Impact Assessment of the Quality Improvement in Primary Education Programme

Implemented by

M V Foundation (MVF)

Submitted by

Best Practices Foundation

on

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABF	Axis Bank Foundation
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
BC	Backward Caste
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCE	Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation
CLAP	Children's Language Acceleration Programme
CLIP	Children's Language Improvement Programme
CRPF	Child Rights Protection Forum
DA	District Administrator
DEO	District Education Officer
DPO	District Resource Person
DO	District Officer
DPEP	Department of Primary Education Programme
EFA	Education for All
EVS	Environmental Sciences
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GP	Gram Panchayat
GRC	Grievance Redressal Committee
HM	Head Master
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
MDM	Midday Meal
MEO	Mandal Education Officer
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MP	MandalParishad
MPDO	MandalParishad Development Officer
MRO	Mandal Resource Officer
MRP	Mandal Resource Person
MVF	MumidipudiVenkatarangaiya Foundation
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NPEGEL	National Programme Education for Girls at Elementary Level
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
PET	Physical Education Teachers
PHC	Primary Health Centre
PO	Project Officer
PS	Primary School
RBC	Residential Bridge Course
RTE	Right to (Free & Compulsory) Education
RTI	Right to Information
RVM	Rajiv Vidya Mission
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCERT	State Council of Education Research and Training
SF	Subject Forum
SHG	Self-Help Group
SI	Sub-Inspector
SMC	School Monitoring Committee
SRG	State Resource Group
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TFCR	Teachers' Forum for Child Rights
TLM	Teaching Learning Material
TOT	Training of Trainers
UPS	Upper Primary School
VO	Village Organisation
ZPTC	ZillaParishad Territorial Constituencies
ZP	ZillaParishad

1. Purpose of the Review

M Ventakatarangaiya Foundation (henceforth MVF) has been implementing the 'Quality Improvement in Primary Education' programme in Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh with the support of Axis Bank Foundation (ABF) since August 2007. So far, ABF has sanctioned three projects to MVF - 2007 to 2010, 2010 to 2012, and 2012 to 2013. This report is focusing in particular on the grant period of 2012-1013. However, as the project of 2012-13 is a continuation of previous projects in the area, therefore the findings discussed in this report is not confined to the activities undertaken in the project year of 2012-13 but as a continuation of all the previous projects. With a core purpose of 'ensuring every child is in school', the objective of the project shifted from 'empowering schools to deliver quality education' in the first project (2007-2010) to 'empowering all stakeholders involved in ensuring quality education' in the current project (2012-13). The major objectives of this study are:

- To study the aims and objectives of the programme and activities to achieve them;
- To study the impact of the programme on children and communities;
- To analyse the sustainability of the programme.
- To elicit lessons learnt and recommend ways forward for the next phase of project.

1.1 Methodology

Axis bank has supported the endeavour of the MVF in three phases: 2007-2010, 2010-12, and 2012-13. The project has covered 156 GPs from nine mandals of Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh (See Figure 1: Map of Project and Sample Study Areas). With the help of MVF, six project gram panchayats (GPs) from six different mandals of the district were selected for the study and visited from 4th to 7th December, 2013. See Table 1 for Sample GPs studied. It is important to mention here that

Figure 1: Project sites and study sample sites

● MVF's Project area
□ BPF study sample sites

MVF selected GPs for the study; therefore this study uses an appreciative inquiry method to
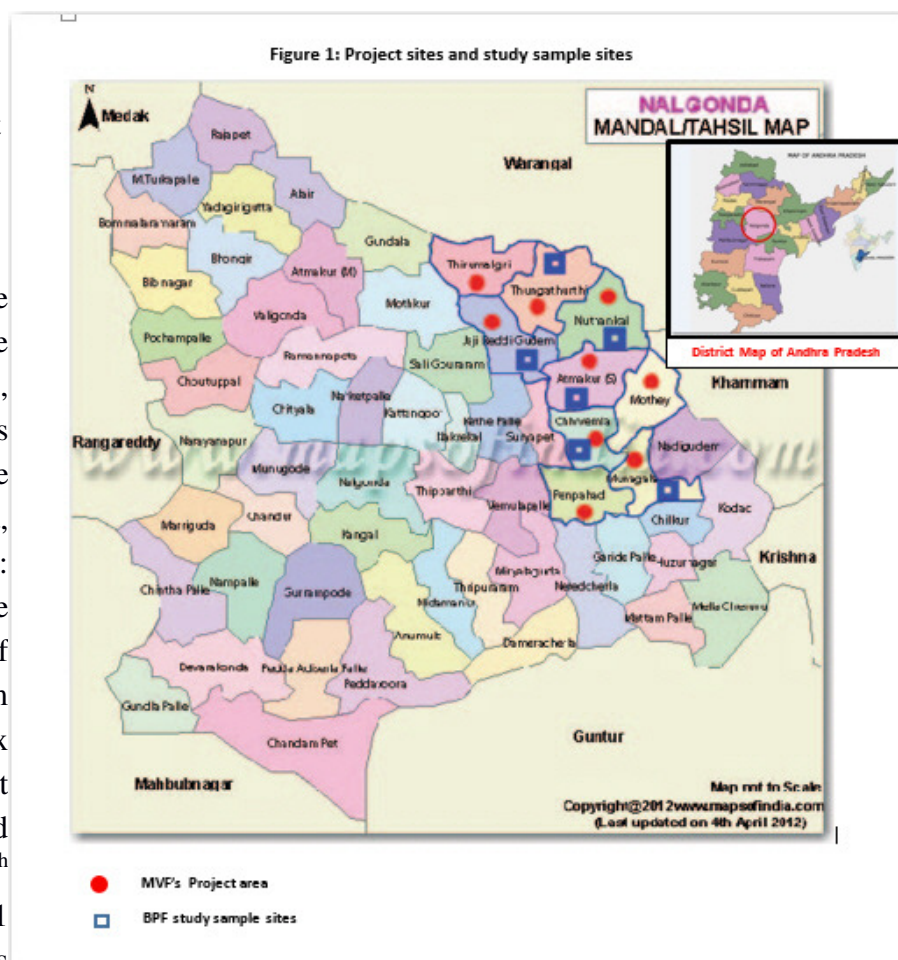
represent an impact assessment of the best practices of MVF's work and positively biased in favour of the achievements of the ABF funded programme

Table 1: Project and sample study sites

	Date	Mandal	Gram Panchayat	Groups interviewed	Case studies
1	December 4, 2013	Chivemla	Chandapatla	GP members, SMC members, Teachers and Student communities	
	December 4, 2013			Discussion with Field Staff of MVF	
2	December 5, 2013	Thungathurthy	Reddy Gudam	GP members, SMC members, Teachers and Student communities	
4.	December 5, 2013	Arvapally (JajiReddiGudum)	Parasayapalli	GP Members, SMC members, Teachers and Student Committee	
				Discussion with members of Subject Forums	
3	December 6, 2013	Nuthankal	Bikkumalla	GP members, SMC members, Teachers and Student committee	A case study of A. Rajith: A child labour who joined Residential Bridge Course
4	December 6, 2013	Athmakur (S)	Gattikal	GP members, SMC members, Student Committee	▪ Case study of summer school volunteers ▪ Case study of a CRPF member ▪ A Case study of Mr.Lingaiah: SMC member who used to be a child labourer.
	December 6, 2013			Teachers Forum for Child Rights (TFCR)	
5	December 7, 2013	Munagala	Kokkireni	GP members, SMC members, school children	
6	December 7, 2013			Mandal Education Officer (MEO) of PenpahadMandal, Summer School Volunteers, Youth Groups members, *Mahila Sanghas' members,* Child Rights Protection Forum (CRPF) members	

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interviews were conducted using a multi stakeholder analysis covering a broad spectrum of stakeholders of the project like, GP members, School Monitoring Committees (SMCs), teachers, school children, members of Children Committees, members of Youth groups, and members of Child Rights Protection Forum (CRPF) at village level. Also, at the district level, group discussions were held with members of Subject Forums, summer school volunteers, members of SHGs, members of CRPF and members of TGRF. The team interviewed the Mandal Education Officer of PenpahadMandal to discuss the issues of children education in the Mandal. Discussions with core team members of MVF and field staff of the project were also conducted to understand the project and its activities. Internal documents of MVF, publications and statistical data along with many other documents and statistics on education are consulted while writing the report.

2. The Context

To understand the work of MVF which works within the public education school system in Andhra Pradesh, it is important to understand the context namely a) the situation of education in India and the structure of the education government apparatus b) the Right to Education Act (2009). Second this section then provides a broad description of the MVF programme and the stakeholders it engages with.

2.1   Education in India

According to Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), about 8.1 million Indian children are outside the school system due to a lack of access to, or owing to an absence of, quality education in schools[1]. Since the late 1960s the Government of India (GOI) has sought to evolve strategies to address this lack of equity, reach, and quality in education. The GOI introduced a series of key policies in order to realise a constitutional mandate requiring the provision of universal education up to the age of 14.

In 1968, the government adopted a national policy whose purpose was to ensure that all regions of the country had equal access to educational facilities, and a Common School System, including a common curriculum[2]. The goal of the subsequent National Policy on Education (1986) was to refine and systematise the implementation of the earlier policy[3]. The 1990s saw the emergence of an international push in favour of compulsory universal elementary education—the Education for All (EFA)[4] initiative—by the start of the new millennium. In accordance with this international consensus, and as part of a broader process of economic liberalisation, the Indian government decided to open the Indian public education sector to foreign funding for the first time. This decision gave rise to the World Bank funded District Primary Education Programme or DPEP (1994). Guided by the 73rd amendment's emphasis on decentralised government, the DPEP empowered district governments to develop and implement district-specific iterations of national educational policy. Determined to maximise this decentralised approach in achieving universal

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    Report to the People on Education, 2009-2010, p. vii.http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/Report-english_0.pdf (accessed on 18-12-13). Many of these children belong to rural, SC and ST communities that are struggling for access to a wide range of basic services and facilities including *pucca* homes, clean drinking and running water, and sanitation.

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    National Policy on Education (1986), p. 5, MHRD.http://www.dise.in/Downloads/Publications/Publications%202000-01/ar2001.pdf

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    Already the government was talking about a 'new thrust in elementary education' which was to focus on 'universal access and enrolment' as well as 'substantial improvement in quality of education', along with a 'child centered approach' and better school facilities. NPE (1986), p. 13.

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    Progress towards universal access and retention: analytic report, 2001. http://www.dise.in/Downloads/Publications/Publications%202000-01/ar2001.pdf

elementary education, the government introduced the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* scheme (SSA) in 2002. The structure of the Educational Administrative apparatus is provided below (Figure 2). At the time of the scheme's implementation, approximately 39 out of 200 million children were still not receiving any schooling[5]. A key aim of the SSA programme therefore, was to achieve universal enrolment of all children in the 6-14 age brackets by 2010.

Figure 2: Structure of the Educational Administrative Apparatus
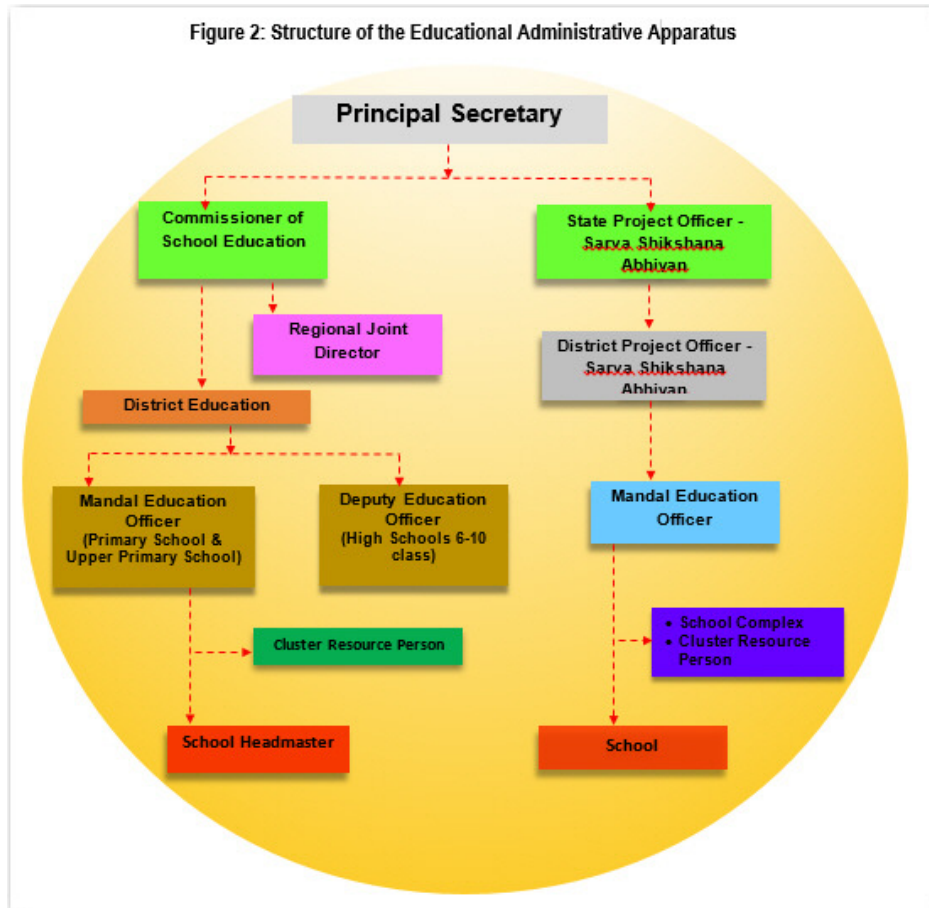
By 2009, according to the International Development Association (IDA), an estimated 98 per cent of all homes in the country had a primary school within 1 kilometre's reach. Enrolment overall "increased from 101.16 million in 2002-03 to 131.85 million in 2006-07 and further to 134.38 million in 2008-09[6]." With regard to equity, by 2008 the number of girls in school had increased from a ratio of 90 girls to every 100 boys at the start of the SSA in 2002 to 93 girls per 100 boys. Moreover "[p]ublic school enrolment of children from long-deprived communities-Scheduled

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    Making Elementary Education Universal, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/IDA/0,,contentMDK:21388039~menuPK:3266877~pagePK:51236175~piPK:437394~theSitePK:73154,00.html

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    Elementary Education in India 2008-2009, National University of Educational Planning and Administrationhttp://dise.in/Downloads/Publications/Publications%202008-09/AR%202008-09/Analytical%20Tables.pdf

Castes and Scheduled Tribes - now exceed[ed] their shares in the general population.[7]"

While these accomplishments were laudable, the quality of elementary schooling - long on the country's education agenda - continued to suffer. Those children who did attend school had to contend with inadequate infrastructure (including few to no toilets, no drinking or even running water and a limited number of classrooms); teacher absenteeism, an imbalanced teacher-student ratio, poor or un-stimulating instruction, lack of amenities such as a playground and sports material, and a punitive learning environment involving corporal punishment and mental harassment. Therefore, while *universalizing* elementary education constituted the focal point of the SSA's efforts, it became apparent that equally serious attention needed to be paid to securing the *quality* of education being meted out. The Right of Children To Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act (2009), a landmark endeavour, is the Indian government's most recent effort to tackle these problems in the public education system.

