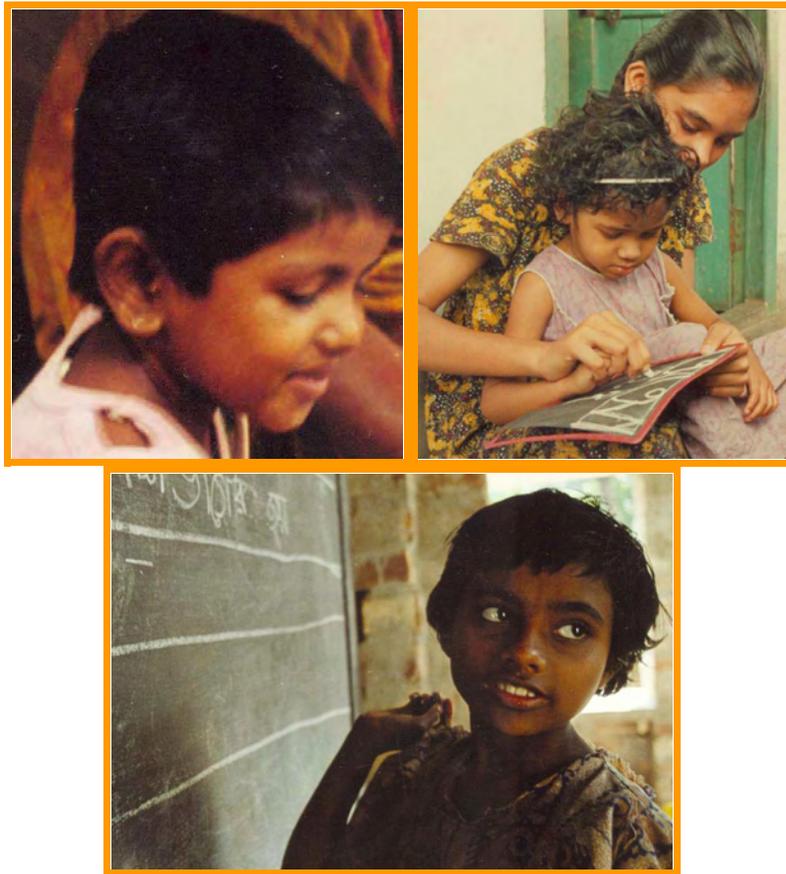


# **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

*For the period of  
October 1, 2003 – September 30, 2004*



*USAID Reaching and Educating At-Risk Children  
(REACH) India*

*Cooperative Agreement No. GDG-A-00-03-0006-00*

# **Table of Contents**

- I. Executive Summary**
- II. Key Accomplishments**
- III. Project Overview**
- IV. Start-up Activities**
- V. Project Management and Governance**
- VI. Programming Activities**
  - 1. Project approach and rollout steps**
  - 2. NGO identification and selection process**
  - 3. Grant application template development**
  - 4. Introductory and Technical Assistance workshops**
  - 5. Grant Selection Committee and Advisory Board**
  - 6. Grant award process**
  - 7. Dissemination strategy**
  - 8. Tools developed**
- VII. Financial and Administrative Processes**
- VIII. Monitoring and Evaluation**
- IX. Future Steps**
- X. Lessons Learned**

## I. Executive Summary

“Thank you REACH India for enriching our organization; we have been associated with UNDP/UNESCO/UNICEF/Save the Children but no one yet has taken this much of responsibility to bringing their partner onto the same wavelength...”

--An NGO representative following the Technical Assistance workshop in Kolkata

It has been a momentous first year. From start-up activities to identification of NGOs to awarding grants, the REACH India project is gradually taking shape and fulfilling its objectives of strengthening the capacity of Indian NGOs to attract and retain disadvantaged children in quality educational programs.

REACH India's first annual performance report covers the period October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2004, a period which saw not only the start up and establishment of REACH India's office, but also significant progress toward our programmatic objectives.

The project has been rolled out (from identifying eligible NGOs to short-listing of proposals) in three of the six geographical areas – Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata. Preparations are underway for rolling out the project in Chhattisgarh and Mumbai. In Delhi, which was the first target region, REACH India now has seven partner NGOs -- five for Direct Service Delivery grants<sup>1</sup> and two for Capacity Building Support grants<sup>2</sup>. Together the seven NGOs will impact nearly 55,000 vulnerable children.

The Jharkhand grant recommendations packet is being prepared and will be sent to USAID for approval in October 2004; four NGOs have been recommended for Direct Service Delivery grants and one for Capacity Building. The REACH India team has short-listed Kolkata grant applications based on an initial review of proposals; site visits and the Grant Selection Committee meeting are due in October to decide on the final list of proposals to be recommended for funding to USAID.

While the project rollout has been the most visible achievement, much has been accomplished over the last year behind the scene including start-up activities such as finding and furnishing office space, recruiting and hiring staff, and establishing financial and managerial procedures; developing tools and application templates; creating information materials; and building collaborative ties with the multiple project stakeholders i.e., NGOs, Government, the corporate sector and donor agencies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Formerly referred to as Lead NGOs

<sup>2</sup> Formerly referred to as Intermediate Service Providers

## **II. REACH India's Accomplishments: Year One**

### **1. Setting up the REACH India office**

- Identifying and equipping the office.
- Hiring staff -- management, professional and office staff.
- Developing REACH India personnel and organizational systems e.g., personnel policies, filing structure etc.
- Developing REACH India financial systems (for project and for grantees).

### **2. Creating tools and templates for grant making and Technical Assistance**

- Developing one-year and four-year implementation plans.
- Preparing the Project Monitoring Plan (PMP).
- Developing initial Technical Assistance (TA) and training plans.
- Developing NGO organizational assessment procedures and tools.
- Developing Grant Agreement template.

### **3. Rollout of REACH India grant processes**

- Developing the REACH India grant application and evaluation processes.
- Developing the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Grant Selection Committee.
- Identifying and recruiting members for the Grant Selection Committee for Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata.
- Organizing introductory and TA workshops in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata with representatives from more than 170 NGOs participating collectively in the three regions.
- Reviewing a total of 121 grant applications from eligible NGOs in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata.
- Short-listing proposals to be forwarded to the Grant Selection Committee
- Following up on REACH India evaluation of proposals with site visits to observe short-listed NGOs' programs on the ground.
- Assessing the monitoring and evaluation needs and data collection capacity of potential grantee NGOs.
- Organizing Grant Selection Committee meetings for Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata.
- Awarding a total of approximately Rs. nine crore in grant funds to seven partner NGOs in Delhi who will collectively impact nearly 55,000 vulnerable children in different parts of the city over the next three years.
- Preparing the Jharkhand grant recommendations packet for USAID.
- Planning for launch activities in Chhattisgarh and Mumbai.

### **4. Outreach to NGOs, Government and other stakeholders**

- Producing the REACH India information packet.
- Developing the ToR for the National Advisory Board.
- Identifying and extending invitations for membership on the Board.
- Developing REACH India's dissemination strategy.

- Designing and developing content for REACH India website.
- Holding discussions with other USAID-funded education and development projects.
- Making exploratory visits to four of the six project implementation areas.
- Creating a master list of NGOs for three of the six geographical areas.
- Creating networking opportunities for NGOs in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata by inviting smaller NGOs to REACH India's introductory workshops as well as by providing a printed NGO directory for the region.
- Liaising with government officials in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata to promote REACH India's complementarity with the Government of India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) goals, and build collaborations with government stakeholders.
- Building synergies through meetings and e-mail exchanges with other donor agencies including UNICEF, UNESCO, DFID etc within and outside REACH India implementation areas.
- Discussions with other USAID-funded projects to seek out ways to collaborate with one another.

### **III. Project Overview**

The aim of the Reaching and Educating At-risk Children (REACH) in India project is to attract and retain disadvantaged children in quality educational programs by strengthening the capacity of Indian NGOs<sup>3</sup> in selected urban and rural areas. The project complements the Government of India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or Universal Elementary Education (UEE) program.

A key concern of the project is to overcome constraints to the participation of girls in education, both in- and out-of-school. The first facet of the implementation approach is to improve service delivery of a core group of NGOs while the second facet supports the efforts of established NGOs to build the capacity of smaller and less experienced NGOs to provide basic education services to vulnerable children.

The project will provide grants (totaling US \$11.2 million over the project period i.e., 2003-2007) and technical assistance to NGOs that provide educational services to address the basic education needs of at-risk children -- defined for this purpose as children (especially girls), between the ages of four and 14 years of age, who are either out of school or are in school but in danger of dropping out.

This will be done by:

- Promoting improved and expanded delivery of educational interventions to disadvantaged children through grants to NGOs for Direct Service Delivery.
- Providing grants to established NGOs to develop the capacities of smaller, less experienced NGOs to deliver direct educational services and thus, help the smaller NGOs improve and scale up programs.
- Establishing and strengthening local NGO networks to achieve outreach and advocacy goals of the REACH India program.
- Engaging the government education sector.

---

<sup>3</sup> The term NGO also includes not-for-profit organizations and foundations.

- Conducting monitoring and evaluation through multiple approaches.
- Disseminating and promoting the adoption of good practices within the NGO and educational communities.

### **Purpose of grants**

This project isn't just about providing funds to NGOs. In fact, the project's richness lies in its scope; by weaving together various strands of activities targeted at multiple stakeholders, REACH India ultimately hopes to create a tapestry of opportunities for the disadvantaged child.

The goal of the project is to improve access, enrolment and retention of at-risk children in schools by working closely with the Government structure to address its needs and supporting NGOs to fill in the gaps through complementary programs that meet SSA goals. The means of achieving this are varied but leading to one common result: the increased participation of vulnerable children in educational programs.

Guiding principles of the project include:

- Engaging partner NGOs in an organizational development approach to capacity building with the recognition that organizational development is a collaboratively planned process of change in an organization.
- Working with government educational agencies and broader educational schemes. This collaboration will encourage greater (and much needed) complementarity between the goals of NGO educational interventions, including Full Alternative Educational programs, and Government's goals of UEE; promote increased leveraging of resources; and provide training for Government educational personnel.
- Contributing to the development of NGO networks and forums at the state, district and town level that will help bring issues related to primary education to the forefront of development work. Networks will be established in each of the geographic areas where REACH will focus its attention as well as across the program areas, thus linking activities in geographic areas that might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact. Government agencies and the private sector will be included in each network in an effort to build public private partnerships to broaden local commitment to expanding educational opportunities for vulnerable children.
- Tying a large number of partner NGO interventions in elementary education to a shared Results Framework. These activities will be linked to action research that captures the common vision of REACH India stakeholders and provides data for advocacy and policy work.
- Developing research and policy agendas in each and across all geographic areas where REACH India will work and promoting the active dissemination of good practices through multiple channels. Action research activities will be designed to provide critical information for use in shaping and informing program implementation in an effort to make education work better at the local level. Research results will also be used to frame policy enabling statements related to educational programs for vulnerable children.

Linking partner NGOs to a shared Results Framework enables this project to become a sum that is greater than its parts. Each partner develops plans for action research activities that support their respective program efforts as well as the overall 'cause' of education for vulnerable children. Each partner prepares strategies for engaging the government sector and a gamut of stakeholders in activities and the development of networks that advocate for increased resources for the education of vulnerable children. In short, all partners play a role in creating an identity for the REACH India project and commit themselves to increased and improved educational service delivery to vulnerable children.

