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**Civil Society Organisations  
and Elementary Education  
Delivery in Madhya Pradesh**

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# CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION DELIVERY IN MADHYA PRADESH

Reetika Syal\*

## Abstract

Despite various efforts for the past six decades, the Indian government has not achieved universal enrolment in elementary education. The government acknowledges that it may be too big a task to be accomplished by a single agency and has made a space for civil society and non-governmental efforts to achieve this goal alongside the government. In Madhya Pradesh, the CSO's involvement in elementary education began with individual efforts for curriculum innovation in the 1970s. Persistent efforts by the CSOs to improve elementary education in government schools eventually resulted in their formal inclusion within the state government's decentralised education structure. The CSOs in MP work in partnership with the state government and play a complementary role. The major findings of this paper indicate that the CSO's involvement has helped improve attendance and retention rates of students in schools by introducing activity based teaching-learning material in classrooms and by increasing awareness and participation of parents and members of the village community in the delivery of elementary education and within the school system.

## Background

Universal education has been high on the Indian government's development agenda<sup>1</sup> since the 1950s. Through the various five-year plans<sup>2</sup>, national policies on education<sup>3</sup> and several programmes and committees the Indian Government has repeatedly reviewed this goal and the implementation strategies in the states. The literacy rate in India has consistently increased over the years from 18.33% in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011<sup>4</sup>, along with the allocation for education in the annual budgets<sup>5</sup>. The Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66) aimed at intensifying efforts to improve educational outcomes. A great deal of attention was given to opening new primary, middle and high schools, increasing the number of teachers and providing access to education to the entire population. Nevertheless, despite allocating huge sums of money and substantially increasing the number of schools and teachers, the government could not achieve its goal of universal elementary education<sup>6</sup> and a huge number of children still remain out of school<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 45 of the Indian Constitution, says that every child should be given free and compulsory education till 14 years of age. In 1976, education was included as a subject in the Concurrent List, which gave both central and state governments jurisdiction over the subject. In August 2009, elementary education for children between 6 and 14 years was made a fundamental right through the Right to Education Act.

<sup>2</sup> The government accorded high priority to education from the Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66).

<sup>3</sup> National Policy of Education 1968 and 1986; Programme of Action in 1991-92

<sup>4</sup> Provisional Population Totals - India, 2011, Census of India ([www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in))

<sup>5</sup> Expenditure on education as percentage of Gross Domestic Product- 1950-51- 1.19%; 2000-2001- 4.22% ([www.indiastat.com](http://www.indiastat.com))

<sup>6</sup> According to estimates in this plan<sup>6</sup>, about one-fourth of the children still remained out of school, the socially and economically disadvantaged groups were barely included in the school system and 64% of the total students enrolled

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Indian Constitution led to the establishment of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in all villages. This provided an opportunity for the community to monitor, supervise and support government plans and programmes at all levels. A policy shift can be noted from the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-1990) onwards. Official documents show that a conscious effort was made by the government to involve civil society organisations (CSO) in service delivery (Chandhoke 2009). The Government of India also partnered with the CSOs and non-government organisations (NGOs) in the field of education to improve the delivery mechanisms and also the quality of education (GoI, 1997:2.64, 2007:9, Kumar, 2008). The involvement of many organisations was legalised by signing memorandums-of-understanding (MoUs) with different state governments in order to help in delivery of social services including education<sup>8</sup>. The government evolved this strategy in the social service sector to bring in innovations and efficiency in service delivery mechanisms. In the education sector, CSOs were brought in for innovation in teaching-learning methods and education delivery mechanisms that were lacking in government schools. Universalisation of elementary education may be too big a task for a single delivery system so the government encouraged and legitimised the role of private providers<sup>9</sup>.

Organisations working in the area of elementary education have increased access to education of disadvantaged children. They have also improved the quality of schooling (Jagannathan, 2000). These organisations<sup>10</sup> influence mainstream education by replicating their own models of education delivery in the government schools. They act catalysts and not as large-scale providers of education. These organisations found that the demand for schooling was strong even among the poorest communities and the causes for the poor response to getting an education could be eradicated by improving the quality of education in schools and the responsiveness of the system itself.

This paper focuses on the involvement of CSOs in partnership with the state government to improve the education delivery mechanism in the state of Madhya Pradesh (M.P). Section I above explained the state of education in India. Section II gives a brief outline of the concept of civil society as it is viewed in the context of this paper, giving a few examples of successful CSO intervention in elementary education. Section III elaborates on civil society working in education in MP. Section IV describes the case study of the CSO *Samavesh* working in partnership with the MP government to strengthen the delivery of elementary education, giving data to illustrate the present situation in government schools (in sampled villages) and the effect of CSO intervention in the respective schools. Section V lists the findings from the previous section and concludes with policy suggestions for state-CSO partnership.

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in schools would dropout by Class V. The main deterrents cited were the socio-economic compulsions of the families, irrelevant curriculum and the lack of essential facilities in schools. The targeted approach planned to be adopted here was to adjust the schooling hours to suit the convenience of the groups that were being left behind, to provide economically viable and educationally relevant facilities in schools and to promote non-formal systems of learning (Chapter 21, GoI, 1980:352-354)

<sup>7</sup> Out of those children who attend school, half of them dropped out before completing the elementary level (GoI, 2007:8).