Right to Education Act (2009)

The RTE, passed in 2009, guarantees free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6-14[8]. See Annexure 1 for the RTE (2009). In the wake of this act, "India has moved forward to a rights based framework that casts a legal obligation on the Central and State Governments to implement this fundamental child right as enshrined in the (*sic*) Article 21A of the Constitution, in accordance with the provisions of the RTE Act.[9]" In accordance with the directives of the act, there has been a shift in the government and the SSA's definition of terms like 'equity' and 'access'. Equity means "not only equal opportunity, but also creation of conditions in which the disadvantaged sections of the society – children of SC, ST, Muslim minority, landless agricultural workers and children with special needs, etc. – can avail of the opportunity to learn"[10]. In order to achieve true equity then, the quality of the learning environment must also be attended to. This requires a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system that is grounded in community participation. The RTE has mandated that each school form a School Monitoring Committee (SMC) consisting of parents, teachers, and representatives from local government institutions. SMCs not only create a sense of ownership among community members towards the school system, they also establish a sense of accountability on the part of teachers and head masters towards the families and communities of the children who have been placed in their care. Other stipulations are improved

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Making Elementary Education Universal,http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/IDA/0,,contentMDK:21388039~menuPK:3266877~pagePK:51236175~piPK:437394~theSitePK:73154,00.html

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"The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards". Ministry of Human Resources and Development.http://mhrd.gov.in/rte

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MHRD Schemes, http://mhrd.gov.in/schemes

teacher training, prohibiting teachers from teaching outside the system (e.g.: private tuition), hiring teachers with the requisite qualifications, and continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) of students' performance.

Against this backdrop of education, MVF, an organisation working towards the 'right to education of all children' since 1991, is working to ensure this right through its various innovative methods. In this study, we will try to gauge the processes/methods adopted by MVF, its impact, and the constraints and challenges faced by them.

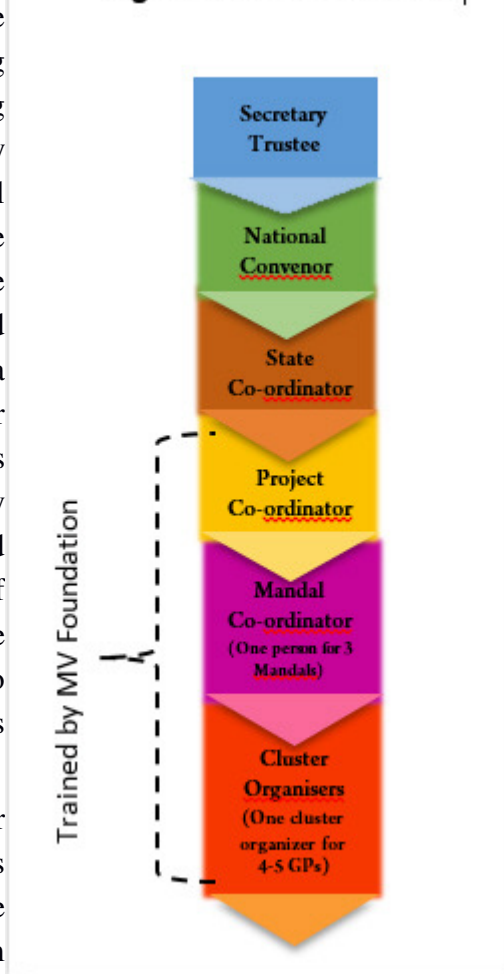## 2.2. M.V. FOUNDATION: A JOURNEY TOWARDS QUALITY 'EDUCATION FOR ALL'

Established as a trust in 1981, in Ranga Reddy district in the state of Andhra Pradesh, the journey of MVFbegan by working on issues of land, housing, and minimum wages and running of cooperatives and non-formal education centres. Its primary aim in the field of education then was to provide poor, local students with grants to help them complete their schooling, the target group being the Scheduled Caste community. By the 1990s it widened to include all children and the focus had moved towards issues of bonded labour. This came about as a result of the link discovered by MVF in their course of their work on the issue of minimum wages, between the low wages of the women workforce and their male counterparts, namely their husband and children who were working as bonded labour on the same farms. MVF thus began work in the field of child labour in three villages of Ranga Reddy district in the backward region of Telengana and in 1991 it was able to release and rehabilitate 15 child labourers. Figure 3 provides the structure of MVF.

Figure 3: Structure of MVF

During this time, MVF started involving local youth in their campaign to abolish child labour and bolster children's enrolment in schools. Initially, 40 youths participated in the household surveys, walking from village to village and from home to home and interviewing families to see whether the children in their households were in school or not.

Faced with the reality of poorly equipped schools, and the overall absence of schools within 3 kms of each village, MVF started petitioning the government to set up schools and additional classrooms. In order to drum up further community support MVF started to liaise with the village *Sarpanches*. By 1998-1999 MVF had begun mobilising multiple stakeholders simultaneously. Often times, when MVF staff approached local government stakeholders to address a problem, both parties would realise that a policy tailored to tackle the issue at hand had yet to be formulated. These ad-hoc village-level policy decisions eventually effected policy change at the district level and further up.

By the year 2000, MVF had implemented its programme in 18 mandals and 500 villages of Ranga Reddy district; 85 villages had been made child labour free and 4,000 bonded labourers had been released with the support of 1,600 education activists and 8,000 youth volunteers. Furthermore, in 168 villages every child in the 5-14 age group is in school; in 400 villages every child in the 5-11 years age group is in school. To mainstream children freed from child labour, MVF innovated bridge courses (See Box 1 for a case study of the impact of bridge courses on A. Rajith).

Box 1: A Journey to Gram Panchayat

A Rajith, age 23 years, is a mother of a six years old girl and a three years old boy. Her daughter is studying in class 1st in the village government school. She lives in Bikkumalla GP of NutankalMandal, with her family.

Rajith lost both of her parents when she was very young. She lived with her old grandmother and worked as an agricultural labour in the village. After the campaign of MV Foundation in her village, she was brought to the Residential Bridge Course (RBC) camp in 2001 as she was then 11 years old (only the children under nine years of age are enrolled directly into the school). She lived in the RBC camp for a year to complete her Bridge Course and then joined regular school in class VI at her village. She continued her studies for another three years - till class VIII. After then she shifted to her maternal uncle's house in Hyderabad for two years. But, there she was not enrolled in any school. By the end of 2008, she got married to a person from her village. Her husband, Mr. Ramaih, who was working as a bonded labour, was also rescued by the MV Foundation in the year 2000.

In 2009, she was approached by the villagers to work in MGNREGA programme as a mobilizer because she was meets the requirement (mobilize should be 8th pass) and was free. Her work as a mobilizer has strengthened her ability to work with a community. Before the election (held in 2013), the community gave her the confidence to join politics and contest in the panchayat election. Now, she is the vice-president of the village panchayat. Her education has given her the confidence to come out of the house and work for the welfare of her village.

Potable water is an issue for most of the women in the village. As a vice-president of the Gram Panchayat and a ward member, she wants to get water connection for all the households in her ward.

Residential Bridge Course Camps

When a child above nine years is mobilized to attend school, then rather than sending him/her to a regular school, he/she is sent to a Residential Bridge Course camps (RBC) where he/she can finish the courses taught in class 1st to 5th in his/her own pace and then go on to enroll in regular schools.

RBC is regarded by the Sarva SikshaAbhiyaan as being an important

Child labour freed include 5000 adolescent girls, a group which has traditionally been denied access to education because of the institution of child marriage. MVF expanded its work geographically since then and today the organisation has reached around 1,046,688 children. Of which, 5,13,798 children are from fourteen districts of Andhra Pradesh, and rest are from Tamil Nadu (5,13,798), Bihar (2,107), Madhya Pradesh (3,57,241) and Chattisgarh (500).

MVF has a unique philosophy on the child labour issue, which is set out in a charter, termed as 'The Non-Negotiables'[11] (see Figure 4). The fundamental premise of the Non-Negotiables is that any form of child labour is disastrous to a child's education, including child labour at home and thus there should be no compromise at all in this respect.

In the year 2005, MVF started a nation-wide post card and signature campaign to amend the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986[12] which continues to distinguish between hazardous

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[11]

   Mahajan (2004)., *MVF India Education as Empowerment*

[12]

     The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 prohibits the employment of children in 18 occupations and 65 processes and regulates the working conditions of children in employment where they are not prohibited from working.
http://labour.nic.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/ActsandRules/SectionoftheSociety/TheChildLabourProh

and non-hazardous child labour, thus justifying children working in the so-called 'non-hazardous' vocations, including the large numbers of children in farm work/agriculture.

Figure 4: Non-Negotiables of MVF Philisophy
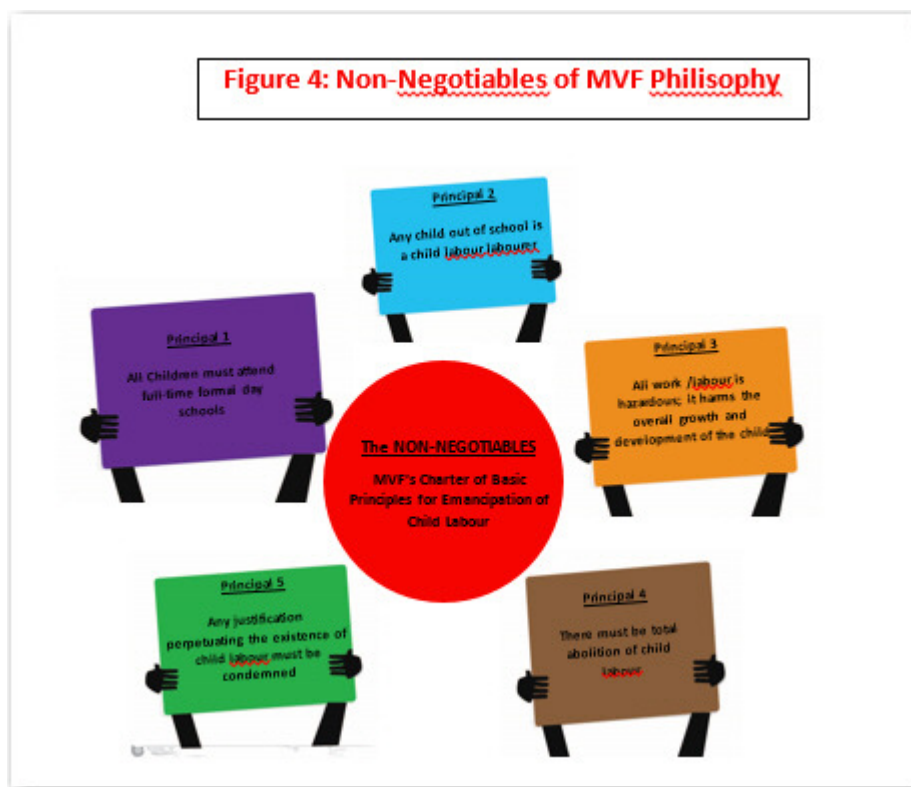
2.3. The 'Quality Improvement in Primary Education Programme

Axis Bank Foundation has been supporting MVF in the implementation of its programme 'Quality Improvement in Primary Education in Nalgonda District' since September 2007. This quality programme reflects a change in focus from quantity to quality in the central government's education policy, in line with the global shift[13] towards providing a quality education to all children given that 'millions of children are leaving school without having acquired basic skills'.[14]

Before 2010, their programmes focused on 'changing the environment of the school to make the school a child friendly and lively'[15] place by providing children with school materials. MVF also intervened by forming children's committees in that period. In the second phase of the programme (2010-2012), the scope of the intervention was expanded to 226 schools under 9 mandals and resources such as subject forums, *melas*, and TLMs were generated. Summer Revision schools followed as a result of subject forums. At the same time another major intervention was the

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The World conference in Jomtien in 1990 and the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 augured for a system of education which caters for an equal access to quality education for all children.