## **The focus on gender**

REACH India has paid special attention to the girl child by ensuring that partner NGOs in their proposed programs identify their target child beneficiaries by gender as well as specify educational interventions, if any, that are designed to attract and retain more girls in their programs. [The thrust areas for specific educational schemes](#) could [include](#):

- [Focusing on educationally backward areas in terms of girls' education.](#)
- [Focusing on disadvantaged sections of girls like those belonging to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, etc.](#)
- [Tackling gender-specific issues that prevent access of girls and women to education.](#)
- Strengthening the capacity of formal schools to enroll and retain girl children.
- [Providing special coaching and remedial instruction for girls in need.](#)
- [Focusing on the educational needs of adolescent girls, including providing the necessary support structure and a learning environment](#) that is conducive for them to continue in school.
- Focusing on girl-friendly educational strategies e.g., women teachers, and pedagogical approaches that have proven effective in retaining girl children.

[Girls](#) in rural areas need extra attention since they [are doubly disadvantaged by the non-availability of educational facilities and by the work they have to do such as collecting fuel, fodder and water, sibling care and paid and unpaid work.](#) In this context, REACH India is hoping to support programs such as residential bridge schools for girls which seek to address both issues of access as well as social and physical barriers such as distance of schools from home.

This project also aims to check the steep drop-off rate for girls at the upper primary level by funding programs working to strengthen the capacity of formal schools and Full Alternative Education programs to retain vulnerable children, especially girls at the upper primary level.

Apart from supporting direct educational interventions, REACH India hopes to secure greater participation of girl children in educational programs through advocacy, dissemination and networking efforts including:

1. Mobilizing community leaders through partner NGOs to actively promote education for the girl child.
2. [Broadening local community participation in support of girls' education](#) through advocacy and networking efforts.
3. Disseminating best practises and lessons learned in the area of girls' education.
4. Sponsoring action research in the area of girls' education and using the findings to develop policy enabling statements and reports for purposes of advocacy.

[REACH India will also benefit from](#) other USAID-funded projects such as the [education, health, water and sanitation activity, SWASTHH+, in Karnataka and Jharkhand that will directly impact child health and the enrolment and retention of girls.](#)

## **Types of grants**

To achieve this spectrum of objectives, REACH India will provide two types of grants:

**1. Direct Service Delivery Grants:** REACH India will provide funds and technical assistance to NGOs that have a proven record in or show the potential of working in the education sector for direct delivery of educational services to vulnerable children in formal and alternative educational programs.

**2. Capacity Building Support Grants** that will provide funds to enable well-established NGOs to mentor and support smaller grassroots NGOs in providing basic education services to vulnerable children in formal and alternative educational programs. Organizations receiving Capacity Building Support Grants will help selected grassroots NGOs in two ways: a) via sub-grants to implement educational programs; and b) strengthen the organizational and educational capabilities of grassroots NGOs.

Organizations may apply for either or both types of grants.

## **Geographic focus**

Geographically, the goal of REACH India is to have impact on vulnerable children in urban mega-cities and in poor rural districts. The six geographic areas – Delhi, Jharkhand, Kolkata, Chhattisgarh and Northern Karnataka -- were chosen by USAID using the following criteria:

- Areas where there are large numbers of child-workers, wide gender disparities, high trafficking rates and/or large numbers of educationally deprived children.
- Cooperation and receptivity of state and local education sector officials regarding NGO sponsored activities.
- Performance and credibility of NGOs that function within a given area.
- Potential synergy with other USAID funded activities within a given area, e.g., health, community development, urban development.

## **IV. REACH India Start-up Activities**

Upon signing of the REACH India award on September 30, 2003, intensive efforts to set up the project office in Delhi, India, began; the first few months following the signing saw a flurry of activity – interviews with potential hires, meetings with USAID, filing legal compliance documentation etc – as well as visits by senior officials from REACH India partner organizations including the American Institutes of Research (AIR), Juarez and Associates and World Education.

Over the next few months, the office was set up, an account opened for REACH India and local staff hired. The office was fully ready for occupancy in the last week of January.

By March, all administrative and program staff were in place.

While in country, REACH India is staffed by a small team of professionals from the fields of education, training, monitoring and evaluation, finance and communications, it also draws on the expertise of its partner organizations: Juarez and Associates (for monitoring and evaluation), Michigan State University (MSU) (for communications and information technology) and World Education (for quality of education).



Besides this, partner NGOs are also expected to support each other through their core competencies and become resource centers for other NGOs. Further, we hope to create a larger network of NGOs beyond just our grantees by facilitating forums where NGOs can share their expertise with others doing similar work.

## **V. Project Management and Governance**

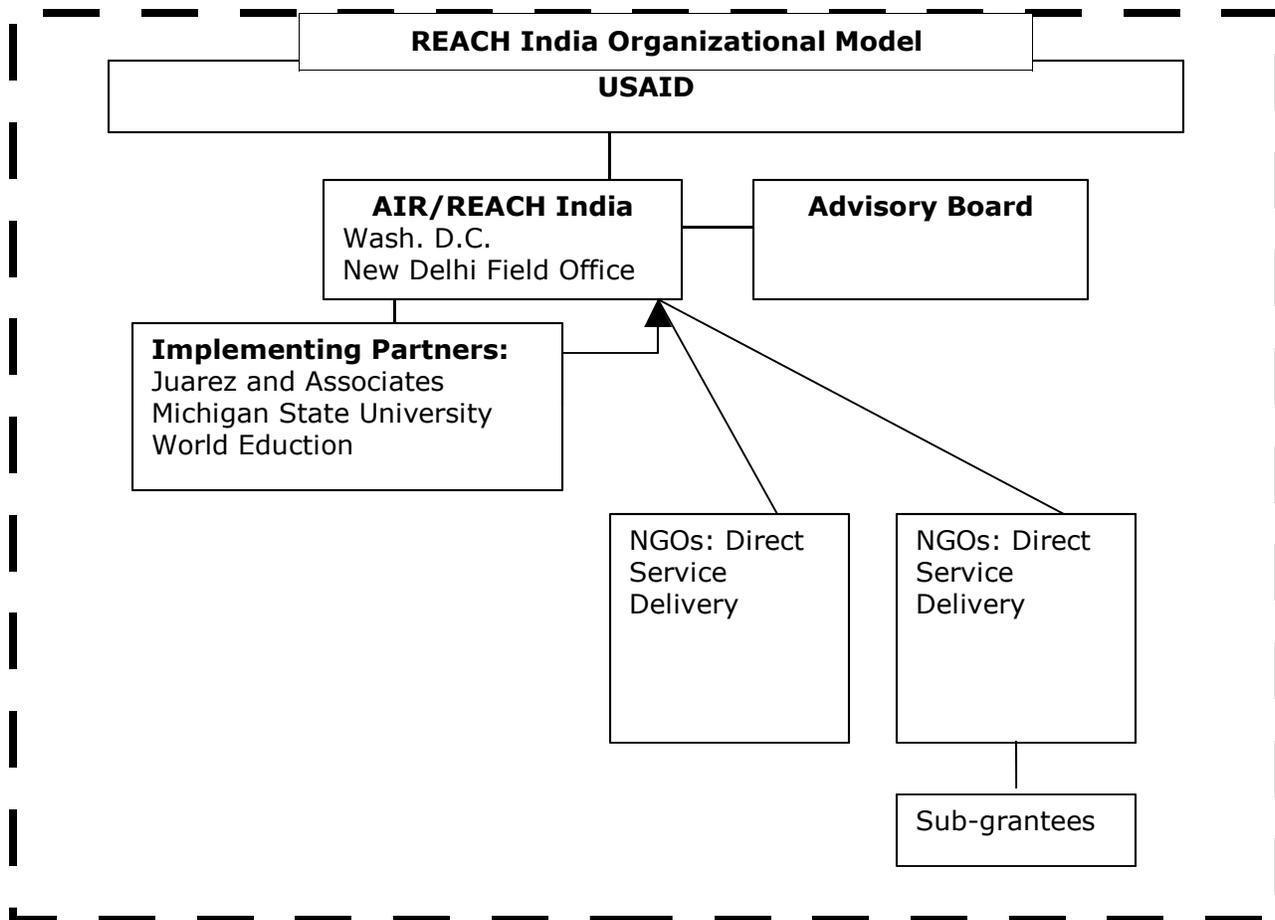
REACH India is a USAID-funded project that is being implemented by AIR, Juarez and Associates, MSU and World Education under the auspices of the Educational Quality Improvement Program: Classrooms, Schools and Communities (EQIP1).

For REACH India, AIR will be the lead implementing organization. Juarez and Associates will provide the technical leadership in research, monitoring and evaluation and World Education and Michigan State University will provide short-term technical assistance in the areas of capacity building and identified areas of need in service delivery such as teaching-learning strategies and curriculum.

Apart from the expertise of REACH India partners, an Advisory Board consisting of persons from the academic, business, government and NGO communities has been constituted to suggest policies, procedures and practices that will enable REACH India to achieve its objectives, as well as promote more generally the objectives of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) with regard to vulnerable children. It is anticipated that the REACH India Advisory Board will also serve as one avenue for communication between REACH India and the government of India.

Further, to ensure transparency and fairness in the selection of grantees, REACH India has set up a Grant Selection Committee. The Committee consists of concerned Indian educationists capable of objectively assessing the relative merits of proposals and how well it connects with REACH India objectives. The Committee is a temporary body and it will be disbanded once the project implementation has begun in all six geographical target regions.

A REACH India organogram is shown on the next page.



## 1. Establishing the Advisory Board

REACH India’s Advisory Board is a national-level group that has been established to provide governance functions as well as guidance on how best to achieve REACH India’s objectives and operating principles. It is envisaged that the Board will also help REACH India make decisions that maximize impact in our work with organizations in the field.

The rationale for the Board is simple: it is not possible for REACH India to have in-house knowledge and expertise in all areas and it looks to the Board to provide the project with a multi-dimensional perspective. The group consists of professionals who are advocates for the cause of basic Education For All and are actively engaged with education and its reform processes in India. REACH India will be able to learn from their experiences, as well as receive strategic and tactical advice from different vantage points: government, academia, resource institutions, the corporate world, and NGOs.

In addition, members of the Board will help REACH India build ownership of the project within the existing Indian structures for achieving UEE, thereby increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the project. The Board will guide the team on dissemination strategies, including possible forums and networks through which program accomplishments can be shared with a wider audience.

Certain parameters were laid out to help identify members for the group. The members are expected to have an understanding of the issues at hand and suggest how REACH India can

address subjects such as institution-building, development of professional capacities and ways to use opportunities provided by programs such as SSA. Other possible issues include educational reforms, change management, innovations in delivery of education, role of new technologies, barriers to the entry of educational institutions, methods of assuring quality of education, decentralization of curricula, education management, and textbook development.

The Board is also expected to guide and counsel the REACH India team to ensure that the project supports and complements efforts within and outside government towards universal elementary education.

The Board members have one or some of the following skills:

- Educational research and policy experience
- Academic experience
- NGO experience or experience in an area of development other than education
- Project management/funding agency experience
- Government experience
- Legal training
- Finance/corporate experience

It was planned that members would preferably be based in Delhi for logistical reasons; if all the members are in the same location, it will make it easier to hold meetings and have individual interactions as needed. However, as the Board now stands, two of the members are based out of Delhi as it was felt that they provided enormous value to the Board.

Meetings will be held at least twice a year. However, members may be asked to meet the REACH India team on an individual basis for informal consultations as and when required.