<sup>8</sup> Some examples CSOs working in partnership with the state government for better delivery of education are *Eklavya*, *Samavesh* and *Room to Read* (Madhya Pradesh), *Digantar* and *Bodh Shiksha Samiti* (Rajasthan), *Azim Premji Foundation* (Karnataka), *Pratham* (Maharashtra) etc

<sup>9</sup> The scope of the involvement of private providers' in education has expanded and is not just limited to offering only financial assistance to government programmes (GoI, 2007:9).

<sup>10</sup> A study of six organisations working in primary education in India was carried out [*MV Foundation*, Secunderabad (A.P), *Bodh Shiksha Samiti*, Jaipur (Rajasthan), *Pratham*, Mumbai (Maharashtra), *Eklavya*, Bhopal (MP), CEMD, Delhi and Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre, Chittor (AP)]. The survey showed that the organisations brought in significant innovations at the micro-level and enhanced the implementation of large-scale government programmes. Quality of education as defined by these six organisations goes beyond the learning outcomes of students and perceives the school as a place for self-expression, acquiring cognitive and non-cognitive skills, nurturing the spirit of enquiry in the child, etc.

## Concept of Civil Society

Most scholars prefer to give a working definition of the concept of civil society for the purpose of their study (Jayaram, 2005) since the concept itself is often interpreted as having a very broad scope to encompass all non-state aspects of social life. It includes the contractual relations of the modern state and also the traditional social networks, communities, the voluntary sector and social movements (Joseph, 2002), unions, self-help groups, foundations, social service agencies etc. (Mohan, 2002). Some arguments of civil society are based on disillusionment with the state and its method of functioning where members of the civil society are then called upon to gather all their resources to form a collective endeavour against the state (Kaviraj, 2001). The term is often opposed to well-established concepts such as 'state' to bring out its meaning. The interest in civil society lies not in the capacity of the concept *per se* but because scholars are not satisfied with the state. Therefore, most often we come across literature<sup>11</sup> on 'state *versus* civil society' rather than 'state and civil society' (Jayaram, 2005).

According to Neera Chandhoke (2003), civil society is a sphere where the society enters into a relationship with the state. It has been 'reduced to a ragbag' into which everything that is not the state or family's responsibility, has been included. Chandhoke strongly feels that civil society is what the practitioners make of it. The actors, who are the legal citizens of a country, are important because it is ultimately they who comprise civil society and make it work. Civil society does not automatically ensure the victory of democratic projects. It only provides the actors with the values, space and the inspiration to battle for democracy. If the citizens follow undemocratic practices then civil society is also termed undemocratic (ibid).

The neo-liberal theories shifted emphasis from purely state-centric development to state-civil society partnership for good governance. Civil society and social actors were encouraged to take up responsibilities of development and welfare functions along with the state. One of the most important roles that the civil society plays in contemporary India is to act as a watchdog to the state and by doing so, make the state more accountable and responsive to the needs and demands of the citizens besides creating a framework for participative and mobilisation politics (AGDI, 2008). Upward accountability of CSOs to the government and downward accountability to the region and communities they serve have emerged as important issues in civil society engagement in India (ibid). The CSOs largely perceive their role as being complementary to the government — assisting the government in implementing their programmes. In this regard, the CSOs can shoulder the responsibility of providing the people with better access to government services.

Government and civil society partnership takes on a variety of forms and has given mixed results<sup>12</sup>. The actual nature of the partnership depends on the context and the policy framework within which civil society operates (Ingram and Schneider, 2006). In the course of enhancing the accountability of the government, CSOs in India have largely filled the gaps left by the state in programme and policy implementation. Decentralisation has brought with it autonomy for all the state governments to carve out state/region specific programmes for better implementation of the various policies. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan of the Government of India (2007-2011), while talking of inclusive growth, outlines its commitment to improve governance in critical areas and improve efficiency and

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<sup>11</sup> Scholars such as Rajni Kothari, Atul Kohli and Prem Shankar Jha argue for the reduction of the state's role since it has failed to maintain order. However, Neera Chandhoke advocates bringing the state back into the civil society discourse since state institutions promote democracy and social justice in their own way (Jayaram, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Krishna Kumar (2008) talks about one such form, i.e., public-private partnership, as a method employed by the state to reduce its own responsibility in providing public service

effectiveness in government programmes. It emphasizes that the CSOs can work with panchayat institutions to improve effectiveness of these programmes and that it is important to experiment with programme design at the local level to give flexibility to the decision-making process.

### **Civil Society in Elementary Education**

Govinda (2003) notes that the states like MP and Rajasthan have recorded considerable progress in providing basic education with the help of civil society and community participation. The Government of MP worked in partnership with CSOs and NGOs in the implementation of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). In Rajasthan, elementary education received much support from the *Lok Jumbish*<sup>13</sup>, a local NGO which along with members of the community, has invented a technique of 'school mapping' of the entire village depicting each household with the educational status of its members between 5-14 years. There is a lot of community interaction and discussion while preparing the map, which provides an opportunity even to illiterate members to participate. In these programmes, the government's involvement was limited to providing funds.

