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NGOS WORKING FOR EDUCATION IN RAJASTHAN

NGOS Working for Education in Rajasthan

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Abstract - Rajasthan is the largest State of India in terms of total area occupied. The pattern in public spending on education presents an encouraging picture. Though Rajasthan's per capita income is relatively low on education, and this ratio has been increasing over the past decade. Furthermore, Rajasthan has always been a home of voluntary efforts and voluntarism. The voluntary sector organizations have played a vital role in addressing the issues concerning the life of the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged. Today there are an impressive number of voluntary organizations in the state offering alternative perspective.

Key Words: NGOs, Education, Rajasthan

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INTRODUCTION

Education is undoubtedly one of the most important factors that impact the growth and development of a country as well as the future course of the country's people as a whole. Education in India annually brings a perfect and successful batch of youth, but in a regrettable number. Indian education have been claimed to follow a tougher and a higher level education in case compared to that of foreign. Though India itself has a teaching quality par excellence but fails to mushroom the brains. Time in memorial epics about teacher student relation in India has been an inspiration here.

INITIATIVES OF STATE GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE EDUCATION STATUS IN RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan is the largest State of India in terms of total area occupied. The State also has significant diversities of terrain, livelihood pattern as well as dispersal pattern of habitations in rural areas and basically an arid and semi arid State with scanty to moderate rainfall and therefore prone to famine conditions often. Communication network is poor and climatically it has severe summer as well as severe winter weather. Within the state, agriculture and animal husbandry are the major sources of livelihood, with a few manufacturing industries or services. Distribution of income and assets is also highly uneven. Therefore, the task of ensuring that education is universalized and relevant for all sections of society is indeed formidable.

Historically, the society has been conservative due to the legacy of princely and feudal rule. Even after independence, practices like child marriage, parda systems etc. still prevail. Resultantly, the impact of all

these on the spread of education, especially amongst the females, has been adverse. This was reflected in the dismal literacy rate of the State as per 1991 census, when it was second lowest in the country at 38.55% for men. The female literacy rate at 24.44% was the lowest in the country. Since then the State, has registered growth over the past decade (2001) – literacy has gone up to 67.06% in 2011 and the female literacy percentage from 43.9% to 52.66% in 2011. Educational outcomes have improved substantially over the last decade even though indicator of gender equity and transition from elementary to higher classes are still behind national averages.

Education is fundamental to the success of any modern society. Efforts are being made to universalize elementary education in Rajasthan through community-ownership. Programmes like Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan are attempting to provide an opportunity for improving human Capabilities to all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode.

The State Government is endeavoring to achieve the objective of total literacy through various programmes/schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, District Primary Education Programme, and Continuing Literacy Programme. School children are being benefited with mid-day meals in the state. Apki Beti Scheme has been introduced for the girl child belonging to BPL families and whose one or both parents have died. A scholarship fee is made available under the scheme. Special bridge courses have been started for physically challenged children and qualified teachers have been appointed for them.

ROLE OF NGOS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION STATUS IN RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan has always been a home of voluntary efforts and voluntarism. The voluntary sector organizations have played a vital role in addressing the issues concerning the life of the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged. Today there is an impressive number of voluntary organizations in the state offering alternative perspective; committed expertise; an understanding of the local opportunities and constraints; and perhaps most importantly, the capacity to conduct a meaningful dialogue with communities.

It would be appropriate to have a critical look on evolution of the voluntary sector in the state. Considering the "organization" as an important part of voluntary efforts, it was the decade of the 70's when some NGOs emerged in Rajasthan, with the objective of welfare of the disadvantaged groups with focus on adult education and social development. Seva Mandir, in Udaipur, worked to promote literacy, and better agriculture practices among the small and marginal farmers and the poor. The Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) Tilonia worked to provide basic infrastructure and resources to poor families of the rural communities. The approach of these organizations in the 80's was to do all these activities with the active involvement of the concerned communities. In the 80's several organizations like Urmul Trust were set up with the focus on community development and addressed their concerns and issues with their participation, rather than imposing some development projects/schemes as such.

The efforts of voluntary sector have been now recognized by the state to a great extent. This was reflected in form increase in the legitimate space for voluntary organizations in state run development initiatives. The Women's Development Program and Shiksha Karmi Pariyojana were inspired by the NGOs intervention with women and children. In these programmes, the NGOs were then involved as partners in planning and implementing the schemes, in training the personnel and mobilization of the communities, in monitoring and evaluation. From this period, it was seen that many bilateral donors also insisted with the Rajasthan Government to involve NGOs as partners in development schemes that they agreed to fund. In early 90's the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funded Lok Jumbish Program which envisaged active and substantial partnership with NGOs into the implementation process.

NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION

The main agencies facilitating development at the grass root level are the Government line departments, the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the field based NGOs. Each of these stakeholders has their significant characteristics that afford some strengths and some

weaknesses that have implication for development processes and thereby collaboration. In the last decade, the scope of involving NGOs in development process at various levels has theoretically increased and practically too this has brought in a flux of NGOs in the development arena.

The presence and role of voluntary organizations in social development has become manifold large and multidimensional in last couple of decades. There has been a golden history of voluntary movement in the state. However, there are some historically backward areas in terms of presence and outreach of voluntary initiatives. Vidya Bhawan Society and Seva Mandir in Udaipur, Social Work Research Centre in Ajmer and Urmul in Bikaner are some good examples to understand the evolution and development of the sector in the state.

Efforts done by voluntary agencies are widely recognized, accepted and have been instrumental in bringing the disadvantaged into the development mainstream. Today the voluntary agencies are playing a major role in awareness building, organizing communities, trainings, service delivery, initiating innovations in development, research, planning, monitoring and policy reforms. These roles are being performed in key sectors like - Rural Development, Health and Family Welfare, Social Welfare, Micro-credit and Livelihoods, Natural Resource Management (Water, Forest, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry), Education, Women Development, Relief & Disaster Management, Social Security and Empowerment of disadvantaged people and so on.

NGOS IN EDUCATION

Following are some NGOs those work in education sector in Rajasthan using different methods and techniques to improve the standard of education in the society.

BODH

i. Rural Programmes

Bodh's rural programmes (**Jan Pahal** and **Shikshak Pahal**) are being implemented in Thanagazi and Umrein blocks in Alwar, Rajasthan, India. The two programmes cover 35 panchayats in Thanagazi and eight panchayats in Umrein. Four bodhshalas in deprived localities in Alwar city also come under their purview. The two programmes reach out to about 16,500 children in Alwar (Programme MIS, January 2009). Notable achievements across the two rural programmes include a growing cadre of mother teachers (local women trained to take preschool groups at bodhshalas). This group represents a significant community resource. The 35 rural bodhshalas have managed to increase their enrollment rate to 85-100% and retention rate to more than 70%. The intervention government

schools have also seen an impressive rise in enrolment and retention rates.

ii. Urban Programmes

Janbodh – Urban Education Programme.

The **Janbodh** programme was initiated with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Oct 21, 2005 between the Government of Rajasthan (GoR) and Bodh. It evolved from the experiences and learnings of **Janshala** (the Government of India – UN Agencies Primary Education Programme). **Janbodh** is a part of the state government's multistakeholder partnership forum - Rajasthan Education Initiative (REI). The five-year programme aimed at contributing to the state initiatives of universalisation of education. There was an emphasis on enhancing understanding of urban educational deprivation in Jaipur city and informing policy and practices accordingly.

JAN KALA SAHITYA MANCH SANSTHA (JKSMS)

Jan Kala Sahitya Manch Sanstha (JKSMS) is a social service organization founded in 1983 by young social activists. It is registered under the Rajasthan Societies Registration Act 1958 and the Foreign Contribution (Regulating) Act, 1976 (FCRA). It is working without discrimination of caste & creed in several parts of the state of Rajasthan in India. JKSMS believes in democratic values based on secularism and community participation at all levels.

The strategic aim of JKSMS is to ensure active involvement of beneficiaries in all issues that are pertinent to them. It believes the every stakeholder has the right to full-fledged development; where they have the right to survival, protection, development and participation related to their own growth and self-respect. JKSMS focuses on under privileged societal groups.