REACH India submitted a list of potential Board members to USAID. Following USAID approval, REACH India began the recruitment process. Invitation letters to join the Board were sent out to 10 individuals. Of these, six have accepted. They are:

- **Prof. Shyam Menon: Dean Faculty of Education, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi.** An academician with many years of experience, Prof. Menon has been an advisor on many education projects, has participated in several Joint Review Missions for DPEP, and been on several committees for education research.
- **Ms. Vimala Ramachandran: Educational researcher and consultant.** Ms. Ramachandran has in-depth knowledge of the primary education sector, national education programs and the NGO sector. She was the first National Director of Mahila Samakhya, when the program first began. She has carried out an appraisal of SSA, and is well aware of the needs of the education sector including SSA.
- **Mr. Sumit Bose: Principal Secretary, Finance, Government of Madhya Pradesh.** Mr. Bose was the Joint Secretary in the Department of Elementary Education, Government of India, and has been closely involved with DPEP and preparation of SSA. He was also a consultant with the UNDP/USAID project on Getting Children Out of Work and Into School. He too is well-versed with the SSA program – its strengths as well as its current gaps.
- **Prof. R. Govinda: Senior Fellow, NIEPA.** Prof. Govinda is an internationally renowned expert on primary education. He is the head of the school and non-formal education unit at NIEPA, New Delhi and a visiting professor at the University of London. He has been a consultant for UNESCO, UNICEF, ACCU, NORAD, the World Bank and the Asian

Development Bank, and has also published several books and professional papers in Indian and international journals. He specializes in policy analysis, decentralized management, basic education, non-formal education and educational evaluation.

- **Dr. Shantha Sinha, Secretary Trustee, MV Foundation.** MV Foundation is well known internationally for its work on eradication of child labor. Dr. Sinha, founder-member, has several awards to her credit for her work on this subject. In 2003, she received the Magsaysay award for Community Leadership; and in acknowledgment of her contribution, the government of India has conferred on her the Padma Shree award.
- **Dr. Venita Kaul: Education Specialist, World Bank.** Dr. Kaul worked with NCERT for several years and subsequently joined the World Bank. She has been working closely on DPEP and SSA and has specialized in early childhood care and education.

Currently, recruitment is underway for a member from the corporate sector to bring this perspective into the project.

There has been no formal meeting with the Advisory Board yet. However, Board members have been consulted individually at REACH India's office. One of the Board members also participated in the Delhi Grant Selection Committee, and it is expected that one more may participate in the Chhattisgarh Grant Selection Committee.

## **2. Establishing the Grant Selection Committee**

The second governance group, the Grant Selection Committee (referred to in USAID's REACH India project description as the Grantee Selection Board), serves the function of assuring a fair and transparent process for the selection of grantees.

The Committee also ensures that the program is guided by concerned educationists with a deep understanding of the Indian economic and socio-cultural context.

The structure of the group consists of:

- A core team of three professionals from the ranks of educationists, policy makers, researchers, donor agency representatives, academicians, lawyers and financial professionals who share a commitment to human resources as a key component of development.
- An additional pool of individuals with the same ranges of backgrounds as core team members, but, additionally, having experience in REACH India's geographical target states.

REACH India ensures that members not only bring diverse skills to the table, but also either hail from diverse geographical regions or have worked in settings that are similar to REACH India's target locations and are familiar with the geographical setting in which the project will be undertaken. They have an understanding and appreciation of ideas central to the issues at hand, including innovations in delivery of education, role of new technologies, barriers to the entry of educational institutions, methods of assuring quality of education and decentralization of curricula and textbook authorship.

The Grant Selection Committee for any given grant selection process consists of five to six members – two to three from the core group, who serve as permanent members of the Committee, and two to three from the general pool, with expertise in the geographic district under consideration for grants. The members of the REACH India staff serve as a resource

to each Grant Selection Committee and the Chief of Party (or in her/his absence a representative of AIR or a partner) chairs the Committee meetings. This process ensures that at least two and possibly three of the Selection Committee members on any given grant selection team will already be familiar with REACH India and its grant selection process. These individuals have a comprehensive understanding of REACH India's vision and objectives and will be able to assure a continuity of standards, purpose and process through the granting cycles. Additionally, by drawing on individuals from a larger pool, REACH India is able to gain from a broad range of skills as well as build a broad base of support and understanding among key Indian professionals across India.

Grant Selection Committee members have expertise and experience in one or more of the following:

- Educational research and policy expertise.
- An understanding of and experience with international Education For All (EFA) efforts in general, and India's commitment to UEE in particular.
- An understanding of the NGO community and its particular contribution to the development process and to UEE.
- Project management/funding agency experience.
- Government experience.
- Finance experience.

Members are provided an honorarium since they expend considerable time in reviewing and evaluating the project proposals. Names of the permanent members of the Committee were sent to USAID and they have approved the list. The names of the regional members for Jharkhand and Kolkata were also submitted to USAID, and subsequently approved.

Grant Selection Committee meetings have been held for three of the six geographical target areas: Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata. Prior to the first meeting, an orientation was organized for the members to inform them in more detail about REACH India, its goals and strategies, and their role. The grant evaluation criteria and the scoring were discussed with them and their feedback incorporated into the set of criteria, following which it was sent to USAID for final approval.

Prior to each grant selection activity, members of the REACH India team thoroughly review each application and provide their assessments and observations (based on site visits to NGO programs) at the Grant Selection Committee meeting. Only proposals which receive a pre-approved numerical score on the Technical Review Form are passed onto the Committee for consideration.

Committee members are sent the short-listed proposals along with blank Technical Review Forms. Members are given about two weeks to read between 10-15 proposals, note down their comments (on the Forms), and then rank the proposals individually. Members then gather at the REACH India office for a day-long meeting to discuss the proposals as a group and speak about each proposal's strengths, gaps, convergence with REACH India objectives and Intermediate Results, unique features and the organization's track record. Given that each of the members has an intimate understanding of the education sector, meetings are usually lively affairs with spirited exchanges; still, there is always consensus at the end of the day and members have, during the last three rounds, always unanimously agreed on the final proposals recommended for funding.

At all Grant Selection Committee meetings, it is stressed that REACH India is ideally looking at a combination of grants that would help achieve all three Intermediate Results namely:

- Out-of-school children provided with alternative schooling and mainstreamed into Formal Elementary Schools.
- Strengthened Formal and Alternative School Capacity for enrolment and retention of vulnerable children, especially girls.
- Promoting system reforms for improved decentralized educational services, such as EMIS, micro planning and monitoring.

*(See Annexure 1: Terms of Reference for Advisory Board and Grant Selection Committee)*  
*(See Annexure 2: Profiles of Grant Selection Committee members)*

## **VI. Programming Activities**

### **1. Project approach and rollout steps**

The project team met several times to review the project documents and to draft a plan for the implementation of the project. These meetings provided an early opportunity for team members collectively to think through the logic and purposes of the project as well as to provide their individual suggestions. This process led the team, collectively, to develop a comprehensive and systematic orientation and understanding of the project and to develop materials, such as the project implementation plan, that reflected this.

As a result of these discussions, the team developed the view that the proposal submitted by AIR and partners to USAID would benefit from the following changes:

First, the schedule for reviewing, funding and beginning implementation of grants should be compressed. Under the terms of the original proposal, grants would not be made in several of the project areas until the end of the second and third years of the project. This, it was felt, would leave too little time for these grantees to implement their projects effectively. Additionally, the number of children served and mainstreamed during the project period would be less. The position taken, therefore, was the project implementation in three regions would be begun by the end of the first project year and the final three by the end of the second project year. This would mean that while all primary grantees would have at least two years of project implementation, some primary grantees would have up to three years of implementation time.

Second, the order of project initiation in regions should be revised. Originally, the plan had been to begin implementation in the cities of Delhi and Kolkata, then begin implementation in rural areas (Jharkand and Chhattisgarh), followed by implementation in Mumbai and Northern Karnataka. While the team concurred with the earlier decision to begin implementation in Delhi, among other reasons, because of its proximity, the position was developed that the second area in which to initiate the project should be a rural area (in this case, Jharkand). It was seen as urgent to initiate communications in rural areas as soon as possible because the project development challenges there would be greater and more time consuming. In these rural areas, there are fewer NGOs -- particularly NGOs with adequate background and experience to qualify for the project -- and the percentage of children at risk and out of school are higher and their needs greater. Finally, it was posited that NGOs

working in the elementary education sector in cities face different issues from those working in rural areas. This fact, too, led the team to consider the advantages associated with an early focus on an urban and a rural area, and apply lessons learned to subsequent rollouts.

These two project implementation revisions were discussed with USAID who were in agreement that this pattern of implementation would better relate to the goals of the project following which work plans were accordingly adjusted.

Below are documented the broad steps to the rollout of the project:

### **ROLLOUT TIMELINE AND ACTIVITIES: FOR ALL GEOGRAPHIC TARGET REGIONS**

Step	Activity	Timeframe
1.	Exploratory visit 1	<b>2-3</b> working days Sample timeline*: October 1 to 3
2.	Compile NGO lists and send out pre-grant applications	<b>4</b> working days Sample timeline: October 4 to 9
3.	Waiting period for receipt of pre-grant applications	<b>10</b> working days Sample timeline: October 9 to 18
4.	Evaluate pre-grant applications, shortlist potential grantees and send out invitation letters for workshop	<b>6</b> working days Sample timeline: October 21 to 28
5.	Send out invitations to other guests, workshop speakers etc	<b>Concurrent</b> w/Step 4 Sample timeline: October 21 to 28
6.	Exploratory visit 2**	<b>2-3</b> working days Sample timeline: October 7 to November 1
7.	Send names and bios of potential Grant Selection Committee members to USAID	<b>2-3</b> working days + <b>5</b> working days awaiting USAID responses Sample timeline: October 7 to November 12
8.	Conduct introductory workshop	<b>2-3</b> working days Sample timeline: November 20 to 22
9.	Conduct TA workshop	<b>3-4</b> working days Sample timeline: November 27 to 30
10.	Waiting period for receipt of grant applications	<b>One month</b> Sample timespan: November 20 to December 20
11.	REACH India evaluation of grant proposals.	<b>Two weeks</b> Sample timeline: December 23 to January 3
12.	Copy and send shortlisted proposals to Grant Selection Committee	<b>2-3</b> working days Selection comm. reviews for <b>2 weeks</b> . Sample timeline: January 6 to 22
13.	REACH India site visits	<b>Concurrent</b> w/Step 12 Sample timeline: January 9 to 22

Step	Activity	Timeframe
14.	Selection Committee members send rankings; REACH India compiles.	<b>2 weeks after</b> proposals are sent to them Sample timeline: January 23
15.	Selection Committee meets with REACH India to discuss proposals	<b>1-2 working days</b> Sample timeline: January 27 to 28
16.	Negotiation letters are sent to shortlisted applicant NGOs	<b>1-2 working days</b> Sample timeline: January 29-30
17.	Waiting period for receipt of revised grant applications	<b>8 working days</b> Sample timeline: February 1 to 12
18.	REACH India review of revised grant applications	<b>3 working days</b> Sample timeline: February 12 to 14
19.	Send final list of potential partners along with respective proposals to USAID	<b>1 working day</b> Sample timeline: February 15
20.	Waiting period for USAID response	<b>10 working days</b> Sample timeline: February 15 to 28
21.	Negotiate on USAID issues with partner NGOs	<b>5-7 working days</b> Sample timeline: February 28 to March 4-8
22.	Signing of MoU along with TA workshop (a week after final revised proposals are received)	<b>1 working day</b> Sample timeline: March 15
	<p><b>*: Sample timeline refers to a hypothetical date or period for an activity; this gives an idea of how long in realtime i.e., number of months, the rollout of a geographical area could take.</b></p> <p><b>**Optional; If we have completed our groundwork during Exploratory visit I, Step 6 will not be required</b></p> <p><b>Pink highlighted areas refer to concurrent activity,</b></p>	

## 2. NGO identification and selection process

From the outset, REACH India was clear that its process of identifying NGOs, soliciting and reviewing grant applications should mirror the program objectives of collaboration and transparency. We sought to do that by ensuring that NGO lists were culled from a variety of independent sources, drawing up a set of objective and verifiable criteria for the pre-screening process, and creating a data entry tool to determine eligibility of NGOs to apply for grants. We wanted to make the pre-screening exercise as inclusive as possible by extending invitations to the widest pool of NGOs available. By doing this, we were able to enhance our understanding of the NGO sector in education as well as guarantee that our list was truly representative rather than from just any one agency's database.