The survey carried out by the PROBE<sup>14</sup> team is another example of successful civil society initiatives in elementary education. Problems of teacher absenteeism, student dropouts, poor state of the school building, no teaching-learning resources, low levels of achievement etc., were common to all the five states in the survey. Taking examples of three organisations from different states<sup>15</sup>, the report discusses the exemplary performance and commitment of these organisations to universalise elementary education in a common schooling system. The report also observes that though the scale of working and the geographical area covered by the organisations is much smaller than that of the government, their performance and commitment cannot be undermined. For the purpose of this paper, civil society is perceived as working in tandem with the state for better policy formulation and implementation.

### **Civil Society in Madhya Pradesh**

MP's experience with civil society intervention in education dates back to 1972 when two NGOs<sup>16</sup> started the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) in 16 schools of Hoshangabad district of the state. These NGOs were committed to improve the teaching of science in government schools. The MP Department of Education gave permission to these two NGOs to carry out their pilot project to explore the extent to which innovative changes could be introduced within the framework of the government school system<sup>17</sup> ([www.eklavya.in](http://www.eklavya.in)). The Madhya Pradesh State Education Board played a special role in this effort by giving administrative backing and academic freedom to experiment with books, kit, curricula, teacher's training and examinations. Hence, the HSTP was able to address innovation and quality improvement in science education and also focus on all aspects of school

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<sup>13</sup> *Lok Jumbish* is a programme funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Government of India and Government of Rajasthan.

<sup>14</sup> Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) team surveyed five states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, which consisted of more than half of the country's out-of-school children. Though these states are not representative of the whole country, the problems and challenges that they face are very similar to the ones faced by any other state in India.

<sup>15</sup> *Eklavya* (Madhya Pradesh), *Lok Jumbish* (Rajasthan) and *M.V Foundation* (Andhra Pradesh)

<sup>16</sup> Kishore Bharti and Friends Rural Centre

<sup>17</sup> To test this hypothesis, the HSTP investigated the feasibility of the introduction of the 'discovery' approach to learning science in village schools in place of the traditional 'learning by rote' methodology. In course of time, the concept of environment-based education was included as an integral part of teaching science.

functioning to facilitate innovative teaching. This stands out as a unique example of the state government accepting the initiative and innovation of an NGO to change the delivery of education within the framework of the state education system. As HSTP continued to experiment and evolve new methods of science teaching and learning, it provided a model for innovative quality improvement in the mainstream education system on a macro scale (ibid).

The MP government was one of the first in the country to give responsibility of the village school to the panchayats<sup>18</sup> after the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment in 1993. It was during this period that the MP government brought about reforms in education (*Rajiv Gandhi Shiksha Mission*) which revamped the government's agenda of providing universal elementary education. This mission was entrusted with the responsibility of developing, co-ordinating and implementing programmes for universal elementary education especially in the interior, rural and tribal areas for economically and socially deprived children. It performed the dual role of creating and meeting the demand for education by providing adequate educational infrastructure and qualitative educational inputs by mobilising the community, opening new schools, constructing schools, upgrading schooling amenities, developing approved teaching-learning materials, providing teacher's training, strengthening academic support systems etc. To improve the quality of education in the village schools, the village community (along with the panchayats) was given various roles and responsibilities in the education of their children<sup>19</sup>. The MP State Development Report 1995, acknowledged the problem of outdated curriculum and textbooks, which were not helping students<sup>20</sup>. In order to revamp the curriculum, NGOs already working in the field of education were included in the curriculum re-designing committees. Their field experiences and input from teachers were taken into account in designing the new curriculum (GoMP, 1995). In the 1990s, the state restructured its overall development strategy to view the people as agents of change and not only as recipients<sup>21</sup>. As part of this strategy, it encouraged various civil society initiatives and their collaboration with government agencies to improve the delivery of education<sup>22</sup>. Hence, MP was one of the first states to have a state-CSO partnership in elementary education<sup>23</sup>.

The MP government claims to have achieved universal access to primary education in 1998 under the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) by ending the backlog of habitations-without-schools. Hence, the remaining tasks before the state government were to bring out -of-school children within the purview of education and to improve retention, completion and achievement rates of the enrolled students (GoMP, 2002:28). For this purpose, the state sought the co-operation of CSOs in redesigning the school curriculum, preparing teaching-learning materials and strengthening teachers training

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<sup>18</sup> The main functions of the panchayats for education in rural areas included management and operation of schools along with the construction of school buildings, providing teaching aids in school, appointment of teachers and implementation of the central and state governments education promotion schemes (Source: [www.ssa.mp.nic.in](http://www.ssa.mp.nic.in); Chapter II - Madhya Pradesh - Background of Elementary Education and Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report 1998: p4).

