

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

**Investment in Education and Implications for Poverty Reduction
in India: A Study of Primary Education Projects Funded by the
European Countries**

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Planning and Administration
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Abstract

Economic development has a positive impact on poverty reduction. Education contributes to economic development and hence leads to poverty alleviation. This route to poverty reduction is based on the income measures of poverty. It is now recognized that poverty is a state of deprivation of opportunities and choices most basic to human development. Hence, efforts towards human development reflect anti-poverty and pro-poor concerns. Education is one of the crucial elements in human development. Investments in primary education are more pro-poor than that in other levels of education.

Primary education in India was almost free from large scale external funding. The 1990s witnessed introduction of many externally funded primary education projects. This paper is an effort to closely examine some of the intervention strategies of primary education projects funded by the European countries. Based on a close examination of Lok Jumbish project, DPEP Projects in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, this paper attempts to identify intervention strategies which help investments reach the poor in India.

Investment in Education and Implications for Poverty Reduction in India : A Study of Primary Education Projects Funded by the European Countries*

N.V. Varghese**

1. Introduction

Economic development is closely associated with poverty reduction in many countries. It is believed that increased income levels lead to improved health, education and living standards. However, development experience shows that there is no automatic link between increased per capita income and reduction in poverty levels. Absolute poverty is a condition of life characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy and diseases beneath any reasonable definition of human decency (World Bank, 1980). Poverty not only reflects an impoverished state in which people live but also a lack of opportunity to choose other types of living and a lack of capacity to choose even when opportunities are available. Poverty is ultimately a matter of capability deprivation (Sen, 1990).

Development now is defined in terms of human development. "Human development is the end - economic growth the means" (UNDP, 1996). Literacy and education have a direct role in human development and are instrumental in facilitating other achievements. Investments in the social sector in developing countries lead

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to higher literacy rates and large number of children enrolled in schools. For example, between 1970 and 1993 literacy rates in less developed countries increased by half - from 43 per cent to 61 per cent. South Asia has the lowest level (49 per cent) of literacy as against Latin America where the literacy rate is 86 per cent. Similarly, between 1961 and 1991 Net Enrolment Ratios (NER) in developing countries increased from 48 per cent to 77 per cent (UNDP, 1996).

Reduction of poverty has been one of the major concerns of Indian development planning. The elimination of substantial famines in the post-independence period is a reflection of successful efforts to reduce poverty in India. Poverty in India is measured in terms of 'poverty line' which is based on an absolute minimum level of per capita consumption. In the sixties, the poverty line was estimated on the basis of expenditure required to provide 2,400 calories in rural areas and 2,100 calories in the urban areas. Based on this norm, it was estimated that Rs. 20 per person per month in rural areas and Rs. 25 per person in urban areas are the minimum necessary incomes to provide the calorie intakes.

The Working Group set up by the Planning Commission recommended a household consumption expenditure of Rs.100 in rural areas and Rs.125 per household in urban areas at 1960-61 prices for defining poverty line. In the seventies, Dandekar and Rath (1971) used an average calorie norm of 2,250 per capita per day for urban and rural areas. Based on this calorie intake required, they estimated the per capita monthly consumption expenditure of Rs.14.20 in the rural areas and Rs.22.60 in the urban areas at 1960-61 prices. Another Task Force set up by the Planning Commission estimated average daily per capita calorie requirements for rural areas as 2,400 and for urban areas as 2,100. The poverty line was estimated to be Rs. 49.09 per capita per month in the rural areas and Rs.56.60 in the urban areas at 1973-74 price levels (Srivastava,1996). The number of people below the poverty-line in 1987-88 was 237.6 million. Nearly 33.4 per cent of the rural population and 20.1 per cent of the urban population live below the poverty line. The Planning Commission relied on National Accounts Statistics to estimate the number of people below the poverty line. In the 1990s, the Commission

adopted the recommendations of the Expert Group (Lakdawala Committee) estimations based on NSS data. In 1994, it is estimated that around 40 per cent of the rural and 31 per cent of the urban population are below poverty line (Dev and Ranade, 1997). This shows that poverty in India has increased in the 1990s.

