as a tool to continuously monitor the functioning of the school; (ii) block level mobilization efforts through awareness meetings with community meetings at the village or at weekly markets, *kalajathas* etc.; and (iii) interactive structured forums for parents, teachers and children scheduled in the school timetable where children present, read and demonstrate their learning once in 2 months.

- d. **Promotion of Science and Mathematics:** Using locally available, cost-effective resources Naandi would provide inputs to teachers to build their subject specific knowledge and skills. Proposed activities for achieving this include: (i) augmenting facilities in the school such as science laboratories; (ii) teacher training programs in mathematics and science for primary and upper primary school teachers; (iii) organise science exhibitions; and (iv) institute science popularization award for recognising best practices.
- e. **Promotion of Language Skills:** It has been widely recognized that low levels of learning reading and writing, especially weak comprehension skills functions as a major impediment in learning all school subjects. Hence Naandi proposes to organise: (i) reading-writing-comprehension summer camps to assess competency levels of students; (ii) development of a bilingual training manual; (iii) improving existing libraries and setting up new libraries; and (iv) training for teachers in building competencies and skills in teaching English.
- f. **Capacity Building for Planning, Monitoring & Motivation:** Capacity building of various stakeholders would be an important component of the project. This would involve capacity building of PTAs, master trainers / resource persons and teachers. This component will focus on providing training for effective monitoring, planning and management, motivational aspects, research and curriculum.
- g. **Early Child Development:** Link between a strong early childhood, preschool programme and children's health and education indicators has been widely recognized. The proposed project would focus on: (i) home-based programme for children of 0-3 years consisting of training family member, provision of supplementary nutrition and regular growth monitoring and facilitating immunization; and (ii) centre based program for children of 3-6 years, focusing on improving the quality of pre-school centres, training for instructors and monthly reviews for assessing progress.
- h. **Other Components - Girls Education, School Health and DIET Strengthening:** In addition to the above mentioned components, the project would also include intervention to address the issue of girls' education by providing remedial education and bridge courses, award for school adopting best practices, teacher training focusing on gender sensitization and community mobilization on girls education. The project would also have a school health programme, which would provide for regular check-ups, health education and monitoring the quality of mid-day meals served in the school. Finally, Naandi would work with state level government institutions like Rajya Shiksha Kendra and State Council for Education Research and Training to build capacities of eight District Institutes for Education and Training (DIETs).

In the last nine months, most of the components mentioned above have taken off quite well. The components which have taken off substantially include enhancing learning environment, promotion of language skills and building the community school bonding. To enhance the learning environment, the schools have been painted in a bright pink colour, and within each classroom, the walls have been painted black from the floor to a height of 3 feet. This is a running blackboard for all children in the class to write on. For strengthening the Community-School Bond, Naandi Foundation has initiated different components like the Community Black Boards and Sandesh Vahini Dals. To promote language skills, Naandi is undertaking reading writing camps and library activities in the schools. Another achievement of the project so far has been to carry the district administration along with it in all its interventions. The components that have not taken off as planned include the early child development, school health and DIET strengthening.

Objective of the exercise:

- Review the progress in the project against the plan.
- Make recommendations for strengthening the design and implementation.

Scope of the Work:

- i. Assess the progress in the project against the proposal and annual work-plan for Year I.
- ii. Visit 2-3 schools and villages in each of the three blocks to gauge effectiveness of the different components of the project. Focus on the quality of intervention in the elementary schools.
- iii. Meet teachers and members of the community. Based on the same, review the school-community inter-face and progress made in building the partnership. Reflect on the role of community that Naandi envisages in the intervention.
- iv. Assess Naandi's definition of 'Quality Education', discuss with the team the ways they use to evaluate the same and provide your feedback on the same.
- v. Review the 'Baseline Study' in terms of the design of the tools, analysis and findings. Discuss the issue of capturing impact of the project and assist Naandi Foundation in formulating suitable impact assessment indicators.
- vi. Review monitoring systems followed by Naandi and coordination mechanisms between the schools, community and the government functionaries.
- vii. Meet relevant government officer(s) and understand their view on the project, their commitment in facilitating its implementation including financial support and ideas for mainstreaming.
- viii. Comment on long-term implications of adopting strategies like hiring 'Bal-mitras' in the context of the need for building professional cadre of teachers. Understand the role that Naandi envisages for itself in the wider policy related issues within the state and comment on the same in the context of a collaborative project.
- ix. Review the contribution of "Other Sources" in the project including the funds raised from these sources.

- x. Discuss the future direction with Naandi and comment on the feasibility of the proposed work in the context of field reality, human and other resources available.
- xi. Make recommendations on all the above points

Expected Outputs: A detailed draft report would be submitted to the Trust within ten days after completion of the field visit to Naandi Foundation, Sheopur. It should comprise of the following chapters:

- i. An executive summary
- ii. A background chapter
- iii. A comprehensive chapter on findings and recommendations
- iv. Annexure: Brief daily account of the field visit
- v. Any other information and insights on the project. (Please feel free to add anything of relevance that has not been included in this ToR)

On review of the draft report, and receipt of the feedback from the Trust and Naandi Foundation, the consultant would then submit the final report in ten days time.

Time Frame:

The consultancy will be for a period of eight days in the month of May-June 2006.

Suggested break up:

Days	Tasks
Day 1	Desk review of documents
Day 2-6	Field Visit
Day 7-9	Preparation of draft report
Day 10	Report finalization

ANNEXURE II

Field visit by SRTT Review Team – District Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh

Date	Place	Programme	Name of Visitor
21-05-06	Karanya Khedli, Mekhlahedi	Summer camps, Meeting with PTA, Teacher and community members	D. Shivakumar
	Utanbadh	Exposure visit	D. Shivakumar
22-05-06	Devanchand dera, Madho Ka dera	Summer camps, meeting with PTA's Sarpanch, Teacher & community members	D. Shivakumar
	Advar	Sandesh Vahini Show, Community meeting	D. Shivakumar
23-05-06	Khirkhiri, Goras, Shripura	Summer Camps	D. Shivakumar
	Karahal	Meeting with B.E.O and BRC	D. Shivakumar
	Silpuri	Sandesh Vahini show, Community meeting	D. Shivakumar
24-05-06	Gaswani, Baroda Kalan	Summer camps, meeting with CAC, PTA's, Sarpanch, Teachers & community members, Exposure	D. Shivakumar
24-05-06	Gandhi Nagar, Nimodapeer	Summer Camp, Meeting with PTA	Dr. B.K. Anitha
	Pandoli	Sandesh Vahini Show, Community meeting	Dr. B.K. Anitha
25-05-06	Project Office	Interacting with Balmitra, Block and Cluster coordinators, Sandesh Vahini artists	Dr. B.K. Anitha D. Shivakumar
26-05-06	Project Office	Interacting with the District Manager and the project team members	Dr. B.K. Anitha

ANNEXURE III

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