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Education for All (EFA) Report 2010

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As per Mr Dhananjay in FDG with MVF resource persons, 8December 2013.

preparation of GPs through the formation of sub-committees on education. When SMCs became mandatory in schools in 2011, MVF staff started to train SMCs to participate in schools. 'We prepared both SMCs and schools in accommodating each other so that SMCs can conduct regular meetings within the schools and also participate in activities we undertook earlier'[16]. Then in the period 2012-2013 'influencing learning outcomes' became central to MVF's interventions. Annexure 2 provides a detailed outline of all activities, year-wise.

Although the programme's title is *'Quality Improvement in Primary Education Programme in Nalgonda District,* MVF works on the premise that the quality argument should not be superior to the argument of keeping the child in school. 'This is not to be misinterpreted that our organisation does not want quality but that quality runs parallel to the objective of keeping the children in school', says the Secretary of MVF, Mr Vikram[17]. For instance minimum drop-outs is a qualitative parameter according to MVF as it is a way of ensuring that children are together in a separate space for a defined period of time and that space excludes them from the work atmosphere.

Figure 4b: Stakeholders of the Project

2.4   Stakeholders of the project

A key feature of MVF's strategy is to involve the community in the ownership and management of the programme. MVF entered Nalgonda in a programmatic way in 2001. They mobilize local communities like GP members and community based groups around rights-based issues faced by children. Figure 4b depicts the various stake holders of the project.

Gram Panchayats (GPs)

Because of their crucial position and proximity with the village community, Gram Panchayats have a significant role to play at the village level and certainly in MVF's drive towards achieving quality education and the protection of child rights in their communities.. They are ideally suited for this task because they have direct access to children, schools and parents. They are equipped to monitor all public institutions such as schools, social welfare hostels, Anganwadi Centers, Sub-centers of Health Departments and the Primary Health Centers. They have the authority to engage with officials of all concerned Departments and to hold them accountable, in the best interests of

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As said in the staff meeting, 8December 2013.

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Interview with the Secretary of MVF, Mr Vikram, 8December 2013

children. According to the Andhra Pradesh RTE mandate "The Gram Panchayat shall be the first level of grievance redressal of children, parents and the public"[18]. However Grievance Redressal Committees (GRCs) should be constituted at mandal, districts and state levels. Hence MVF has enlisted the support of GPs in mobilising local resources for the school and in pressurising the higher level education bureaucracy. This high level of involvement provides both visibility and increases the legitimacy of MVF's interventions.

SMCs

The RTE mandates that each school constitute a management committee (SMC), whose purpose is to (1) monitor the functioning of schools; (2) prepare and recommend a school development plan; (3) monitor the utilisation of the grants received from the appropriate government or local authority or any other source. Therefore, SMCs constitute another key partner group that MVF has chosen to work with, to achieve the objectives of the programme; thus MVF staff facilitates the formation of SMCs and resources are devoted to strengthening the capacity of SMCs to help them better deliver their duties in the monitoring and planning of school processes and development.

Child Right Protection Forum (CRPF)

Mobilized by the discussions, many people came forward to support the cause of children and actively participated in the campaigns against child labour and child marriage. These active members were organized under Child Right Protection Forum (henceforth CRPF) at village, mandal, district and state levels by MVF. Membership of CRPF cuts across caste, creed and economic status. Members of CRPF works collectively to resolve issues related to child rights, child education, childlabour and child marriage. At times, they have approached the local authorities to intervene in the issues related to child marriage or child labour. After the exit of MVF from a village, it would be the responsibility of CRPF to continue the programme in the district. The CRPF is mobilized in an extent that now they can carry out the issue of child-rights in the district with minimum support provided by MVF. The District CRPF Committee was registered under the State Society Act in 2004. According to V, Sudhir, District Convener of CRPF, "The CRPF was a result of community response to MVF's work."

Teachers Forum for Child Rights (TFCR)

Not legally mandated by the government, the Teachers Forum for Child Rights (henceforth TFCR), established in 1996 is a group of public school teachers who believe that the teachers' role extends beyond the school and up to the household. TFCR recognises schools as the only institutions that keep children out of work. MVF works in conjunction with TFCRs to mainstream and institutionalise quality and compulsory primary education and to create awareness of the RTE act

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Source Links- http://www.ncpcr.gov.in/childrights_panchayat.htmand http://www.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/lgdi/rtewatch/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Amendment-GO-on-RTE-Rules.pdf?q=blog/RTE/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Amendment-GO-on-RTE-Rules.pdf haven't changed anything in the writing for the GP grievance redressalbeacuse that is a rule issued in the Andhar Pradesh RTE- 2010 abstract.

among parents and community members. Discussions in the TFCR meetings subsequently led to the creation of subject forums, which has now evolved into a separate institution of its own.

Self Help Groups (SHGs) or *Mahila Sanghas*

Under the employment generation drive of Government of India, the formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) are promoted all over the country. Particularly in Andhra, many women in villages are associated with these SHGs. Therefore, to tap the women force of villages, MVF has motivated SHGs to join the drive and campaigns for the abolition of child labour and education for children. MVF staff conduct regular meetings with SHGs where they discuss child related issues and also train SHG members on the RTE and entitlements such as the mid-day meals.

Youth Groups

'Youth groups' are an integral part of the landscape of every village in Andhra Pradesh. Registered or unregistered groups consist of village youths (mostly of men) in the age group of 18-30 years. The general body of the group consists of seven members, i.e. President, Vice-President, Secretary, General Secretary, Treasurer and two executive members. The group meets monthly to discuss the progress and to plan for the next month. The groups often consult villagers to chart out their activities in the village.

Village youth have long proved to be among the best allies of the MVF in its campaign against child labour and its drive to enrol children in formal education (Wazir and Shaith, 2009). In most cases, MVF approaches youth groups when they enter a new village. Staff of MVF discuss the issues of child labour and their education with the youth groups, and mobilize them to participate in the campaign against Child Labour and for Child Education in their village. These youth groups play an essential role by disbursing information about the programme among villagers, conducting regular meetings with the community, and carry out preliminary survey of the village with the support of MVF staff.

Under the ABF supported programme, MVF has worked with 1,221 youth groups from nine mandals of the Nalgonda district. MVF trained these groups on the RTE, child rights, child marriage, child labour and RTI. These groups work alongside MVF volunteers to mobilize children to attend school and to convince parents and employers about the importance of education for children.

Government Officials

MVF posits that 'the state is the instrument of the people and the poor could create space in the polity for their struggle'.[19] From that stance, MVF chose to work with existing institutions rather than set up parallel institutions. It tries to engage the state at all levels in its undertakings. MVF staff train headmasters, teachers; government officials such as the Mandal Education Officers (MEOs), District Education Officers (DEOs) and the District Administrator. They are frequently invited to participate in MVF meetings on planned activities such as summer camps and MVF

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  Mahahan (2004), MVF INDIA : Education as Empowerment.

brings together the SSA and the community through review committees and through multiple other community-based activities. This engagement has built ownership of the education administration over the programme activities of MVF.

3. Impact of the 'Quality Improvement in Primary Education Programme in Nalgonda District'

The impact of the MVF programme has been presented as a response to two primary objectives:

- To ensure all the children are in school
- To improve quality of school education

The following section analyses each of these objectives, examining MVF's strategies to achieve the objective and the programme activities implemented, against the outputs and outcomes that result from these strategies and activities.

3.1 Objective 1: To ensure all the children are in school

MVF's main strategies employed to ensure all children are in school include the engagement and mobilization of all stakeholders to ensure attendance and to create a child friendly environment in schools to attract children and parents. A summary of the strategies, activities and outcomes for Objective 1 are depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Strategies, Activities and Outcomes for Objective 1
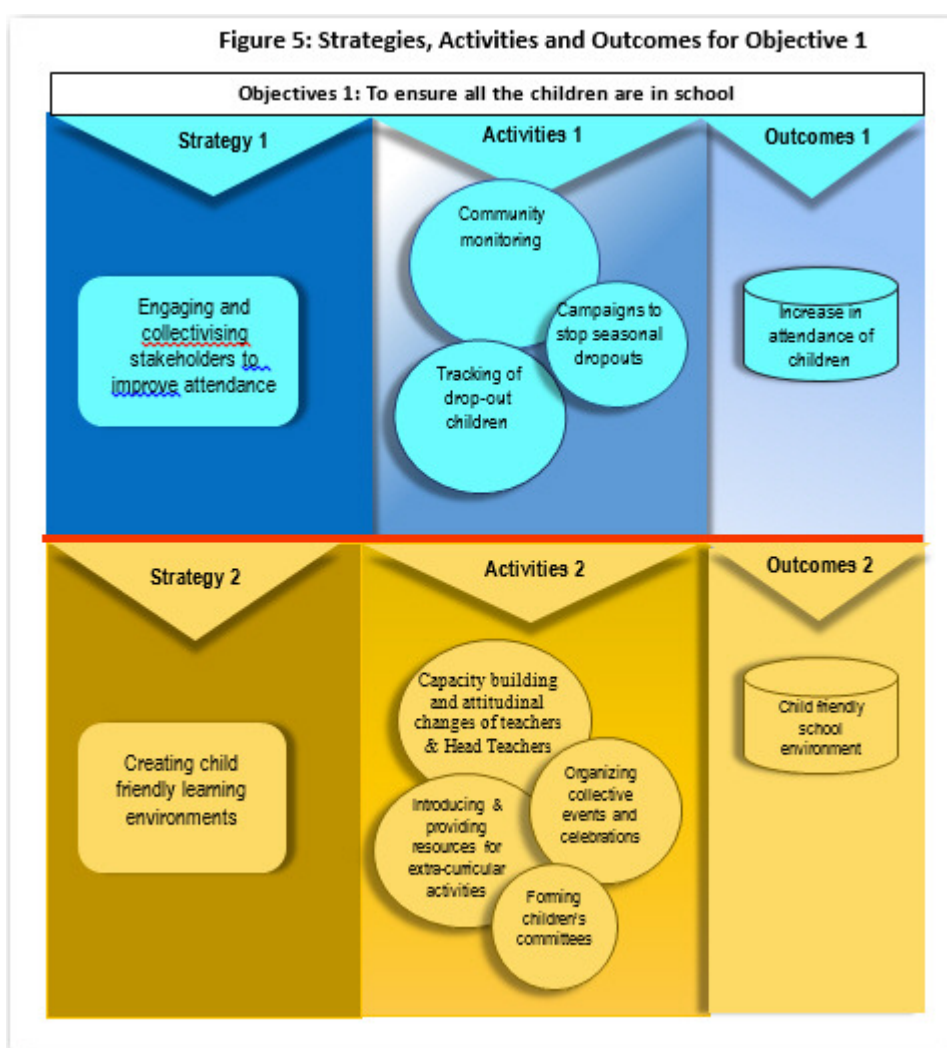
Strategy 1: Engaging and collectivizing stakeholders for ensuring attendance

Activities to ensure attendance in schools

    i. ***Ensuring Attendance of Children through Community Monitoring***: The objective of MVF in building awareness is not only to disseminate information but also to build consensus of stakeholders, local ownership and bring together the community on the issues of child rights and their education. Regular meetings, door to door campaigns and training programmes of MVF have helped evolve a child friendly environment in the area. This has motivated community groups to monitor schools in terms of the number of children present but also to mobilize parents to send their children to school. Under the guidance of MVF, youth groups undertook a door to door survey of school and non-school going children in their GP[20]. Based on this, community groups convinced parents of the non-school going children to send their children back to school.

        Another strategy utilized by MVF was to incorporate role of teachers and school student to track down the absent students. Like, in case of a long absence of certain student, the teacher sends the member of an 'information committee' to enquire the reason of a non-attendance, and then share the information with SMCs and CRPF. Then the members of the community groups visits the house of an absentee student, and discuss the reason of absenteeism of student from school and also try to sort out the issue[21].

    ii. ***Tracking of Drop-out Children***: MVF has developed a very systematic method of tracking drop-out children known as COHORT. Under this mechanism, MVF gets the data of drop-outs from the school and then tracks them with the help of CRPF and Youth Group members of the village. After tracking the children, the MVF with the support of the community members visits the houses of the dropped-out children and encourage parents to send their ward to school. If the child given for bonded labour or working in field, then the community also calls government officials from labour and education department to put pressure on employer to release children and send them to school.

    iii. ***Campaign to Eliminate Seasonal Drop-outs:*** Seasonal drop-outs are common in rural areas during the agricultural seasons when children are employed to do agricultural work. To prevent this, MVF along with the local community groups conduct door to door campaigns to generate awareness about the child labour act and RTE, especially among parents and employers. The members of CRPF visit the houses of dropped out children to convince their parents to send their children to school. Employers are also asked not to employ children in field. However, many employers are not willing to agree with members as employing children cost them less in compare to a grown-up person. In such cases, community group members approach MRO or police to intervene.

Impacts on Attendance

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       Based on the discussion with Youth Group Members on December 7, 2013

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       Discussion with student committees and MVF staff

The main impact has been an increase in attendance rates in schools through community intervention and monitoring.

Increase in Attendance of Children: Building awareness of the community has led to the change in the perception of society towards child labour, child marriage and their right to education within a decade. The case of Mr.SwarnaLinga Reddy, a landlord from Gattikal GP who was once used to employ children as bonded labour, joined CRPF to campaign against child labour. He along with the other members of CRPF used to make a door to door visit to mobilize people against child labour. It is the collective monitoring of community members like Youth Group, CRPF, SMCs and GPs with the support of teachers has ensured that most of the children of the age of six to fourteen years are in school. Data provided by MVF shows a rise in attendance rates from 79 percent in September 2010 to 84 percent in August 2013 in the nine project mandals. In all sample villages, children are attending school[22]. Table 2 shows that MVF has tracked 1,829 children in the project area.

