

**Reaching and Educating At Risk Children in India  
REACH India**

**Report of the mid-term review**

**July 2006**

**Neelam Singh**

**Sheshagiri K M**

**For  
Creative Associates International Inc  
&  
USAID**

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Finally, the willing participation of teachers, parents, children and community members enriched our interactions. Their questions, achievements, hopes, anxieties, fears and frustrations added the much needed insights needed for this review. To all of them, we would like to express our gratitude.

We sincerely hope that this document will add to the rich discourse that exists in REACH India on education, and strengthen its endeavors to provide a meaningful education to every child.

**Neelam Singh and Sheshagiri K.M**

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Background

REACH India, a four-year project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), was initiated in September 2003 towards improving access of vulnerable children to quality basic education and complementing the Government of India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA, 'Education for All' campaign). The goal is to reach out to about 200,000 children through 109 NGOs by sustaining capacities and supporting qualitative improvements in the process of reaching these beneficiaries. REACH was designed to provide educational opportunities to 'at-risk' children in six geographical areas by supporting NGOs through grants and technical assistance. These geographical areas, viz. Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kolkata, Mumbai and North Karnataka are a mix of rural and urban, which differ in terms of socio-economic and cultural characteristics.

Strengthening NGO capacity to scale up delivery of educational services to out of school children and improve quality of education in schools, promotion of best practices within the NGO and government sector, encouraging stronger relationships between NGOs and government, and promotion of resource networks among NGOs to address issues of UEE are the key features of REACH. This mid term review is envisaged to allow reflection on the progress, achievements and gaps of the programme and to consider any strategies, actions and linkages that could help sustain its interventions beyond the project. The review process involved consultations with USAID, REACH and selected Grantees, desk study of literature, and field visits in Delhi, Kolkata, North Karnataka and Jharkhand.

## 2. Strengthening strong performing NGOs to scale up their delivery of educational services to out-of-school children in urban and rural areas

The time available for actual interventions on the ground in different regions has been short, given that almost a year was spent in setting up the organization, systems and procedures and thereafter in identifying the grantees. In any assessment of REACH programme as a whole, the very short and inadequate time frame of the interventions for any purposive and sustained education programming to take place on the ground needs to be taken into account. There has been a tendency in the programming to pay more attention to the quantitative aspects (i.e. the numbers) of bringing children back into school. A more holistic and comprehensive analysis on mainstreaming and retaining children in the formal system is thus needed for lasting impact. REACH and its Partners may well undertake this analysis.

By the end of March 2006, a total of 49,046 children had been enrolled by grantee NGOs in various education interventions. It must be noted that the revised figures for children to be mainstreamed into formal schooling now stands reduced at 88,000. Due to the phased manner in which the intervention has expanded to different regions of the country, REACH has had to continually revise its estimate of out of school children to be mainstreamed, based on field level analyses. Further, government interventions for out of school children through bridge courses etc also operate in areas where REACH works; therefore absorption of children in these programs cannot be ruled out; this impacts the REACH targets by reducing the number of out of school children to be mainstreamed.

REACH India interventions encompass a wide range focusing on vulnerable children including girls, children with developmental disabilities and those from marginalized families. Approaches include bridge courses, coaching classes, Early Childhood Education (ECE), Special Education for children with developmental disabilities and a variety of pedagogical interventions. Albeit a number of interesting approaches are being implemented by the grantees, the inability to consolidate the experiences through empirical research, documentation and dissemination of learning could be seen as a weakness of REACH India at this stage.

### **3 Working with Parents and Local Communities**

While most partners have attempted to create greater awareness among parents on the need for children to be educated, this activity at present seems to be limited to the identification of out of school children and their mainstreaming in government schools. Further, a sense of despair and helplessness prevails among parents in both rural and urban areas about the functioning of government schools. REACH interventions may well focus on building the understanding and capacity of parents and local communities to negotiate better with the schools and educational system at large. In this connection, strengthening PTAs, School Development Committees and working with Panchayats are areas that need attention.

### **4 Working with the Government Schooling System**

Working towards the realization of UEE goals entails the development of strong linkages with the government system at different levels from the school, to the state level. REACH grantees have attempted to establish linkages with government during the course of their work. Admittedly, this is a difficult task, given the inertia within the system. Furthermore, the government-NGO relationship is seen with a degree of distrust by increasingly politicized bureaucracy and interest groups.

Barring the work of a few NGOs, from whom much can be learnt, most grantees have not yet moved towards working more directly with the government schools to improve their overall functioning and quality. A related point is about the development of internal capacities of REACH Partners to engage effectively the government system at all levels. This is integral to any capacity building efforts for the NGOs. A critical observation that must be made is that unless the quality of the government school system improves considerably in the near future, the gains made by the REACH intervention are likely to be lost, as many children may find it difficult to cope with the transition. Eventually, they will drop out.

Another question that crops up is this: Are formal schools the only answer? What about open systems of learning, like the National Open School, for instance? There is also the need to 'vocalize' learning inputs to enable adolescents develop employable skills in local markets. These aspects need systematic investigation in the remaining period.

### **5 Building the capacity of smaller, less mature NGOs**

NGO selection in REACH has been through a rigorous process that has taken much of the initial one and a half years of the intervention. A unique feature has been the selection of NGOs, large and small, working in rural and urban settings. Some NGOs are known in the education sector, while others look at education as a key component of their overall development interventions. REACH India has sought to engage with the larger, more

established NGOs as Partners in capacity building of small NGOs (the sub-grantees). For the smaller NGOs, the REACH program offers perhaps the first opportunity to systematically work on children's education. They have been supported by REACH through inputs for staff and teachers on organizational development, quality education (like the 'Learning Classroom Series' for example) and financial administration. Partners value these inputs highly. These efforts need to be consolidated. They are likely to bear fruit and result in lasting impact only if the grantees choose to continue to build upon this strong foundation.

To augment these efforts, an advisory board consisting of civil servants, academicians and experts was involved with REACH right from the selection stage itself. This board was expected to steer the program towards a wider vision, and also liaison with the government. However, the board seems to have become inactive after the selection process, as it is likely that administrative aspects dominated the REACH program.

## **6 Developing a shared notion of Quality Education**

There is a wide variety of understanding and interpretations of quality in REACH. Articulations are also uneven in their depth. The over riding considerations of quality seem to be the achievement of basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, along with the achievement of the quantitative target of mainstreaming a certain (committed) number of children in school. The understanding of quality therefore lacks a deeper conceptual and philosophical basis. It may help to revisit/rethink this issue and arrive at a broader, deeper notion of quality that drives the endeavor of educating vulnerable children. In this connection, the initiative of the Learning Classroom Series (LCS), facilitated by REACH through the services of an external consultant, along with the Quality of Education Tool (QEAT) developed by REACH, holds promise as regards the development of a collective understanding on quality over time. The challenge is to systematically explore the possibilities of sharing these ideas and approaches to enhance quality within the government schools.

## **7 Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation**

REACH has developed elaborate tools and systems to record the progress of their interventions on the ground. Many of these approaches are still works in progress. These include individual tracking and profiling systems for children, and regular monitoring of classroom processes through quality checklists. For finance, REACH has provided inputs on basic accounting and audit procedures for each grantee and sub grantee. However, key monitoring documents such as Performance Monitoring Plans (PMPs) do not have process indicators – they are based on quantitative targets. Indicators other than numbers of children to be mainstreamed would have helped the grantees to focus on the actual processes that are needed to root their interventions more strongly.

## **8 Promoting the adoption of best practices within the NGO and state/district education communities**

The focus so far has been on implementation of activities, given the tight deadlines and targets for children to be mainstreamed. Much less time has been spent on learning from the experiences and achievements of each other. While there is some scope for REACH in

creating learning and sharing platforms to help pooling of complementary skills and expertise, given the differences among many of the grantees (based on ideological, political and personal equations), a uniform strategy may not be appropriate.

The same can be said about the potential replication in the government system of approaches adopted by REACH partners. Model building takes time. Sharing, learning and wider dissemination must also be undertaken deliberately for it to have any wider influence and impact. REACH and its Partners may well create space in the remaining duration of the intervention for this to happen.

Given the enormous challenges that mainstreaming vulnerable children involve, documentation and research in the REACH India programme has been weak. The resources earmarked for research on issues of relevance have been reprogrammed to accommodate the budget cuts. There is still the possibility that a concerted attempt to pull together the rich and wide variety of experiences, backed with evidence and demonstration, would enable respective NGOs to showcase their work for advocacy and fund raising. Among the many possible areas for research and documentation, the issue of transition, retention and learning in children must be highlighted. REACH and its Partners could demonstrate how, through their interventions these challenges have been addressed effectively.

## **9 Networking**

A critical component of the REACH India programme has been the realization that networking is crucial. REACH India made concerted efforts to bring the grantees together from selection stage onwards. However, despite these efforts, REACH has not been able to pool together their strengths, the knowledge base and experience despite encouraging and facilitating interactions among them. Informal coming together for sharing experiences has happened in some places. This should not be seen as a reflection on REACH India but on the notion of networking. Working together entails similar perspectives on critical issues and ways and means of addressing them, and this is not happening in REACH India.

Although not stated in the discussions, one does sense personality and ego clashes that are compounded by conflicting interests of member organizations who vie for funds for similar work from the same donors. On the whole, while it may not be possible to bring all Partners together as part of a coherent network, REACH and its grantees may well explore common issues and themes around which they can come together in the remaining period of the intervention.

## **10 Sustaining the Process**

Sustainability may be seen in at least three complementary ways. In the remaining period, REACH and its Partners may focus their attention on these aspects in a systematic manner and explore ways of ensuring continuity of efforts. The first is to sustain the interventions of capacity building of grantees – it has been noted already that REACH has undertaken efforts to create strong, vibrant organizations which can effectively address the agenda of UEE for vulnerable children. These processes must be consolidated. Secondly, to ensure that the ideas generated during the REACH intervention must find their way into the larger government system. For this, it has already been noted that a deliberate strategy needs to be out in place. Only when innovative ideas and approaches enter the government system is there hope of change on a wider, larger scale. Thirdly, we have mentioned the need for a



more rigorous approach to working with community based institutions like PTAs, School Development Committees and Panchayats. The agenda of local education governance is a key area that needs urgent attention. These three complementary aspects must be focused upon in the coming 18-20 months of REACH India. If this happens, it is likely that a strong foundation can be laid for future work and for sustaining children's learning.

## 1. Introduction – background, purpose and methodology

REACH India, a four-year project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), was initiated in September 2003 towards improving access of vulnerable children to quality basic education and complementing the Government of India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All campaign). It is slated to end in September 2007, about a year from now. A 'no cost' extension has been requested by REACH for a period of six months starting October 2007.

The project was designed to provide educational opportunities to 'at-risk'<sup>1</sup> children in six geographical areas by supporting NGOs through grants and technical assistance. These geographical areas, viz. Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kolkata, Mumbai and North Karnataka are a mix of rural and urban, which differ in terms of socio-economic and cultural characteristics.

The interventions seek to address the basic education needs of at-risk children, especially girls, up to 14 years of age, who are either out of school or are in school but in danger of dropping out.

This is primarily done by strengthening NGO capacity to scale up delivery of educational services to out-of-school children and improve the quality of education in schools. The other purposes promoted by the projects include:

- Promoting the adoption of best practices within the NGO and educational communities.
- Encouraging stronger and more complementary relationships between NGOs and government in promoting UEE objectives
- Encouraging strengthened supportive and resource networks among NGOs to address issues pertaining to achievement of UEE

The project aimed at reaching out to about 200,000 children through 109 NGOs by sustaining capacities and supporting qualitative improvements in the process of reaching these beneficiaries.

With a year to go before the end of REACH India, a mid-term review was envisaged to allow reflection on the progress, achievements and gaps of the programme and to consider any strategies, actions and linkages that could help sustain its interventions beyond the project.

Project grantees, individually and collectively, as well as project staff, in consultation with grantees, and its Advisory Board is considering how, in the remaining period, the greatest benefits can be achieved and possibilities of continuance strengthened. The mid term review is expected to help sharpen these ideas and directions.