PRIMARY EDUCATION:

The NGO is involved with informal and formal primary education through alternative methods of learning.

i. Apna-Ghar (Shelter Home for Boys) & Mamta (Shelter Home for Girls)

Apna-Ghar (The shelter home for homeless children struggling on streets without family ties) established during October 1994. The meaning of Apna- Ghar is "Own Home". During the year 2010-11, JKSMS established a separate shelter home for girls by the name of "Mamta - Apna Ghar"

FACILITIES PROVIDING IN APNA-GHAR AND MAMTA - APNA GHAR :

The resident children of shelter homes are availing following indoor and outdoor facilities:

- Boarding with all basic facilities like food/ clothes/ utensils/ bed/ recreational and sports material/learning & teaching material/other utility items etc.
- Informal primary education by NGO's teacher.
- Formal primary education through enrolment in Govt. schools.
- Homework support to school going children.
- Life education with practical Knowledge of routine activities.
- Awareness regarding Health/personal hygiene/sanitation.

ii. Partnership for Education

JKSMS created a partnership system to provide qualitative education in public schools to the children of Apna Ghar. Amway Opportunity Foundation is providing financial support for School Fee, Uniform and Bus fare for 10 children.

iii. Library Support (Reading Room) Project

Library Support Programme is implemented for children of slums studying in government schools. It covers 28 schools for elementary education in Jaipur. One library in each school has been established to develop language and reading skills among children.

iv. ILM-The special Livelihood school

An initiative for children involved in costume jewellery in Jaipur. A special school, ILM has been established for primary education and to enhance skills development in their traditional jewellery trade. So children get simultaneously both, education and livelihood skills to survive. The total enrolled students (boys & girls) are 519.

ASHA KA JHARNA

Asha Ka Jharna' is a voluntary non-profit organization working for the cause of disability since 1997. Three special schools for mentally retarded and hearing impaired children are being run by organisation in the rural areas of Rajasthan, where special education, therapeutic, vocational, guidance and counselling to about 165 special children and their families are provided.

JANSHALA

Janshala was launched in Rajasthan in 1998. The programme covers the cities of Jaipur, Ajmer, Bharatpur and Jodhpur. The significant feature of Janshala in Rajasthan is that it is being implemented exclusively in urban areas. It is considered the first ever exclusive intervention in urban areas by any government programme on primary education. Therefore, the experiments and interventions in Rajasthan are being keenly watched for lessons which can be incorporated in other cities. Janshala is an effort to provide educational opportunities to deprived children in urban slums and improve the quality of existing schools.

Janshala is implemented by the Rajasthan Shahri Katchi Basti Janshala Samiti. For the smooth and efficient working of the project, the zones are divided into clusters. Each cluster consists of about 10-12 schools. One school, which is deemed as a cluster resource centre, coordinates the teaching-learning activities of all schools in that particular cluster.

i. Community mobilization

The Janshala programme aims at bringing the community closer to schools by empowering them and by making the formal school system more responsive to their needs and aspirations. This is envisaged in three stages: community mobilisation and sensitisation; community participation and support; and community ownership and sustainability.

ii. Samudayik Janshalas

Samudayik Janshalas (SJs) are alternative learning centers established in slums with no government schools, and in which more than 50% of the children are non-school going. These are full-time schools that run for four hours a day on timings decided by the community. SJs target girls and children of marginalized populations and ensure their regular attendance and retention in primary education.

iii. Committee of Janshala

Quality improvement in government schools (Rajkiya Janshalas). The quality of teaching is determined by the quality and competency of its teachers. Training plays an important role in enabling a teacher to handle challenges and responsibilities such as activity-based learning, multi-grade teaching, campaigning for education, etc.

iv. Teachers' training

Rajkiya Janshala (RJ) teachers are trained by master trainers (who are trained by Bodh Shiksha Samiti) at the zonal level, with special emphasis on child centered teaching methodology and community involvement in education. The headmasters of the schools are also given a weeklong training. Teachers here help the students develop their own initiative and ability to think critically. They guide students to seek

important knowledge and direct them to analyze possible solutions to meaningful problems. Teachers use a variety of methods to achieve the desired learning goals. Some of these described below.

a. Multi-grade teaching (MGT)

MGT is an inevitable solution to the problem of shortage of teachers, which affects most schools in India. Janshala has a programme to train teachers to carry out their responsibilities in a multi-grade situation. Teachers in both SJs and RJs are given training in MGT to teach classes I and II.

b. Multi-level teaching

Multi-level teaching requires students in a class to be divided into groups, on the basis of their pace of learning and level of mastery. This method ensures that each child gets the individual attention of the teacher, and presupposes that each child has his/her own pace of learning and different potentials for learning different subjects.

c. Activity-based learning

Learning is made interesting through various activities, which may be indoor or outdoor, group or individual. Teachers design learning activities to correspond with the child's stage of development.

d. Teaching-learning material

Teachers in both RJs and SJs are provided with a sum of Rs 500 to buy Materials to make TLM. The principle behind the concept of teaching through TLM is that the process of thinking in terms of language develops much later for children, and they understand facts better when they are represented using some symbols other than language.