Table 2: Data on Children Tracked in the current Academic Year (2013-14) in the Project Area

Mandal	Results of Tracking				
	Total Children under tracking	Repeaters	Joined in other school	Re-Admission	Dropped out
Arvapally	87	0	87	0	0
Athmakur(S)	262	90	167	2	3
Chivemla	231	13	214	1	3
Mothey	77	0	77	0	0
Munagala	139	13	80	38	8
Nuthankal	337	65	265	1	6
Penpahad	128	29	83	8	8
Thirmalagiri	305	53	248	3	1
Thungathurthy	263	0	263	0	0
Grand Total	1829	263	1484	53	29

Source: MVF

The result has shown that 1,484 children tracked have joined school (81.1%), followed by repeaters (14.4%) in this academic year. The door to door visits and campaigns of community groups along with MVF have resulted in re-admission of 53 children (2.9% of the total tracked children) who dropped-out from the school. Only 1.6 percent of the children have dropped-out in the project areas in the current academic areas[23]. Regular campaigns in the villages have helped to reduce the number of absenteeism in school. In the sample villages, the child labour has been completely curbed which consequently resulted in increase in attendance of children in school[24].

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Discussion with GP members

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From MVF data

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Strategy 2: Creating a child friendly learning environment

Activities to create a child friendly learning environment include interventions to change teachers' attitudes, facilitating co-curricular activities for the overall development of the child, organizing events and engaging children through children's committees.

i. *Capacity building towards attitudinal changes of teachers and Head Teachers:* The objective of MVF is not just to ensure students attend school but also create an enabling environment for quality educational outcome. One major reason for out-of-school children is the approach and attitude of teachers towards children as well as teaching. Non-communicative teaching patterns, corporal punishment, and structural discrimination are some basic triggers for low interest among students in attending school. Therefore, one challenge in the universalization of education is to change the attitude of teachers towards children and make learning a more engaging experience for students. Towards this end, MVF conducted campaigns with TFCR members to create awareness among teachers, parents and community members about three specific issues: prevention of corporal punishment, prevention of caste, gender or religious-based discrimination, and prevention of child marriage. Also, the TFCR capacitated school teachers to change their pedagogical styles though innovative teaching learning materials which are more engaging.

ii. *Forming 'Children Committees'*: MVF has facilitated schools to form 'students or children committees', which not only encourage co-curricular activities but also develop skills amongst children. The five different student committees formed in the schools are – 'library committee', 'information committee', 'health and hygiene committee', 'sports and cultural committee', and 'wall magazine committee'. Roles of these committees include maintaining and issuing library books, sharing of news and current events, checking cleanliness (especially *during distribution of mid-day meals*), supporting teachers to organize sports or annual days and issuing sports materials and displaying the stories and drawings of children on the school information board. Formation of these committees has increased the participation and ownership of children in the school and its activities. Also here, it is important to mention that these students committees are supported and encouraged by the teachers of the school.

iii. *Introducing and providing resources for co-curricular activities:* With the help of ABP and other project support, MVF provided sports materials, like skipping ropes, balls, as well as story books in all schools of the project area. MVF encouraged teachers to utilize the sports materials despite the risk of damage. 'Sports and cultural committees' were formed to maintain and utilize sports materials. Similarly, the 'library committee' of students maintains and issues books and maintains proper records. To encourage writing skills and crafts among students, 'wall magazine' committees are formed in the schools. This committee posts stories and paintings of students on the school information board.

Discussion with GP members of the sample villages

iv. *Organizing events and celebrations:* Collective events such as picnics are organized as part of the Summer Revision Classes to attract children. However, schools lack the funds to organize such events regularly or celebrate all events in a particular year. So, with the support of community groups, most schools are now celebrating either annual day, sports day or an annual cultural event.

Impact on the School Environment

The main impact on schools of these activities has to create a more attractive environment that engages the children in more well rounded development.

Making the Environment More Child Friendly

These activities have resulted in making the environment more child friendly in those schools visited by the team. Capacitating school teachers to improve their pedagogical skills and styles through subject forums/melas has helped to enliven the learning environment for students. Subject forums have conducted 30 subject melas in 2011-12, in which 463 teachers from 144 schools of the project area participated. Availability of sports materials in schools has increased the interest of students in attending schools, and to learn new games. However, one major constraints is lack of sports and games teacher in primary schools. This has prevented students of using the sports materials provided in schools, like volleyball, and chess sets. Out of six, only one school is teaching volleyball to students as the school shares their boundary with High School (usually High Schools have sports teachers). Also, in many schools the playgrounds are not of the appropriate size or simply do not exist. Children were excited about their access to the library, which not only has entertained them but also helped them to enhance their vocabulary. Constant engagement of teachers with student committees has also built the relationship amongst them. Celebration of annual function and sports days has enhanced the cohesiveness amongst teachers, students and community members. This has built a sense of well being amongst children, and enhanced the belief of parents in teachers. According to MVF in many GPs, people have shifted their children from private to public schools. A summary of the outputs for objective 1 are depicted in Figure 6.

| Celebration of annual day and children day in schools | Active participation of students in the drawing and story writing |

3.2 Objective 2a: To improve quality of school education by strengthening teacher's capacities

Strategy: Building pedagogical capacities of teachers

In order to improve the quality of education in the public school system, MVF and its partner organisations have sought to raise the calibre of instruction in the government school classroom. The primary strategy utilised to achieve this objective, has been to build teachers' pedagogical capacities. In order to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills, MVF and partner organisations have created a number of teacher-centered and teacher-led activities and programmes. The mobilization of teachers into academic resource groups called Subject Forums has been a key component of this strategy. Other activities include holding subject melas for teachers to demonstrate TLMs to the community, conduct teacher trainings to improve course materials and their pedagogical skills and finally byfacilitating the creation of Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) by Subject Forum members. Figure 7 illustrates a summary of the strategies, activities and outcomes for objective 2a.

Figure 7: Strategies, Activities, and Outcomes of Objective 2a
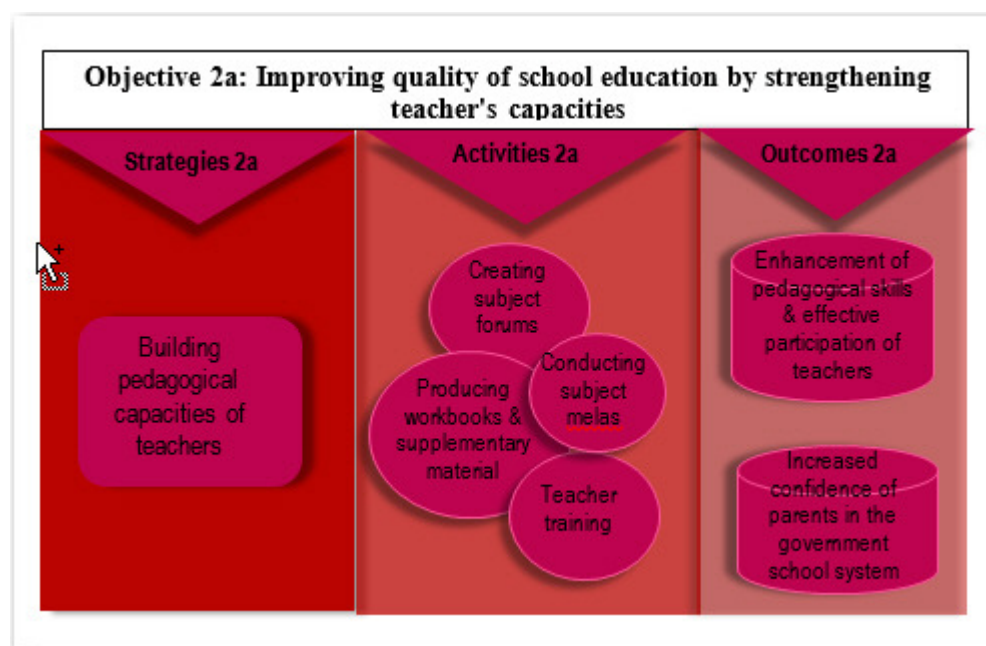
Activities to build teachers' skills

i. *Creating Subject Forums*: The Subject Forums were an outcome of the TFCR's desire to help teachers improve their pedagogical style. They believed that a more skilled and enthusiastic teaching force could, through the quality of their instruction, cultivate children's desire to stay in school and away from the labour market. A group of enthusiastic teachers from within the TFCR decided to create and share innovative

teaching learning materials (TLMs) that would help enliven the learning environment. Subject forums are now an endeavour in their own right and comprise teachers who may or may not be members of the TFCRs.

First established in 2011, there are now 36 Subject Forums in each of the nine project mandals. Subject Forums are constituted at the GP, mandal, district, and state levels. Each Forum has six branches, one for each subject. They include: EVS (Environmental Sciences), Mathematics, Social Studies, Telugu, English, and more recently, Sports. Each group of subject-specific forums at the mandal level is represented by a convenor. Convenors from all nine mandals make up what is called a 'core group' of 'diamond[25]' or extremely committed and innovative teachers who take the lead in developing and disseminating TLMs for their subject area of interest. Subject forum members' primary responsibility is to utilise innovations that they have been introduced to during forum meetings, in their respective classrooms. At the mandal level, forum members meet twice a month, primarily on Saturdays or public holidays, for a minimum of two to three hours a day if not the whole day. MVF provides forum members with training on the RTE and various pedagogical techniques.

ii. *Conducting SubjectMelas*: The forums have also given rise to Subject Forum Melas or exhibitions, of which 144[26] have been conducted, where teachers can share their innovations with parents and community members. These events are attended by a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, children, officials such as MEOs, and members of community based organisations like women's groups and the CRPF and TFCR. One head master described the nature and the impact of the melas, saying, "*They [the Subject Forum teachers] collectively prepare TLMs. Then they demonstrates the use of these materials in the public domain to children's parents. The parents observe these new methods and materials at the mela—children participate in this learning process as well. TLMs of groundwater harvesting and solar energy...these phenomena are demonstrated through experiments and models developed by subject forum teachers.[27]*" At some of the melas, children have taken on the responsibility of curating and demonstrating the TLMs that their teachers used to teach them their lessons. Mandal (Block) level and district level officers have also participated in Subject Forum Melas.

iii. *Producing Workbooks and Supplementary Material*: Subject Forum members have produced workbooks and other supplementary material that are being utilised both in regular classroom as well as in the summer schools. MVF has also organized 20 preliminary workshops for developing remedial materials, which were attended by 188

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Mr. VenkateshGowd, the project manager for Nalgonda district, used this analogy to describe teachers in the core groups.

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Data Provided by MVF

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Interview with HM, PS Reddy Gudam, December 5, 2013.

members of subject forums[28].

iv. **Teacher Training**: School teachers who are not involved in the Subject Forums have also participated and benefited from a number of MVF led activities. MVF has worked with the State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) to improve course materials. MVF has organized 17 class wise teachers meetings for teaching new courses and pedagogies, attended by 115 teachers. It is important to note that Forum members also participate in School Complex[29] meetings, giving them an opportunity to mingle and share what they have learned at the Forums even with school teachers who do not participate in them. According to MVF, *"The meetings have various agendas ranging from monitoring the teaching activities to child rights and progress of the schools, with the larger focus being on the overall improvement of the quality of education."* Workshops were conducted for teachers to help them develop remedial material that would augment the Summer School TLM that they were planning to use as well. Currently, 28 schools are providing students with remedial instruction using the Summer School TLMs[30]. Prior to these remedial classes, teachers were encouraged to conduct needs-assessments of their students to gauge their competency levels[31].

Impact on teachers skills

The primary impact of this strategy has been improved pedagogical capacities of teachers and a resultant increase in confidence of parents.

Improved Pedagogical Capacities of Teachers: The appeal of the Subject Forums to their participants lies in the fact that, *"everyone has their own passion for English or maths or EVS etc. They know they have some ideas and innovations, but they have no platform to display, no platform for sharing or exchange.[32]"* The Subject Forums provide precisely such a platform. In the course of their meetings, Subject Forums have been able to develop alternative, child-friendly pedagogical

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    From MVF data

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    "...the high school, with its respective primary and upper primary schools together is a SCHOOL COMPLEX .This is headed by the Head-master of that particular high school section as the CONVIENER and the Head-master of the primary school as the SECRETARY; where he/she has to look after the progress of schools under them. Like check up on the methods of teaching, difficulties of the teachers/ students in teaching/learning if any and so on. To facilitate this, the school complex has to conduct at least '8' meeting in an academic year and increase the number of meeting depending on the need, i.e. the school complex can even meet twice a month." MVF Annual Report, 2012-2013, p. 11.

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    MVF Annual Report 2012-2013, p. 18.