<sup>19</sup> The roles and responsibilities of the parents and community members are outlined in the Madhya Pradesh People's Education Act (*M.P Jan Shiksha Adhinyam*) of 2002

<sup>20</sup> "...the print size, the density of the text on each page, the lack of visuals, often the absence of any human agency, the poor quality of whatever illustrations there may be, and, most significantly, the language, are alienating for a young child. A detailed analysis would, of course, show that the content is highly inappropriate and does not take into account the natural cognitive development of a child. It is crucial to recognize that the process of textbook preparation must be a part of curriculum development, and must be bound by rigorous trialing in the field." (Madhya Pradesh State Development Report - 1995, Chapter III- Education for All: From Rhetoric to Reality, p38)

<sup>21</sup> MPHDR, 2002, Government of Madhya Pradesh, p 19

<sup>22</sup> The state government restructured its overall development strategy to view the people as agents and not only as recipients. Through decentralisation, it created new partnerships with the community and local panchayats so that the dichotomy between the provider and receiver could be dissolved. Substantial delegation of power to the local panchayats and the Village Education Committees provided greater space for direct community partnerships

<sup>23</sup> Compiled from MP Human Development Reports 1995, 1998 and 2002

institutes. This was intended to improve the overall delivery system of elementary education and further help universalise elementary education. The CSOs in MP have signed MoUs with the State Education Board and are expected to improve the quality of education in the government schools in the respective regions. The organisations have been involved with government schoolteachers in developing and strengthening different aspects of elementary education such as redesigning curriculum<sup>24</sup>, introducing multi-grade multi-level learning system, innovation in teaching-learning material for teachers and students, training teachers in these new methods, mobilising and strengthening community support for the school<sup>25</sup> etc. The following section describes a case study of *Samavesh*, a CSO working in partnership with the state government to strengthen the delivery of elementary education in two districts of MP.

## **Delivery of Elementary Education in Madhya Pradesh: State and CSO Partnership**

Memorandum of Understanding: The MoU between *Samavesh* and the MP State Education Board (in 2005), outlines their respective roles/expectations in strengthening the overall elementary education system in two districts of MP. *Samavesh* was expected to provide good and effective education in the 50 schools in its care using its own modalities. However, under the MoU the CSO was expected to support, train and monitor all the Cluster Resource Centres and train all the teachers in the blocks where the 50 schools were located. To ensure good quality education, *Samavesh* designed the *Shiksha Protsahan Programme*<sup>26</sup> (SPP) under which a whole gamut of activities to strengthen the delivery of elementary education in government schools was carried. According to the MoU, the state government does not give financial support but has agreed that *Samavesh* could approach other agencies for funds<sup>27</sup>.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP) had to take up an administrative role according to the MoU by issuing instructions and orders to respective district institutes for educational training (DIET) and the District, Block and Cluster Resource Centres to support *Samavesh* and participate in its activities and programmes while also providing financial support, training and capacity building activities to the BRCs and DIETs. A clause in the MoU mentions that the state government should ensure suitable student-teacher ratio and provide other minimum facilities in schools as planned in the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*<sup>28</sup>. The average teacher-pupil ratio (TPR) in Dewas and Harda districts stands testimony to the fact that GoMP has not fulfilled its part of the MoU to provide minimum number of teachers (as per the

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<sup>24</sup> A package was developed for Classes I-V by *Eklavya* organisation called *Seekhna-Sikhana* in collaboration with the MP State Council of Education (SCERT) and the DPEP programme. It included a set of workbooks titled *Khushi-Khushi*, which follows an integrated approach to learning ([www.eklavya.in](http://www.eklavya.in)).

<sup>25</sup> Through formal and informal discussions with the village community members, organising children's fairs and street plays to increase awareness about elementary education

<sup>26</sup> The organisation provides a resource person called *Bal-Mitra* (friend of the children) in each school to help students who lag behind in mainstream classes. Another resource person called *Jan-Mitra* (friend of the people) is assigned for every 3-4 villages to supervise the BM in carrying out teaching activities effectively and also to mobilize the village community and increase their awareness of education through informal discussions, meetings etc. The CSO also organises fairs, summer camps, puppet shows etc., in the village to increase involvement and collaboration of government school teachers, parents and community members and local level government officials in the village schools. Under the SPP, the CSO also assists local and district government officials in training teachers (during the annual teacher training seminars) in innovative teaching methods and also implement the activity-based learning package introduced by the government. They also help during the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) meetings and in creating awareness among the parents and community members about their rights and duties to improve the school system.

<sup>27</sup> *Samavesh* gets financial aid from the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) in Mumbai.

<sup>28</sup> *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education for All) is a flagship program of the Indian government to provide education to all children between 6 and 14 years through community-ownership of the school system.

TPR) or infrastructural facilities. The primary survey brought forth an average TPR of 1:51 in Dewas district and almost double that in Harda, i.e., 1: 98. Most of the schools in these districts have newly constructed buildings with adequate classrooms, a hand pump and separate toilets for boys and girls. However, one hand-pump does not prove sufficient water for all children in the school in the summer months when most of the hand pumps dry up and fail to provide water. The toilets remain locked for students at all times and are only to be used by teachers or when a government official visits the school. Every village and habitat in Madhya Pradesh may have a school building but the basic amenities continue to elude the students.