e. Preparing them young: pre-schools

Anganwadis, playschools and early childhood care and education (ECCE) centers are the different kinds of pre-schools initiated under Janshala programme. There are 148 anganwadis functioning in Rajasthan, 97 in Jaipur and 51 in Bharatpur.

f. Adolescent learning centers

Adolescent learning centres function separately for boys and girls, as most communities in the selected cities oppose adolescent co-education. The centres are named Kishori Samooths for adolescent girls and Kishore Samooths for adolescent boys.

g. Adult learning centres

Socio-educational forums, Mahila Samooths and Vachnalayas are initiated to meet the educational

needs of older members of the society. These centres provide general education to adults.

PRATHAM

Pratham is the largest nongovernmental organization working to provide quality education to the underprivileged children of India. Pratham was established in 1994 to provide pre-school education to the children in the slums of Mumbai city. Since then, the organization has grown both in scope and geographical coverage. Pratham firmly believes in working with the government to bring about large scale change and therefore programs are aimed at supplementing rather than replacing governmental efforts. Between 1999 and 2001, it expanded work to cover 19 cities with similar models. In addition it began working with child labour through outreach program

i. Learn to Read

Pratham's Learn to Read (L2R) technique was an accelerated learning technique targeted at teaching both in-school and out-of-school children how to read in 4- 8 weeks.

ii. Read India

ASER 2005 and 2006 findings revealed that in spite of having been in school for over 2-5 years, a significant percentage of school children could not read, write or do basic arithmetic. To address this problem in January 2007, Pratham launched the Read India campaign to help all of India's children aged 6-14 years learn to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. Instead of relying on governments to ask for "people's participation", this movement talks of "people's initiative and governments' participation". The campaign is being implemented in 350 districts (600 in India) across 19 states in the country with the help of thousands of volunteers and the government school system. In most states where the Read India campaign has been implemented, there has been a significant improvement in the learning levels of the children.

RAJASTHAN BAL KALYAN SAMITI

RBKS, an acronym for Rajasthan Bal Kalyan Samiti, is a non-government organization, registered under the Society registration 1860. Since March 1981 it has been working on developmental issues to benefit poor and deprived sections with special emphasis on women and child development at education, health and livelihood front. RBKS believes that education and health is constitutional right of the people and its provision is a fundamental duty of the state and civil society. The initial years of RBKS focused on Education as primary sector, while now it applies the principles of integration.

For RBKS, education is a facilitation tool to address the aspects of right to participate; to information; freedom of expression; of assembly and of association for marginalized people whose voice is never heard by the dominant classes. During recent years RBKS started playing role of empowerment of deprived part of community dalits, women, physically challenged and children around development services and basic right issues. RBKS seeks to improve the overall status of rural communities especially tribal through creating awareness and capacity building of providers. RBKS operates from its Head Office located at Jhadol and project offices at Swarupganj; Ratlam; Gogunda; Railmagra; Pindwara; Dungarpur and Coordination office at Udaipur.

RURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

At RBKS, Education is a weapon of deprived section issue and it has tried to change the scenario to a large extent. Situation of girl's education is low, the reason being gender bias, social taboos, involvement in household activities and lack of transport availability etc. One of the main characteristic features of education scenario in the state is high drop out after primary education. Since its inception focus area of RBKS education initiatives are around Non formal education for pre-school boys and girls and education opportunities for dropouts and deprived girls.

CREATING ENVIRONMENT SUITABLE FOR EDUCATION

RBKS believes that providing education facilities through various institutes can help to reach facilities in remote regions to a few thousands of children only. Considering the facts about need and supply situation the most important is family attitude towards education, therefore RBKS take up activities, which are beyond projects, these are Networking; Community Motivation; and Advocacy. In these lines RBKS work as motivator for girl's education, village committees.

URMUL SETU SANSTHAN

The **marushala** (desert school) is an alternative school conceived by Urmul Trust – an NGO working in the deserts of Western Rajasthan. The project began in 1992 and at present there are 6 marushalas. Western Rajasthan has a low level of literacy, especially among women. Pupil absenteeism peaks at the time of seasonal migration to the Dhanis (newly-created hamlets in the command area of the Indira Gandhi canal), when many children work in the fields. By following the agricultural calendar, the Marushala ensures that children are able to study while contributing to family labour. All the marushalas are located in places where no other school exists.