## A. Identifying NGOs in the target region

Grant competitions often use advertisements in national dailies/publications to solicit NGO applications, but since this avenue was not available to us (because of certain restrictions), we used multiple sources for gathering names of NGOs working in the education sector.

The following methods/sources were used for all three regions:

- i. **Internet search:** The World Wide Web was used to search for Indian NGO directories online. Three of the major online sources used were IndianNGOs.com, Indev.org and [Cafonline.org/cafindia/](http://Cafonline.org/cafindia/) (the site of Charities Aid Foundation, India.) All of them provided names of NGOs with addresses and telephone numbers.
- ii. **Telephone and e-mail:** Various Indian and international NGOs/foundations (including NGO alliances) based in the target regions were contacted via phone and e-mail to ask if they knew of comprehensive directories of NGOs working in the area of education for disadvantaged children. Among the agencies contacted were ActionAid India, CARE India, Janshala (GOI-UNDP), HPS Foundation, Oxfam India, UNICEF, UNESCO and Voluntary Action Network India (VANI). These organizations shared with us their lists of NGOs, and a few of them such as VANI and CAF even forwarded our pre-grant application to NGOs in their networks.
- iii. **Publications:** Names of NGOs were collected from the Development Alternatives' publication, DIANET (an NGO state-wise directory published in 1998). This book was a useful resource as it was used to validate whether organizations were more than five years old, which is an eligibility criterion on the REACH India pre-grant application. In Kolkata, a resource directory by the City Level Programme of Action (CLPOA) served as a good starting point for our final compilation of NGOs.
- iv. **Exploratory visits:** In Delhi, visits were made to the state Education Director and the UEE Mission to acquire the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) list. Trips were made to both Jharkhand and Kolkata to understand the education scenario in the state and gather information about NGOs in the area. In Jharkhand, REACH India staff met with the State Education Secretary, Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC) officials, and visited a few NGO programs and offices. A visit was also made to Patna (in the neighboring state of Bihar since Jharkhand was once a part of Bihar) to meet with the state UNICEF officials. During the Kolkata visit, REACH India staff members met with the State Education Secretary and other Government representatives from the education sector and visited NGO programs.

After collating the information from the above-listed sources, the team created a central database that housed the names of NGOs by target region. This comprehensive list was used to fact-check the names and addresses of those NGOs submitting pre-grant applications.

While going through the process of acquiring lists of NGOs, the team realized the lack of a comprehensive and updated list of NGOs working towards improving access to and quality of education for disadvantaged children in Delhi and Jharkhand. The team created directories for Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata which were then shared with the NGO community in each region.

## **B. Establishing the pre-grant application criteria and process**

The REACH India team developed a set of pre-selection criteria and a form for determining which NGOs would be eligible for submitting a grant application and which NGOs could be potential sub-grantees (formerly referred to as smaller, less experienced NGOs).

NGOs had to meet the following pre-selection criteria for Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai:

- Possess a valid Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Number.
- Be registered under the Society Registration Act/Trust.
- Have a minimum of five years experience in working with disadvantaged children between the ages of 6 and 14 years, especially girl children. [This condition may not apply to NGOs that wish to apply for the Support Grant, conditional on their demonstrating that their capacity building model can be successfully replicated.]
- Currently impact a minimum of 3,000 children.
- Have experience working with projects that have budgets of at least Rs. 20 lakh per annum for the last three years and have viable financial systems in place.
- Have a proven track record of success in implementing educational programs that complement the government's goal of achieving UEE by the year 2010.

For the three rural areas i.e., Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Northern Karnataka, it was decided to modify the criteria slightly as the belief was that there were fewer "large" NGOs working in the interiors of these states. NGOs in these areas would have to meet all the above criteria, but the numbers of children impacted was lowered to 1000 and the past project budget requirement was halved to Rs. 10 lakh per annum.

*(See Annexure 3: Pre-grant application form)*

## **C. Selecting eligible NGOs**

For all three regions, the introductory letters, along with the pre-grant application forms, were couriered (next day delivery) to the NGOs in the REACH India database about 10 days before the response was expected i.e., NGOs were given a deadline of 10 days to return their completed forms. In the case of Jharkhand and Kolkata, letters were also sent to eligible NGOs from REACH India's previous grant competitions.

**Reviewing pre-grant applications:** A team of two persons read the forms and entered information into a spreadsheet under relevant heads, including year of registration, number of current beneficiaries, annual budget etc. *(See Chapter on Tools Developed.)* To ensure accuracy and flexibility, the applications were then reviewed by two additional persons. The goal of this process was to ensure organizations were being judged fairly and reasonably.

Based on these discussions and the eligibility criteria, pre-applicant organizations were classified into three categories:

**i. Eligible NGOs:** These organizations were informed of their eligibility to submit a grant application and invited to both the introductory and technical assistance (TA) workshops.

**ii. NGOs that could be potential sub-grantee or resource organizations**  
(Small NGOs): These organizations consisted of NGOs whose applications showed considerable potential, but fell far below the eligibility criteria in terms of budgets handled and numbers of beneficiaries served. These organizations were invited to the introductory workshop to provide them an opportunity to network, explore

partnerships and funding possibilities with potential REACH India grantee organizations.

**iii. Ineligible NGOs:** These organizations were rejected on all counts; they were not invited to either of the workshops and would not be considered as potential resource or sub-grantee organizations. They were informed that they had been found ineligible for submitting a grant application.

Going by this classification, statistics for each of the three regions broke out this way:

Name of region	No. of pre-grant applications sent out	No. of pre-grant application responses	No. of Eligible NGOs	No. of Small NGOs	No. of Ineligible NGOs
Delhi	180	75	40	19	16
Jharkhand	185	121	42	31	48
Kolkata	148	75	44	18	13

Invitations for the introductory workshop were couriered to both eligible and small NGOs in all cases to provide an opportunity for potential grantees to meet with potential sub-grantees.

In addition to using the pre-application for selecting NGOs who would be invited to the workshop, information from the pre-application was also used to:

- Conduct an informal needs assessment; for example, review the organization’s report writing, financial, and monitoring and evaluation capabilities.
- Create profiles of NGOs based on information provided in the application.
- Create a directory of NGOs working in education (in the specific target region) that will be circulated to participants at the respective region’s workshop.

**Taking stock**

While we did receive applications from large, medium and small NGOs with varying degrees of organizational capacity, we came to realize that our pre-grant application criteria sifted many of the small to medium-sized organizations out of the process, and only the “tried and tested” NGOs were able to meet the set requirements.

Most small organizations work with fewer numbers of children and have lower budgets than was specified in the criteria. However, to ensure that small organizations with a good track record could remain part of the process – albeit as potential sub-grantees to our partner Capacity Building NGOs – it was decided to include them in the introductory workshops. These smaller NGOs were also informed about organizations who received REACH India Capacity Building grants so that they could inquire into the possibility of becoming a sub-grantee.

In the final assessment, the criteria did work to provide us a mix of credible NGOs working on a spectrum of interventions among different target groups of vulnerable children.

### **3. Grant application template development**

#### **A. Establishing the grant selection criteria**

REACH India developed a draft of evaluation criteria for use by the Grant Selection Committee (*referred to in the USAID project description as Grantee Selection Board*) in judging and awarding grants. The draft criteria were submitted to USAID for feedback and approval. The criteria address the following:

- The organization's past experience in the education sector and/or its ability to use past experience to engage in the education sector.
- The relevance of the activities proposed and their link to REACH India's goals and objectives.
- Sustainability of the proposed project and the quality of the financial proposal.

After incorporating suggested revisions by USAID, the document was finalized and included in the grant application that was distributed to potential partner NGOs at the introductory workshop.

#### **B. Developing the grant application template and instructions**

The grant application for potential NGO grantees was developed and comprises the following:

- Introduction to the project and the grant opportunity.
- General instructions for completing the application.
- Checklist of required attachments.
- Evaluation criteria: one for Direct Service Delivery grants and another for Capacity Building Support grants.
- A cover sheet (basically a form) (This provided key organization and project information at a glance).
- Certification sheet (for NGOs to sign and stamp the application).
- The Project Proposal which comprised five parts: Executive Summary, Statement of Need, Case Statement, Project Description and Other Funding Sources.

There were four basic annexes to the application:

- Implementation plan
- Finance and budget instructions
- Budget template
- Monitoring and evaluation template

A comprehensive set of instructions was prepared to be used by grant applicants in submitting their proposals. The instructions laid out the vision and purpose of REACH India; guided grant applicants through the process of developing detailed programming and action plans, monitoring and evaluation plans and budgets; and explained the approximate amount of financial resources they could hope to receive. The instructions are directly linked to the grant selection criteria.

Applicants are also required to show evidence of past performance and to provide documentation in support of their organization's personnel and financial policies. (*See Annexure 4: Grant application template*)

## 4. Introductory and Technical Assistance workshops

Following the identification of eligible NGOs, the project was launched with an introductory workshop to unveil the project and the grant opportunity to NGOs participating in the grant competition. The introductory workshop was followed a week later with a Technical Assistance workshop to walk applicant NGOs through the grant application.

The aims of the workshops are to:

- Explain and clarify the grants application and proposal development process.
- Assist NGOs with the development of proposals that are responsive to REACH India outcomes.

While it has been a challenge to adequately emphasize all aspects of this multi-faceted project within the workshop timeframe, participant feedback has been mostly positive; REACH India was complimented for providing a forum that provides a networking opportunity for NGOs – both to interact with each other and interface with officials from Government and donor agencies – as well as one that employs a “participatory” and “helpful” approach to proposal creation. At the same time, participant, staff and other critiques have led to revisions and improvements in the workshop itself as well as the grant application.

*(See Chapter on Lessons Learned)*

### A. Delhi

“Today’s workshop provided ample opportunity for brainstorming and networking.”

“A lot of hard work has gone in from your end in preparing the application form; now it is our turn.”

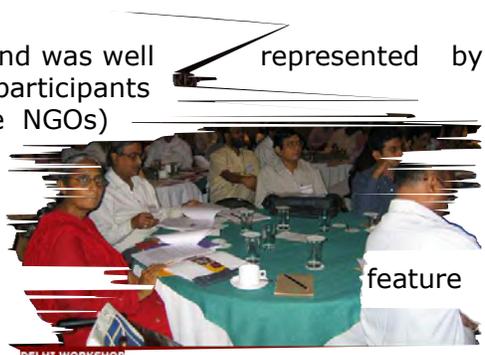
“There should be more time for questions and answers.”