### **About the CSO *Samavesh***

As mentioned earlier, the HSTP program was started in 1972 by two voluntary organisations and later carried on by the organisation *Eklavya* after 1982. In the field of education, *Eklavya* mainly worked in curriculum development in collaboration with subject experts, researchers, field workers and teachers. Over the years, *Eklavya* worked in close collaboration with the national and state government's and developed textbooks and other academic material for the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) and the national DPEP. It was also involved in designing a new learning package for primary schools and teaching of social science in secondary schools in MP. Besides education, *Eklavya* also did a lot of work in rural development such as training panchayat members, forming women's self-help groups etc<sup>29</sup>. This rural development work was carried out by an independent group within *Eklavya*. A need was felt to make that group into an independent organisation so it could continue to work for overall rural development in education, health, rehabilitation, training panchayat members, women's empowerment etc. In 2003, this group detached itself from *Eklavya* and became an independent organisation called *Samavesh*.

*Samavesh* initially established *Shiksha Protsahan Kendras*<sup>30</sup> (SPK or centre for encouraging education) in some villages in *Dewas* and *Harda* districts of MP. Even though the parents were happy with the SPKs, the government schoolteachers saw them as a threat to the village government schools since the children would attend the former more regularly than they would attend their own school. Since *Samavesh* did not want to establish parallel institutions within the village and their only aim was to help slow learners and improve the overall education in schools, it decided to modify its method of working and requested the state government for permission to work in these schools to help the children learn better. The state government designed a MoU outlining the activities that *Samavesh* would undertake in these schools to improve them. This MoU granting permission to *Samavesh* to work in 50 government schools (in as many villages) in the two districts for a period of five years was signed in November 2005. *Samavesh* hence designed the Community Based Participation Programme for

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<sup>29</sup> Since 1995, *Eklavya* has been involved in training panchayat personnel in villages. In 1998 the Participatory Planning for Rural Development (PPRD) programme emerged as an umbrella for rural communities to play an effective role in self-governance and to make better use of economic and social opportunities, orientation and training of panchayat members, formation of community groups, community involvement in health and education and natural resource management with support from the local community. The government called upon different civil society organisations to train panchayat members and *Eklavya* was asked to co-ordinate the programme. *Eklavya* also played a role in mobilising the community such as women's self help groups in economic activities and also to promote health and education. A study of about 32 panchayats was also carried out by *Eklavya* to gauge their strengths, weaknesses, main challenges etc.

<sup>30</sup> The SPKs provided out-of-school community support for children who were lagging behind in school especially the first-generation learners from Dalit and tribal households (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes). Each of these centres was assigned to a resource person called *Bal-Mitra* (BM) who would teach the children through innovative and activity based methods using simple and creative materials such as pebbles, leaves, flash-cards, songs, poems, skits etc. The BMs would engage in regular classes and a large number of children started attending them.

Strengthening Elementary Education' or *Shiksha Pehel Programme* (SPP) as a comprehensive programme aimed at improving elementary education in government primary schools including improvement of school and classroom environment, enhancing community participation and strengthening block level management of schools (which included training and capacity building of teachers in these two blocks).

### **Situation of Sampled Government Schools**

In the MP Human Development Reports<sup>31</sup>, the government consistently raised the issue of being unable to fulfill the infrastructural needs of village schools. From 1995 to 2007, the efforts of state government fell short of providing a physical learning space for children in all villages. In 1998, the government boasted of having bridged the physical gap in access to schooling for all children under the EGS. However, it was only through *Lok Sampark Abhiyan*<sup>32</sup> that the government realised that the gap in access was far from being bridged.

The data in Table 1 illustrates how the government has been unable to fulfil some of the basic infrastructural and human resource requirements in the schools<sup>33</sup> in Dewas and Harda districts where it is working in partnership with the *Samavesh*. Even after signing the MoU with the CSO, the state was unable to provide basic amenities in these schools. The table shows the difference between what is expected<sup>34</sup> of the government according to the MoU and the situation as observed during fieldwork (for select variables). The data marked in bold in the table indicates that five years after signing the MoU, the state government was not been able to provide basic necessities for a school such as adequate number of teachers and infrastructural requirements like adequate number of classrooms and drinking water and toilet facilities.