The Indian planners, it seems, believed in the initial stages that economic growth will have a trickle-down effect on poverty. However, it was soon recognized that poverty reduction may not be possible in the near future if we rely only on a trickle down approach. Hence, programmes directly addressing the issue of poverty were envisaged as part of the planning process itself. The anti-poverty programmes that got a momentum in the seventies are a reflection of this changing strategy. The Integrated Rural Development Programme aimed at creation of assets and employment in the rural areas; the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) are examples of anti-poverty programmes initiated in India. All these efforts were to reduce poverty through income generating strategies. In other words, poverty reduction is seen essentially as a process of enhancing income levels of the poor.

Now it is recognized that one of the key elements in enhancing human capabilities is literacy and education. Hence, efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate illiteracy lead to human development in the short run and poverty reduction in the long run. However, India's record on this count is far from satisfactory. "India's success in removing 'poverty ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity' has been even markedly less substantial than that of many other countries. And in one particular field - that of elementary education - India stands considerably behind even the average of the poorest countries in the world" (Dreze and Sen, 1995, p. 3).

Provision of educational and health facilities are seen as part of some of the anti-poverty programmes in India. While the long term contribution of education to poverty reduction was recognized, direct intervention in education as an anti-poverty programme was less emphasized. However, investments within education in the recent past have been

increasingly targeted towards primary education and adult literacy programmes which benefit poor people. The flow of external funds to primary education in the nineties have also contributed to an increase in total investment in primary education. This paper is an effort to analyse the poverty reduction implications of investments in primary education. The study is based on a close scrutiny of three externally funded primary education projects - Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan, DPEP in Madhya Pradesh and DPEP in Andhra Pradesh funded by SIDA, EU and ODA respectively - operating in India.

The methodology followed in this study includes a close scrutiny of project documents; discussions with representatives of donor agencies and officials of Education Department at national and state levels and interactions with project incharges and functionaries. Such discussions were followed up with field visits to project locations in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and visits to state level project office and discussion with project functionaries in case of Lok Jumbish. During the visits to Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, efforts were made to assess the impact of project investments on poor. Continued discussions with the project functionaries and groups of beneficiaries, reveal the mechanisms of targeting project interventions towards the poor. All these projects are in the initial stages of their implementation and hence the efforts in the study were to analyse and understand the project strategies and their implications for poverty reduction rather than evaluating the project management practices *per se*.

The paper is organised as follows : the next section discusses the role of education in economic growth and human development as perceived in the past and present. Section 3 discusses the donor agency perceptions on lending for education. Section 4 provides an overview of the externally funded primary education projects in India. Section 5 discusses some specific features of the three projects under study. Section 6 analyse intervention strategies focusing on poverty reduction. Section 7 makes an assessment of the impact of these interventions towards poverty reduction. The final section summarises the conclusions of the study.

2. Education, Economic Growth and Human Development

Development theories of the fifties postulated that economic development is first and foremost a question of economic growth depending primarily on physical capital. Economic growth was seen in terms of increase in GDP and GDP per capita. Sources of economic growth were defined in terms of those factors which were directly contributing to increase in GDP. Education was not considered as an important factor promoting economic growth during this period.

Empirical evidence on the sources of growth in the late fifties and early sixties showed that conventionally specified production function, notably Cob-Douglas production function, could not explain a large part of growth in national income. A further disaggregated analysis of the sources of growth showed the contribution of increased productivity of the labour force towards economic growth. This increase in the productivity of the labour force is mainly attributed to factors like education (Schultz, 1961; Denison, 1962). In other words, it was hypothesised and empirically validated that education accounted for a major part of the unexplained or residual sources of economic growth. Hence, expenditure on education was treated as an investment in human capital directly promoting economic growth.

Economics of education emerged as a distinct area of research in the subsequent period. In the initial period attention was focused on the contribution of education to economic growth measured in terms of GDP per capita. A large number of studies showing either correlation between education and economic growth (Harbison and Myers, 1964; Harbison, 1973) or specifying and measuring the extent of contribution of education to economic growth were conducted (Fields, 1980). Bowman and Anderson (1963) argued that a threshold effect of 40 per cent literacy rate was necessary to cross the barrier of GDP per capita of US \$ 200 and that only when the literacy levels exceeded 80 per cent, the GDP per capita crossed the limit of US \$ 500. In other words, they concluded that a level of 40 per cent literacy was a necessary condition for a 'take-off

stage' and a level of 80 per cent necessary for sustained economic growth (Bowman,1980).