31
    MVF Annual Report 2012-2013, p. 18. See also FGD with teachers at PS Bikkumalla, December 4, 2013.

32
    FGD with Subject Forum members, Suryapet, December 5, 2013.

approaches and material. Speaking of the change in their teaching methodology, as a result of their participation in the SF, one environmental science teacher said "*we typically teach orally, but we are now encouraging learning by doing (among students). EVS is not to be taught orally only, so we have been developing relevant TLMs about the environment.*[33]" Another teacher pointed out that while they had been exposed to hands-on teaching methods before, "*...since the SF, we have started gathering instructional material. As for 'learning by doing': this we've learned in the SF.*[34]"

Describing some of the hands-on, child-friendly techniques that he has developed, Charulu, a Telugu teacher said, "*I have created an alphabet garden out of thermacol consisting of birds, flowers, and fruits. I ask my students to write the name of the object next to each piece, and if not the name, then the first letter of the name.*[35]" Another Telugu teacher shared how, "*I created a pin board, and placed a letter next to each pin. There's a small ball that children roll around the board. When it comes to rest against a letter, depending on which standard they are in, they have to identify the letter and create a word – and maybe come up with its antonym – or create a whole sentence or a whole paragraph starting with that letter. We use it for children from the 1st-5th standard. So that is the exercise.*[36]"

One teacher recounted how, "*before I came to the English Subject Forum I didn't have many ideas. However, after the second and third meeting we had to prepare a workbook which would enable us to teach English easily, at the basic level, for the first and second classes (standards). We drew on material from books from the English medium schools, and some government textbooks and old readers. We then prepared a workbook based on this material. Within a short time, using exercises from the workbook, and innovative methods, we were able to teach children the letters of the alphabet, from A to Z, in 15 days.*[37]"

Subject Forum members' presence at the School Complex meetings has enriched and augmented the quality of these meetings, since they are keen to disseminate what they have learned in the Subject Forums. The MEO of Penpahad, who attended a number of School Complex meetings following the formation of the Subject Forums noted that "*the benefits (of attending the Subject Forums are reflected in the complex meetings. The members of the Subject Forum are also involved in the School Complex meetings and they share their experiences with (over) 30 teachers. I have attended these complex meetings.*[38]" Furthermore, workbooks created in the Subject Forums are made available to non-Subject Forum teachers as well. Another outcome of these inputs has been a revitalisation of School Complex meetings in terms of developing TLMs and sharing with

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[33]
    ibid
[34]
    ibid
[35]
    ibid
[36]
    ibid
[37]
    ibid
[38]
    Interview with **NAME,** MEO, Penpahad, December 7, 2013.

participating teachers.

As a result of initiatives such as these, teachers have begun to feel better equipped to tutor children effectively. As a number of Subject Forum teachers insisted, children learn 'by doing', from the implementation of an interactive and sensory approach to teaching. An EVS teacher observed that the kidney model that he had created as a TLM for his 5th standard students was equally popular among children from the 3rd and 4th standard, who were now able to understand kidney functions—a topic that is part of the 5th standard syllabus—purely through their interaction with the model. Teachers also feel like they belong to a larger intellectual community, from which they can draw sustenance. Whereas before they were short of ideas or enthusiasm, being in a group of like-minded peers, has led to the creation of a knowledge bank from which teachers can draw inspiration.

Growth of Parents' Confidence in the Government School System: Another powerful outcome is that parents' confidence in the government school system—and its teachers especially—seems to be growing stronger. Poor rural parents have, historically, had an unequal relationship with teachers. They have felt intimidated by and distrustful of them since they represent an aloof and high-handed government bureaucracy. Teachers, in turn, have felt very little respect for parents in these poor communities, as they consider them to be uneducated and thus undiscerning. As a result of multi-stakeholder activities like the melas however, teachers feel that parents now have more faith in the government school system. During an FGD, subject forum members insisted that, "*because of use of TLMs and innovative methods parents also benefit. Before confidence levels were very low and parents were enrolling their children in private schools. Since the introduction of TLMs and the TLM melas parents are now admitting their kids in government schools.*[39]" As a consequence of the student influx from private schools, the public school system is being benefited.

This growing confidence has created a strong yearning among parents and community members for an education for their children. Speaking of the change in communities' and parents' attitudes towards schooling as a whole, Mangamma, a member of the Parsaypally SMC said, "*Now all kids are in school since MVF and the passage of the RTE. Before children were in child labour and herding cattle. There has been an attitude change: before MVF, parents used their children for their own agricultural work, bonded labour and domestic work. Now even poor people in the villages feel that our children should not be like us—we lost out. That's why we send the children to school. We need education—our children need it the most. We can question the institutions—MVF gives us moral and technical support and training—that's why we go to the schools and visit the officials— MPDO, MDO. Now these officials are more accessible...*[40]" A summary of outputs for Objective 2A are depicted in Figure 8.

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[39]   FGD with Subject Forum members, Suryapet, December 5, 2013.

[40]   FGD with SMC members at PS Parsaypally, December 5, 2013.

Objective 2b: Improving quality of school education – through community participation, monitoring, evaluation and competency assessment

Two main strategies were used by MVF towards improving quality of education in schools. The first has been through involving communities in monitoring and evaluation of education institutions. For this purpose, it was important to create multi stakeholders platforms and to build partnerships to facilitate community engagement and participation. The second strategy was to build the monitoring, evaluation and competency assessment capacities of multiple stakeholders. A summary of the strategies, activities and outcomes for Objective 2b are depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Strategies, Activities and Outcomes for Objective 2b
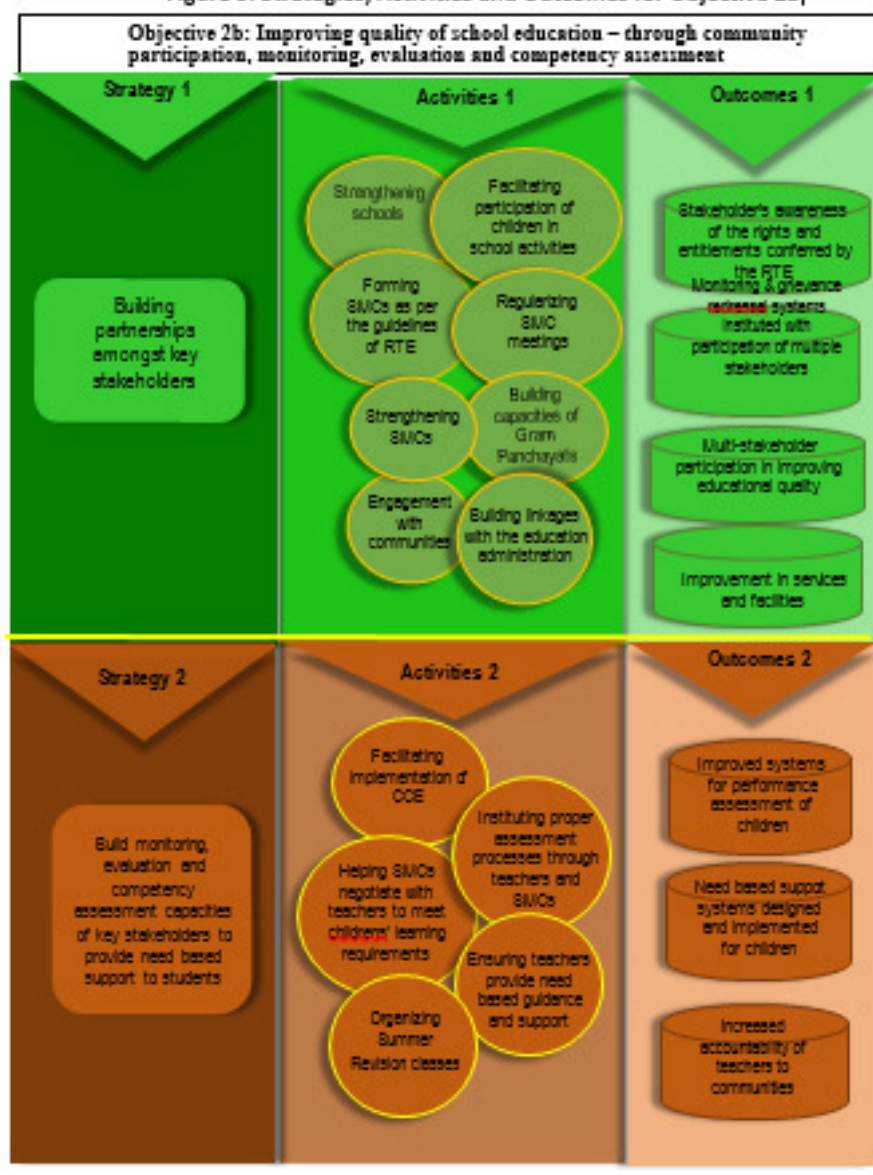
Strategy 1: Building partnerships amongst key stakeholders

Partnerships to improve school functioning and to strengthen schools require engagement with

community based institutions, panchayati raj institutions, school personnel and the administration. The CBOs include School Management Committees (SMCs), youth groups, mahilamandals, formal institutions like the Child Rights Protection Forums (CRPFs) and the Teacher's Forum for Child Rights (TFCRs). From the community, other key stakeholders involved in these various bodies include the Panchayat heads at all levels and representatives, as well as parents. The school personnel the programme engages with include the teachers and head teachers. The education administration such as the District Education Officers (DEOs), Mandal Education Officers (MEOs) and Mandal Resource Persons are also engaged in multiple activities and fora.

Activities on Partnership Building

i. *Strengthening Schools*: Schools are the focal point of the MVF programme where capacities of teachers and head teachers are built on a range of issues described in the previous section. MVF's unique institutional building efforts within communities and schools complemented by their alliances with school personnel, communities, political and administration representatives, creates long term sustainability. The resultant social and political capital brought to schools by MVF creates a permanent resource of community members that can continue the work after the project ends.

ii. *Facilitating participation of children in school activities*: Children are given inputs on child rights, how to strengthen schools, create a child friendly atmosphere in schools and the importance of maintaining positive relations with community. Within schools, children are also engaged in school functioning and child rights through the creation of children's committees and assemblies. Five children's committees namely the Library, Wall Magazine, Health & Hygiene, Sports & Cultural Activities and Information Committees have been formed in all 226 schools with 4,950 members, headed by teachers. These committees met weekly and motivate children to engage in school activities and build their leadership skills.

iii. *Forming School Management Committees*: Partnerships begin at the panchayat level with the formation of SMCs as per the guidelines of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. MVF has facilitated formation of 222 SMCs for the tenure of 2011-13, and 223 SMCs in the tenure of 2013 to 15 out of a total of 226 schools (98%). Committee members consist of parents, teachers, and at least one representative from key community based organisations and local government institutions. By law, at least 50 per cent of all SMCs must comprise women, while parents should constitute 75 per cent of the general body of the committee. Each standard must have 6 parent representatives, two of whom must be from the general categories, and one of whom must be from either the SC, ST, or minority communities[41].

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These specifications are not a part of the original RTE. They figure in the amendments made by the Andhra Pradesh government to the text of the original act. However, when interviewed, SMC members stated that some further amendments had been made—that now three parents are expected to represent each class, out of which two should be women, and one should be a man. Similarly, if the chairman is a man, the vice-chairman has to be a woman and vice-versa. Thus, 66 per cent of each SMC must consist of women.

iv. *Regularizing SMC meetings:* While the SCERT has instructed SMCs to meet once every alternate month (for a total of six months), these committees typically convene once a month or once very two months, regularized by MVF intervention. Each SMC constitutes various sub-committees meant that there has been focused attention on individual issues like health and hygiene or education (such as teacher and student attendance and performance).

v. *Strengthening the SMCs*: MVF's role has been to capacitate and enable SMCs to carry out their duties as mandated by the RTE. MVF has trained 78.4 percent of the total SMC members from both the tenure. MVF has developed 58 SMCs as resource SMC, who are training other SMCs about RTE and their role in a school. MVF conducts training sessions at the start of each school year during which SMC members are taught:

- About rights (such as the right to a free and compulsory education for their children) and entitlements (including two free school uniforms per child and adequate school facilities) guaranteed by the RTE;
- How the SMCs can exercise their claim to these rights and entitlements (i.e., what procedures to follow should the government not dispense its duties in a timely manner);
- How to monitor student attendance and performance through initiatives like the five point contact programme, bi-monthly student head-count, and a review of attendance registers and student portfolios;
- How to monitor teacher attendance and performance by conducting impromptu school visits during class hours and through conversations with children;
- How to conduct/monitor summer schools to address learning needs of children

Consequently SMCs interviewed reported being engaged in a range of activities that strengthen schools such as:

- *Monitoring* schools, funds and expenditures, violation of child rights, identification, enrolment and facilities for learning by disabled children, implementation of the midday meal scheme, student absenteeism and teacher absenteeism.
- *Assessment of children's performance* by evaluating learning outcomes of children
- *Planning and needs assessment* including preparing and recommending School Development Plans and monitoring its implementation.
- *Reporting* any violation of child rights and denial of their entitlements to the local authorities
- *Accounting and reporting* of receipts and expenditure of the school annually.

vi. *Building Capacities of Gram Panchayats:* MVF has trained 1,422 GP representatives on the RTE[42] and their roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis monitoring of schools, school infrastructure entitlements, child rights related issues such as bonded labour and child marriage, assessment of children's performance, surveys of children to track them,

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As per data provided by MVF, 152 orientation training sessions on RTE were conducted in 2013 and 1,422 GP members attended these sessions.

grievance redressal and participation in a range of events related to child rights and entitlements and children's overall development.