Teachers - The above table shows that in seven schools there were not enough teachers (as per the total number of students) and the Teacher-Pupil Ratio was very high (1: 156 being the highest where the school has only two teachers for 312 students). This in turn negatively affected the number of teaching hours and the quality of teaching, since the teachers had to manage the students of five

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<sup>31</sup> MPHDR 1995, pp 43-44; 1998, pp 06-09, 2002, pp 20-22; 2007, pp 120-125

<sup>32</sup> Lok Sampark Abhiyan was a system of collective micro planning on a habitation basis to assess the status of children's schooling, out of schoolchildren and educational and infrastructure facilities. LSA- I was undertaken in 1996 and LSA- II in 2000-01. LSA-I aimed at finding out-of-school children, their reasons for doing so, and outreach of schooling facilities. It covered 55,295 villages and contacted 6.1 million households and 10 million children. LSA-I revealed that only 70% of habitations had access to primary schools. It also demolished the myth of universal enrolment because enrolment was not more than 70%, most children reported as dropouts had never been enrolled and the most deprived were tribal girls. LSA - II aimed at identifying gaps in middle schools and measured progress of educational indicators at the primary level and established a benchmark for the upper primary. LSA made it possible to formulate a comprehensive state plan for UEE with district specific perspective plans (MPHDR 2002)

<sup>33</sup> For the purpose of fieldwork, 12 schools were randomly chosen from *Dewas* and *Harda* districts. Out of these, 9 schools were 'experimental schools' where the government was working in partnership with the CSO and the remaining 3 were 'control schools' where the government was not working with CSO collaboration. All the 12 sample schools were government/ public schools (under M.P state government administration). The CSO intervention in the experimental schools was restricted to giving quality inputs in teaching methods, training teachers in innovative teaching-learning methods, mobilisation of the village community for active participation in supervision of the school etc. The CSO abided by all rules laid down by the state government and did not have any say in the administrative working of the school. It only enhanced the delivery of elementary education through various activities.

<sup>34</sup> The expected value of a variable taken is as specified in the education policy documents and notifications of the state government. Teachers - as sanctioned by the Block Resource Centre for each school; TPR (Teacher- Pupil Ratio) - one teacher per 40 students; Teachers' Attendance (monthly) - an average 25 days per month; Teaching hours per day - 5 hours; Total classrooms - one room for each grade i.e., atleast 5 classrooms in each school; Drinking water - one hand pump in each school; Functional Toilets - at least one common toilet in each school.

grades and could barely concentrate on completing their lessons, let alone teach meaningfully. Another important point of concern was the attendance of teachers. None of the teachers reported<sup>35</sup> that they were present in school on all working days of the month. It is worth noting that even schools that had two or more teachers, only one teacher was present during most visits<sup>36</sup>. The teachers admitted that they worked in shifts in the school to ensure that at least one teacher was present in the school. In case an official from the government department visited the school, the teacher present could cover up for the absentee teachers. However, it is interesting to observe that whenever the teachers did not come on time to the schools, the village youth (in some villages) open the school premises and engage the students in some activities. The village youth do this so that the students would understand the importance of school timings and not loiter around in the village unnecessarily.

**Table 1- Infrastructure and Human Resource in for Sampled Schools in M.P  
(Expected and Observed)**

	Variables	Teachers		TPR		Teachers' Attendance (Monthly)		Teaching hours per day		Total classrooms		Drinking water		Functional toilets	
		Exp	Obs	Exp	Obs	Exp	Obs	Exp	Obs	Exp	Obs	Exp	Obs	Exp	Obs
	<b>Schools</b>														
1	Melpiplia	2	2	1:40	1:45	25	20	5	<b>3.5</b>	5	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No</b>
2	Chichli	3	<b>2</b>	1:40	1:52	25	20	5	4	5	<b>3</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Ajnas- Balak	5	5	1:40	1:30	25	20	5	4	5	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Karond Khurd	3	3	1:40	1:39	25	20	5	4	5	<b>2</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No</b>
5	Karond Bujurg	2	<b>1</b>	1:40	<b>1:81</b>	25	20	5	4	5	<b>3</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No</b>
6	Chandpura	2	2	1:40	1:34	25	20	5	<b>3</b>	5	<b>3</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No</b>
7	Sunderpani	0	<b>0</b>	1:40	<b>0:148</b>	25	24	5	5	5	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No</b>
8	Moregarhi	2	2	1:40	<b>1:156</b>	25	24	5	<b>3</b>	5	<b>3</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Ghodapat	1	1	1:40	<b>1:110</b>	25	20	5	<b>3</b>	5	<b>2</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No</b>
10	Barchha Khurd	4	<b>1</b>	1:40	<b>1:92</b>	25	18-20	5	<b>3</b>	5	<b>2</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Manora	2	<b>1</b>	1:40	<b>1:113</b>	25	24	5	4	5	<b>3</b>	Yes	<b>No</b>	Yes	<b>No</b>
12	Kalakahu	2	2	1:40	<b>1:64</b>	25	24	5	4	5	5	Yes	<b>No</b>	Yes	<b>No</b>

**Notes-** For each variable, the Expected value has been given in the first column (Exp) and the corresponding Observation during field work is given in second column (Obs)  
- Expected values of variables *Teachers*, *TPR*, *Total Classrooms*, *Drinking water* and *Functional Toilets* taken from State Government data for school report cards ([www.schoolreportcards.in](http://www.schoolreportcards.in))  
- In school no.7 (Sunderpani), there are 148 students in the primary section of the school but no teacher has been sanctioned or positioned for the past 2 years

Infrastructure - As mentioned earlier, the government has constructed new buildings for most of the schools in these districts with adequate classrooms, a hand pump for drinking water and separate toilets for boys and girls. However, one hand pump is insufficient for all children in the school and in the summer months, most of these hand pumps go dry. Moreover, only four out of the 12 sample schools have toilets in the school premises, which remain locked for students at all times and are only used by teachers or by government officials that visit the school. This data gives an insight into the infrastructural inadequacies faced by the schools in the sample districts, which is evidence of non-

<sup>35</sup> The figures for teachers' monthly attendance are averages and have been estimated from the answers given by the teachers during their respective interviews for average number of working days in a month and in the total academic year.