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<sup>1</sup> We quote from the Program description document of REACH India: 'Most vulnerable children in India live in rural areas and urban slums, which by and large are bypassed by government programs and services. They comprise children from squatter colonies, children with HIV-AIDS, children from poor families, street children, working children and the children of sex workers.'

The review methodology included desk study of relevant literature, discussion with REACH and USAID staff, and field visits to selected regions and partners. Different types of grantees (direct and capacity building grantees and sub-grantees) were visited in Delhi, Kolkata, Jharkhand and North Karnataka. The grantees were selected for interactions with the review team keeping the following criteria in mind – volume of funds, type of grantee (direct or capacity building), rural/urban location and population, duration of intervention in REACH program, and focus areas/strategies followed. The visits included discussions and interviews with partner staff, teachers, children, parents and community representatives, as well as government officials from the education department, besides field visits to the actual sites/centers of learning. A questionnaire was circulated to all partners (even those not visited by the review team) to elicit their responses. (Refer Annex 3 for the study/review framework and tools.)

## 2. Progress against stated objectives

The progress has to be viewed in the context of the late start of the REACH programme in the different regions. Although REACH officially began in September 2003, almost a year was spent in setting up the organization, systems and procedures and thereafter in identifying the grantees. The selection process for sub-grantees of the capacity building grantees took even longer (see box below).

<b>Region</b>	<b>Start up month</b>	<b>Project duration</b>
Chhattisgarh	June 2005	2 years 2 months
Delhi	October/November 2004	2 years 10 months
Jharkhand	December 2004	2 years 8 months
Kolkata	January 2005	2 years 7 months
Mumbai	September 2005	1 year 11 months
North Karnataka	November 2005	1 year 8 months

It needs to be noted that the time available to interventions by sub-grantees is even shorter. For example, the programme has been operating in Karnataka for just about six months in the case of direct grantees but for the sub grantees, ground level interventions will begin with the new academic year, i.e., July 2006. The interventions of sub grantees of Akshara and SVYM are barely a few months old – as recent as March/April 2006. As this report is being written, the baseline exercises are still underway with these sub grantees. Therefore, in any assessment of REACH programme as a whole, the very short and inadequate time frame of the interventions for any purposive and sustained education programming to take place on the ground needs to be taken into account. As a result, there has been a tendency in the operational aspects of the program to pay more attention to the quantitative aspects (i.e. the numbers) of bringing children back into school; this tends to push into the background other socioeconomic factors that may be responsible for preventing children from participating in schooling.

The following sections attempt to outline the progress against objectives in terms of reaching out to Out of School Children, building capacities of NGOs to do likewise, and promoting the adoption of best practices within NGO programs as well as the government education system.

## **Strengthening strong performing NGOs to scale up their delivery of educational services to out-of-school children in urban and rural areas**

### **(i) Reaching the Unreached**

#### **(a) Delivery of educational services to children at risk**

The REACH India programme initially aimed at reaching out and educating about 400,000 children at risk. The figure was revised later to 300,000 and further to 200,000, which is the stated objective for the end of the programme in August 2007 (now March 2008 with the proposed no cost extension). The following is the break-down of the 200,000 children who have been targeted by the programme, as per the monitoring and evaluation data provided by REACH India:

105,000	Mainstreamed into formal schools through bridge courses and Balwadis
40,500	Directly enrolled into formal schools
55,000	Already enrolled in schools but supported through indirect means (e.g. remedial support, teachers' training, provision of additional teachers in single teacher government schools, etc.)
<b>200,500</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

These children were to be reached out through more than 100 NGOs. As of now, about 82 NGOs are implementing the programme. These include: 22 direct grantees, 11 capacity building grantees and 49 sub-grantees. About 27 sub-grantees are yet to begin implementation (as mentioned earlier, the 22 sub-grantees in Northern Karnataka are still engaged in baseline surveys).

The NGOs have so far prepared the ground and are showing encouraging progress against targets. The following observations provide an overview:

- By the end of March 2006, a total of 49,046 children had been enrolled by grantee NGOs in various education interventions. The Jharkhand region accounted for nearly half (46.8%) of the students.
- About 67.7% of the above children are enrolled in bridge courses. Direct enrolments in formal schooling systems account for 10% of enrolments. The Balwadis (preschools) as well as remedial classes have enrolled 9.9% children each.
- About 50.8% of those enrolled were continuing in bridge courses and only 12.7% had dropped out.
- Only 5% of 49,046 who were enrolled into an NGO intervention could be mainstreamed. The remaining children have not yet completed the bridge course and will be mainstreamed in the current school year.
- A slight majority (51.2%) of the enrolled students were girls, reflecting the general pattern of the programme. Nearly 80% of the students were identified as belonging to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, other backward classes or a minority group.

- A slight majority of children (53.1%) of children served by REACH interventions were from urban areas. Bridge and balwadi programmes tended to serve a majority of rural students while direct enrolment, remediation, and Alternative Education Services (AES) tended to serve students in urban areas.

According to latest estimates by REACH, 88,000 children are expected to be mainstreamed in formal schools by the end of the project period. As against the above figure of 1,45,500 children, this represents a *further* reduction. These estimates are based on project proposals and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plans of each Partner. The main reason attributed by REACH for a further reduction in the number of children to be mainstreamed is the following – as the REACH intervention started in different regions, the estimates of children to be mainstreamed in project proposals that were approved by REACH, were at variance from REACH's own initial estimates of 4,00,000, 3,00,000, and subsequently, 2,00,000 children. It must be noted that grantees' proposals were based on actual assessments of field needs. Invariably, baseline surveys were conducted by all Partners to arrive at their estimates.

Further, it must be noted that REACH grantees work in a dynamically changing environment, where government interventions also operate. Observations on the ground suggest that many children are continually getting enrolled/absorbed in bridge courses and EGS centers of the government. This possibility cannot be ignored, and may explain the reduction in numbers of the children to be mainstreamed by REACH interventions.

The grantees are confident that their targets in terms of number of children to be mainstreamed will be met by the end of the project period. However, for many of them including the Karnataka partners, whose programmes commenced only six months ago (the sub grantees in Karnataka are still engaged in the baseline exercises), this is going to be a tall order.

There are enormous challenges to be met as far as the targets are concerned. These challenges range from children potentially dropping out of bridge centers (for instance, as of April 2006, up to 35% dropping out of bridge centers as reported by the capacity building grantee Deepalaya in Delhi), and government schools, even after mainstreaming. Mainstreaming seems to be more understood as the activity of getting children to enter the formal schooling system of the government. In reality, this is at best a limited step, and has to be accompanied by adequate support structures that enable the child to cope with the new (and often hostile) environment of the school. Unless these structures and activities are functioning effectively, the gains in terms of numbers are likely to be lost.

In the remaining period, REACH Partners have to critically assess if adequate support mechanisms have been provided to enable retention and meaningful learning. There is thus a need to review and address this aspect of drop-outs. Quick, accurate assessments of the status of children in transition (For example: Do children *like* being in government schools? How are they coping? What factors encourage or hinder mainstreaming and retention?) need to be undertaken to put in place supportive mechanisms for children who are mainstreamed, and for those who are still struggling to even access programmes like the bridge centres. This type of analysis could add great value to the program.

In connection with mainstreaming it must be stated that approaches towards institutionalizing learning through open school systems like the NIOS, need to be explored more systematically in the remaining duration of the project. The formal schooling system may not always be the best route to children who are older, and who also may need other inputs like vocational education, for instance. A concern was expressed in Delhi regarding the validity of certification through the NIOS. Such constraints could be addressed through concerted discussions with concerned government education departments. Another related question must be posed: whether *all* children from the bridge centers will be mainstreamed in the true sense of the term. What about those who still remain? What about the costs of mainstreaming them beyond the project period? Where is this going to come from? These aspects need to be addressed more comprehensively in the remaining period.

**(b) Range of Interventions; focus on special groups**

Children ‘at risk’ are being supported through bridge courses (both residential and non-residential) and remedial teaching/coaching and by provision of support to formal schools. Some of the grantees are also attempting to work with the formal (mostly government) schools.

Indeed, one observes an impressive array of interventions in the REACH India programme:

- Bridge courses enable children to quickly move into the mainstream through enrolment into formal schools. Residential bridge courses for girls have a definite appeal. This fact has been observed where intensive learning has been provided through residential programmes (e.g. Balika Shivirs in Rajasthan). This is evident in the case of REACH India grantee BVA. In the past, finding girls for admissions to the bridge courses was extremely difficult and a lot of field work was required. But now there is a rush for admissions. Non-residential Bridge Courses are more widely prevalent in REACH, with most Partners using these as a means to get children mainstreamed in the formal school system.
- Interventions like the Bridge Courses are further supplemented by coaching programs. These are often referred to as activities of ‘remediation’. Partners point out that children who have been mainstreamed in school, and those who are already in school, but are having difficulties in learning, need this support, if they are to remain in school and learn. However, remediation or coaching programs are not the norm; most Partners have not instituted them in their practice.
- It is well known that ECE prepares children for primary education. Although most REACH grantees are engaged with primary education, there are exceptions like CWD and SARD, which have ECE interventions as well as part of their design. This element could have been more deliberately added as part of the overall design of the REACH program.
- Focus on identifying and addressing learning disabilities -- Manovikas Kendra, Ummeed, Digdarshika and AADI are among the few Partners that have an exclusive focus on differently ‘abled’ children
- A range of innovative (pedagogical) interventions, often working directly with the government schools, include science education (Agastya Foundation), Teaching-Learning materials (Avehi-Abacus), Accelerated Reading and Learning

Programs (AR/LP of Akshara), Curriculum strengthening (Vikramshila), 'Whole School' approaches (CEMD, TTF), professional development of teachers and education administrators (CEMD) etc are in place.

The wide range of approaches in the REACH intervention as described above attempt to reach out to different groups of vulnerable children, especially girls, children from tribal communities, differently 'abled' children, and so on.

In terms of numbers, the number of girls targeted in REACH is slightly more than boys, as is evident from the information available. Partners seem to be placing an equal emphasis on the education of boys and girls; however, interventions still seem to be dictated by the perceived imperative of girls becoming mothers and what would they require from education during this transition. There seems to be the need for reflection on teaching and learning, which will enable girls to explore their personhood, and sometimes stretching the boundaries of who they are and could become.

The challenges of mainstreaming children in tribal areas, like those of Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand, are enormous. Both these states comprise of significant proportion of tribal population in the country. The tribal population is socially and economically marginalized. Low levels of illiteracy and rampant poverty contribute to lowering schooling for children in the list of priorities for tribal communities/families. Most tribal children in the areas where Jharkhand grantees work are first generation learners. Furthermore, the field level activities of Jharkhand grantees suffer particularly from the increasing concern about the spread of Maoist influence across the state.

Though special education for children with developmental disabilities is not an exclusive focus area, REACH Partners like AADI are pioneers in this area. Other grantees who are doing notable work include Mano Vikas Kendra, Ummeed and Digdarshika. Their experiences need proper documentation.

Albeit a number of interesting approaches are being implemented by the grantees, the inability to consolidate the experiences through empirical research and dissemination of learning could be seen as a weakness of REACH India at this stage.

Following are some snapshots from the field visits:

- While children in a learning centre run by a NBJK sub-grantee in Giridih could hardly read as per their level, children in another centre fared quite well. The visible differences between the two centres were the level of enthusiasm and preparedness among the teachers. Also, there were two teachers and more children in the latter. There was not much difference in the attitude and response of the parents who were satisfied as long as the teacher attended the school regularly – a complaint they had against the government schools.
- Meeting with the teachers running the learning centres of the same NGO revealed that they themselves were not thorough in their understanding of basic concepts. For them, the job as the teacher in the NGO learning centres was ill-paid (they were being paid Rs.1000/-, less than the minimum wages) and essentially supplemented their income from other sources (e.g. agriculture).

While it would be wrong to doubt their commitment, one came to understand that people did not mind a low-paid job as it added to their social status in the local milieu.