*(A sampling of participant feedback following the Delhi workshops.)*

#### i. Introductory workshop summary

The introductory workshop was held on April 16, 2004 and was well represented by the NGO community in Delhi with more than a 100 participants (from 40 eligible NGOs and 19 potential sub-grantee NGOs) attending the session at the India Habitat Centre. The primary objectives of this workshop were to provide an overview of the REACH India project to participants and facilitate networking between the different NGOs in the city. The workshop was the only one this year to child beneficiaries as workshop speakers.

*(See Annexure 5: Delhi introductory workshop report)*



#### ii. TA workshop summary

This one-day workshop on April 23, 2004 was organized to assist eligible NGO representatives in responding to the grant application template and in completing the various annexes according to REACH India expectations. During the week leading up to the TA workshop, participants were e-mailed an electronic copy of the grant application as well as the Excel budget template spreadsheet.

The workshop used small-group activities to clarify roles such as sub-grantees and Capacity Building grantees as well as to get participant input on issues such as the challenges of upscaling and replicating existing programs.  
(See Annexure 5a: Delhi TA workshop report)

## **B. Jharkhand**

“The workshop was handy to understand the ample opportunity we have to impact quality education. Our role as an NGO is clarified.”

“Had the participants (i.e., speakers including the Education Secretary) given more concrete and specific suggestions on improving convergence and strategic alliances with various stakeholders it would have been more productive.”

*(A sampling of participant feedback following the Jharkhand workshops.)*

### **i. Introductory workshop summary**



The introductory workshop on May 27, 2004, in Ranchi, Jharkhand was attended by representatives from 46 participating organizations. It was held in both English and Hindi. A decision was made to keep all the written materials in English for two reasons:

- 1). Since the REACH India staff is quite small, there are not sufficient human resources to translate materials into local languages and then have them re-translated into English for the Grant Selection Committee and USAID.
- 2). By asking NGOs to write project proposals in English, it was understood that some allowance would have to be given for poorly written proposals, and further clarifications sought from those NGOs. However, the decision to have them submit proposals in English was seen as part of building the capacity of these NGOs and helping their sustainability; if NGOs are to compete effectively for international donor funds, they stand a better chance if they can articulate themselves in a global language such as English. In a few cases, NGOs did hire consultants, but it was the belief that in the long run, a grantee NGO would hire staff who were both comfortable in the English language and capable of project delivery.

The Jharkhand workshop’s objective was similar to that of Delhi -- a forum to share information about the REACH India project and provide networking opportunities to NGOs in the area. However, it differed in that the target region of Jharkhand includes both rural and urban areas, and speakers, noting this fact, emphasized that interventions would need to be customized depending on where the NGO was working in the state. The state Education Secretary also spoke at this workshop and engaged in a lively debate with NGO representatives, many of whom mentioned that it was rare that they got to exchange views with a senior Government official, and that they were grateful for the opportunity.

*(See Annexure 6: Jharkhand introductory workshop report)*

### **ii. TA workshop summary**

Like the introductory workshop in Jharkhand, the one-day TA workshop – held on June 2, 2004 -- was conducted in both English and Hindi. Its objectives were similar to that of the Delhi TA workshop. SSA State Project Director Smita Chug spoke to the participants and

answered questions on the program implementation in Jharkhand. However, based on the learnings in Delhi, the small-group activity focused more on developing components of a sample proposal rather than a more generic discussion on the NGO educational interventions.

*(See Annexure 6a: Jharkhand TA workshop report)*

## **C. Kolkata**

“Though (the series of workshop activities and sessions) really squeezed our energies, as we leave we are enriched and return with the hopes of doing more and more for our vulnerable children.”

“Learning through doing is the best practise for learning. I am very much delighted to go through this process you have used as a methodology at this workshop.”

“The workshop would have been more effective if there had been less number of participants.”

“To be very candid, it is unique. Thanks to REACH India”

*(A sampling of participant feedback following the Kolkata workshops.)*

### **i. Introductory workshop summary**

The introductory workshop on August 10, 2004, in Kolkata, was well represented by the NGO community with 60 participating organizations. Its objective was similar to those of the workshops in Delhi and Jharkhand. The speaker at the workshop, UNICEF Education Officer Sulagna Roy, stressed that while a number of governmental and non-governmental interventions have been made in the state, coverage, even in Kolkata, was patchy, and that there are still many children out of school.

*(See Annexure 7: Kolkata introductory workshop report)*

### **ii. TA workshop summary**



REACH India’s Kolkata TA workshop – held on April 18 and 19, 2004 -- differed from Delhi and Jharkhand in that it was designed to be held over one and a half days. This was done to implement the learnings from the previous two TA workshops that indicated participants might benefit from longer and more detailed sessions with greater emphasis on interactive activities. The other departure from previous practices was the use of laptops wherein each small group was given a laptop to enable them to sketch out their activity

electronically.

The small-group activities which focused on proposal development was more hands-on since participants were able to get instant feedback from the REACH India team on their proposal presentations; this enabled the group also to understand (in practice rather than theory) REACH India’s expectations as a reviewer of proposals. Similar exercises were done for the monitoring and evaluation and budget components of the proposal template.

By engaging participants in a mock proposal development exercise and providing feedback, NGOs received a better understanding of the underlying themes of this project, its goals and

focus and how they could shape their programs to not only fit into REACH India parameters but also enhance its capabilities to respond to EFA goals.

While the program component was dealt with adequately, there was insufficient time to provide a comprehensive overview of the finance, and monitoring and evaluation portions of the proposal. Consequently, it was decided to extend the TA workshop to two days in future workshops.

(See Annexure 7a: Kolkata TA workshop report)

## 5. Grant award process

During the reporting period, the grant evaluation process was completed for Delhi and Jharkhand, and was in the final phase for Kolkata. Below are details of the process undertaken for the three regions.

### A. Delhi

Delhi was the first region for implementation and while there were many benefits to beginning the project in "our own backyard," there were also a few lapses that served to teach us how to improve our delivery for the second target region: Jharkhand.

While the Delhi TA workshops yielded some rich information on the gaps in the education sector, they were less focussed on achieving the aims of the workshops, one of which was to assist NGOs in developing their proposals. As a result, the proposals varied quite widely in quality, but offered a host of programs that were both innovative and diverse in their approaches.

**i. REACH India team scoring:** REACH India received 35 applications from 32 NGOs; 29 proposals were for Direct Service grants and 6 were for Capacity Building Support grants. The REACH India team reviewed the 35 applications, scored each organization, and based on the scores, short-listed 10 which were sent to the grant Selection Committee. The grant Selection Committee reviewed the 10 proposals – eight for Direct grants and two for Support grants -- in their individual capacities, scored and ranked them.

**ii. Grant Selection Committee meeting:** Two weeks after the proposals were sent to them, the Committee returned their rankings of the 10 organizations. This was followed by a day-long meeting at the REACH India office where the Committee members came together

### Delhi, Kolkata and Jharkhand: A snapshot

Delhi and Kolkata are typical Indian metropolises characterized by non-cohesive, heterogeneous migrant communities, vast disparities between rich and poor, and extensive slums. Slums form the principal setting for the urban vulnerable children, and, because most of the dwellings are not recognized by the respective state and local governments, children face insecurity and little or no access to government programs and services. Vulnerable children in the urban areas include children from squatter colonies, street children, working children, and the children of sex workers. Their issues are different from those of their rural counterparts, both in magnitude and type.

The newly formed state of Jharkhand is mainly rural and characterized by a heterogeneous tribal populations as well as those belonging to the Scheduled and Other Backward Castes. Nearly 38 percent of Jharkhand's population is tribal. The many tribes spread across the state are often distinct from the mainstream, not only in dialect but also in terms of daily living patterns. The diversity of tribal communities makes for complex social, economic, and educational development scenarios.

In addition, rural, marginalized families often migrate to urban areas in search of livelihood and better lives, but they are often ill-prepared for the shanty living, disorganized informal sector, disease, and new forms of exploitation that greet them. In an unfamiliar environment without support systems, survival becomes the primary concern, and it is common to find children helping their families cope by working, often in challenging and hazardous situations.

to discuss the proposals and present the rationale for their rankings. After each member presented their rationale, members were asked to rank each organization as a group. This was done to allow members an opportunity to revise their original ranking based on what they had heard during the meeting from others on the Committee.

**iii. Revised proposals and site visits:** Based on members' comments on the proposals, letters were sent to each of the short-listed nine NGOs asking them to submit revised proposals addressing the listed questions/concerns. NGOs were given two weeks to return the revised proposals. After the letters were sent, REACH India followed up with a site visit to each of the nine organizations. The site visits had a dual purpose: 1) To do some 'ground-truthing' of the NGO's activities 2) To provide the NGO an opportunity to discuss the issues/concerns that were raised in the letter. Based on the site visit and financial assessment (which was based on the financial appraisal tool), two more organizations were dropped, bringing the list of probable Delhi grantees to seven – five for Direct grants and two for Support grants.

Based on a budget analysis, it was also decided to cut budgets for all the seven NGOs.

**iv. USAID grant recommendations packet:** In an effort to provide USAID a snapshot of the proposed projects recommended for funding, the proposals are sent along with the following documents:

- 1.) **Overview:** Provides a bird's eye view of the NGOs recommended for funding by the Grant Selection Committee. Information in a tabular format includes the name and profile of the short-listed NGO, its rank by the Selection Committee, number and description of the program's target group, geographical area, the Intermediate Results (IR) the project would correspond with, project objectives, strategies/activities, innovations and the three-year project budget.
- 2.) **Organizational appraisal:** Includes the REACH India team's observations of its site visit to the NGO project base and an analysis of the organization's financial and administrative systems.
- 3.) **Grant Selection Committee comments:** Documents the Grant Selection Committee's observations and remarks on each short-listed NGO's project proposal.

USAID reviewed the packet and sent back comments. Based on USAID's input, further clarifications were sought from potential Delhi grantees particularly with regard to cost per beneficiary and Full Alternative Programs. USAID approved five NGOs for grants in Delhi in September; two more received approval in October.

REACH India's approved seven partner NGOs in Delhi are:

**Direct Service Delivery grantees:**

- AADI
- CEMD
- Disha

- Katha
  
- SARD

**Capacity Building Support grantees:**

- Deepalaya
- Prayas

All the recommended NGOs were chosen not only for their superior projects and organizational work, but also for reasons of complementarity. For example, AADI was selected for its focus on inclusive education, Disha on its work with the Mayapuri slum children and children of sex workers, CEMD and SARD on their work with the Government system, and Katha on its pedagogy and outreach to street children. By doing this, REACH India was able to cover all three IRs. Besides this, the expectation was that these NGOs would support each other through their core competencies.

*(See Annexure 8: Delhi NGO grantee project summaries)*

**B. Jharkhand**

The learnings and feedback from the Delhi grants evaluation process were incorporated. While the steps remained the same, there was a shift in the sequence. Refinements to the process included:

- Modifying the grant application template.
- Revising the Technical Review Form based on Delhi Selection Committee members' feedback.
- Conducting site visits before the Grant Selection Committee meeting to provide a first-hand perspective to members about the potential grantee NGO's program.
- Modifying the grant recommendations packet for USAID.

Contrary to expectation, the proposals from Jharkhand were well written, and also presented interesting approaches for rural populations such as residential bridge programs for adolescent girls.