<sup>36</sup> School visits by the author were carried out during January to March 2010. Planned as well as random visits to the school and classroom observations were a part of the data collection methodology

fulfillment of government's terms of the MoU. Nevertheless, during fieldwork it was found that in villages with no school building (or was under construction), the panchayat gave its office rooms or made alternate arrangements so that the school could function properly.

To examine the working of the CSO in these villages, data<sup>37</sup> for select variables is given in Table 2. The table<sup>38</sup> is divided into two columns to bring out the difference between experimental schools (government schools working in collaboration with the CSO) and control schools (government schools not working with CSO collaboration).

### Effect of CSO intervention in Government Schools

CSO Initiatives - *Samavesh* uses various techniques and methods to provide elementary education in the villages. It provides a resource person called *Bal-Mitra* (BM) in each school to help students who are lagging behind in their studies, and a *Jan-Mitra* (JM) for every 3-4 villages who supervises the BM and interacts with the village community and parents on issues related to education. Cluster coordinators in each district constantly support and supervise the BM and JM. *Samavesh* partners with the state government every year to train teachers in innovative methods of teaching and learning. This partnership extends to the training of the PTAs as well (in the experimental villages). This quick review of the working of the CSO explains to us that *Samavesh* is involved not only in providing education to the children at the school level but also in strengthening the education delivery system by interacting with teachers, parents and community members and bringing them together for the efficient working of the village school.

**Table 2- Variables showing impact of CSO working on delivery system of elementary education in Experimental and Control Schools**

	Variables	Experimental schools (9)	Control schools (3)	
1	Active Parent- Teacher Association (PTA)	6	1	
2	Reported cases of discussion in PTA over dropout/out-of-school students	3	0	
3	Reported cases where parents/community have demanded accountability from teacher	2	0	
4	Reported cases for lack of teachers	No. of schools which face this problem	5	0
		No. of schools which complained to authorities about problem	2	0
		Action taken by authorities on the complaint	1	0
5	Reported cases for Irregular teachers	No. of schools which face this problem	5	0
		No. of schools which complained to authorities about problem	3	0
		Action taken by authorities on the complaint	1	0
6	Reported cases for inadequate school infrastructure	Insufficient Classrooms	1	0
		No Drinking water	2	2
		No Toilets	2	2
		Midday meal room/ utensils	3	0
7	Using ABL techniques to teach in class*	3	0	

\* An Activity-Based Learning (ABL) package has been designed by the MP State Education Board to be implemented in every school and the teachers are given annual training to utilise the Teaching Learning Material (TLM) provided under the ABL package

PTA Role and Training - During focused group discussions it was observed that six out of the nine schools where the CSO was working in partnership with the government, had an active<sup>39</sup> PTA body. The

<sup>37</sup> Data has been collected through focused group discussions with the members of Parent-Teacher Associations, village community members and classroom observations

<sup>38</sup> Table 4 lists data for the 12 sample schools listed in Table 3. The only difference being that in Table 4, the schools have been divided into Experimental and Control schools (as explained earlier)

<sup>39</sup> Data on PTA was gathered on number and regularity of school visits, interaction/discussion with teachers, interaction/discussion with parents, raising issues of concern for the school, participation in school activities, regular meetings/discussions amongst themselves, taking responsibility of sending children/dropouts to school. Villages which fulfilled 5 or more criterion were considered to have an active PTA

PTAs visited the schools regularly and discussed issues of concern for the school in meetings and with teachers. However, only one control school had an active PTA. The experimental schools also reported that issues of dropout and out-of-school children were discussed during their meetings and demanded accountability from the teacher. Though all PTA members are trained by the government at the beginning of their two-year term, the experimental schools receive separate training from the CSOs. During this training the PTA members are provided with separate booklets and pamphlets that describe (with illustrations) their duties and responsibilities in detail. The CSO personnel constantly interact (formally and informally) with the village community and carry out various activities to increase the awareness of parents of the school and their children. The PTAs in experimental schools especially attribute their active involvement in school to the constant interaction with and availability of CSO personnel (*Jan-Mitra* and field level coordinators).