Denison (1979) showed that nearly 21 per cent of the growth in the US economy between 1948 and 1973 was due to the increase in the educational levels of the labour force. Hicks (1980) analysed the relationship between education and economic growth in 83 countries for the period between 1960 and 1977 and concluded that an average increase in literacy rates by 20 percentage points contributes to an increase in the rate of growth of GDP by 0.5 per cent. In a similar analysis Wheeler (1980), based on the data for 88 countries, concluded that an increase in literacy rate from 20 to 30 per cent results in an increase in GDP by 8 to 16 per cent.

Most of the poor in the world live in rural areas depending upon agriculture. Studies assessing the contribution of education to agricultural growth (Lockheed, et.al. 1980), in general, have shown that education contributes to agricultural growth directly through the improved productivity of the farmers and indirectly through changes in agricultural practices and farm efficiency and that the effect of education on agricultural production was more effective and visible in a modernising environment than in traditional modes of agricultural operations.

Some of the recent studies have shown that in the US economy, formal education has out-performed machine capital in its contribution to overall growth of national income since 1929 (Carnavale, 1992). With the ascendancy of human capital theory, it is predicted (Fallon and Layard, 1975) that in the process of economic growth the relative share of physical capital would fall and there would be a corresponding increase in the share of human capital.

A large number of studies were conducted in the sixties onwards in the traditional rate of returns framework (Psacharopoulos, 1985; Tilak, 1987; 1989). The rate of returns analysis showed that investment in education is at least as profitable as other forms of investment and in most cases returns to education surpassed other forms of investment.

Two important conclusions from many of the rate of returns analysis are significant from the point of view of prioritising investment decisions. First, all the empirical studies have shown that the marginal rate of returns to primary education are higher than that of other levels of education. Second, investing in the deprived sections of society and disadvantaged groups and females show a higher rate of returns than investments in economically and socially better off sections and males. Such findings have a significant impact on the linkages between education and anti-poverty programmes.

It needs to be noted that although a majority of studies during this period defined the role of education in a measurable but narrow sense of its contribution to GDP, there were efforts to look at education and its contribution from a broader dimension. For example, it is found that education helps reduce fertility and is useful in exercising controls on population growth. The inverse relationship between education and fertility in the developing countries was treated almost as a universal truth. More importantly, it was empirically found to be true that the inverse relationship between education and fertility was stronger and significant in case of women than among men (Cochrane, 1979). The economic impact of education and literacy can be seen through various ways. There is a need to make a distinction between the natural fertility and desired fertility. The natural fertility may increase in the process of economic development; but the desired fertility declines in most of the cases. Education improves access to family planning methods which directly reduces the desired fertility. With increase in the levels of education, women may be shifted from traditional to modern sector jobs which indirectly but effectively reduces desired fertility (Leibenstein, 1974). The empirical evidence in India has shown that couple protection rates progress positively with educational levels of adult females.

It was found that low literacy countries are characterised by high infant mortality, lower life expectancy at birth, widespread endemic and communicable diseases and poverty. The empirical evidence from most of the countries showed that with the increase in literacy rates, preferably beyond 75 per cent, there is a positive impact on all these indicators (Ahmed, 1985; Suratwala, 1992). In other words, empirical evidence showed

that education contributes not only to increase in GDP but also to improvement in social and economic indicators of well-being especially of the poor.

Empirical evidence showed that economic growth did not necessarily reduce income inequalities and in fact, income inequalities did increase between nations and within countries. Therefore, the growth oriented strategies were replaced by development oriented approaches. Economic development was defined in terms of Growth With Redistribution (Chenery, 1974). With such a change in the very perception of economic development, the focus was not only confined to production but also on distribution of what was produced i.e. equity became one of the major objectives of economic progress. Since growth did not percolate in an equitable fashion, it was found necessary to directly target the deprived groups. Therefore, anti-poverty programmes directly targeting the deprived groups became a priority area for investment in all developing countries. Lower levels of education like primary education was a direct beneficiary of such a change in approach.