- Children who have been taken through Akshara's ARP in Raichur district (through Prerna, the local NGO) seem to have picked up the skills of reading story texts; the program has made them enthusiastic about reading and wanting to learn more. However, there are many children in the same group who can read by decoding the symbols, but are unable to explain the meaning of the text completely. This seems to be the next challenge for the program, which plans to make school libraries an integral part of children's learning.
- Agastya's science demonstrations in schools and local communities provoke children teachers and community members alike to think about common natural phenomena which occur in daily life. A key question, however, is: how will these approaches be instituted in schools? Will mere demonstrations and some teacher training work?
- SARD in Delhi has negotiated with the MCD schools to allot space for its resource centers within each school where it works. These resource centers act as spaces where children who have difficulties with learning, are further supported. The resource centers also act as spaces for teacher enrichment within the school.

It was not possible to get a good sense of what children are learning because the mid-term review took place when the learning centres and schools were closed for vacations. Monitoring systems of REACH, like the Student Tracking Tool (STT), do not capture the element of scholastic achievement in children. Some attempts were made to meet with children and it appears that their performances are mixed. The grantees have developed their own measures of what children learn in the core subjects. Usually, marks or grades are provided to regularly monitor the achievement of subject related competencies.

## **(ii) Working with parents and communities**

While most partners have attempted to create greater awareness among parents on the need for children to be educated, this activity at present seems to be limited to the identification of out of school children and their mainstreaming in government schools. In a number of interactions with parents and community members, the review team observed a general sense of helplessness and despair as regards the relationships between the formal schools and parents is concerned. A widespread belief is that the school will 'never change' and 'we cannot do anything about it'. Parents are nevertheless seen to be sending their children to government schools, as they do not have the capacity to meet the costs of private schooling in many cases. However, there seems to be an increasing trend towards sending children to private schools, both in rural and urban areas. This is likely to further undermine the functioning of government schools, unless their quality improves perceptibly. Indeed, this represents a key challenge for interventions like REACH.

In the rural Jharkhand, for instance, the children are first generation learners. School as an organized structure for learning and education of children is an alien concept, and hence, there is little or no conception of the quality of school or of formal education, in general. As long as the teacher turns up at the centre, they seem satisfied. The government school teachers are generally seen as lax and are accused of absenteeism. There is a valid concern



but it raises doubts about their ability to collectively monitor the quality of schooling at the local level (e.g. what teachers are teaching and what children are learning). Interactions with teachers at the learning centres did suggest that they lacked proficiency both in terms of instruction and content. This is critical because after a certain point, parents (and children too) look for returns to schooling (e.g. job opportunities, visible improvement in quality of life, and so on) and are disappointed if this is not seen to be happening. This results in high rate of drop-outs, and a critical mass of children educated up to a certain level remains a distant goal.

REACH interventions need to be more strategic in their approach to community mobilization around children's education. This must be linked to the development of the 'bargaining power' of communities to make schools perform better. Admittedly, this takes time. Nonetheless, parents and local communities need to be supported in building of their capacities and confidence to negotiate with the government school system, to pressurise it into becoming more accessible and improving its performance. After all, it is this system that is expected to cater to the learning needs of most children who have been mainstreamed. There are some promising examples in REACH which will need building upon:

- SVYM, in North Karnataka, has chosen to work with the School Development and Management Committees (SDMC) in an effort to federate them at the block level; there are plans to work closely with the Panchayati Raj institutions as well. SVYM realises that Panchayat resources need to be tapped into to encourage community level interventions for at risk children. This is part of pushing the agenda of decentralised education governance.
- Similarly, Prayas is trying to create vigilance committees in the community, and small working groups among local NGOs to regularly monitor children in schools, towards ensuring retention and learning of children in schools.

Thus, more efforts are required fairly quickly at the grassroots level in order to promote proactive engagement of the community in sustaining the interventions and claiming the resources that are rightfully their own.

### **(iii) Working with the government schooling system**

A laudable feature of REACH India has been the imperative of linking the interventions with SSA by supporting and working with the government agencies. In Jharkhand, for example, BVA along with CINI Asha, UNICEF and SSA is developing the curriculum for bridge courses. However, the process of mainstreaming children in the formal (mostly government) schooling system cannot be viewed in isolation, and only with respect to enrolling out of school children. School enrollment campaigns under DPEP/SSA have raised awareness among parents about schooling and put the spotlight on the school. Arguably they want to educate their children. But the issue is the functioning of schools, and of the quality of teacher and learning. This needs urgent attention.

We have already mentioned that, among both rural and urban communities, there is a perceptible sense of despair about the government school system. Despite impressive quantitative expansion in schooling facilities over the years, due to interventions like the OBB, DPEP and now the SSA, a feeling persists on the ground that it does not function,

with its poor infrastructure and absent teachers. Concerns remain about the quality of teaching and learning, and ill-equipped, ill-resourced and distant schools. If these conditions do not change sufficiently, all efforts at mainstreaming will be rendered ineffective and counterproductive for children's self esteem and ability for continued learning. While the data collected by the NGOs does give an indication of children joining the formal education system, it is not clear if they are attending schools regularly. It is still early to say whether these children would stay on in the formal education system. A systematic mapping may be required to ascertain this.

Stronger networks and linkages with government departments and schools are critical to ensure that children stay on and learn. By and large, there is a need for the grantees to cover much ground in this regard. Barring the work of a few, most grantees have not yet moved towards working more directly with the government schools to improve their overall functioning and quality. This is acknowledged by the grantees themselves. A related point that must be made in this connection is the development of internal capacities of REACH Partners to engage effectively the government system at all levels, particularly so on the ground, in the day-to-day practice of working with teachers. This is an area that needs to be focused upon in the days to come.

We must note that there are enough examples in REACH that have the potential to impact the government schooling system at a wider level in multiple ways. CEMD's work on educational leadership for school principals and department officials is time tested, and well appreciated. SARD, for instance, has had prior experience of working closely with government schools in the PESLE program, where its inputs have mainly been in the areas of teacher support. Akshara, which uses the NGO Pratham's approach to early reading and literacy, has attempted to institute the approach in government schools. Agastya, as we have already noted, is doing promising work with government schools on science education. Vikramshila, for many years, has worked on pedagogical improvements in the government schooling system. AADI is integrating the issues and concerns of children with developmental disabilities, with the concerns of school development as a whole. There is thus a corpus of experiences that need to be synthesized and tapped for the future.

The above concerns notwithstanding, some positive attempts that already exist need to be noted:

- In Kolkata, Vikramshila uses the state government's curriculum and by unpacking it and identifying the core concepts, it is seeking to enhance learning among children.
- In Delhi, SARD has established resource centers in each MCD school it works with. Space for this has been provided by the school itself. These resource centers cater to the need of 'slow' learners, and they have been envisaged as spaces for teachers to come together, share ideas and innovate.
- CEMD in Delhi has for many years worked with the government system to promote educational leadership. TTF in Karnataka likewise works with teachers and school principals, and has recently started translating its experience in government schools. All these experiences need to be shared on a wider scale.
- Agastya in Karnataka has innovated the approach to science teaching, while Akshara has made inroads with its accelerated reading and learning programs in

schools. Similarly, Avehi-Abacus in Mumbai works with a large number of government schools to promote its learning materials and methods.

Review and documentation of the approaches, especially in terms of what has worked and what has not in the remaining period is crucial. The collation of the above experiences will prove to be invaluable to REACH in particular, and the education sector, in general.

In connection with mainstreaming it must be stated that approaches towards institutionalizing learning through open school systems like the NIOS, need to be explored more systematically. The formal schooling system may not always be the best route to children who are older, and who also may need other inputs like vocational skills, for instance. A concern was expressed in Delhi regarding the validity of certification through the NIOS. Such constraints could be addressed through discussions with concerned government education departments.

In connection with the process of mainstreaming, and of working directly with the government schools, we must ask a related question: whether *all* children from the bridge centers will be mainstreamed in the true sense of the term. What about those who still remain? What about the costs of mainstreaming them beyond the project period? Where is this going to come from? These aspects need to be addressed.

## **Building the capacity of smaller, less mature NGOs**

### **(i) Selection process**

NGO selection in REACH has been through a rigorous process that has taken much of the initial one and a half years of the intervention, both for capacity building and direct grantees, as well as the sub grantees. The Partners of REACH represent an interesting mix – they are large and small, working in urban and/or rural areas, with focus on education or education as a component of a range of interventions that include health, economic development, HIV/AIDS, land rights, watersheds and so on. Many of them are engaged in direct and indirect implementation, and some are intensely engaged in policy advocacy as well. This mix promises a variety of perspectives, approaches and interventions.

### **(ii) Capacity building process**

An interesting feature of REACH India has been the mechanism of transfer of financial and technical assistance through ‘capacity building’ grantees. Relatively well-established and strong NGOs were identified for this role and through them smaller and less mature NGOs are being supported. There are 11 capacity building grantees spread across five regions.

REACH India has sought to engage with the larger more established NGOs as partners in capacity building of small NGOs. In addition, they have been providing support in the areas of (i) organizational development; (ii) quality education; (iii) monitoring and evaluation and (iv) financial administration. The technical assistance that has been provided is rated very highly by the grantees.

The means of sustaining capacities and qualitative efforts developed in the process of reaching these beneficiaries need to be explored and encouraged.

Some of the capacity building grantees are well-known in the development sector for their competence in education programmes and have acquired a good reputation for their work. Many others are quite large in terms of size (staff and funds), the range and spread of interventions but are better known not for education but for their emphasis on other development issues (e.g. community development, juvenile justice, etc.) which were and remain their organizational priorities.

REACH India’s approach of identifying and selecting smaller NGOs has helped these organizations engage more systematically with educational issues (with support from REACH and the capacity building grantees) and at the same time, develop further their financial, accounting and technical capacities and the confidence for educational programming. By constantly engaging key stakeholders like parents, government schoolteachers and officials, and local leaders, the grantees have managed well to keep the spotlight on children’s education. All these efforts have resulted in an enhanced awareness and even sense of urgency to increase efforts to meet the goals of UEE.

For REACH India, reaching out to a large number of organizations within the short time available, and setting up systems for implementation, is in itself an achievement. The

grantees have on record acknowledged these efforts. Further, through the much appreciated inputs vis-à-vis the Learning Classroom Series (LCS), REACH has attempted to set up open ended, hands on learning methods for the professional development of NGO staff and teachers. These efforts must be consolidated through follow up; they require time to take root. In essence, this implies continuity as far as inputs and their application in day-to-day work is concerned.

REACH India has invested substantially in the capacity building of NGOs, mainly in terms of improvement in education quality, monitoring and evaluation, organizational development and financial management and administration. These efforts are likely to bear fruit given there is a commitment by the Partners to ensure continuity of inputs well beyond the period of the REACH intervention.

### **(iii) Developing a shared notion of Quality Education**

It is not easy to look for a shared articulation or understanding of school quality in particular, or quality of education in general, in the REACH interventions. From interactions with grantees, what comes across is a wide variety of understanding and interpretations of quality. Articulations are also uneven in their depth. On the whole, these range from statements like ‘every child in school and learning well’, to ‘child centered, activity based and joyful learning methods in order to attain Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs)’. Indeed, in most cases, the MLLs feature as a key aspect. The terms child centered or activity based are not elaborated further in most cases.

In some cases, the grantees have a broader notion of quality, which encompasses each activity or aspect of the entire intervention. We may take an example here to illustrate the case. Thus, for Deepalaya, quality considerations operate at their level as a capacity building grantee, and also at the level of their sub grantees. In this case, the issues for consideration involve attendance of children, and their monthly achievements on the core subjects. At Deepalaya’s end, thinking on quality involves the nature and effectiveness of their interactions both with Reach and with their sub-grantees, in terms of timely support provided, adherence to systems and procedures etc.

Though in some instances (like Prayas), the articulations on quality involve notions of holistic development (such as ‘creativity, self confidence, curiosity, self reliance, dignity of the individual etc), it is not clear how these aspects are addressed in the day-to-day practice of running bridge centers and working with government schools.

In conclusion, we may state that at the grantee level, the over riding considerations of quality seem to be the achievement of basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, along with the achievement of the quantitative target of mainstreaming a certain (committed) number of children in school. At the moment, the understanding of quality therefore lacks a deeper conceptual and philosophical basis. It may therefore help to revisit/rethink this issue and arrive at a broader, deeper notion of quality that drives the endeavor of educating vulnerable children. In this connection, the initiative of the Learning Classroom Series (LCS), facilitated by REACH through the services of an external consultant, holds promise as regards the development of a collective understanding on quality over time.