Community Awareness - It should be noted that none of the control schools reported discussions on issues of dropout children or demanding accountability from the teachers as was reported in the experimental schools and villages. In addition, the problems of lack of teachers and their irregular attendance and inadequate infrastructure were reported more during discussions in experimental schools more than in control schools. One might reason that the control schools did not face these problems and hence did not report it during focused group discussions and interviews. However, as can be observed from individual school level data in Table 1 (schools 10) *Barchha Khurd*, 11) *Manora and* 12) *Kalakahu*), control schools also faced similar problems. The reason for not reporting/discussing these issues was that the parents and community in the control school villages were not aware that lack of teachers, high TPR and less teaching hours were serious issues that could hamper the education of their children. Regular discussions with the parents and village community members and organising activities cultural programmes, fairs, puppet shows etc., (which invariably carry as message for importance of education) by the CSOs in experimental schools made parents and the community aware of the problems faced by the village school and the possible solutions to these problems. Interaction and awareness is lacking in the control schools due to which parents are not able to demand accountability from the teachers and government officials. It may not be possible for CSOs working in such schools to provide infrastructural facilities and additional teachers to the schools since that would require a large amount of material and financial resources, which may be outside the purview of the CSOs. Nevertheless, the CSOs could raise awareness within the village/community members about how basic infrastructural requirements and additional teachers in a school can help improve the quality of education.

Activity-Based Learning - The last variable in Table 2 mentions the Activity-Based learning techniques that have to be used by all teachers in the classroom. As mentioned earlier, each experimental school has a BM teaching the children who are lagging behind. The BMs use activity-based learning techniques to teach these children and bring them up to the level of their class. Government teachers of experimental schools observe that the children taught by ABL methods are able to understand and learn faster in class. They also have better retention rates and are more vocal in class. During the annual training session of all government schoolteachers, *Samavesh* trains all teachers in the ABL techniques and teaching methods. Through class observations, it was found that more teachers from experimental school used the ABL package while none of the teachers of control schools used it. The reasons given

by teachers for using the ABL package were that whenever they encountered a problem, they could always approach the CSO personnel (BM or JM) in school to help them out and also because the CSO resource persons themselves use these techniques to teach the children in experimental schools which inspired government teachers to also use the package. When the control school teachers were asked the reason for not using the package they responded by saying that the ABL techniques take up a lot of time in class and in order to complete the syllabus it was better to teach by tried and tested methods. This reason was also given by some of the experimental schools teachers who said that the ABL technique of teaching takes time but the children understand the lessons better with ABL methodology and after using ABL for some time, both the students and teachers get used to it.

## **Section V**

Based on the discussion above we understand that CSOs have been extremely helpful in implementing government policies. However, the efforts of the government have not obtained the desired results. In such a situation, it may be helpful to widen the scope of the CSOs' activities to provide inputs to make better policies in the future. The present section discusses the major findings of the study based on which some policy suggestions have been made.

### **Findings-**

- An appropriate TPR has not been achieved in government schools in the state due to lack of teachers. Moreover, regularity and responsiveness of teachers is also a matter of concern in the sample schools.
- The state government has not been able to meet the infrastructure needs of the village schools. Basic amenities such as functional toilets and drinking water are not available in a large number of schools.
- The training provided by the CSO to the PTAs in experimental schools has resulted in comparatively more active PTAs than in control schools.
- The PTAs in experimental schools have been raising the issues of dropout and out-of-school children and accountability of the teachers, more than the PTAs of control schools. The oft-cited reason (during discussions) is the constant presence of CSO personnel to motivate and guide the parents to demand answers from the teachers and government officials.
- Even though all teachers are trained in ABL techniques and packages, teachers in experimental schools use ABL more compared to their counterparts in control schools. Usage of similar techniques by BM in the experimental schools motivates the government teachers in these schools to use the ABL package in their respective classes.

### **Policy Suggestions**

From Tables 1 and 2 we can make a definite case for involving CSOs in the delivery of elementary education. Civil society interventions in policy implementation improve the delivery of elementary education. CSOs have made the PTA and community members much more aware of the problems faced by the village school and also their rights as parents to demand accountability from the teachers. The first step by the MP government should be to acknowledge the presence and contribution

of CSOs. If their efforts are recognised and acknowledged it could improve the efficiency and responsiveness of the CSOs.

Judging by the field experience, it can be concluded that the government has fallen short of meeting its commitment as outlined by the MoU. Efforts by the government to bring about 100% enrolment have not been successful and the problem of dropout and out-of-school children is a major hindrance in achieving this goal. The CSOs have been helping in these areas by providing field level inputs to the government and making the latter aware of the impediments at the ground level. If this method of intervention continues, it would be helpful in addressing the gaps between formulation and implementation in the subsequent policies/plans. Therefore, the scope of the CSO's role can be widened to help design area-specific strategies to address local needs and requirements, and also to assist the government in their implementation. It will also ensure that students complete their education despite family constraints and other socio-economic impediments.

The CSOs have utilized their opportunity to improve the delivery of elementary education to the maximum. The paper establishes that there is a definite advantage of having CSOs working with the government to provide better education. A bigger role for the CSOs would ensure that inputs from field level experts could be sourced at every stage. This would result in effective delivery of education with efficient accountability mechanisms in place, right from the grassroots level. In this context, it may be argued that CSOs could be given a bigger role in implementation and evaluation of education plans and policies so that the aim of UEE can be achieved through joint efforts by the state and CSO.

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