Activities to Build Gram Panchayats' Capacities and Engagement

GPs as a result of MVF's work engage in a variety of education related activities including:

- *Child tracking* which includes maintaining records of all children in the 0-14 age bracket, mobilizing children and drop-outs to join school and monitoring school attendance on a monthly basis.
- *Monitoring* of school and other educational institutions reviewing the functioning of the schools, hostels, and anganwadis on a quarterly basis.
- *Grievance Redressal* including conducting grievance redressal days when parents, SMC members, and anyone else from the community can approach the GP with school-related problems.
- *Negotiating* with teachers and HMs to ensure provision of remedial instruction to weak students.
- *Campaigning* on child rights including issues that affect their rights to education such as bonded labour of children and child marriage.
- *Claiming of entitlements* through petitioning and liaising with higher government departments in order to lay claim to all entitlements, such as transportation allowances with the Transport department office for proof of distances between schools and habitations.
- *Participation in events* such as the children's assemblies as well as children's overall development such as annual days, sports and cultural events

Engagement with Communities: Youth groups, women's groups, other community groups and parents engage in a series of activities related to monitoring of schools, child tracking, raising of grievances regarding the rights and entitlements of children. CBOs form a part of the various education and child rights committees including the SMCs, CRPFs and TFCRs. There are currently 1756 CRPF members, and a total of 225 SMCs in the project area[43]. Youth groups' capacities are built to conduct surveys on non-school going children and of school premises to ascertain problems with infrastructure.

Youth groups' capacities are built to conduct surveys on non-school going children and of school premises to ascertain problems with infrastructure.

> *vii. Building Linkages with the Education Administration*: The education administration is involved in a range of activities including addressing grievances through the GRCs, participation in multi-stakeholder committees on review on the functioning of schools and other education related institutions including conducting social audits and finally in training and capacity building of education personnel.

Impact of Partnership Building

The primary impact of building multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships are that a) key

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    Figures provided by MVF.

stakeholders are aware of the Right to Education (RTE) and their individuals roles and responsibilities in implementing the RTE. b) monitoring and grievance redressal mechanisms have been instituted with various stakeholders participating in fora created at various levels c) School performance and functioning as well as quality of education improved on account of grievances being addressed

Awareness Of all Stakeholders of Rights and Entitlements Conferred by the RTE

Training provided both by the state and by MVF have raised awareness on the rights and entitlements of children and issues that affect these rights across stakeholders. The various committees engaged in implementing the RTE are in place such as the SMCs, CRPFs and TFCRs and have been trained on, and therefore are aware of their roles and responsibilities as mandated by the RTE.

Creating the Space for SMCs to Hold Teachers Accountable: Interviews with SMC members revealed that they were very familiar with the rights outlined in the RTE—the compulsory enrolment of every child between 6-14 years in school; the right to free admission to school; entitlements such as mid-day meals, free uniforms, textbooks, and shoes. Members therefore knew how to tell if the school was up to par in the services it was rendering and the facilities available. They also knew how to approach the government and whom to approach to demand that the necessary changes be made. As one SMC member, from PS Parsayapally put it, they learned that they had the "right (adhikaram) to question teachers[44]"; that there were responsibilities that accompanied this right such as a duty "*to check and see which children fall into which grade, we must ask teachers. If they are in grade 'c', school and teachers should conduct remedial classes for them—to improve their standards. Teachers should also use TLMs, compulsorily. For the remedial classes, teachers should use alternative teaching methods, play methods, easy methods, not general teaching methods. I didn't know about this before my training.[45]*" This new right to question has been attributed directly to the programme. Annapoorna, a member of PS Parsaypally's SMC, insisted that this was because, "*in the past we used to go talk to teachers, but teachers were not that responsive. Also we didn't feel like we had the right to question teachers, so we weren't very forceful about it. That space was there before, but we didn't pay it much attention—we weren't really aware of it.*" However, as a result of MVF's interventions, specifically "*their meetings[46] and the insistence that you should improve kids' schools, you should monitor them—that's why we're getting involved. Previously we really didn't have much awareness of this space.[47]*"

Creating the Space for parents to hold teachers accountable: This awareness has increased the sense among parents of having the right to hold teachers and officials to account.B. Venkanna, Reddy

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     FGD with SMC members at PS Parsaypally, December, 5 2013

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     ibid

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     MVF translated the English 'training' into 'meeting' in Telugu, for lack of a comparable term in Telugu.

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     ibid

Guddem SMC chairman said that the training had equipped him to monitor student's academic progress and hold teachers accountable for it: *"Before I didn't know how to gauge children's progress—after training we have been able to question teachers about children's progress[48]."* Overall, parents experienced a sea change in their relationship to the school system as a result both of the RTE, and of MVF's training and capacity building work around it. They now felt that their children were entitled to an education, and that they were entitled, as parents, to ensure that teachers were providing their children with a good education.

Monitoring and grievance redressal systems instituted with participation of multiple stakeholders

These mechanisms include stakeholders from various levels such as SMCs monitoring teachers, SMCs presenting findings to GPs and Gram Sabhas, the engagement of SMCs and GPs in monitoring of funds spent by schools, engagement of GPs, CRPFs and MEOs in social audits and the involvement of youth groups in SMC related work and surveying of school-going and non-school going children.

SMC members reported being more equipped to monitor and evaluate the implementation of various schemes and programmes that their schools were entitled to. To begin with, being part of a legally mandated body instilled a sense of entitlement among parents and community members. For instance, when asked if she would have questioned teachers in the past about students' performance, Mangamma, a member of PS Parsaypally's SMC replied, *"there was space to approach teachers in the past, but we didn't use that space[49]."* When asked why, she said simply, *"Because we hadn't formed a school management committee yet. Also we didn't know that you could question the teacher—or that you were supposed to."*

Many youth groups work with SMCs to monitor the functioning of schools, the Mid-day Meals Programme, teacher's attendance and their time of reporting. They track progress of government schemes and grants and funds available to GPs under various government initiated programmes.

The CRPFs have started addressing grievances. For example one CRPF member[50] from Chivemla village reported on how these issues have been addressed saying *"This village has been highly active in terms of child rights issues including child marriage, out of school children, bonded labour. There are so many stories from this village on bonded labour and how it has been stopped. We have even gone to other villages risking quarrels and mortal fights to release children from bondage."* Likewise, in other villages interviews with GP members revealed action on child labour and child marriage. Another GP member from Gattikal village[51] said, *"A major programme and campaign of the GP members has been on child marriage. One of the biggest reasons for not getting the girl child into school was their early marriage. We have stopped child marriage 100%. Now every marriage in the village has to be registered. It is the duty of the village secretary to*

48
    FGD with SMC members at PS Reddy Guddem 5 December, 2013.

49
    ibid

50
    Interview with CRPF member, Chivemlamandal, December 7, 2013.

51
    Interview with GP member, Gattikal village,Athmakurmandal, December 6, 2013.

register every marriage. The bride and grooms photos have to be attached to the registration. Now there are many procedures that are followed. This is a Mandal and division campaign issue."

SMC members from PS Gantikkal related how they were able to approach the MEO over issues like lack of running water. They received funds to build a water tank to store water in (for purposes such as hand-washing and dish-washing). The SMC in Reddy Guddem recounted how the preceding SMC had petitioned the MEO, MPDO and Project Officer of the SSA to increase the number of teachers at the school, which they did. Likewise interviews at Chivemla village Chandapatla block showed that school records namely attendance is monitored by the GP with the SMC members on a monthly basis[52]. *"If we are reviewing records we try to find out how many children are not attending the school and every meeting is necessarily attended by headmasters. We ask the headmasters to tell us how many children are not attending the classes. If we find anything then we take up something by talking to the parents."* This shows how several stakeholders engage with the monitoring mechanisms engage.

Youth groups, CRPFs and SMCs monitoring as well as social audits have raised issues which are resolved first at the panchayat level and in the event that it cannot be resolved there, petitions have been submitted to government when RTE isn't being implemented properly. For example in 2011 the CRPF sent 300 petitions to NCPR. They came and conducted a public hearing of the petitions. The petition was about RTE implementation and touched on issues such as: punishment, accessibility, school funding, denial of registration, social discrimination by teachers against students.

Multi-stakeholder Participation in Quality Education:GP members were trained in motivational strategies to prevent child labour and encourage enrolment of children in school. They were also informed about the kind of infrastructure students and teachers were entitled to. As a result of this training, they formed a number of sub-committees such as the wadding, education and health sub-committees, to assist the SMC in monitoring student and teacher attendance, student and teacher performance, and the quality of the MDMs. SMCs receive training not just from the SSA and MVF, but from other community organisations such as the CRPF and the TFCR. As a consequence, TFCR members have been recognised as resource people by the district government. One member recounted how the "*previous district collector had invited TFCR and also MV Foundation to conduct joint trainings for SMCs in the district. They recognise the role of the TFCR as resource persons, not only in the division, but at the district level; and in doing so, the district administration has made use of the TFCR.* [53]" This recognition legitimises MVF's work, while also furthering its institutionalisation, and forging strong bonds between various community stakeholders.

There are multiple incidents reported by MVF about the involvement of district and mandal officials in meetings, events, committees and other fora. These include involvement of GP members in social audit teams to check on the various school related issues. These social audits surface gaps in the school infrastructure such as lack of toilets, drinking water, lack of compound

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Interview with GP member, Chivemlamandal, December 7, 2013.

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FGD with TFCR members, Suryapet, December 6, 2013.

walls and sufficient classrooms, which are shared at various levels, with officials, SMCs, parents, and in Gram Sabhas. Issues again are resolved at multiple levels, starting with the Gram Panchayat. This has created a voice for the community evident in the issues being raised within GPs, Gram Sabhas, and in the form of petitions. As a consequence of a plethora of petitions, the district collector decided to hold a monthly forum to resolve issues related to violation of the RTE[54]. This is a major accomplishment of the engagement with multiple stakeholders that has created an enabling environment in the district to implement the RTE and to respond to the community's raising of issues.

Improvement in Services and Facilities in schools

Due to SMC's monitoring, teacher attendance improved with greater responsiveness from government. Asha, an SMC member of the Parasayapalli GP said, "*Our HM and teachers were very irregular. They would come late and leave early. We tried to counsel them on three different occasions but there was no change. Then, we gave a petition to the MEO, who then served the teachers an oral notice. Now the teachers are coming regularly.[55]*"

With regard to improved facilities, Srinivas, a Parasayapalli SMC member recounted how, "*In the High School there was no compound wall. Then the SMC gave a petition to the ZPTC (ZillaParishad Territorial Constituency) and the local sarpanch. The ZP member responded quickly and sanctioned some funds for the construction of the compound walls. They also constructed 2 toilets—one for boys and one for girls.[56]*"

FGDs with GP members[57] revealed how the RTE improved school infrastructure by bringing in resources through petitions. According to the sarpanch from Parasayapalli GP, "*One Monday of every month at the district headquarters in Nalgonda is earmarked as a grievance redressal day. So on that day the panchayatsarpanch and some sub-committee members went and gave a petition for rooms for the school. We wanted these rooms since 2007 and had been petitioning for them but it was only after passage of the RTE that they were sanctioned and constructed. In the first phase two buildings were constructed.*" Another GP member corroborated this saying that the district collector used the grievance redressal mechanism to send petitions to the Rajiv Vidya Mission (RVM)[58] at the state level. A third GP member said "*if these three buildings had been commissioned before the RTE, they would have taken 10-15 years to build.*

Figure 10: Outputs for Objective 2b
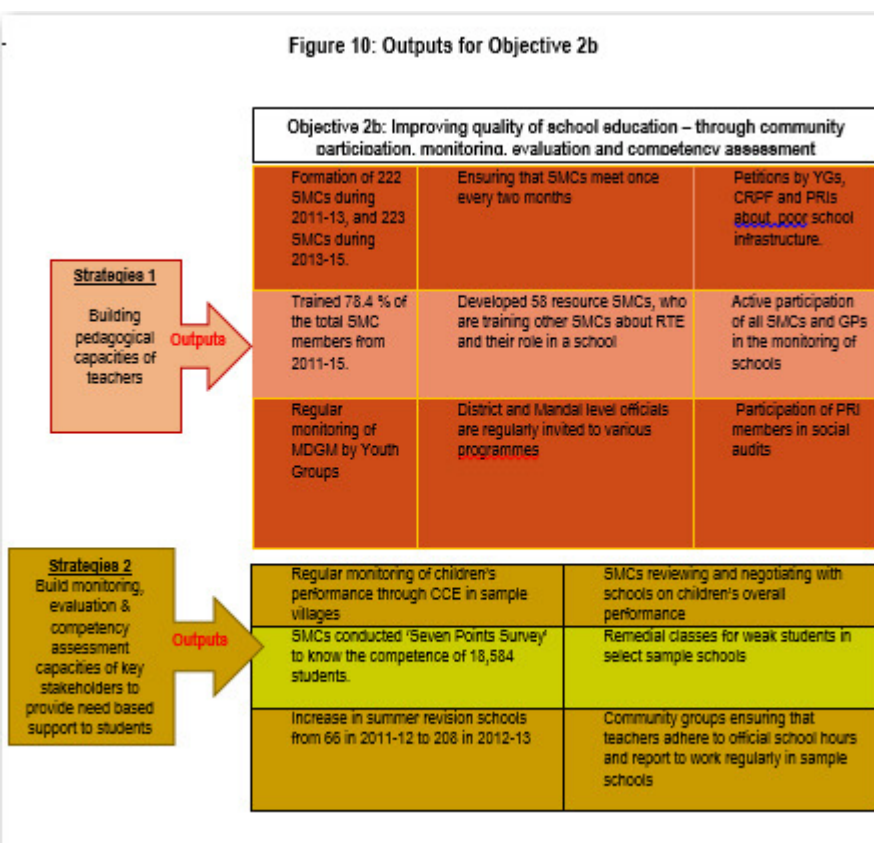

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      FGD with District CRPF m

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      FGD with SMC at Parasay

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      ibid

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      FGD with GP at Parasayapalli G

58

      The SSA programme is cal

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Because of the RTE, they have been built very quickly. Before the RTE there were only 3 teachers—now each class has a teacher. The MandalParishad president and a ZP member also belonged to this village during that time—that's why there was development, teachers, buildings, compound walls were sanctioned." These members reported that it was only through petitions and through the RTE that they were able to hire permanent teachers, where earlier they were only provided with Vidya volunteers who are temporary. This progress was attributed directly to the MVF programme where according to the sarpanch *"MVF and CRPF group met regularly with us and put pressure on us to concentrate on school and education development. That's the other reason why there was so much progress made in this time."* Figure 10 depicts the outcomes of strategies for Objective 2B.