**i. REACH India team scoring:** REACH India received 40 applications from 32 NGOs; 28 proposals were for Direct Service Delivery grants and 12 for Capacity Building Support grants. The REACH India team reviewed the 40 applications, scored each organization, and based on the scores, short-listed 14 proposals from 11 NGOs, which were then sent to the Grant Selection Committee. Two of the five Committee members were from Jharkhand. *(See Annexure 2: Profiles of Grant Selection Committee members)* The Grant Selection Committee reviewed the 14 proposals – eight for Direct grants and six for Support grants -- in their individual capacities, then scored and ranked them.

**ii. Site visits:** During the time the Selection Committee members were individually evaluating the proposals, the REACH India team visited the field operations of some of the short-listed NGOs in Jharkhand. This time, the site visits had another purpose besides 'ground-truthing' and that was to discuss issues that the NGO had not addressed in its proposal but which the team believed were relevant to the execution of the project.

**iii. Grant Selection Committee meeting:** Two weeks after the proposals were sent to them, the Committee returned their rankings of the 14 proposals. This was followed by a day-long meeting where the Committee members came together to discuss the proposals and present the rationale for their rankings. As in Delhi, each member presented their rationale, following which members were asked to rank each organization as a group.

A final ranking was done in which six NGOs' project proposals – four for Direct grants and two for Support grants -- were recommended for funding contingent on their agreeing to revisions requested by the Committee.

**iv. Revised proposals and more site visits:** Based on members' comments on the proposals, letters were sent to each of the six NGO finalists asking them to submit revised proposals addressing the listed questions/concerns. NGOs were given almost two weeks to return the revised proposals. Of the six NGOs that letters were sent to, five returned revised proposals, satisfactorily addressing the issues raised by the Committee; one NGO did not send a revised proposal.

After the letters were sent, REACH India followed up with a second round of site visits to NGOs who had made it to the final list but were not visited during the first round owing to time constraints.

Based on the Selection Committee's rankings, the REACH India site visit and financial assessment, the final list of NGOs recommended for grants included four for Direct grants and one for a Support grant.

**v. USAID grant recommendations packet:** Apart from the proposals, the overview, the appraisal and the comments of the Selection Committee meeting on the proposals, REACH India also decided to include in the packet a document detailing the steps in the grant evaluation process as well as a more detailed cover note that, among other things, provided context to education initiatives for disadvantaged children in Jharkhand. The overview was also refined to incorporate cost per beneficiary.

## **C. Kolkata**

Kolkata benefited from our experiences in Delhi and Jharkhand and overall, the project rollout so far has been quite smooth; the workshops were more interactive and the proposals better written (although they lacked the diversity of approaches displayed by Delhi).

**i. REACH India team scoring:** REACH India received 46 applications from 41 NGOs; 32 proposals were for Direct Service Delivery grants and 14 were for Capacity Building Support grants. The REACH India team reviewed the applications, scored each organization, and based on the scores, short-listed 11 which were sent to the Grant Selection Committee. The Grant Selection Committee reviewed the 11 proposals – eight for Direct Service Delivery grants and three for Capacity Building Support grants -- in their individual capacities, scored and ranked them. The site visits and Grant Selection Committee meeting for Kolkata will be in October, 2004.

## 6. Communication, advocacy and networking

India's education-oriented NGO community is extremely diverse in terms of member capacities and the scope of its activities. Some are quite large and relatively well endowed. Their contribution is crucial in terms of the vulnerable children they target and in terms of the innovative models they often bring to the government education sector. Their impact has been significant, especially in community mobilization, devising new solutions in alternative schooling, and, in some cases, redefining formal school processes.

However, in many cases the micro-level initiatives have been neither properly understood nor fully appreciated for their significance. Lessons learned have not been consolidated into a coherent understanding of educational realities or shared with other NGOs. In many instances the scale of intervention has been confined to a few villages or centers.

In other cases, NGOs have displayed limited understanding of wider issues in the macro environment and been unfamiliar with the latest thinking in the educational field.

Keeping these issues in mind, REACH India will train its communications, advocacy and networking efforts on bridging these gaps and creating a more collaborative environment for sharing knowledge, building/nurturing networks of practise and engaging in successful advocacy efforts with 1.) the community to encourage attitude shifts towards schooling, especially for the girl child, and 2.) the Government to impact policy.

REACH India will also draw upon the collective expertise and experience of its Advisory Board as well as other EQUIP1 Partners to provide guidance to the project on dissemination strategies and help in identifying forums and networks through which program accomplishments can be shared with a wider audience.

REACH India has sent a dissemination strategy and planning matrix to USAID for approval. While approval for the plan is pending, the ultimate goal of REACH India's dissemination strategy is to:

- Bring stakeholders together on common platforms and create channels of communication and collaboration among them that remain long after this project has ended.
- Ensure that the information disseminated helps stakeholders in reaching decisions, making changes, or taking other specific actions designed to improve the outcomes of their programs. In short, REACH India's dissemination strategy's main aims will be to ensure that the information is usable and can improve the project's effectiveness in reaching its goals.

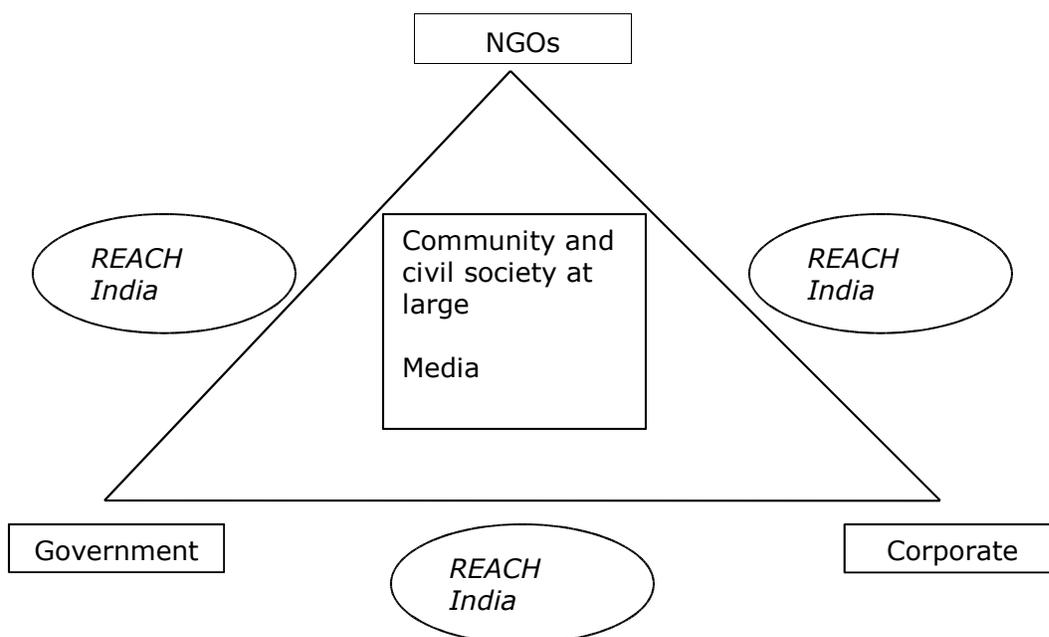
During the first year of the project, efforts in this area focussed largely on dissemination (as was anticipated) and less on networking. Activities ranged from putting together information materials, brochure, slideshow and posters, workshop materials such as Frequently Asked Questions and a Sub-grantee concept paper, resource materials such as regional NGO directories, preparing the design and content of the REACH India website, helping create opportunities for networking among NGOs as well as between NGOs and other key stakeholders such as the Government through meetings and workshops and developing REACH India's dissemination strategy and planning matrix.

Apart from networks as a tool for knowledge sharing, they can also provide a critical feedback loop between research activities and the elaboration of policy-based action planning. Network

participation is seen as critical as it provides an opportunity for organizations to come to collective understandings of the issues that need to be addressed and provides the most effective mechanism for addressing those issues, thus allowing for a collective voice of stakeholders on policy development for education for vulnerable children. REACH India will work with all stakeholders to ensure outcomes emerging from REACH India policy efforts are promoted as policy enabling statements, each with clear indication of what efforts would be necessary to move from a policy enabling statement to a policy statement accepted and adopted by government.

REACH India will primarily target NGOs partners (as well as non REACH India grantees), Government and the corporate sector in its advocacy and networking efforts. It will also, through its dissemination efforts with partner NGOs, indirectly reach other important audiences, including the community and civil society at large and the media. While the Government is key because they are responsible for education policy – and to a large extent, implementation – the rationale behind involving the corporate sector is to link them up with NGOs and thus, build public-private partnerships that will ensure long-term sustainability of NGO programs.

An understanding of how this might work can be seen through this diagram:



*(See Annexure 9: Draft Dissemination Planning Matrix)*

## 7. Tools developed

To maximize the effectiveness of REACH India's work and to systematize the processes, REACH India created the following tools.

### A. Spreadsheet for data analysis from pre-grant applications

A spreadsheet was created to log in the data from the pre-grant applications under the following heads:

- Date of registration of organization
- FCRA number/approval
- Geographical coverage
- Number and kind of beneficiaries in current programs( 3000 for urban and 1000 for rural)
- Current annual budget (Rs.20 lakh for urban and Rs.10 lakh for rural)
- Types of activities in current programs
- Years of experience in education (5 years)
- Highlights from their current projects

The information plotted on the spreadsheet was analysed and organizations that met all the basic objective criteria were screened as eligible and those that met approximately 70-80% of these criteria were categorized as small NGOs and potential sub-grantees.  
(See Annexure 10: Sample spreadsheet)

## **B. Technical Review Forms**

Two types of technical review forms were developed for reviewing the two types of grant applications - Direct Service Delivery and Capacity Building Support grant applications. The evaluation heads for both types of forms are the same:

- Case Statement – 20 points
- Project Description – 25 points
- Sustainability – 15 points
- Organization and Management Structure - 15 points
- Budget - 25 points

Each of the above sections has guidelines to help the reviewer evaluate the relevant section of the proposal and allocate points to each section. There is space for comments and questions that may be put up by the reviewer.

Both the REACH India team and the Grant Selection Committee members use the same forms to review the proposals. The final scoring by each member is done by adding up the total of the various sections.

*(See Annexure 11: Direct Service Grant Technical Review Form)*

*(See Annexure 11a: Capacity Building Grant Technical Review Form)*

## **C. Rapid Organizational Appraisal Tool**

A Rapid Organizational Appraisal tool focusing on program capacity was developed following the Jharkhand site visit and will be used for the first time during the Kolkata site visit in October 2004:

The tool covers the following sections:

- Organizational background
- Program
- Target beneficiaries
- Staff
- Teacher facilitator training
- Infrastructure
- Financial systems
- Representational
- Institutional planning processes

A separate appraisal tool was used during the Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata site visits to gather information on the NGO's administrative and financial systems.  
(See Annexure 12: Financial appraisal tool)

## **VII. Finance and Administration**

The financial and administrative work during the first year can be divided into two areas: 1). Internal work involving setting up office, systems and completing periodical financial processes 2). Providing financial inputs for launching the project and assisting NGOs in understanding REACH India financial requirements.

### **1. Systemizing REACH India accounts and administration**

#### **A. Registration with Registrar of Companies**

Pursuant to section 592 of the Companies Act, 1956, American Institutes for Research completed their registration with the Registrar of Companies (ROC) and certification was received on June 22, 2004. The American Institutes for Research's registered principal place of business in India is at 13, Palam Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi 110 057.

#### **B. REACH India budget revision**

REACH India worked with American Institutes for Research in revising and developing the REACH India budget for Year 2.