LCS is a programme using open-learning methods for NGO personnel to enrich their educational services. It comprises of a series of three workshops on curriculum enrichment, improved teaching learning strategies and promoting active assessment in the classroom. These themes were identified for improvement of the education quality on the basis of proposal reviews, site visits and informal discussions with the partner NGOs. It was further verified with the Education Quality Checklists in Delhi and Jharkhand. In between the workshops, the participants are expected to practice the learning in the field.

The LCS series workshops have been widely appreciated by Partners. A concern, however is that for these intensive inputs to be internalized it takes time and continuity of efforts. In the remaining period therefore, this process of capacity building must be consolidated through regular follow up and attempts must be made to introduce the same approach in the wider government school system at various levels in a phased manner.

REACH has also attempted to define the contours of quality through tools such as the Quality Education Assessment Tool (QEAT), which has a deeper pedagogical basis. Orientations of Partners on this tool and its usage, is underway. Through elaborate classroom observations and recording of processes of teaching, learning and interactions between teachers and children, and through regular interviews with teachers and NGO staff, the status of quality at any given point in time can be mapped.

The challenge for REACH in the remaining period would be to deepen its understanding of quality at different levels, and look for ways to use this understanding in strengthening practices in the government schooling system. For this to happen, grantees must first demonstrate how a broader, deeper notion of quality informs their work, beyond the achievement of MLLs.

#### **(iv) Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation**

REACH and its grantees have developed elaborate tools and systems to record the progress of their interventions on the ground. Many of these approaches are still works in progress and need to be refined. These include individual tracking and profiling systems for children, and regular monitoring of classroom processes through quality checklists. As far as tracking of finance is concerned, REACH has provided inputs on basic accounting and audit procedures for each grantee and sub grantee (see section on Financial Management for some details).

A key document that enables and sets a benchmark for monitoring is the Performance Management Plan (PMP) of REACH. This sets out the indicators that have to be met by each grantee with regard to covering children through bridge courses, direct enrollment in school, and mainstreaming of children following the bridge course cycle. However, a review of the PMP reveals that there are no process indicators – the PMP is a plan that is based on quantitative targets. In the absence of such indicators, the emphasis shifts to achieving the required numbers – processes like working with parents and communities, improving the functioning of the government school etc tend to be less emphasized. Indicators other than numbers of children to be mainstreamed would have helped the

grantees to focus on the *actual processes* that are needed to root their interventions more strongly.

#### ○ **Student Tracking Tool (STT)**

In recognition of the need to closely monitor the progress of children who are out of school, REACH India has designed and implemented the Student Tracking Tool (STT). All the grantees are using this tool.

In April/May 2005, the M&E team from REACH India provided training on the STT for the Delhi partners. The STT uses an excel sheet and makes tracking simple and systematic. Each child is given an UI number (Unique Identification number). At the AECs or Bridge Centers, the teacher routinely records the presence or absence of a child. In the case of the government school, the bridge course teachers visit the school every month (2-3 times), more specifically on the last working day of every month to collect information on children who have been mainstreamed. Based on the information given by the schoolteacher, the bridge course teacher follows up with the parents and the child.

The STT, however, does not track all children in school. For this, one has to rely on official records which may not be accurate. There also may be a thin line separating children who have been out of school, and those who are in, and just about barely managing to stay on. So, there may be a need to develop a more sensitive and simpler system that derives its ideas from the STT, for tracking all children in school. Indeed, if this happens, this could result in becoming a useful contribution of REACH to the government schools.

While all grantees found the STT to be extremely useful, some of the Jharkhand and Kolkata grantees found it to be cumbersome and were of the opinion that it should be simplified. Inefficient electricity and internet connections in the rural areas add to the difficulties. Nonetheless, the consensus is that it should be promoted widely, beyond the REACH grantees after simplifying it.

#### ○ **Quality of Education Assessment Tool**

Though the STT does not focus on children's learning attainments in the various subjects (it is only a tool that tracks the status of children 'physically') Partners have often developed their own simple systems to monitor the basic competencies learnt by children. In some cases, marks are given. In others, children's learning is graded. Yet in other cases, it is categorized into 'levels'. The LCS training has helped partners conceptualize the assessment formats.

In some cases, as in the case of Disha in Delhi, for instance, 'specific learning outcomes' (SLO) on the lines of the minimum levels of learning (MLLs) for each subject is fixed. The teacher then grades the child's achievement based on these SLOs.

REACH India's 'Quality of Education Assessment Tool' is a much more broad based approach to enable the NGOs to assess the status of quality of their interventions on a number of critical parameters through regular observations, discussions and recording. The

key parameter is the classroom teaching and learning environment, which is mapped with the help of an extensive checklist. To date, REACH has trained NGO staff to use this tool. It is too early to ascertain the experiences of using the same. Along with the modified STT, the Quality assessment tool has the potential to be used in government schools to strengthen qualitative monitoring and support as well; this needs to be promoted strongly in the remaining period.

#### o **Individual Student Profile**

This is a simple format developed by REACH, to help the recording of data of each child, both quantitatively and in a qualitative sense. It records the profile of the child in terms of its family background, attendance, achievement in school, etc. At the field level, more items can be added to make the profile more comprehensive, as it is a flexible tool.

REACH and its grantees should now advocate for the usage of the STT at the school level for all children through the government systems. A simplified version of the QEAT, along with the assessment formats developed through the LCS workshops, can also help in regularly monitoring qualitative processes in school. Adoption by the government systems would ensure sustainability of these extremely well designed and effective tools of monitoring.

#### (v) **Promoting Organizational Development**

During the process of selection of the grantees, an effort was made to engage with the potential grantees through a series of workshops on project development and proposal writing. It was a useful exercise as it gave the potential grantees an idea of the expectations from partnership with REACH India, helped improved mutual understanding about the goals, approaches, outcomes and systems, and left with the smaller NGOs in particular some skills that could enable them to seek funds from other sources.

An advisory board, consisting of civil servants, academicians and education experts was involved in the selection of the grantees from the short listed NGOs. The selection process was planned well and was able to bring together as partners a wide array of NGOs with varied levels of competencies and potentials. Some were funded to expand their work and some were funded to innovate. In principle the REACH grantees are an interesting mix that potentially could complement each other, but in practical terms the perceptions on education and its role in the wider development process, approaches to work and the issues of autonomy prevent such complementarities.

As the donors or externally funded programmes suffer from a problem of “image”, they face greater challenge in addressing resolution of these issues, which in cases require deft handling or may be left unresolved for being less important. The REACH India advisory board was in a unique position, given its composition, to steer the programme towards a wider vision. However, after the selection process it seems to have become inactive. It was expected to suggest policies, procedures and practices to enable REACH India work towards achieving the SSA objectives regarding vulnerable children. It was envisaged that it would serve as a liaison with the Ministry of HRD in the Government of India.



Interview with one of the former members of advisory board suggests that the members as important people in the education sector and bureaucracy were not able to give adequate time to guiding the process and the follow up by REACH India was also weak and failed to keep them informed and engaged. It is likely that the administrative aspects dominated the REACH India agenda and strategic reflection, vision and guidance required for scaling up the programme was neglected.

Weak linkages with the government seem to have contributed to the failure of REACH India to make a contribution to the wider process of UEE. It was intended that REACH through the advisory board, through USAID and on its own would keep the Ministry of HRD informed of all initiatives and progress. Some efforts have been made through periodic interactions and by convening information sharing events. But strategic guidance and evolution of REACH India as a programme with a unique identity and the ability to bring about changes at larger scale has not happened. At the state level, REACH India staff expects the grantees to take the lead while the latter expect coordination and support from the former. Given the reality of uneasy government-NGO partnerships overall, the political environment in the states, the crucial role of individuals in the bureaucracy, institutionalization of relationships with government can indeed be difficult. The advisory board could have played an important role in identifying key issues for dialogue with the government; further, contacts with the government at different levels could have been rigorously promoted to ensure convergence and synergy of efforts.

In the remaining period of the programme, efforts to formalize relationships of NGOs with government education departments may not be feasible. What could positively be done is the consolidation of the image of REACH as a set of approaches to bring children who are at risk within the formal education system. It may allow the grantees to pursue the agenda on their own and perhaps together with other like-minded NGOs. As part of the phasing out process, discussions need to take place about the approaches that work, the evidence that would support its advocacy and its packaging and promotion.

#### **(vi) Strengthening Financial Management Systems**

Recognizing that transparency and accountability are critical not only from the donors' perspective but also from developmental perspectives, REACH India also focuses on ensuring sound financial management and promoting best practices in its dealings with the grantees. The staff is bound by the grant agreement but efforts are made to advise and guide the grantees. At the roll-out stage, a grant management workshop was organized at which the sub-grantees were also invited.

The feedback from smaller grantees and sub-grantees, and especially those located in the rural regions, suggest that they have benefited immensely from the technical assistance pertaining to financial management. The low-key articulation of the large and/or urban based NGOs could probably be because they work with a range of donor agencies and have acquired the experience of operating a variety of financial management systems. Furthermore, they have staff who specialize in accounts and finance and are already familiarized with, for example, software packages such as Tally. According to REACH India

finance staff, the smaller grantees have practical problems and are more receptive while the larger grantees have well-developed systems and know how to respond to the donors.

REACH India's efforts need to be commended for adding value to the systems of NGOs which are generally believed to be weak in financial management. With donors becoming increasingly fastidious and the imperative of social development or the inability to hire and retain technically qualified staff due to limited budget or remote rural location no longer qualifying as pertinent arguments, it is likely that the smaller grantees would be able to benefit in future in their dealings with potential donors. However, it is not clear on the whole if the grantees would continue to follow the systems and best practices being promoted by REACH India as different donors tend to have differing systems, which they must adopt.

## **Promoting the adoption of best practices within the NGO and state/district education communities**

### **(i) Networking among NGOs**

A critical component of the REACH India programme has been the realization that networking is crucial. The programme itself has been able to bring under one umbrella a rich variety of NGOs. They work in different geographical regions, with different categories of children at risk from different socio-economic communities, in different ways and have assimilated varied experiences. REACH India made concerted efforts to bring the grantees together from selection stage onwards. Assistance through capacity building grantees to sub-grantees is another way in which networking has been promoted.

However, despite these efforts, REACH has not been able to pool together their strengths, the knowledge base and experience despite encouraging and facilitating interactions among them. This should not be seen as a reflection on REACH India but on the notion of networking. There seem to be a number of problems in practical terms, which were commented upon at length by the grantees, sub-grantees and REACH India staff.

Working together entails similar perspectives on critical issues and ways and means of addressing them, and this is not happening in REACH India. There are inevitable hierarchies and political differences among the NGOs. NBJK, a large and influential NGO by virtue of its range and spread of programmes, appears to be a donor rather than a facilitating NGO in its interactions with the sub-grantees, which essentially depend on it for REACH India funds.

Sometimes cooperation is hampered by competition and conflicting claims over resources and positions of authority. Even if the NGOs are located in the same city (e.g. CINI Asha, CLPOA and Vikramshila in Kolkata), they do not interact on a regular basis. **And above all, there is absence of common concern and a shared sense of urgency.**

In Kolkata, the NGOs seem to be competitors and/or lack common ground. While there is a perceptible lack of energy in the network of the primary Kolkata grantees (which they themselves corroborate), there is a greater bonding among the capacity building grantees and their sub-grantees.

In Delhi, there has been some informal learning between organizations like SARD, AADI and CEMD. More recently, Prayas has attempted to establish an Education Alliance focusing on South Delhi, in which more than 20 NGOs have come together. Prayas's efforts are however not supported by REACH budgets – the activity of networking and alliance building was not budgeted for in the project proposal, which focused mostly on implementation related activities.

Although not stated in the discussions, one does sense personality and ego clashes that are compounded by conflicting interests of member organizations who vie for funds for similar work from the same donors. While relationships between the sub grantees and the capacity building grantees may be of nature so as not to hamper day to day work, the sub-grantees

rely on the capacity building grantees for channelling of funds. They therefore tend not to voice their concerns and ideas but instead work mostly on the instructions and plans made by the larger NGO. In order to promote more functional autonomy to the smaller NGOs, more space needs to be created by the capacity building grantee to allow for alternative approaches and thinking.