Strategy 2: Build monitoring, evaluation and competency assessment capacities of key stakeholders to provide need based support to students

  i. *Facilitating Implementation of Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)*

CCE is introduced by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in Primary Classes in 2004[59] with the objective of facilitating holistic learning in the school. It is primarily a system of school based assessment in both scholastic and co-scholastic aspects of students' development as per the guidelines and norms set by the CBSE. It is believed that CCA will help reduce the pressure on the child during/before examinations as the student will have to sit for multiple tests throughout the year, of which no test or the syllabus covered will be repeated at the end of the year, whatsoever[60]". SSA has conducted a three-day training on CCE for all teachers at the Mandal level. On day one, the teachers are trained on the RTE and on the next two days, they are trained on specific subjects like math, English, Science, and so on. However, constant changes in the system of CCE and lack of proper training by SSA have resulted in non-implementation or incorrect-implementation of CCE by teachers[61]. As mentioned by a teacher from Reddy Gudam, "CCE is comparatively a new grading system, which has come to its present form through many trials and errors, like CLIP, CLAP etc (previous grading systems). Even the systems in CCE have changed thrice over the course of one year.[62] Due to this lack of understanding, teachers from subject forums trained the school teachers on CCE, so that teachers can grade the capacities of students properly. However, not all teachers have been uniformly covered.

Also, CCE has mandated maintaining a separate portfolio of each child, which is shared with parents during parent teacher meetings (PTMs). However, the teachers were unable to create portfolios as they were not trained on it. This issue was discussed in the subject forums by teachers. So, with the help of teachers from subject forums, MVF facilitated teachers to conduct baseline

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  (*Circular No. 5/18/25/04*)

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  http://aecsnarwapahar.nic.in/cce.htm

61

  As per the discussion with the teachers from Chandapartla GP of ChivemlaMandal

62

  Interview, Teachers, PS Reddy Gudam, 5 December, 2013

assessment of student competencies in order to maintain their portfolios[63]. This has increased the competency of teachers to evaluate childrens' performance, and take appropriate steps to improve their grades[64]. In the study sample schools visited, the team found that teachers were maintaining a portfolios on every child.

   ii. Helping SMCs negotiate with teachers to meet children's learning needs

Under the grading method of CCE, students should be graded into A+ (Good), B+ (Okay) and C+ (Poor), which is shared with parents in PTMs. However, as pointed out by a GP member from Chivemla[65], '*Recently we have conducted the campaign and the child contact programme. They took the assessment sheets to the school headmaster and asked why don't you conduct remedial classes. They said that they are conducting remedial but we do not know if they are actually doing it. So you have to keep on negotiating the system, there's no other way.*' With the support of MVF, SMCs is able to negotiate with the HMs to conduct remedial classes in their schools to improve the grades of C grade children. Many schools in the project area have started a separate class (remedial class)[66] for C grade students, where teachers put extra effort to improve their grades[67].

As per the available data, remedial classes were held for children from Classes 2-5 in 40 schools of the project area in the academic year of 2011-12. See Table 3 This responsibility has been handled by 54 local youth volunteers. Some have been teaching the children free of cost and the remuneration of the others is being paid through community contributions.[68]

Table 3: Mandal wise number of Remedial Classes Conducted in 2011-12

Mandal	*Schools*	*Volunteers*
Arvapally	9	13
Atmakur	2	2
Chivvemla	2	2
Mothey	1	1

63
     FGD with teachers at PS Bikkumalla, December 4, 2013

64
     As per the discussion with the teachers from Chandapartla GP of ChivemlaMandal

65
     Interview with GP member, Chivemlamandal, December 7, 2013

66
     Generally schools who conduct remedial instruction are following 3 basic strategies, that is organizing special remedial class for the children who need special attention drawn from 2 – 5 classes and dedicating one teacher for them. The second method adopted is organizing C group children within every class and assigning them different sets of academic work. The third method involved making children who fare well help those with difficulties in basic competencies.

67
     As per the discussion with the teachers from Chandapartla GP of ChivemlaMandal

68
     MVF Annual Report, 2011-2012

Munagala	1	1
Nutankal	9	14
Thungathurthy	9	10
Tirumalagiri	7	11
Total	40	*54*

iii. Organizing Summer Revision classes:

<table>
<tr><td>

Box 2 Seven Point Survey

Are you attending school regularly?
Can you read and write Telegu?
Are you reading stories regularly?
Are you participating in story writing and drawing?
Can you read and write small English words?
Can you do addition and subtraction?
Are your teachers checking your notebooks regularly?

</td></tr>
</table>

SMCs did an evaluation of all the children in school through a 'seven point survey' developed by MVF (Box 2). As per the survey, the performance of the children is 'not-satisfactory'. SMCs discussed the issue with the MVF staff and teachers, and came on a decision to organize 'Summer Revision Classes' (henceforth SRC) within their GP during the summer vacation of school. The SRC will help academically weak students to improve themselves.

SRCs are organized under the leadership of SMCs with the support of MVF. Volunteers, usually educated persons (minimum 12th pass), who have time to spend two hours for 45 continuous days in the school, are selected to teach in the SRC. Volunteers attend one day 'orientation programme' at district level and a 'training programme' at mandal level, attended by district and mandal officials. Participation of government officials and known dignitaries motivate volunteers.

Supplementary study materials and workbooks prepared by the teachers from the Subject Forum are used in the SRCs and to train volunteers.

Volunteers, along with teachers and students, organize rallies to encourage children to attend the SRCs at school premises for 45 continuous days (including Sundays) between 8 am to 12 noon. Every Sunday was a non-teaching day when the festivals, like Deepavali, Sankrantietc,

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Box 3: Fighting for the Rights of Children's Education

R.Saidulu is a member of Ambedkar Youth Group from Lingala GP. He is also an active member of the campaign mobilized by MV Foundation. In the beginning of the campaign, he was monitoring the village school along with his group members. He asked teachers, including the school principal, to report on time and come to school regularly. This enraged the principal as he himself was not regularly on time. He started harassing Saidulu. He sent postcards to GP members and other people of the village alleging illicit relationship between his sister and a teacher (who was supporting Saidulu in his endeavor). All the people who had received postcards from the principal gave the postcards to

or picnics were organized.

Volunteers have review meetings on every Sunday with the SMCs, GP members and teachers. Progress of students, along with the course and other activities of the classes are discussed in the meetings. Also, the suggestions given by the SMCs, GPs and teachers were discussed and incorporated in the SRCs. (See Box 3 for Case Study of Saidulu: A Summer Revision School Volunteer)

SMCs collected funds from the community to give honorarium to volunteers (around Rs.1200/- to 1500/- per volunteer) and to meet expenses of the SRCs, like providing drinking water and materials to celebrate festivals/picnic. Workbooks and other study materials were provided by the MVF.

Impact of monitoring, evaluation and competency assessment capacities of key stakeholders

Holding teachers accountable by instituting performance assessment mechanisms of children

The CCE has resulted in ensuring that communities have a mechanism to provide teachers feedback on the learning needs of children. Naveen Kumar, the headmaster of the school in Parsayapalli summoned up the CCE programme by saying, "*It is a burden to those who don't do their work. For teachers who do their work, it is very helpful. Tracking a student's performance helps teachers and parents too. This year, we channelised the CCE to prove to parents that we are doing our work. It helps us build evidence of the work that we are doing.*" Mr. M. Surendar the math teacher from the same school said that as a consequence of CCE, "*You know what stage a child is at. Whichever child is weak, you can tailor your teaching to that child. Otherwise you're using universal methods instead of child specific methods on a stage-to-stage basis.*" This particular observation points to the need perhaps for MVF to make more use of 'hands-on', innovative methods of teaching, which would foster the enthusiasm of children in their learning process in primary schools.[69]

Increased capacities of SMCs to hold teachers accountable: The importance of monitoring attendance of teachers and children was demonstrated by SMC members interviewed. G. Nagendra the vice chairman of the SMC inBikkumalla said that "*this committee lead to the better learning of children and questioning teachers about the children's' studies and the maintenance of the school keeps them focused on their jobs.*"[70]

Mangamma, an SMC member from Parsayapalli expressed that earlier, even though they as parents had the space to confront teachers about their children's performance in school, they did not use this space because they were unaware about their rights. Annapoorna a member of the Parsayapalli SMC said that when she did approach the teachers, they were not responsive to her queries. Also

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[69]
     For example organisations like Agastya are already working in Andhra Pradesh based on this hands-on method by developing low-cost models to enhance children's learning of science. So cross learning amongst organisations through field visits would be beneficial to srengthening MVF's programme on quality improvement in primary schools.

[70]
     Interview, SMC members, Bikkumulla, 6 December, 2013

they didn't feel like they had the right to question teachers, so they weren't very forceful. *"That space was there before, but we didn't pay it much attention—we weren't really aware of it. But through MVF, meetings, that taught us to improve kids' schools, and monitor them,—that's why we're getting involved. Previously we really didn't have that much awareness of this space."*[71]

Teachers becoming more responsive to communities: Teachers from Bikkumulla said now, *if children did not complete their homework, we invite parents and tell them. Sometimes the parents come without any invitation to ask about the children's performance. This has forced us to keep a record of every child's performance and has helped us identify those children who are weak in their studies and need more attention. SMC members also visit the school unannounced, to monitor various activities."* Some teachers were of the opinion that this has helped them in being more productive. They now regularly check the children's homework.[72]

Increased capacities of GPs to negotiate with teachers: In ReddiGudam village, the ex-Gram Panchayat member along with the current GP members (elected few months back) received the training from MVF on the RTE Act. The GP members explained that the education committee along with the sarpanch visited the school and talked to three students in each class to check the level of their competence in each subject, and found that they were very poor in math, Science and English. Also, the committee found that teacher was not reporting in time. *"Actually they should be here by 9.00 but some of them were coming as late as 10 or 11 o'clock."* So they talked with the teacher and asked them to report on time. The committee visits the school every fortnight during lunch time to test the food given to children.[73] According to GP members from Reddy Gudam, *"Now we are able to negotiate with the teachers of the school. We have the right to ask them about the education of our children and they have to listen to us."*

Need based support systems designed and implemented for children

SMCs have conducted 203 summer revision classes in the last three years. Parents reported that summer schools have helped their children to learn their lessons as the quality of education in regular schools in not good. On the importance of summer classes, Sampath Reddy an MRP from Tirumalagirimandal said, *Many children with learning gaps have been benefited by the Summer School. Attending these classes has also helped them remember what has been taught to them in school. The Module has proven to be very useful in honing the children's talents by involving them in a wide range of activities and sustaining their interest in education. I am optimistic that such measures can help improve their competencies.*

71
      Interview SMC members Parsayapalli, 5 December, 2013

72
      Interview Teachers, Bikkumalla, 6 December, 2013

73
      Interview with GP members, ReddiGudam village, 5 December, 2013

Box 4: From Child-Labour to Monitoring Schools

Lingaiah is a 28 year-old businessman, husband and father of one. A member of PS Gattikkal's SMC, he was once a child labourer. Growing up, his parents were poor, landless shepherds. Along with a younger brother and two older sisters, Lingaiah helped his parents tend the sheep, and contributed to the family income. He also attended school. However, when he was around nine or ten years old, his parents got both his sisters married. They gave gold as dowry and spent money on the wedding ceremonies. With their daughters married and out of the house, the family was short of two earning members. Lingaiah's parents decided to allow their youngest son to continue with his schooling; Lingaiah, they decided, would have to leave school and care for the sheep full time.

Lingaiah was in the 4th standard when this happened. For the next five years, until he turned 14, he herded sheep with his relatives. Every year, he would spend at least six months on the road, covering approximately 100 kilometres by foot in search of fresh pasture for his sheep. This peripatetic lifestyle meant that Lingaiah had very little contact with his old life. When he did return home, it was to find that his friends were progressing in their studies by leaps and bounds. Lingaiah often pleaded with his parents to let him return to school; they, however, were adamantly against it.

In 2001 or 2002, some gram panchayath and CRPF members, accompanied by MVF, made a visit to his home. They urged his parents to let Lingaiah return to school. They came once or twice or three times a week, for a period of two to three months, putting steady and consistent pressure on Lingaiah's parents. While initially reluctant, they finally agreed to let Lingaiah attend school whenever there was a lull in the shepherding work.

At the age of 15, Lingaiah entered in the 5th standard. He attended school for 10 months and took a leave of absence for three, to go herd sheep. He had kept up with his reading and writing during his time as a shepherd, often pouring over the newspaper whenever he got a chance. When he returned from his travels, he would spend time with his friends, reading their textbooks and practising writing with them. As a result, Lingaiah had managed to retain a lot of what he had learned prior to leaving school. When he completed the 5th grade, he went directly to the 7th. His parents allowed him to move to Suryapet to continue his studies. There Lingaiah lived with his brother, the same brother who had been allowed to study while Lingaiah worked. He took tuitions, and when it was time to take the 10th and 12th standard exams, the school agreed to waive his fees on both occasions. MVF had presented them with a circular from the MEO, requesting schools to cancel examination fees for students who had been child labourers, and were attempting to complete their schooling.