In the eighties, the ultimate objective of economic development was defined in terms of human development itself. This approach regards human beings as both means and ends of social and economic development and accords priority for the well-being of people (Griffin and Knight, 1990). The shift was from a commodity-centred approach to a people-centred approach to development. Economic development is seen as a process of expanding the capabilities of people and economic growth can be seen as a means to the end of enhancing people's capabilities. If the traditional economic paradigms placed an over-emphasis on the production of goods and commodities, in this approach "greater emphasis has been placed on the distribution of goods among people and on considerations of need and equity" (Griffin and Knight, 1990, p.10).

Sen argued that development should be people-centred and it should concern with what people can do and what people cannot do. This approach sees the process of economic development in terms of expanding capabilities of people and this capability approach sees human life as a set of 'doings and beings' (Sen, 1983; 1990). While the

expansion of capabilities will lead to increase in GDP per capita, an increase in GDP per capita may not necessarily lead to an increase in capabilities of people. This approach is the basis for reclassification of development of countries in terms of Human Development Index (HDI) in place of traditional GDP approach. The first Human Development Report brought by the UNDP in 1990 pointed out that human development is a process of enlarging people's choices . The most critical of these wide-ranging choices are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have resources needed for a decent standard of living (UNDP, 1990, p.1). The HDI thus constructed takes into account three variables, namely, life expectancy, literacy and per capita income.

Human development is measured in terms of expansion of capabilities of human beings. This implies that poverty is a state of deprivation of opportunities and choices most basic to human development measured in terms of Capability Poverty Measure (CPM) as indicated in UNDP (1996) report. The UNDP Report of 1997 developed indicators of human poverty, Human Capability Indicators (HCI). The report defines poverty as a state of absence of some capabilities to function. It is measured using the indicators of survival, knowledge and decent standard of living. Interestingly, income is not taken as an indicator in HCI. In other words, the recent measures of poverty focus on non-income indicators. These changes in conceptualization of development have, no doubt, brought about dramatic and positive changes in investment priorities. The poor has become dear both to national governments and international donor agencies.

3. Lending for Education

The rationale for lending and spending on education is the belief that education contributes to economic development. While many of the developing countries during their national liberation struggles emphasised on mass education, the priorities of the funding and lending agencies varied with respect to the level and type of education to be funded. This variation in perception may be due to their understanding on the type of education contributing to faster economic development. For example, some agencies like UNICEF, ODA, USAID etc. placed emphasis on science education; certain other

agencies like the World Bank, Ford Foundation, SIDA etc. considered technical and vocational education as the key to transition from traditional sectors to industrialisation and economic development. It is interesting to note that a large share of international funding upto the 1980s was targeted towards education beyond primary levels (Varghese,1992). The UNESCO was one of the few international agencies which from the very beginning consistently favoured spending more on primary education.

The donor interest did not always coincide with the interest of recipient countries. In many cases the revealed donor interest had more to do with the requirements of their direct investments in the productive and economic sectors of the economy than to do with the development of education *per se* in the developing countries. The concern of the developing countries on the other hand was development of education as directed by its economic and social developmental requirements. The donor perception was mostly in a 'project mode' whereas national concerns were always in a 'programme mode' affecting immediate priorities and long term requirements.

Evaluation of many of the technical and vocational education programmes and science education projects in the developing countries have shown that they were not successful as was expected. Even Agency evaluations also showed that these programmes failed. For example, the studies initiated by the Bank on diversified secondary school curriculum implementation in the subsequent period showed the inappropriateness of the policy emphasis. In some countries enrolments declined and in some other countries academic performance of the students declined as a consequence of introduction of diversified curricula at the secondary level. Haddad (1987) evaluating the Bank ~~experience in this area~~ concluded that 'diversified secondary education as a method to train large numbers of skilled manpower is open to question'. In many an instance, the expensive facilities created by the donor agencies remained unutilised for lack of effective demand for these courses. Many graduates of vocational courses failed to find jobs; their wages were not better than that of the general secondary graduates; and given the high cost of training the rates of returns analysis could not justify continued investments on technical and vocational education and the lending priority changed over a period of time.

It was increasingly realised in the seventies that economic growth alone would not reduce poverty and improve the condition of the poor in the immediate future. Therefore, more concerted efforts to directly target the poor through appropriate programmes became essential. The international funding agencies notably ILO, World Bank etc. gave emphasis on four complimentary strategies, namely, increasing employment, focus on basic needs, reducing inequalities in income and wealth and raising the productivity of the poor (World Bank, 1980). Needless to add, education especially primary education was one of the elements included in the priority areas for funding.