On the whole, while it may not be possible to bring all Partners together as part of a coherent network, REACH and its grantees may well explore common issues and themes around which they can come together. However, this has to happen around a common agenda. In Delhi, for instance, acceptance of NIOS certification by the larger school system arose as an issue which Partners felt needed collective advocacy. Similarly some grantees are exploring possibilities of joining hands with the Right to Education Task Force (RETF) to explore how the Right to Information and the Right to Education can be used to negotiate space with the government to improve its education services.

## **(ii) Information Dissemination, sharing and learning**

REACH India has a rich array of promising interventions. These include:

- Accelerated Reading and Learning Programs (ALP/ARP) of Akshara, modeled on the NGO Pratham's approach
- Agastya's approach to science education in schools
- SVYM's approach to federating the School Development and Management Committees (SDMC) and working with Panchayats
- CWD's attempt to link with primary schools through Balwadis (Preschools)
- SARD's resource centers in MCD schools
- Vikramshila's focus on using the government curriculum in a meaningful way
- AVEHI-Abacus's inputs on teaching-learning materials through its learning kits
- CEMD's work with the schooling system through inputs for development of education leadership, and
- Work of AADI, Manovikas Kendra and Ummeed on working with children having developmental disabilities

However, the focus so far has been on implementation of activities, given the tight deadlines and targets for children to be mainstreamed. Though REACH partners do realize that there is much that can learn from each other, much less time has been spent on learning from the experiences and achievements of each other. Not much ground has been covered in terms of grantees learning from each other's experiences. By and large, they continue to work in isolation. While there is some scope for REACH in creating learning and sharing platforms to help pooling of complementary skills and expertise, given the differences among many of the grantees (based on ideological, political and personal equations), a uniform strategy may not be appropriate.

The same can be said about the potential replication in the government system of approaches adopted by REACH partners. Model building takes time. Sharing, learning and wider dissemination must also be undertaken deliberately for it to have any wider influence and impact. REACH and its Partners may well create space in the remaining duration of the intervention for this to happen. Other challenges of working with the government system

have already been highlighted. We may mention here some initiatives that Partners have taken to learn from each other, and some possibilities that exist:

- In Karnataka, the complementary skills and expertise that REACH grantees bring to the fore can be used to strengthen initiatives, as the REACH intervention gets underway.
- In Delhi, Prayas has attempted to create an 'Education Alliance' for quality education of marginalized children. So far, over 20 organizations have come together. Challenges to widen the scope of this network, however exist.
- SARD, AADI and CEMD in Delhi have come together to exchange ideas and support each other.
- Similarly, in Mumbai, REACH grantees have come together a few times to learn from each other's experiences and also to forge a common network.

Efforts have been made through workshops and newsletters to disseminate information among the grantees and sub-grantees about what each other are doing. Often, good practices in the REACH program in particular, and in the education sector in general, have also been highlighted through these newsletter.

#### **(i) Documentation and Research**

Given the enormous challenges that mainstreaming vulnerable children involve, documentation and research in the REACH India programme has been weak. The resources earmarked for research on issues of relevance have been re-programmed to accommodate the budget cuts. Arguably, the research agenda could not take off because of engagement with the start up and implementation of interventions within the short duration of programme. There is still the possibility that a concerted attempt to pull together the experiences, backed with evidence, would enable respective NGOs to showcase their work for advocacy and fund raising. It could allow REACH India to develop through concerted efforts evidence based policy research on India's out of school young people. The outcome could be used for advocacy purposes.

Among the many possible areas for research and documentation, the issue of transition, retention and learning in children must be highlighted. REACH and its Partners could demonstrate how, through their interventions these challenges have been addressed effectively.

However, innovative and successful approaches have to be forcefully demonstrated before they can become institutionalized within the larger government schooling system. This requires rigorous process documentation of what has worked, and what has not, and research on outcomes due to these approaches. A key recommendation therefore would be the emphasis on institutional learning. It must be noted, however that these approaches have been in place prior to REACH India. The value that REACH can add lies in the wider dissemination of their learning through research and documentation. On the whole, it can be said that for REACH India and its grantees, the varieties of experience and approaches present a good chance to learn.

#### **(ii) Lobbying and Advocacy**

The response of the grantees vis-à-vis working directly with government, suggests a mixed picture. In some regions, the relationship of NGOs with key government officials is relatively cordial (e.g. Kolkata) while in others they are still trying to work out ways and means of working together (e.g. Jharkhand and Delhi). In North Karnataka, REACH Partners seem to have a strong relationship with the government which they are seeking to build upon. The discussions with the grantees and government officials as well as observations elsewhere suggest that the ability to work with government agencies depends on a number of factors, foremost being the articulation of a collective vision of moving forward towards a common goal and initiative towards large-scale changes/systemic reforms. Further, there are enormous challenges in institutionalizing the relationship with the government. In reality, personal equations and rapport seem to work more effectively, than organizational arrangements. While this helps in gaining access to government, it seems to place a constraint on the stance that an NGO should take – to what extent can there be genuine engagement on issues that need urgent sorting out?

However, the importance of working with the government is being recognized gradually and slowly. The genesis of most grantees has been in an era when NGOs were seen more or less as parallel to the government and confrontational approaches, be it passive or active were favored. Thus, government-NGO partnership is still being understood both at the conceptual and practical level.

As there is inability to develop a rapport with the government officials, some of the Jharkhand grantees expect assistance from REACH in this regard. On the other hand, the Kolkata grantees have benefited from the presence of a favorably disposed senior bureaucrat. Indeed, individuals within the government rather than government institutions tend to matter. There is always the possibility that the person concerned would be transferred and the NGOs would need to start all over again on building trust and a cordial working relationship. The NGOs located in the urban areas seem to stand a better chance because they tend to have more people who have the language and networks. They are able to interact with the higher authorities relatively easily because of physical proximity and more communication channels. However, there are other challenges in the urban areas, as in the case of Delhi, for instance. School education is administered by more than one agency – the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, The Delhi Cantonment board and the Directorate of Education, which oversees the SSA. Lack of coordination between these agencies further complicates the task of achieving UEE on the ground. With frequent transfers of officials, NGOs find it even more difficult to get a toe-hold for engagement and negotiation in the government system.

Furthermore, the education department in different regions is not streamlined, which makes it difficult for the NGOs to identify key individuals for lobbying. They have had to lobby with different people in the education department at different points of time. Indeed, the relationships continue to depend on personal rapport and relationships and there is no guarantee that the trust and comfort with key individuals in the state education department would persist as officials are transferred periodically. Furthermore, the government-NGO relationship is seen with a degree of distrust by increasingly politicized bureaucracy and interest groups.

The political environment or the perception of it influences the position of an NGO regarding its approach – should it collaborate or challenge? This is a real issue among a range of grantees. Growing influence of the Maoists in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand has had an effect on the functioning of grantees and sub-grantees. Fearing retribution from an allegedly saffronist NDA government in Ranchi, CWD seeks to assume a low-key and markedly non-confrontational approach. The Kolkata grantees recognize the threat of the very strong and politicized teacher's unions in West Bengal. In Karnataka, there are different shades in the relationships of REACH partners with government.

Agastya and Akshara have established linkages with the highest levels of government at the state level, the latter being enabled by the 'corporate' linkage of its management. SVYM seeks to federate the SDMCs and work with Panchayats but is facing great difficulty in getting the government to respond. Its work is perceived to be 'political' in nature and therefore unacceptable whereas the activities of other grantees are more acceptable because they deliver services and/or materials (e.g. teachers' training, provision of materials and support to libraries).

Influenced by its ideology, set of beliefs, history, current capacities and interests, each grantee is seeking to make a positive difference in the education scenario in India. However, they are not engaging in a comprehensive range of interventions that could characterize a holistic approach or could give it sufficient clout and influence. This requires both overcoming of differences, as well as putting in place a holistic approach on the ground.

#### **4. Priorities towards sustainability**

Interactions with grantees, sub-grantees and parents as well as observations of the mid-term review team highlight a few areas of concern:

##### **Inability to address wider developmental issues that impact on education**

The socio-economic conditions of the household, school infrastructure and environment, teachers' attendance and perception of returns on education among the communities and families are factors that to a great extent impact on whether a child would enroll in a school, and more importantly whether s/he would stay on and learn something. In most cases, children are first generation learners and they need encouragement, support and facilities. Furthermore, the parents (especially those living in rural areas) do not have the conception of quality that would enable them to play an active role in monitoring the education of their children and the functioning of the schools.

Socio economic factors such as poverty/family income, sibling care, lack of basic services etc are critical for children's enrolment, attendance, attainment and retention. These factors have to be taken into account and addressed if the processes are to be sustained. Clearly, they are beyond the scope of REACH India. The programme is neither geared to nor is able to address the 'root causes' or a number of factors critical for children to enroll into and to stay on in the formal school system.

It may however be useful to identify how the grantees are seeking to address these issues if they are and sharing of experiences of how they could make the connections. While some of the REACH India grantees are focused essentially on education (e.g. Vikramshila, CEMD, among others) there are a number of others who have a community development approach. It would be interesting to explore how they have (if they have) linked their REACH India related interventions with other developmental interventions.

While the grantees may well achieve the quantitative targets and expenditure – in terms of enrolment and to a lesser extent with continuing support to children after they have been enrolled, the question remains what thereafter. This brings them in contact with the government schooling system – unless this system is made to work better, unless its capacities are strengthened and its accountability is focused upon, much of the gains made in REACH may not sustain ultimately in terms of children’s retention and learning.

### **Is mainstreaming into formal schools the only way out?**

Mainstreaming has been reduced to mere number of children enrolled into formal schools. Undoubtedly there can be two views regarding the emphasis on mainstreaming of children. By all accounts the necessity of getting a certain number of children enrolled in schools has diverted attention from qualitative aspects, it was perhaps imperative to insist upon it. It would have been a never ending exercise in capacity building. The fact that children must go to formal school, not just to non-formal education centres, has to act as a constant reminder of the broader goal. This is particularly critical for a large proportion of NGOs that had been working on NFE. This insistence acts as a reminder for them.

Making primary education ‘sustainable’ is the challenge. Sustainability could be seen in different ways: (i) Sustainability of the REACH India programme; (ii) sustainability of the field level programs (bridge course, learning centers, remedial coaching centers etc) (iii) sustainability of the capacity building initiatives and (iv) Sustainability of learning among children.

### **Sustaining the REACH India programme**

This could be viewed in financial terms. What happens when REACH India ends? It is important to note that it is a programme and not an organization that can raise funds from various sources.

There does not seem to be a perceptible or significant shift towards a meaningful collaboration with the government. Most of the grantees will run the program with REACH’s assistance and thereafter with funding from other donors.

Most of the learning centres/balwadis are likely to run successfully till the end of the project. Thereafter the NGOs are likely to look for other donors. Most seemed confident of getting funding support. Some centres may sustain through community initiatives, some may continue to be run by the NGO as private initiatives (i.e. charging fees) while many are likely to be shut down.



One option could be to set up REACH India as an independent organization so that it can seek funding from various sources, including USAID (perhaps through QUEST). However, this may not still ensure that REACH in turn would sustain the project interventions. The requirement and focus of another donor may be quite different. The other option could be to strengthen the processes and programmes within a broader conceptual framework that could be eligible for future fund raising.

### **Sustaining the capacity building efforts initiated by REACH**

The focus on children at risk/hard to reach/marginalized and vulnerable and on ensuring their enrolment and retention in the formal school system could be considered the USP – unique selling proposition – of the REACH India programme. As the implementation phase has been considerably short because of the four year duration of the programme and the proportionately long preparatory phase (e.g. getting the management in place, identification, verification and negotiation before initiation of the partnerships with grantees), REACH India has not been able to consolidate, develop and present the lessons from experiences as a possible policy framework. There has been value addition through various capacity building interventions but it would be a while before the learning is internalized by the recipient organizations and individuals. The qualitative nature of capacity building deems it necessary that there is a critical mass of people who are well-versed with the theoretical premises and proficient in the best practices.