Children from the age of 3 are admitted to the marushala. However, they are taught only from the age of six. Pupils are taught Hindi, mathematics and environmental science. The syllabus has been designed by Digantar – a Jaipur-based NGO. Digantar also provides support in the form of regular training and evaluation of teachers. Compared to other schools, the marushalas have plenty of teaching aids. The teacher-pupil ratio is also much higher than in ordinary schools.

Learning in marushalas takes place in a relaxed atmosphere. The children look forward to going to school, and often reach there early. They stay long after the school hours are over, playing with other children. No fees are charged, but parents contribute cash voluntarily. There are no classes in marushalas, but children are graded. The children move from one grade to another depending on their pace of learning. They undergo tests every 3 months, and the tests are conducted as part of the normal school routine. No special emphasis is laid on the tests, so that children do not dread them.

DIGANTAR

Digantar is an organisation committed to develop ways of educating word 'Digantar' in Sanskrit means a change in direction, dik+antar. A well thought out change in direction that leads to more meaningful, appropriate and complete education.

Digantar's search for alternatives in education began on a very small scale with a school in 1978. Focus gradually shifted to a few villages in south east of Jaipur. They believe that the purpose of primary education is to make the child a self-motivated and independent learner. It feel that every human child is capable of learning to live in society, defining her goals for life, finding ways of achieving the chosen goals, taking appropriate action, and of being responsible for the actions taken. Every human being has a right to decide for herself and is duty bound to be responsible for her decisions.

ALTERNATIVE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Alternative Elementary Education Programme (AEEP) is the oldest programme of Digantar. The overarching aim of the AEEP is to engage in a constant search, both in theory and practice, for school systems that provide quality education. Specifically, the aim is to universalise education in project area and to provide the community with an alternative model of elementary education. From a small school with year under review, the AEEP continued with its central theme that of operating three schools in the area. It also included some new components in the programme. They run on an encouraging and affectionate teacher-child relationship in contrast to traditional authoritative image of the teacher resting on fear. Currently, there are 20 groups of children in all

the three schools – with 514 children organised into 17 groups at the primary level and 77 children are given a lot of freedom.

The pedagogy followed in the AEEP is based on learning with understanding, self-learning, cooperation with peers and freedom of pace of learning. The teachers keep records of individual children and try to chart out a course of learning, which is most suitable for an individual child, within a curricular framework.

In February 2004, Digantar began work on a study entitled '**Modes of Schooling – A Comparative Study of Schools in Rural Rajasthan**' with financial support which is ongoing, looks at 75 schools of different types in 3 districts of Rajasthan. The schools visited include Rajiv Gandhi Pathshalas, Government Schools, Shikshakarmi Schools, Alternative Schools, and Private Schools. The study shall compare the five kinds of schools on the basis of children's learning, classroom practices, teachers, and parents, view of the school, educational vision and academic support available to teachers among other things.

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

TEP was an initiative aimed at providing intensive long-term support to teachers in large private urban schools in Jaipur. It hoped to build a community of reflective teachers who placed emphasis on critical pedagogy as opposed to rote learning. TEP is workshop based with two main components- a core module that focussed largely on the key issues relevant to education and the second was oriented to the classroom practices and was specific to subjects.

Evaluation and Documentation Cell (E & DCell) In 2003, an Evaluation & Documentation cell initiated. The cell is visualized as a small but critical unit of the organisation that would help the organisation to review its own programmes. The underlying objective is to create a forum to critique their own work and take corrective measures as and when necessary. The work of this cell may be divided into the following broad categories

- Ensuring quality of programmes
- Documentation

Setting up of systems to ensure smooth functioning of the organisation a work plan to review all the programmes has been prepared. Systems for developing position descriptions, performance appraisals and developing programme wise annual work plans are in place.

NETRAHEEN VIKAS SANSTHAN

Jodhpur Blind School is a NGO in Rajasthan, working for blind, deaf and dumb. Netraheen Vikas Sansthan is working for rehabilitation of blind students since last 35 years in Suncity Jodhpur by

providing free education with boarding and lodging facility separately for boys and Girls. The School was started on 15th August 1977 with only two blind students. This is the only institute for girls with hostel facility in Rajasthan. The school is up to senior secondary level for blind. All the teachers many of whom are even blind also are well trained and highly qualified.

AIMS OF THE SOCIETY (NETRAHEEN VIKAS SANSTHAN)

To provide education and training to blind boys and girls, Make arrangements for Rehabilitation and efforts are made to make available the facilities provided by the govt. to these blind children.

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