#### **C. Month-end financial procedures**

REACH India continues its procedure to close the books at the end of each month, in the Quick Books accounting system, ensuring that all income and expenses are current for the period, bank statements reconciled and petty cash reconciled. REACH India keeps both bank and petty cash income-expense spreadsheets, detailing each transaction for cross reference. The General Ledger of expenses, updated budget vs. actual spreadsheet, bank and cash reconciliation, balance sheet, profit and loss statement and cash request along with scanned copies of all back-up documentation comprise the documents e-mailed to AIR in Washington, D.C.

A monthly payroll sheet is prepared and signed by REACH India. Payroll policy schedules salary payments are made on the last working day of the month with Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) per Indian tax law. Employees sign payment vouchers to verify receipt of salary and then, receive a check along with a printed salary sheet that includes details of investments declared as well as TDS withheld. Time sheets to verify labor are collected prior to disbursement of checks. Leave accruals and leave taken are maintained in a database, and periodically distributed to staff.

#### **D. Year-end**

Following the fiscal year-end on March 31, REACH India prepared year-end salary certificates Form 16 for all project staff. Form 16-A was issued to all vendors on whom TDS was withheld.

## **2. Financial input in project rollout and implementation**

### **A. Grant application packet**

In preparation for the grant rollout process that began in the Delhi metropolitan area on April 16<sup>th</sup>, REACH India developed the budget template to be used by all NGOs who qualified for submitting grant proposals. The template was designed to assist in the overall financial management of REACH India grants. The objective of the template was to provide a flexible approach for budgeting the varied project innovations while maintaining budget uniformity and to group cost elements into standard categories; those being 1) Compensation; 2) Employee Benefits; 3) Travel; 4) Core Project Activities; 5 ) Supplies; 6) Equipment; 7) Buildings and Occupancy; 8) Professional and Consulting; and 9) Support and Other Services. Sample entries, and explanatory footnotes were included in the template to add clarity to the grant applicant.

Detailed instructions were written to instruct the grant applicant in completion of the budget template. The instructions include details on the normative cost-spread to be used as a guideline, the specific descriptions and intended use of the cost categories, and the grant budget range allowance for both Direct Service Delivery and Capacity Building grants.

Refinements to the template and instructions included adding a cost-share mechanism in the event the organization wished to design a program with costs exceeding the range allowed for the Capacity Building Grant, or the Direct Service Delivery Grant and an additional supplement for the Capacity Building grant proposals that illustrated how to break the budget down in the Core Project Activities cost category for the proposed sub-awards.

### **B. Workshop presentations**

A power-point presentation was prepared for both the introductory and the Technical Assistance workshops in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata to assist in explaining and illustrating the planning and developing of the budget for the proposed grants.

### **C. Grant budget reviews**

A budget review template was created to review the proposals for Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata and the budgets of each short-list NGO were assessed and documented. The budget review template documents the proposal's strengths, weaknesses, and lists outstanding questions for NGOs.

Corrections and amendments were requested of the short-listed grant proposals, and again reviewed after the respective NGO responded to the queries.

### **D. NGO site visits**

A financial appraisal guide questionnaire and checklist was designed for appraising the short-listed NGO's financial and administrative systems in order to determine their current capacity for managing the grant for which they applied, and to identify where additional capacity building technical assistance would be required.

Results of findings were shared with members at the Grant Selection Committee meetings of the respective region.

Summaries of strengths and areas requiring capacity building technical assistance from REACH India were documented for both the short-listed Delhi and Jharkhand NGOs whose proposals were to be forwarded on to USAID for final approval.

## **E. Grant Agreement**

REACH India financial staff wrote the draft of the Grant Agreement, and along with American Institutes for Research finalized the Agreement and Annexes and submitted it to USAID Contracts Office for final approval. Final approval was received from USAID on July 17, 2004.

The Grant Agreements for the selected Delhi grant proposals are expected to be sent during the first week of October 2004.

## **VIII. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation is central to REACH India's objectives to increase access and retention of at-risk children in schools, and is embedded in all its efforts to build stronger institutions and programs of NGOs. REACH India wants to move NGOs away from the tendency to measure achievement in terms of inputs rather than results. In order to improve in this area, institutions need to be better able to establish baseline information and assess performance in terms of objectively verifiable indicators at all levels of their activities.

In REACH India, all participating partners are tied to a common Results Framework; this process involves partner NGOs in the discussion of strategies for improving service delivery as well as NGO capacity building. All partners play a role in shaping the monitoring and evaluation system to be used in the project and in establishing indicators by which they will be evaluated over the course of the project.

An important aspect of putting in place a monitoring and evaluation system has been the incorporation of target estimates in the grant application. Grantees establishment of targets is expected to help in the training process and also provide a denominator for judging progress under the grant.

REACH India will be responsible for assisting partner NGOs to improve their ability to monitor the results of their interventions and to use the monitoring information for improving service delivery. This will be accomplished through monitoring and evaluation modules in REACH India workshops that focus three different aspects of monitoring and evaluation: preparation of monitoring and evaluation plans; development of monitoring instruments; and analysis of data. The first will deal with development of indicators related to project goals and establishing links between indicators and means of verification, as well as the preparation of a monitoring and evaluation plan. The second will focus on developing and using data collection tools that correspond to key indicators. The third will deal with techniques to reduce data to manageable formats and to integrate and interpret data in relation to expected outcomes.

Major activities during the reporting period include:

## **1. Development of a menu of indicators**

Apart from the three global indicators – access, enrolment and retention -- that are to be addressed by all grantees, REACH India is in the process of developing a menu of project-specific indicators. The indicators address various areas including:

- Capacity building
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Community awareness
- Teacher training
- Community participation
- Educational policy
- Network formation
- Sustainability
- Quality of education

## **2. Assistance in the refinement of the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)**

The PMP was developed and submitted to USAID for review. A number of issues required clarification with several further drafts being exchanged. During earlier meetings with USAID, it was suggested that qualitative indicators should be included to measure the effect of teacher training on actual pedagogy, and this component was later incorporated into the PMP that was sent to USAID.

## **3. Field visits to NGOs**

Visits were made to four NGOs in Delhi and Jharkhand to determine capabilities in data collection, management and analysis. It was found that the computer facilities and staff experience varied considerably. During each site visit, the team also initiated discussions around school quality. The idea behind the dialogue was to explore whether there were dimensions to the concept that were common to all programs. It was determined that, at least for the four NGOs visited, the rubrics of use of materials, teaching strategies, classroom environment and community participation did apply. Continued dialogue with other NGOs will help determine not only the applicability of these rubrics but will also help identify the items that may cut across programs

## **4. Develop a draft instrument to measure quality of teaching indicators**

After discussions with the project team, it was decided to adapt an observational framework developed by UNICEF/Philippines for use by REACH India NGO grantees to measure quality of teaching indicators.

## **5. Setting targets**

The REACH India team worked with a USAID data specialist to set tentative targets for the project. The team reviewed education statistics and consulted with NGOs in Delhi and Jharkhand to establish reasonable target numbers for the REACH India project. Additionally,

the team stressed that final targets would only be established once baseline data from each of the proposed projects was available.

It is expected that overall, approximately 300,000 vulnerable children will be “touched” by the project through various educational interventions including bridge programs, teacher training, remedial classes etc of which 138,000 will be mainstreamed during the project period.

## **IX. Future Steps**

During the first year, much of our work focussed on laying the foundation for implementation of the project. As we move into the second year, we will have to straddle dual responsibilities: 1.) Rolling out the project in the three remaining regions and 2.) Supporting selected partner NGOs in implementing programs.

The Technical Assistance so far has dealt mainly with proposal writing; it will now begin to focus on improved delivery of educational services including use of an organizational development approach to capacity building i.e., providing training for financial management, program management, planning, fundraising and performance monitoring. Apart from organizational development, TA will also be provided to improve educational services including training in curriculum development, creation and use of Teaching-Learning Materials and development of teaching-learning strategies.

Apart from TA, we will also work on building close collaborations with government educational agencies and broader educational schemes, helping partner NGOs try out new ideas and approaches to their work, promoting NGO networks and forums at the state, district and town level to bring elementary education issues to the forefront of development work, developing action research and policy agendas, and actively disseminating good practices through multiple channels.

### **1. Project rollout** (Arranged by geographical target region)

#### **Program**

**A. Kolkata:** The process is underway and immediate steps include:

- Visiting the REACH India short-listed NGOs in Kolkata to assess short-listed NGOs’ programmatic and financial/administrative capacities.
- Holding the Kolkata Grant Selection Committee meeting.
- Requesting revised proposals from NGOs recommended for funding based on comments from the Grant Selection Committee.

Once the revised proposals come in, REACH India will prepare the grant recommendations packet for USAID.

**B. Chhattisgarh and Mumbai:** REACH India will begin the rollout process for both these areas including making exploratory visits to 1) Understand the education scenario in the areas 2) Identify potential partner NGOs, screening pre-grant applications 3) Hold the introductory and TA workshops 4) Evaluate grant applications from eligible NGOs 5) Organize and participate in the Grant Selection Committee meeting(s) 6) Request revisions of proposals from recommended NGOs based on Selection Committee comments 7) Compile the grant recommendations packet for USAID.

## **Finance**

**A. Kolkata:** Visits will also be made to the short-listed Kolkata NGOs to assess their financial and administrative systems in preparation for the Grant Selection Committee meeting. As a follow-up to the Selection Committee meeting, REACH India will formulate questions raised in the selection process, and prepare a notebook of budget notes and corrections/clarifications to be sent to the recommended NGOs for response. Once all questions have been satisfactorily answered, financial summary notes will be prepared on the selected grant recipients which will be incorporated into the documents submitted to USAID for review and final approval.

Once approved by USAID, the same follow-on procedures will be carried out as in Delhi and Jharkhand.

**B. Chhattisgarh and Mumbai:** Apart from participating in the introductory workshop and Technical Assistance workshop for both regions, we will: 1) review the grant proposal submissions from both regions from the financial perspective, and participate in short-listing the strongest proposals to be forwarded to the Selection Committee; 2) make site visits to all the short-listed NGOs in these regions in preparation for the Selection Committee meeting(s); 3) participate in the Selection Committee meeting 4) follow up with questions, corrections, and revisions as needed; and 4) prepare the financial summary notes for submission to USAID.

The same follow-up steps of reviewing the Grant Agreement and providing technical assistance in finance and administration procedures and reporting procedures will be carried out.

## **2. Grant awards process** (Arranged by geographical target region)

### **Program**

**A. Jharkhand:** The Jharkhand grant recommendations to USAID will be prepared based on feedback from USAID regarding the Delhi proposals and the packet. It will be sent to USAID for approval in October 2004.

### **Finance**

**A. Delhi:** A meeting with the Delhi grant recipients will be held in early October 2004 for the purpose of introducing the Delhi grant recipients to one another and to begin the REACH India networking process. Following introductions and presentations by the Delhi NGOs on their REACH India projects, finance staff will conduct an in-depth review and discussion of the Grant Agreement Terms and Conditions, and applicable USAID regulations, answering all questions in this group setting.

Once the Delhi Grant Agreements are signed, REACH India will advance the first working instalment to the respective Delhi NGOs.

REACH India finance will review Delhi quarterly finance reports received at the end of January 2005.

**B. Jharkhand:** Once the Jharkhand grant proposals are reviewed and approved by USAID, a Grant Agreement Meeting will be held in Ranchi, Jharkhand, with the grant recipients following the same format as with the Delhi grant recipients. It is anticipated that this meeting will be held in early December 2004.

Once the Grant Agreements are duly signed, the same procedures of advancing funds, and holding technical assistance meetings/workshops regarding financial and administrative procedures will be conducted with the Jharkhand NGOs.