Sustainability may be seen in at least three complementary ways. In the remaining period, REACH and its Partners may focus their attention on these aspects in a systematic manner and explore ways of ensuring continuity of efforts.

- The first is to sustain the interventions of capacity building of grantees – it has been noted already that REACH has undertaken efforts to create strong, vibrant organizations which can effectively address the agenda of UEE for vulnerable children. These processes must be consolidated through rigorous follow up, leading to viable networks being formed around key themes/areas.
- Secondly, to ensure that the ideas generated during the REACH intervention must find their way into the larger government system. For this, it has already been noted that a deliberate strategy based on documentation and advocacy, needs to be put in place. Only when innovative ideas and approaches enter the government system is there hope of change on a wider, larger scale.
- Thirdly, we have mentioned the need for a more rigorous approach to working with community based institutions like PTAs, School Development Committees and Panchayats. The agenda of local education governance is a key area that needs urgent attention.

These three complementary aspects must be focused upon in the coming 18-20 months of REACH India. If this happens, it is likely that a strong foundation can be laid for future work and for sustaining children's learning.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that most of the gains from the REACH India program will be lost if there is lack of continuity beyond the period of the current intervention.

## Key recommendations

A lesson for everyone associated with the programme (especially REACH India staff, grantees and sub-grantees) has been that four years are clearly inadequate for initiating, setting up, implementing and preparing for the withdrawal. Longer time span is required for any purposive involvement in children's education and for recording the outcomes of the processes that have been initiated.

REACH is doing good work in reaching out to hitherto unreached children. It has also contributed immensely to developing capacities within the grantee NGOs. In the remaining period of the REACH India intervention, which potentially includes a six-month no cost extension beyond September 2007, the emphasis needs to be on consolidation and showcasing of the work undertaken in the programme towards policy advocacy on effectively including children at risk in the formal education system. A forceful demonstration of ideas and approaches needs to be made leading to institutionalization of efforts. A process of introspection thus needs to be initiated by REACH with the grantees to address the following areas of work.

1. **Organizational development:** A process of looking ahead needs to be initiated by REACH India in partnership with its grantees with focus on the following broad areas:
  - (i) The phasing out process could include orientation and support pertaining to fund-raising and leveraging government and other resources
  - (ii) Discussions also need to focus on the collective learning from the programme and the development of a holistic vision (that entails a multi-pronged approach) on education for children at risk for policy advocacy.
  - (iii) Capacity building of NGOs pertaining to quality education (for children out of schools and those in schools) needs to be consolidated as valuable investment has been made in this area. This is integral to any future organizational development of the grantees. In this regard, capacity building needs to focus on making current education interventions 'more rounded' and holistic, involving all stakeholders (parents, teachers, community institutions and the government departments) in equal measure. This needs to be reflected upon in the coming months.
  
2. **Strengthening the formal school system:** Ideas developed as part of REACH interventions have the potential to strengthen the quality of the government schools. These inputs are crucial from the point of view of making the formal school system more accessible to children at risk. It is therefore important that steps be taken in the remaining period to strengthen the formal schooling environment to make it more conducive for children's retention and learning. The challenge for REACH in the remaining period would be to deepen its understanding of quality at different levels, and look for ways to use this understanding in strengthening practices in the government schooling system.

All grantees agree that their relationships with the government both at local and state levels, has to be continuously strengthened, if they are to make a change in the functioning of government schools.

3. **Looking beyond formal schools:** Mainstreaming could look beyond enrollment and retention in formal schools. Systems such as the Open schools could be increasingly considered as alternatives, with the addition of the component of vocational education in order to enhance livelihood opportunities for adolescents.
4. **Focus on working with communities:** Work intensely and more strategically with communities – build their capacities and confidence for negotiating better with the government schooling system to reduce distance between school, teacher and parents/community. REACH interventions need to be more strategic in their approach to community mobilization around children’s education. This must be linked to the development of the ‘bargaining power’ of communities to make government schools perform better.
5. **Development of a common perspective through policy research towards advocacy:**
  - (i) Process documentation and field research towards policy analysis should include best practices derived from evidence of the efficacy of a range of interventions undertaken under the REACH programme.
  - (ii) Sharing, learning and wider dissemination must also be undertaken deliberately for it to have any wider influence and impact.

Potential areas:

- Experiences from linkages between Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Primary Education
  - Experiences from addressing learning disabilities among children at risk in urban and rural areas
  - Experiences of mainstreaming and retention in government schools; viability of Open schools; integration with life-skills and vocational training/education
  - Experiences of Pedagogical interventions that are designed to strengthen teacher capacity and improve learning outcomes in children
  - Initiatives like the Learning Classroom series (LCS) and its influence on practices
- (iii) An advocacy strategy that pulls together the lessons from the wide array of interventions while recognizing, accommodating and possibly supporting independent initiatives by NGOs would be required.
6. **Networking:** Be it organizational development, capacity building on quality education or documentation, research and analysis, it would be imperative that REACH India takes on a more pro-active facilitating role for getting the grantees to

a common platform. In this, the grantees continue to see an important role for REACH, beyond the function that it plays as a conduit for funds. Many grantees expect from REACH India a role in facilitating the network. Perhaps REACH does have a role but as a lot of time goes into making the network function on a continuing basis, it needs to be realistic in terms of its expectations and creative in its approach. A somewhat loose arrangement like a resource group and/or working groups could be a possibility.

#### **7. Documentation and research needs to be strengthened.**

REACH India needs to carve an identity of its own. This entails that it showcases its work as a holistic programme in terms of its effectiveness and value towards policy advocacy. Further, experiences need careful documentation for wider sharing and learning among REACH Partners and the education sector as a whole. Inadequate documentation may actually result in an opportunity lost for learning on key issues of UEE.

Wherever applicable, REACH and its grantees can rework budgets and approaches in order to align more strongly with the above recommendations, keeping in view that budget bottom lines need to remain the same for the remaining period of the interventions.

# Annexure I

## SCOPE OF WORK

### 1.0 Background

REACH India, a four-year project (September 03 -September 07) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aims to improve access of vulnerable children to quality basic education and complements the Government of India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All campaign).

The project provides educational opportunities to at-risk children in six geographical areas by supporting NGOs through grants and technical assistance. The interventions supported address the basic education needs of at-risk children, especially girls, up to 14 years of age, who are either out of school or are in school but in danger of dropping out. This is primarily done by strengthening NGO capacity to scale up delivery of educational services to out-of-school children and improve the quality of education in schools

The other purposes promoted by the projects include:

- Promoting the adoption of best practices within the NGO and educational communities.
- Encouraging stronger and more complementary relationships between NGOs and government in promoting UEE objectives
- Encouraging strengthened supportive and resource networks among NGOs to address issues pertaining to achievement of UEE

During its life, the project will reach out to about 300,000 children through 100 NGOs. The means of sustaining capacities and qualitative efforts developed in the process of reaching these beneficiaries need to be explored and encouraged. A review at this stage when the project is at a mid-point, will allow REACH to reflect on its progress, achievements and gaps. More importantly, it will inform the project of the strategies, actions and linkages it needs to consider putting in place and support to sustain its interventions beyond the project. Project grantees, individually and collectively, as well as project staff, in consultation with grantees, its Advisory Board and others too is considering how, in the remaining project months, the greatest benefits can be achieved and possibilities of continuance strengthened. The mid term review can be utilized to sharpen these ideas and directions.

### 2.0 Objectives:

- To review the progress of the project and recommend approaches that should be considered to increase project impact
- The six areas are -Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkatta, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and Northern Kamataka
- To recommend steps to sustain the program interventions and the NGO platform including leveraging of government (SSA) and non government resources
- To provide recommendations on project phasing, and the areas those require greatest emphasis /priority given remaining timelines and budgetary constraints.

### 2.1 Key issues

Following is list of key issues that the review will consider. Further questions within each area will be developed by the Review Team.

- What has been the progress against project objectives?

- What has been the key innovations supported by the project that can be scaled up?
- Has there been a value addition by the project intervention to the partner NGOs -
- either in terms of capacity building or program implementation. Are these enhanced capabilities likely to continue even after project completion?
- To what extent does the project interventions support/ complement the government's effort towards education for all?
- What are the areas/ activities that the project need to concentrate now, given the fund availability and the time frame?
- What is the level of networking among the NGOs? What steps are to be taken to strengthen such networks and sustain them beyond the project period?

### **3.0 Illustrative Approach:**

The findings are intended to be advisory rather than directive in nature. The team will get inputs from US AID/India Representative and AIR/REACH representative on team. The approach will include extensive review of project documents and consultations with the NGO partners and government counterparts in the field. The outcome would be a set of operational recommendations on areas and activities that the project needs to concentrate on in order to maximize project impacts and sustain project interventions. Field visits will be made to selected sites and a mix of individual projects will be identified. The sample will be representative of REACH project interventions. The criteria for selection will include:

- Location -urban; rural
- Nature of intervention -Bridge schools; residential courses; remedial classes; in school teacher training; inclusive education
- Target group -street children; girls, differently able children; children from socially vulnerable groups
- Type of grant -amount; number of beneficiaries; NOD profile (past experience in education; total size of its operations), capacity building or direct service grants
- Elapsed time of project interventions -early rollout; recent rollout
- Networking -strong network of stakeholders; emerging network

In each of the regions visited, the team will meet with all the NGO partners including the sub-grantees. The team would also hold discussions with government officials in the National, State and district level in charge of Education for All and also with other donors involved in similar activities.

### **3.1 Illustrative Level of Effort and Schedule:**

The contractor is expected to provide two Experts/Consultants for this review. The team leader will be a Consultant with at least 10-15 years of experience in India and international, in the field of education and in strategic planning having a good understanding of the NGO sector. The second consultant will have 7-9 years the experience in the field of education, especially in quality issues and in conducting evaluations.

The Experts/consultants would be responsible for writing the report. The USAID and REACH representatives will assist in document review, development of tools, etc and would accompany the consultants on field visits (not at Contractor's expense). However, you as Team leader would be the overall in charge of the review. It is anticipated that the review will take 25 days spread over a period of 10 weeks, beginning May 8th, 2006.

### **4.0 Illustrative time lines**

- Preliminary discussions; study tools development -5 days
- Field visits -11 days (the group will divide into two teams). This includes one day stakeholder session with capacity building grantees in Delhi
- Analysis and report writing -7 days
- Finalize report -2 days
- Total number of days -25; Start Date: o/a May 8th, 2006; End date: July 15th, 2006

#### **4.1 Illustrative tasks**

- Desk review; discussion with USAID and REACH staff, government and other stakeholders
- Develop key questions, checklists and study tools
- Questionnaire survey with grantees and sub-grantees
- Field visits to project sites in Delhi, Jharkhand, Kolkata and North Karnataka -this should cover rural, urban, capacity building and direct grantees, old grants and new grants, bridge courses, learning centers, interventions for disabled and in-school interventions.
- Stakeholder discussions in the project areas
- Presentation on key findings and discussion on next steps with REACH and USAffi
- Present draft report
- Finalize report

## Annexure II

### NGO selection criteria for the REACH mid-term review

The following 11 NGOs will be visited and reviewed by the team:

Region	NGOs	Responsibility	Dates for visit
Delhi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Disha</li> <li>o SARD</li> <li>o Prayas Juvenile Aid Centre Society</li> </ul>	Sheshagiri KM	13 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> June
North Karnataka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Akshara Foundation</li> <li>o Tropical Research and Development Centre (TRDC)</li> </ul>		4 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2006
Kolkata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o CINI Asha</li> <li>o Vikramshila Education Resource Society</li> <li>o Manovikas Kendra Rehabilitation and Research Institute for the Handicapped</li> </ul>	Neelam Singh	31 <sup>st</sup> May to 6 <sup>th</sup> June 2006
Jharkhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Centre for Women's Development (CWD)</li> <li>o Banwasi Vikas Ashram (BVA)</li> <li>o Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK)</li> </ul>		23 <sup>rd</sup> to 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2006

The above NGOs were selected according to the following criteria:

#### 1. Combination of rural and urban base, capacity building and direct grantees, and old and new association with REACH India