As a result of his community's intervention and MVF's support, Lingaiah went on to graduate from high school. He got a job working in a wine shop, and four years later,

bought a share in the business. He married and started a family. Lingaiah's daughter now studies at PS Gattikkal, where he is a member of its SMC. He is involved in school development work and participates in MVF's door-to-door campaigns, tracking children to see whether they're in school, and convincing parents that it is where they belong.

In memory of the child he once was, Lingaiah has vowed that he will work hard to help others facing the same struggles that he did, and to ensure that child labour is completely abolished.

4. Challenges and Recommendations

The ABF programme administered by MVF faces a range of challenges. These include challenges posed by the larger environment including the legal framework and the institutional arrangements and conditions within which it is operating, as well as internal challenges.

4.1 Challenges faced within MVF

MVF, like several civil society organizations working with communities on scale, faces major human and financial constraints. These include the lack of a corpus for long term sustainability as well as to expand into new areas and resources to hire professional expertise. Other constraints include issues related to inclusion of women staff at the field level and networking and alliance building with other national institutions working towards the same goals. Expansion of MVF into new areas will also a different set of capabilities including overcoming differences in the social and cultural environments.

Both financial resources and time would be required for community mobilization, especially in new areas to create the enabling environment for community participation, ownership and long term sustainability. Resources are also required to obtain the professional expertise to conduct national advocacy towards changing laws and policies. Specialized funding would be needed to facilitate cross learning and transfer of best practices.

Recommendations for MVF

Building Sustainability Strategies: Wazir and Saith (2010)[74] recommend a strong fund raising strategy for MVF, which ABF can help design and build with corporate social responsibility mandates in the private sector.

Building Networks and Alliances at National Levels would help create a platform for advocacy which no one organization alone can easily achieve. These alliances can also

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74

      RekhaWazir and AshwaniSaith, Universalizing child rights: A Review of MV Foundation's Achievements and Future Directions. Published by MV Foundation, 2010

facilitate cross learning and a transfer of best practices.

Gender Sensitization of all staff would help create the environment to include women in different fora both at the community level and within MVF itself.

4.2 Challenges posed by the Legal Framework

The Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act of 1986 is a huge challenge because it doesn't prohibit child labour completely—only so-called 'hazardous' forms of labour. As one TFCR member states, "*There is a mismatch between this child labour regulation act and right to education act. Without changing this child labour act, which allows children to be in work: instead of prohibiting it totally it actually allows children to be in work. Thus there is no compulsion in right to education act to withdraw children from this work.*[75]" For this it is recommended that MVF engage in policy advocacy measures and build alliances with other organizations aligned with the same goals towards reforming this Act. This form of advocacy would require working with the Ministry of Labour and creating alliances with the trade union movement, particularly those unions dealing with child labour issues.

4.3 Challenges Posed by the Education Administration

Some of the key challenges raised by SMCs are inadequate or non-functioning facilities, poor implementation of schemes like the MDM, and insufficient teaching staff.

Lack of Facilities and Poor Infrastructure

SMC members across the board bemoaned a lack of toilets and running water—both for cleaning and washing as well as for drinking purposes. Members of the Gattikal SMC explicitly demanded separate toilets for boys and girls. Swarupa G., a member of the Reddy Gudem SMC said that the school had only one bathroom, and that was reserved for teaching staff. The SMC at Kokkireni pointed out that the school needed a compound wall. Many existing facilities are in a state of disrepair. At PS Reddy Gudem, the roofs leak and classrooms flood with water during the rains. SMC members said that there was an urgent need for better classroom structures, and for the construction of a few more classrooms.

Inferior Quality of Key Schemes and Entitlements

The quality of programmes such as the Mid-day Meal scheme also requires drastic improvement. SMC members at PS Ghattikal complained that both the quantity and the quality of the rice served during the mid-day meals were poor. Mr. G. Sreenu said, "*Here the mid-day meals are not sufficient as the government only gives 100 grams of rice per*

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      FGD with CRPF members, Suryapet, December 7, 2013.

child and this is not enough. The government should increase the quantity of rice. With regard to this, MVF must help by increasing the rice quantity to 200 grams." Another SMC member recounted how frequent inspections revealed that the rice acquired from the government's public distribution (PDS), is often riddled with insects. When they approached the MEO, they were told that "the quality of rice was not in his hands and that he could only supply what the government gave him.[76]" Gattikal SMC members said that they have taken their problem up to the Housing Minister (Captain Uttam Kumar Reddy) and who is also their MLA, promised to raise the issue at the Assembly winter session.

Problems Relating to Quality and Medium of Instruction

Existing challenges to the overall quality of education included the absence of English medium schools, and a lack of sustained exposure to English from an early age. In the wake of students leaving private schools and returning to the government school system, members argued that children from English-medium private schools were struggling to adapt to government schools. Providing instruction in English would enable them to better acclimate to the government system and would also discourage families of government school children from deciding to move their children to private schools. Many SMCs also stated that there was a shortage of subject-specific teachers in their schools. Multiple SMCs suggested introducing children to English at an early age, preferably from the 1st standard onwards, so that they could learn the language with greater ease. Furthermore, many SMCs believe that English language fluency is a non-negotiable element of a quality education since English is the lingua franca of the world that their children are being trained to enter. In fact, enrolment data shows a decline in the number of children attending public schools which has been attributed primarily to private schools using English as a medium of instruction. Towards an overall improvement in students' ability to absorb their lessons, one committee member said that he made a suggestion to the school teacher that one and a half hours before school closes, the children should revise the old curriculum, land bills, mathematics, table, alphabets, English. During this time, any children who are behind in their studies can learn and fill the gaps.

Need to improve the functioning of SMCs:

SMCs felt that they were not sufficiently capacitated to properly dispense their duties. Some SMC members requested additional training in order to better monitor student performance and to conduct in-depth assessment of students' comprehension levels. However, they were quick to insist that they trusted teachers to do a good job. SMC

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       FGD with SMC at PS Gattikal December 6, 2013.

membership changes every two years. SMC members from one school who were possibly new, reported they were unclear about their roles and responsibilities.

Another instance of incapacitation had to do with the structure of the SMC. A member of the Reddy Gudam SMC was of the opinion that there was limited inter-SMC communication and interaction at the district and state levels. This prevented them from effectively pressuring government to bring about policy change. Currently SMCs at the mandal level have a forum to discuss problems common to their individual mandals. One SMC member from Reddy Gudam suggested that SMCs should federate at the district and state levels in order to better address issues common to the entire state.

Lack of Adequate Training

A related issue concerns inadequate training for all stakeholders including training on CCE by teachers and SMC members, and on SMC functioning,

Lack of Transparency

MVF reported not having adequate access to enrolment and retention data from schools which prevent them from designing appropriate, localized strategies and activities. Retention data of schools is not made transparent because resources made available to schools is dependent on this. Given the mandated 30:1 student teacher ratio, reporting a decline in enrolment would mean that school budgets for teaching staff would get cut. Likewise reporting lower attendance by schools on any given day would affect their midday meal budgets. Reporting lower grades of students by teachers would result in them being questioned by the education administration. All these issues lead to a lack of transparency among schools in terms of sharing information. Therefore MVF too does not have access to accurate information which in turn impedes their ability to assess the larger impact of their activities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In terms of challenges posed by the administration, MVF is in the unique position of being able to understand and critically assess the SSA programmatic and gaps in the institutional arrangements of the public school system. These include gaps within the administration's training apparatus where findings reveal that the SMCs as well as the teachers are insufficiently trained on their functions, competency assessment (CCE) and pedagogical skills. These further include gaps in human and financial resources to form various institutions (e.g. SMCs, Panchayat standing committees, education sub committees and so on) and for them to carry out their functions. Related issues include insufficient teachers especially in the primary schools where hiring of sports teachers fall outside the purview of budget stipulations. Here innovative mechanisms to use state and other funding to augment these budgets would be required. For instance, NREGA funds can be used to repair school walls and compound wall and roofs or to build toilets.

NPEGEL funds can be used to hire sports or Karate teachers on a part time basis.

It is recommended that MVF critically lay out all gaps by conducting a needs assessment with all key stakeholders of the public school system and detail the issues that need to be addressed. Wherever MVF has evolved solutions to address these gaps a detailed policy advocacy strategy to advocate and institutionalize these best practices need to be designed. Wherever solutions are not yet in place (for example English not being taught in public schools) these need to be innovated and piloted. After the piloting, experiments on replication need to take place that should be process documented to create toolkits for roll out, advocacy and mainstreaming. ABF can play a crucial role in supporting MVF to influence policy and advocate for system reforms.

5. Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

Lesson 1: Inadequate School Infrastructure and Facilities

One key finding of this study was poor school infrastructure reported by multiple stakeholders including dysfunctional or inadequate toilets, lack of running water, inadequacy of classrooms, compound walls and roofs in schools. Facilities that were inadequate included the lack of sports teachers and sports material. These conditions are common across India and remain a challenge for children everywhere to access a well-rounded holistic education. While there was evidence of petitions resulting in improvements as a direct result of MVF's work, much remains to be done. This issue being the need of the hour it would be important for MVF to create more innovations using the RTE and their campaign-based movement to break new grounds for the rest of the country on the issue of improvement of school facilities and infrastructure.

One recommendation going forward in the next phase would be concentrated attention and focus on improving school infrastructure and facilities.

Lesson 2: Policy Advocacy on Best Practices in the Use of RTE to improve quality of education

MVF's strategic advantage over other institutions working in the field of education is its strong partnership with government and the emphasis of its work being on the RTE. This provides the ample scope for replication and main-streaming their innovations, which MVF has already done in the case of their bridge courses.

MVF's emphasis on the child's right to education poses the strategic advantage of weaving together a multiplicity of issues including child labour relevant to labour organisations, child marriage relevant to women's organizations, and most importantly trafficking of girls, a key focus of national and state governments today.

A crucial step going forward would be for MVF to engage in policy advocacy on showcasing their best practices in ending child labour using the RTE. If child trafficking is not yet been a major campaign issue of MVF in their focus going forward on girls between the ages of 14-18, creating an innovation that raises awareness and tackles this issue on the same lines as they have child labour would be a major national contribution.

For children in secondary school, it would be important since they do not fall within the legal jurisdiction of the RTE, to innovate solutions for this age bracket of children. Girls in this age group are particularly vulnerable as they tend to be married off in this period and are also subject to possible trafficking. Boys are at risk for employment reasons. Therefore, policy advocacy with both the MHRD and MoL would be required to create

the legal framework needed to protect adolescent children. Further research is required to understand which stakeholders at state and national levels would be required to create alliances with.

Nevertheless policy advocacy on use of RTE to improve education, tackle child labour and child marriage should be a focus of MVF going forward. Using case studies, toolkits and policy briefs for advocacy with state and national governments to showcase their best practices on training and awareness raising mechanisms on RTE, child labour and child marriage and the creation of institutions to support their work such as the CRPF, TFCR and the subject forums would be a major step towards main-streaming and up-scaling their interventions within Andhra Pradesh and nationally. Such an effort should target multiple Ministries including the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Labour and Ministries of Women and Child Development.

A major recommendation would be for ABF to support MVF to a) conduct policy advocacy on their best practices in the use of RTE to improve education outcomes and simultaneously eliminate related issues such as child labour and child marriage b) create similar innovations in their future work with adolescent girls using the RTE to tackle trafficking

Lesson 3: Gender Needs assessment, analysis and innovations on the girl child's right to education

A second strength of MVF has been their ability to tackle issues faced by the girl child in the form of child marriage and their current and upcoming innovations of creating girl's youth groups and working with adolescent girls. Girls and boys face different challenges in their access to education including mobility, expectations of girls to engage in housework, trafficking of girls (another form of child bonded labour) as well as child marriage. These gender based challenges are far worse in the northern states and for certain populations and geographies (border states) compared to the current operational area of the project. Therefore to more effectively tackle gender issues in new areas it would be important for MVF to develop the internal capacity and tools to conduct gender needs assessments of girls in these new areas, and gender analysis to build strategies that can feed into gender planning and budgeting. Such tools would be crucial in their future success for expansion and main-streaming of their work into new states and difficult terrains. One tool recommended here would be a more concerted focus on mothers who are the main stakeholders in the family with regard to education and health issues of children.

A second recommendation would be for ABF to provide support for MVF to conduct a strong gender analysis of their current work, and gender needs assessment for new areas, to create innovations that can build their capacities to deal the girl child's

access to the right to education.

Simultaneously it would be important for MVF to draw upon and learn from key gender-based education innovations such as a) Assam Mahila Samatha Society's work with NPEGEL in fighting gender stereotypes through teaching both boys and girls in government schools self-defence such as Karate, Kung Fu, Taekwondo, or boxing b) Mahila Samakhya in Andhra's work on gender education for boys and girls c) Niranthar's work on ensuring syllabi are gender sensitive and/or gender neutral d) Kerala Mahila Samakhya's work on instituting help desks for girls and boys state wide in every school in Kerala to prevent child abuse e) gender education conducted state wide for all teachers in Kerala through the government training state apparatus by Kerala Mahila Samakhya f) Innovative use of government funds (from NPRGEL) to employ sports and Karate teachers by Assam Mahila Samatha Society as well as to challenge gender norms g) gender education for communities conducted by Karnataka Mahila Samakhya.