### **3. Grant management process**

**A. Performance report:** A staggered six-month schedule is being planned for the respective regions so that the bi-annual performance reports are received at different dates from different regions for review and approval.

**B. Finance report:** A staggered quarterly schedule is being planned for the respective regions, so that financial reports are received at different dates from different regions for review and approval. It would be anticipated that the first Delhi and Jharkhand quarterly financial reports will be due for submission and review prior to March 31, 2005. Going by this timeline, the second financial report will accompany the first bi-annual performance report and the fourth financial report will accompany the annual performance report.

**4. NGO needs assessment tool:** A comprehensive needs assessment tool will be designed for identifying the program and financial and administrative areas where NGOs would require capacity building. The results would form the basis for REACH India's TA interventions for partner NGOs; after identification of the areas of need, a detailed TA plan will be prepared which would then be addressed either individually at the NGO level or at the regional or the national workshops.

### **5. Technical Assistance to partner NGOs**

REACH India envisions a number of areas where partner NGOs may need assistance:

- Monitoring and evaluation including the development of a Performance Monitoring Plan, creation of data collection instruments and procedures and reduction and analysis of data
- Project planning and implementation
- Financial management
- Digital technology

#### **A. Monitoring and evaluation**

**Develop training modules in instrument development, data processing, analysis and report writing:** Training on monitoring and evaluation activities would focus on the links between the project design and the monitoring and evaluation plan. It would include identifying indicators and means of verification at the level of activities, outcomes, and project purpose, as well as determining targets and developing sample frames. In the second case, the emphasis would be on operationalizing the indicators through the development of data collection instruments and procedures. Instruments might include interview protocols, inventories, checklists or focus group moderator guides, depending on the indicator to be measured. The third area would be that of data reduction and analysis,

including coding and cross-referencing of data either manually or through the use of computer programs.

For NGOs receiving Direct Service Delivery grants, training will take place through the development of several training modules that deal with different methodological techniques and allow customisation for the needs of a particular NGO or group of NGOs. Individual training activities will have specific objectives related to the skills to be developed to collect particular sets of information in defined evaluation settings. In fulfilling the capacity building goals of the project, however, several general objectives can be defined. These are: to create flexible researchers who can apply the skills learned for specific evaluation activities to a broad range of social and economic problem areas; to produce valid and reliable data that are utilized for improving practice and policy related to increased educational opportunities for vulnerable children; and to develop commitment in local organizations to sustain systematic evaluation of program effects.

Sub-grantee NGOs will be responsible for much of the results monitoring of their own programs. They will use the database tool for monitoring the success of individual children in their programs, both in terms of reaching targets and in terms of the children's completion of the program and transition to government schools.

## **B. Project planning and implementation**

- Provide TA to grantee NGOs in the area of developing their implementation plan. Training on development of the implementation plan would focus on the links between the activities and the objectives of the project. It would also focus on the linkages between activities and the Results Framework.
- Provide Technical Assistance to the grantee NGOs in the areas identified from the needs assessment exercise.

## **C. Finance**

In December, REACH India will hold a second meeting with the appropriate Delhi NGO grant recipient staff to conduct a more in-depth review of accounting and financial reporting procedures. The first quarterly report will be due at the end of January 2005, 30 days after the end of the first quarter on 31 December, 2004.

It is anticipated that a second technical assistance meeting will be held in late December 2004, in preparation of the first quarterly report.

## **D. Digital technology**

REACH India will provide technical assistance on optimising the use of digital technology. The objectives would be:

- To help NGOs and other participating groups develop their technological skills so that they can use it to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in implementing their projects, specifically in the areas of planning, implementation, and evaluation/assessment.
- To assist NGOs develop networks through the use of technology and create online forums for knowledge sharing.

- To share and build on cases of good practices (through digital video and other techniques) that can expand the knowledge gained through partner NGO projects.

## 6. Finance and Administration

For finance, the specific tasks to be carried out include the following:

**A. Annual Tax Returns:** In October, REACH India will prepare Form 26 annual tax returns on rent, contractors, consultancy fees, and commission on brokerage, and file with the GOI Income Tax Office.

**B. Annual Audit:** REACH India anticipates having an independent audit by an outside Indian audit agency to comply with Registrar of Companies regulations.

REACH India will be monitoring selected NGOs financial and administrative progress, and reports, and reporting financial progress and data to American Institutes for Research.

**7. Monitoring and evaluation:** For the monitoring and evaluation component, there are specific tasks that should be carried out. Among these are the following:

- Establish a confidentiality policy for the data acquired through the project.
- Develop the tracking system for reporting enrolment, retention and school quality.
- Develop an index of school quality.
- Hire additional personnel for the monitoring and evaluation component to meet the needs of expanding into four new areas.

**8. Dissemination, advocacy and networking:** Activities in this area include:

**A. Launch REACH India website:** The website is intended to serve three broad purposes:

- An information resource on elementary education for vulnerable children.
- A knowledge sharing platform that showcases success stories, articles, experiences and innovations in elementary education.
- A networking platform that helps NGOs connect with each other through online forums.

**B. Refine dissemination plan:** Information gathered from the comprehensive needs assessment will be used to refine the dissemination planning matrix. REACH India will also work with NGOs to develop their own dissemination plan that will reflect their own needs and maximize their current capabilities.

**C. Create and distribute newsletters:** Solicit theme-specific contributions from partner NGOs that feeds into their knowledge gap requirements and begin the process of designing, developing and publishing quarterly newsletters.

**D. Editorial guide:** Create and disseminate to partner NGOs an editorial guide that details good practices in communication.

**E. Networks:** Begin the process of establishing new or reactivate dormant networks among NGOs at the regional level to help build links between the government, NGO and

corporate sectors and facilitate the building of a unified vision among the various stakeholders.

**9. Develop an action research agenda:** Begin building a rationale and illustrative activities for a REACH India action research agenda (operations research).

**10. Grant Selection Committee:** For each of the remaining regions, two to three members having an understanding of the local context will be recruited. These members will be expected to have the same attributes as the other members on the Grant Selection Committee.

**11. Advisory Board:** A meeting to formally welcome the Advisory Board members to REACH India and introduce them to its goals and objectives will be held in the first quarter of the second year. Before this meeting, REACH India hopes to secure approval of a corporate representative on the Board. USAID is also expected to invite and confirm participation of a member from the Department of Elementary Education, Ministry Of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

## **X. Lessons Learned**

REACH India frequently assesses the need for revisions and changes in approach based on outcomes including proposals submitted by the NGOs, questions by NGOs and sometimes simply due to the evolution of the project. As a result of these assessments the following changes were made.

**1. Site visits before the Grant Selection Committee meeting:** Based on the learnings from Delhi (where site visits were done after the Grant Selection Committee meeting), REACH India realized that site visits to short-listed NGOs needed to happen before the Committee meetings so that REACH India staffers could provide their observations about the NGO's program on the ground.

The site visits had a dual purpose: 1) To do some 'ground-truthing' of the NGO's activities 2) To discuss issues that the NGO had not addressed in its proposal but which the team believed were relevant to the execution of the project.

**2. Modifying the grant application template:** Several refinements to the proposal template were made including:

A. Asking applicants for greater level of detail in terms of:

- i. Project information: Including details about beneficiaries, past funding for the project (if it was already in existence) and educational philosophy of the applying organization.
- ii. Attachments: Including their most recent budget, latest FC-3, latest Income Tax return and bios of key project personnel.

B. Revisions and additions were also made to the Budget Template and Instructions. Prior to the Kolkata rollout, a second budget template was designed and included in the grant application packet to accommodate a cost-share mechanism in the event the organization wished to design a program with costs exceeding the range allowed for the Capacity

Building Grant, or the Direct Service Delivery Grant. Instructions were written to accompany the cost-share template design.

In reviewing Delhi and Jharkhand proposals, the Activity section of the grant applicant's narrative proposals was found to be lacking in detail, making it difficult to evaluate the budget entries as they related to the proposed activities. A narrative outline of a sample project activity was added to the budget template instructions, and footnotes accompanying the sample entries were coded to match the activity outline to give the grant applicant a clearer example for explaining and budgeting their proposed activities.

Due to questions from potential grant applicants at the Kolkata Technical Assistance workshop, an additional supplement was created for the Capacity Building Support grant proposals that showed how to break down the budget in the Core Project Activities cost category for the proposed sub-grants. Instructions and budget entries were subsequently e-mailed to the Kolkata organizations immediately following the workshop. These revisions will be incorporated into the grant application packet prior to the rollouts in the remaining regions.

**3. Development of the Rapid Assessment Tool:** In order to maximize the effectiveness of the site visits, it was decided to develop a tool that would provide the required information both from the program perspective and from the finance/administration perspective. The two tools (one for program; one for finance/administration) were developed in-house; the finance tool was used for the site visits to Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata while the program one was used for the first time in Kolkata.

This tool was further refined following the Kolkata site visit keeping in mind the kinds of information required from NGOs that would help in REACH India's understanding and evaluation of their projects.

**4. USAID Grant Recommendations Packet:** Based on feedback from USAID and REACH India's own learnings, it was decided to refine the contents of the grant recommendations packet to USAID and make it more comprehensive and holistic. As a result, a document detailing the steps in the grant evaluation and selection process was provided. Refinements were made to the cover letter so that it provided more context on the target region's education scenario as well as to the Overview to incorporate unit cost per beneficiary per project.

The packet now consists of the following:

- Cover note.
- Grant evaluation and selection process document.
- Overview of the proposals.
- Revised proposals.
- Appraisal of NGOs program and finance/administration based on site visits.
- Minutes of Grant Selection Committee meeting.

**5. Increasing the duration of the TA workshop:** Based on feedback from participants at the Delhi and Jharkhand TA workshops, it was decided to extend the duration from one day to one and half days. This was done to implement the learnings from the previous two TA workshops that indicated participants might benefit from longer and more detailed sessions with greater emphasis on interactive activities.

**6. Technical Review Form:** The forms that had been developed prior to the Delhi grant evaluation process were modified after receiving feedback from the Grant Selection Committee members. Two substantial changes were made:

- **Scoring by section rather than by question:** While the earlier forms had scores for specific questions under each section, members pointed out that since each question did not carry equal weightage, the entire section should be scored as a whole rather than each and every question.
- **Budget to be reviewed only by REACH India:** During the Delhi evaluation process, Grant Selection Committee members reviewed and scored the budget section of each proposal. However, they requested that while they had done it for Delhi, they be excused from future rounds as they did not feel this was their area of expertise.

**7. Monitoring and evaluation:** After having been established for a year, there are lessons that can be identified as important for the project. These are listed below:

- **Global indicators:** While there is a commitment to tie the project to a common Results Framework, the Framework was still under development. This complicated efforts to develop a PMP for the project that conformed with such a Framework.
- **Use of a participatory approach:** In developing objectives, protocols and data processing strategies, it is essential that we involve partner NGOs so that they can contribute professional insights on how to approach monitoring and evaluation of programs.
- **Rural/Urban differences in competency:** There is a wide disparity in computer accessibility and skills between urban and rural NGO staff. While those working in urban areas are computer literate and have many of the tools usually associated with a modern office, those in the rural areas are not so lucky. They tend to be less familiar with computers and less likely to have access to updated computers and/or software. This will have implications for how the monitoring and evaluation team designs the technical assistance efforts. There will be a need to allocate more time and assistance to those NGOs in the rural areas. This also implies that there may be more resources used for travel, telephone and fax communications.