	State/City	Direct grantees (8)	Capacity building grantees (5)	Association with REACH	
				Old (more than a year)	New (less than a year)
<b>Rural (5)</b>	<b>Jharkhand (3)</b>	BVA and CWD	NBJK	Since December 2004	
	<b>North Karnataka (2)</b>	TRDC	Akshara		Since November 2005
<b>Urban (6)</b>	<b>Delhi (3)</b>	SARD and Disha	Prayas	Since October 2004	
	<b>Kolkata (3)</b>	Manovikas Kendra	CINI Asha and Vikramshila	Since January 2005	

#### 2. Size of funding

	Large (above \$300,000)	Medium (between \$100,000-300,000)	Small (below \$100,000)
Direct		SARD \$264,972.28 Manovikas Kendra \$237,979.00 Disha \$149,983.00 BVA \$132,711.00	TRDC \$84,997.00



			CWD	\$115,540.00		
Capacity building	CINI Asha	\$724,657.00				
	Prayas	\$402,879.95				
	NBJK	\$621,575.00				
	Vikramshila	\$385,947.00				
	Akshara	\$398,793.00				

### 3. Different ways of working

Intervention	Description	Representative grantee
Bridge courses	Residential	BVA (D)
	Non-residential	Prayas and CINI Asha (CB), TRDC (D)
Remedial teaching/coaching		CINI Asha (CB) and TRDC (D)
Planning and management		CEMD (D)
Teachers' training, pedagogy		CEMD, CWD, TRDC and Manovikas Kendra (D) Vikramshila (CB)
Curriculum development		Vikramshila (CB)
Quality improvement		CWD (D), Vikramshila and Akshara (CB)

### 4. Engagement with different levels of education

Level	Representative grantee
Pre-primary	CWD (D) and Akshara (CB)
Primary	All the NGOs included in the review process
Upper primary	CEMD and BVA (D) CINI Asha and Akshara (CB)

### 5. Working with different 'categories' of children 'at risk'

Risk factors	Categories of children	Representative grantees
Gender	Girls in particular	BVA (D)
Age	Older	CEMD and BVA (D) CINI Asha and Akshara (CB)
	Younger children	CWD (D) Akshara (CB)
Social identity	Tribals	BVA , CWD and TRDC (D)
Differing abilities	Children with disabilities	Manovikas and Umeed (D)
Special circumstances	Street children Children of sex workers	Disha (D), CINI Asha and Vikramshila (CB)

### 6. Partnerships

	Representative grantees
Government	Akshara, CINI Asha and Vikramshila (CB), CWD and Manovikas (D)
NGOs	Almost all NGOs included in the review process
Communities	BVA, CWD, Disha and TRDC (D)

### 7. Focus on education within the NGOs

	Representative grantees
Primary	TRDC (D), Akshara and Vikramshila (CB)
Secondary	Disha (D) and CINI Asha (CB)

### **List of Organizations who responded to the REACH mid term review Questionnaire**

Information was solicited from the remaining NGOs through questionnaires sent to them through e-mail. Responses were received from the following:

1. ABHAS, New Delhi (Prayas sub-grantee)
2. ASRA – Action for Self Reliance and Alternatives, New Delhi (Deepalaya sub-grantee)
3. Basti Local Committee and Social Welfare Centre, Kolkata (CINI Asha sub-grantee)
4. Deepalaya, New Delhi
5. Dr A V Baliga Memorial Trust, New Delhi (Deepalaya sub-grantee)
6. East and West Educational Society, New Delhi (Prayas sub-grantee)
7. EFRAH, New Delhi (Prayas sub-grantee)
8. IRAM, New Delhi (Prayas sub-grantee)
9. Nav Srishti, New Delhi (Prayas sub-grantee)
10. Prayas Institute of Juvenile Justice, New Delhi
11. Sahara Charitable Society, Mumbai
12. SAKSHI – Centre for Information, Education and Communication, New Delhi (Prayas Sub grantee)
13. SIRE, North Karnataka
14. TRDC, North Karnataka (Direct Grantee)
15. Ummeed Child Development Centre, Mumbai (Direct Grantee)
16. Urbo Rural Integrated Development Association (URIDA), New Delhi (Deepalaya sub-grantee)
17. AASHA

## Annexure 3 -- Framework for enquiry

The scope of work for the REACH review states the following objectives and key issues:

### Objectives

1. To review the progress of the project and recommend approaches that should be considered to increase project impact
2. To recommend steps to sustain the program interventions and the NGO platform, including leveraging of government (SSA) and non government resources
3. To provide recommendations on project phasing, and the areas those require greatest emphasis /priority given remaining timelines and budgetary constraints.

**Key issues:** Following is list of key issues that the review will consider. Further questions within each area will be developed by the Review Team.

- What has been the progress against project objectives?
- What has been the key innovations supported by the project that can be scaled up?
- Has there been a value addition by the project intervention to the partner NGOs - either in terms of capacity building or program implementation. Are these enhanced capabilities likely to continue even after project completion?
- To what extent do the project interventions support/complement the government's effort towards education for all?
- What are the areas/ activities that the project need to concentrate now, given the fund availability and the time frame?
- What is the level of networking among the NGOs? What steps are to be taken to strengthen such networks and sustain them beyond the project period?

Accordingly, the following framework for enquiry has been worked out.

Key question	Description/elaboration: key strands of enquiry...	Rationale for enquiry	Possible methods and ways of study/ enquiry
<b>A. Why education for every child? How is it visualized?</b>	<b>Philosophical basis, roots...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aims/Conception of education vis-à-vis organizational understanding of development... Where does education 'fit in'? For how long has education been on the radar of the organization?</li> <li>○ How has it been visualized, given local conditions (geography, local community)?</li> </ul>	The question is important for understanding where the organization is coming from and its future perspective. It should help the analysis of the approach and quality of direct service delivery and capacity building, as well as the interest, inclination and potential for building upon the REACH support.	Study of literature from USAID, REACH and selected Partners Discussion with key persons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In USAID and REACH</li> <li>- across different levels in the Partner Organization</li> <li>- Teachers</li> <li>- Community representatives and parents</li> </ul>
<b>B. What is the analysis of the situation?</b>	<b>Understanding and analysis of community and its children</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the organizational understanding of the community and its socio-economic and cultural context/issues/concerns?</li> </ul>	The question is important for assessing the extent to which the organization's work and the REACH support relate with the realities of children's lives, the likelihood of education bringing about	Study of literature from USAID, REACH and selected Partners Discussions with those who were involved in the exercise/analysis...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How have they gone about ascertaining status of local communities? <i>What</i> did they ask? <i>Who</i> did they ask? What kind of research studies were conducted...?</li> <li>○ What conclusions have been drawn? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- overall -- with respect to the community</li> <li>- with respect to children (pre-school/ school going age group...up to 14 years)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	positive changes in their lives and sustainability of the intervention and impact.	
<p>C. Flowing from A and B above, what have you therefore put on the ground? Perceptions about the ability to innovate and respond to the context...</p>	<p><b>1. Program Management Structure and Functions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the management structure of the program (reporting, decision making, learning and sharing at USAID/REACH level)?</li> <li>○ What is the nature of relationships (USAID/REACH)?</li> <li>○ What is the management structure of the program at the level of the Partner (<i>Capacity Building and Direct Grantee to be studied separately...</i>)?</li> <li>○ What are the relationships like: USAID/REACH and Partners (<i>both types of grantees</i>)?</li> <li>○ What are the relationships like: Capacity Building grantee and direct grantee, capacity building and sub-grantee?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Strategies on the ground...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>What</u> are the broad strategies and interventions?</li> <li>○ <u>Who</u> is targeted by these interventions?</li> <li>○ What is the rationale for selection of the six geographical areas?</li> <li>○ What enables innovation and response in accordance with the developmental concerns (especially pertaining to education), socio-economic and political context and the profile of children?</li> </ul> <p>Four possible strands to be studied:</p> <p>a. Working to bring children who never been to school,</p>	The questions relate directly with the objectives of the REACH project, whether it has been able to deliver upto now and its ability to do so in the near future and beyond REACH. The recommendations are likely to emanate from this line of enquiry.	-- Document study (USAID/REACH/PARTNER) Discussions with key persons/groups Observations of activity/interventions, like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- classrooms in government schools, ... in bridge course, ... in coaching programs,</li> <li>- Ongoing Training programs</li> <li>- Ongoing Meetings/workshops</li> </ul>

	<p>or have dropped out, back into mainstream schooling, through stop gap arrangements like bridge courses</p> <p>b. Working with the government schooling system</p> <p>c. Alternative initiatives, like NIOS, EGS/NFE centres; own schools</p> <p>d. Support structures like coaching/tuition classes before/after school</p> <p><i>In all the above, look at curriculum, pedagogy, training, community involvement, focusing on access, enrolment, retention and completion/learning...</i></p> <p><b>3. Interventions which complement field strategies</b></p> <p><u>Capacity building</u> of NGOs: Understand the Capacity Building model/approach (grantee/sub grantee...) – how does it work? What is meant by Capacity building? What are the forums for learning and sharing?</p> <p><u>Partnering</u> with NGOs: Is there a coming together locally, regionally and nationally on identified/shared concerns?</p> <p><u>Advocacy</u> – what we mean and understand by it...what have we done so far – locally, regionally, nationally?</p>		
<p><b>D. Experiences and Lessons</b></p>	<p>What are the changes?</p> <p>(i) Access and meaningful education for children at risk?</p> <p>(ii) Enhanced abilities of the organizations engaged in the process?</p> <p>(iii) Enhanced ability of the government system to reach out meaningfully to disadvantaged children living on the margins?</p> <p>(iv) What else?</p> <p>What is their notion of progress, quality?</p> <p>How do they establish that something has changed?</p> <p>How do they monitor?</p> <p>What works? What does not? (Refer to the three sections under C for reference...), Especially in terms of access, achievement/learning</p> <p>How have <i>we</i> as USAID/REACH/partners changed?</p>	<p>These questions should help in the understanding of the extent and nature of changes as a result of the REACH and formulating the recommendations for the remaining course of the program.</p>	<p>-- Documents (publications, audio-visual materials, etc) information and database systems</p> <p>-- Discussions, reflections... with parents, teachers, children, staff, government departments</p> <p>-- Measuring numbers enrolled, learning outcomes - in children? Among the trained NGO staff, government teachers and administrators?</p>
<p><b>E. Challenges and possibilities</b></p>	<p>Where do we go from here?</p> <p>What should we do in the remaining period of project</p>	<p>These questions should help get a sense of the future perspective of the grantees,</p>	<p>Reflections/ discussions with key stakeholders</p>

	<p>support, given budget constraints? What is our positioning/commitment for these interventions beyond REACH?</p> <p>Our notion of sustainability – what is it? Does it exist? Need to look at sustainability in the short term, medium term and long-term...</p> <p>How will we leverage resources – human, material, financial? Where?</p>	<p>their plans and concerns. It would be important to know if (and how) they have sought to link with the government, communities, the private sector and donors.</p>	
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### Enquiry with key stakeholders

The key stakeholders, i.e. the child, parents, community representatives, local NGO, teachers and the government, need to be engaged in discussion regarding the interventions, nature of linkages, experiences, lessons learnt and issues for the future. For each stakeholder and each partner visited, there would be a checklist that is specific to that partner (either direct or capacity building grantee) – its staff, teachers, children, parents, community members etc. The following is a generic questionnaire – the specificity would be built in for each NGO.

#### The Child

Her opinions, questions, concerns and development (separate checklist for children is necessary...)

#### Parents

- Their background,
- What are their expectations from school, bridge course etc.
- *How* do they support all their children to attend school?
- What has changed? (Examples?)
- How do they relate with school? Examples...
- What is the notion of quality?
- How do they envisage continuing education for their children? What kind of education?
- What concerns, questions remain regarding their children's education?

#### Community Representatives

- How do they perceive the REACH interventions for out of school/in school children?
- What are their expectations from it? What has been the experience so far?
- How are they supporting the interventions?
- What has changed? (Examples...?)
- What is the notion of sustainability?
- What is the notion of quality?

- How will the community sustain interventions beyond the REACH?
- What concerns, questions remain regarding education of children in their community?

### **Education Department**

- How do they relate to the REACH interventions?
- What are the expectations? (Is there an MoU?)
- What is the nature of linkages?
- What is the department's role?
- What are the experiences so far?
- What more needs to be done?
- What will the scenario be in the event of REACH moving out/winding up?

### **The Teacher (Govt. school, bridge course, coaching classes etc...questions to be specific depending on whether the setting is governmental, non-govt. etc)**

- Background, experiences so far (brief); understanding of education
- Experiences so far with respect to REACH intervention:
- What is its objective? How does the teacher see the intervention?
- Actual day to day experiences of teaching and being with children; training provided so far, if any, and its relevance/impact; what has changed (numbers of children, their learning, environment in classroom/school) – how are changes recorded, monitored, assessed?
- Relationships with parents – how do parents see the teacher? How do parents support the program?
- What are the concerns of the teacher regarding his/her work?

### **Local NGO (Direct or capacity Building Partner of REACH)**

- Vision/mission, aims of education...
- Analysis of situation...how was it done? Who did it? What is the learning?
- Design of interventions on the ground...in school, support out of school, working with children not in school...
- Experiences: documentation, if any...how is it recorded, monitored, measured, assessed, reviewed?
- Links with govt. community, parents, teachers
- Notion of quality, sustainability...

### **REACH/USAID**

- Conception of REACH; Partner selection process; Rationale and selection of interventions; Partner support; Monitoring systems, documentation
- Platforms for sharing and learning
- Relationship with direct support and capacity building grantees...
- Links with government: state and national levels; Notion of quality, indicators, formats...
- Notion of sustainability – have we reached 'there'?
- What questions and concerns remain?

## Annexure 4 -- Abbreviations

AADI	Action for Ability Development and Inclusion
AEC	Alternative Education Center
ALP/ARP	Accelerated Learning Program/Accelerated Reading Program
BVA	Banvasi Vikas Ashram
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CEMD	Centre for Education Management and Development
CWD	Centre for Women's Development
CINI	Child in Need Institute
CLPOA	City Level Program of Action
DPEP	District Primary Education Program
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EGS	Education Guarantee Scheme
HRD	Human Resource Development
LCS	Learning Classroom Series
MCD	Municipal Corporation of Delhi
MLL	Minimum Levels of Learning
NBJK	Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIOS	National Institute for Open Schooling
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
QEAT	Quality Education assessment Tool
REACH	Reaching and Educating at risk Children
RETF	Right to Education Task Force
SARD	Society for All Round Development
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SVYM	Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement
STT	Student Tracking Tool
SDMC	School development and Management Committees
SLO	Specific Learning Objective
TTF	The Teacher Foundation
UEE	Universalisation of Elementary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International development
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UIN	Unique Identification Number



## Annexure 5 -- List of People Met

### Delhi

**Prayas:** Naushad Khan, Moushami Sarangi, Rajib Haldar, Priyanka

**Prayas Sub grantees:** Zuber, Sakshi, Neha, Sakshi, Deepak, IRAM, Ambrish, IRAM, Baby Priyadarshini, IRAM, Lalit, East and West Society, Sayeed Ahmed, EFRAH, Raiz Ahmad, EFRAH, Deepika, Abhas, Javed, Abhas, Nirmal Kaur, Navsrishti

**SARD:** Pradeep Kumar, Sudhir Bhatnagar, (to be added)

**Deepalaya:** T. K Matthew, Peter

**AADI:** Mamta

**Katha:** Parminder, Anand Rana

**DISHA:** Shobhna Radhakrishna, R. L Chopra Roshan Lal, Devendra Kumar, Ashok Kumar, Ravi Kumar srivastava, Lakshmi Chauhan, Bimla Sharma, Sunitha Sharma, Kapil Jain, Ramesh Kumar, Abhay Kumar, Preetpal, Ravi Chopra. **Teachers:** Ritu Pahuja, Bhoop Singh Yadav, Nirupma Saxena, Shashi Babar, Lalit Sharma, Jai Prakash, Hari Ram Bhatti, Kiran Devi, D. P Bhaskar, Anuradha Sharma, R.S Sanwaria

### Jharkhand

**Badlao Foundation:** ??? REACH Coordinator (to be found out...)

**CWD:** Sister Vimla Verghese, Director; Ashok Kumar Singh, Amit Bodra, Jayant Toppo, Manjula Ekka, Mary Anastasia Lugun, Laldeo Prasad.

**BVA:** Suresh Shakti, Kuldip Mishra, Beena Lall, Nibha Sinha, Rupa Kumari, Renu Kumari

**NBJK:** Girija Satish, Executive Director; Adhim Mahto; Arif

**NBJK Sub-grantees:** Umesh Kumar, Samajik Parivartan Sansthan, Giridih; Prabhat Kumar Singh, VEDIC Society, Palamau; Filman, Lok Purna Kendra, Chatra; Ajay Kumar Sinha, BPYP, Latehar; Banmali Sahu, GNK Gumla; Barnali Chakrabarty and Arbind Tiwary, YUVA, East Singhbhum; Arjun Kumar, Jan Sahbhagi Kendra

**Others:** Rajnikant Verma, State Project Officer, JEPC, Ranchi, Jharkhand; Vinoba Gautam, UNICEF

### Kolkata

**CINI Asha:** Partha Ray, Assistant Director; Sujata Mullick, Sougata Bhattacharjya, Shyamsunder Pahari, Sanghamitra Nath, Seemantini De, Anuttma Sanyal, Namrata Kaur, Ruth Raju, Poushali Dutt and Sagar Ghosh and Susanta Saha.

**CINI Asha sub-grantees:** Shikha Mitra, Secretary, and staff of AIWC ECC; Probir Basu and other staff of SPAN

**Vikramshila Education Society:** Shubhra Chatterjee, Kanupriya Jhunjunwala and Bashundhara

**Vikramshila sub-grantees:** Samina Alam, Project Coordinator, and other staff of Banga Education Society; Staff of Humanity Association.

**Manovikas Kendra:** Dr Sharda Fatehpuria, A K Sanyal, Ela Dutta, Mahua Paul, Rakhi Biswas, Shyamashree Chakraborty, Somnath Chatterjee and Papri Bose

**CLPoA:** Dhritiman, Nandini, Achintya

**Sanlaap:** Satyaki, Ipsita, Sutapa

**IPER:** Sushmita, Ratna

**Others:** Debaditya Chakraborty, Principal Secretary, School Education, Government of West Bengal

### **North Karnataka**

**TTF:** Marianne Lobo

**Akshara:** Vijay Kulkarni, Mahantayya Swamy, Govind Dandin, Bande Rao Patwari, Prema

**Akshara Sub grantees:** Pramod Kulkarni, Prerana, Madhvacharya, Prerana, Vidya G. Patil,

Prerana, Ranganna, Prerana, Jambamma G, Prerana, Shanti Ranjan Das, Jan Kalyan,

Sugurayya Swami, GRAMS Teachers: Mallamma, Padmaja

**SVYM:** Mamatha, Rajendra Prasad, Santhosh Shetty

**SVYM Sub grantees:** Harish, Abhivruddhi, Ravi Tonashyal, Abhivruddhi, C. Thippesh,

READS, T. Ramanjanaya, SNEHA, K.M Manjunathaiah, SNEHA, Gururaj, Bhoruka

Charitable Trust, Siddu Pujari, POWER, Nadaf, POWER, B. K Barlaya, BIRDS, Prakash, B.

K, BIRDS, Saroja, Vishala, Satyavati, Vishala, B. C Reddy, Seva, Sadanand M.P, Seva

**Agastya:** Bala Warriar, Ram Kishen, Manju, Hamsa, Suresh, Nandakumar

**TRDC:** Anil Abbi, Geeta Patil, Savitri, Thippeswamy, Vikram, Majid, Harish, Basavaraj

**REACH India:** Dennis Gallagher, Nandini Prasad, Anjali, James, Manjir Ghosh, Saloni,

Arpana...(to be added)

**USAID:** Sourav Banerjee, Madhu Ranjan, Mamta Kohli, (to be added...)

## Annexure 6 -- REACH Mid-Term Review: Schedule

Dates and Days	Neelam Singh	Sheshagiri K M
8 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> May (Mon-Fri)	Planning meetings, including discussions with REACH India and Mamta Kohli of USAID	
16 <sup>th</sup> May (Tue)	Finalisation of the review framework and tools through discussions with Sourav Bannerjee, Mamta Kohli and Madhu Ranjan from USAID and Nandini Prasad and the PME team of REACH India	Not available
22 <sup>nd</sup> May (Mon)	Meeting with Dennis Gallagher	
23 <sup>rd</sup> May (Tue)	Delhi – Ranchi - Hazaribagh Meeting with the four Jharkhand grantees, viz. CWD, Badlao Foundation, BVA and NBJK	Not available
24 <sup>th</sup> May (Wed)	Visit to the CWD, Torpa	Not available
25 <sup>th</sup> May (Thu)	Visit to Banvasi Vikas Ashram at Bagodar, Giridih, and meeting with the staff and interactions with students of the residential bridge course and their parents	Not available
26 <sup>th</sup> May (Fri)	Meeting with NBJK staff and sub-grantees in Hazaribagh	Not available
27 <sup>th</sup> May (Sat)	Visit to NBJK sub-grantee Samajik Parivartan Sansthan in Giridih - Field visit to two centres and interactions with children and parents and meeting with the teachers	Not available
28 <sup>th</sup> May (Sun)	Ranchi-Delhi	Not available
31 <sup>st</sup> May (Wed)	Delhi – Kolkata Meeting with the Kolkata grantees Meeting with the CINI Asha staff	Not available
1 <sup>st</sup> June (Thu)	Visit to CINI Asha sub-grantees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interaction with the AIWC ECC staff and visit to Phoolbagan centre</li> <li>- Interaction with SPAN staff and visit to the coaching centre and meeting with the stakeholders in the field area</li> </ul>	Not available
2 <sup>nd</sup> June (Fri)	Visit to two Vikramshila sub grantees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interactions with Banga Education Society</li> </ul>	Not available

	- Interactions staff of Humanity Association Meeting with Vikramshila staff	
3 <sup>rd</sup> June (Sat)	Meeting with Vikramshila Director, Mrs Shubhra Chatterjee	Not available
4 <sup>th</sup> June (Sun)	Free day	Mumbai-Bangalore
5 <sup>th</sup> June (Mon)	Visit to Manovikas Kendra - Meeting with staff	N. Karnataka field work Bangalore - Meeting with Karnataka Partners: Akshara, SVYM, Agastya, TRDC, TTF
6 <sup>th</sup> June (Tue)	Kolkata – Delhi	Raichur - Akshara + sub grantee
7 <sup>th</sup> June (Wed)	Not available	Raichur - SVYM + sub grantee
8 <sup>th</sup> June (Thu)	Not available	Akshara field visit
9 <sup>th</sup> June (Fri)	Not available	Agastya, Kuknoor
10 <sup>th</sup> June (Sat)	Not available	TRDC, Savanur
11 <sup>th</sup> June (Sun)	Not available	Goa-Mumbai-Delhi
12 <sup>th</sup> June (Mon)	Meeting with the Delhi grantees	
13 <sup>th</sup> June (Tue)	Not available	Prayas meeting; field visit -
14 <sup>th</sup> June (Wed)	Not available	Prayas field visit
15 <sup>th</sup> June (Thu)	Not available	SARD field visit
16 <sup>th</sup> June (Fri)	Not available	Disha field visit
17 <sup>th</sup> June (Sat)	Not available	Disha field visit
18 <sup>th</sup> June (Sun)	Not available	
19 <sup>th</sup> June (Mon)	Not available	
20 <sup>th</sup> June (Tue)		
21 <sup>st</sup> June (Wed)		
22 <sup>nd</sup> June (Thu)	Analysis of findings	
23 <sup>rd</sup> June (Fri)	Analysis of findings	
24 <sup>th</sup> June (Sat)	Analysis of findings	
25 <sup>th</sup> June (Sun)		
26 <sup>th</sup> June (Mon)	Sharing session with REACH India staff	
27 <sup>th</sup> June (Tue)	Drafting of report	
28 <sup>th</sup> June (Wed)	Drafting of report	
3 <sup>rd</sup> July (Mon)	Sharing session with USAID staff	
Up to 15 <sup>th</sup> July	Finalization of report	