The other important change is from the point of view of research evidences. The seventies was a period of ascendancy of cost benefit analysis in deciding to fund educational projects. All empirical studies on rate of returns on education showed that primary education is the most profitable sector of education to invest. This was in line with the added and acquired emphasis on rural development and poverty reduction or in general targetting the poor. In the rural areas, the impact of education especially of primary education was considered to be very good because it improves productivity of the rural farmers.

The ILO under its World Employment Programme, the ODA project experience in Cali and Columbia, DANIDA project experience in Kenya etc. shifted their emphasis to informal sector of employment. The new thinking was 'more basic learning and more basic work'. This also helped to see education as an important and integral part of the strategies to reduce poverty. But it needs to be noted that by the seventies the Bank became the dominant donor in education and also the largest reservoir of research evidence on education. With the shift in Bank's lending policy towards education based more on economic and efficiency considerations and the shift by other agencies based more on the immediate requirements to support programmes targeted towards the poor, educational concerns became significant in the donor agenda.

Within the educational sector, a consensus emerged that it is the lower levels of education that needs to be promoted. Thus, primary education came to the centre of educational agenda for funding decisions. Such convergence of priority areas for investing in education among funding agencies helped the agencies to come together on a platform under the slogan of Education For All by the year 2000. The World Conference on Education held in March, 1990 in Jomtien was a culmination of such efforts.

4. External Funding for Primary Education in India

Large scale external funding for primary education in India is essentially a post-Jomtien phenomenon. In the 1960s and 1970s there was very little external funding for primary education in India (Tilak, 1988). Whenever it took place it was of sporadic nature rather than planned large scale investments. During this period UNESCO and UNICEF funds were being occasionally used for financing certain selected activities in primary education. In the 1980s external agencies started funding primary education projects in India focussing on some selected aspects of primary education.

The first major externally funded primary education project was a bilateral funding by the ODA of the United Kingdom in 1983. The Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP) started as a pilot project in 1983 covering 328 schools. The major emphasis of this project was on quality improvement of primary education. The project conceptualised and focussed primarily on the teacher as the agent of educational change and on improvement of teaching-learning processes. Teacher competency building through specifically designed training programmes was one of the major intervention strategies of this project.

Phase one of the project was implemented during 1984 to 1987 covering 328 schools of 11 selected districts. The financial assistance from Overseas Development Administration (ODA) of the UK was to the tune of one million pounds or roughly around Rs.19.45 millions. This was followed up by a bridging programme from 1987 to

1989 with a financial assistance of around Rs. 13.6 millions. This phase was essentially to consolidate the efforts made during the first phase of the programme.

Phase two of the programme was launched in 1989-90 initially for a period of five years and later extended upto 1995- 96. The financial assistance for this phase of the programme was 27.9 million pounds or roughly around Rs.72.7 millions from the ODA. It was envisaged that the project will cover all schools in all the 23 districts of the state. This phase of the programme attempted to marginally redesign the project. The redesign took a more holistic approach by focussing on classroom as a whole and social environment which influenced the demand for education.

The pedagogical principles followed in the project were the following: i) providing teacher-generated learning activities; (ii) encouraging experimentation and learning by doing; (iii) developing individual, group and whole class work; (iv) providing for individual differences; v) using local environment; and vi) creating an interesting classroom by displaying children's work and organising it effectively. To facilitate achievement of these objectives, the project tried to establish teacher centres for mutual academic support and provision of consumable materials in schools for teachers to experiment with developing teaching-learning materials. These two aspects of the project are distinctly important because these were found to be successful and are incorporated in many of the district level projects initiated and implemented during later periods.

It can be seen from the above discussion that the project had a narrow focus confining itself mostly to pedagogical dimensions. The direct target group was the primary school teachers and the indirect target groups were the students who benefited from the better and more enjoyable classroom practices that resulted from the project interventions. Since the project interventions were school and classroom based, the project ultimately benefited only those who were already enrolled in the schools. In other words, those students who were outside the orbit of school system were not beneficiaries of the project activities. However, it was expected that improved classroom practices will

encourage more parents to send their children to schools. In other words, the impact of APPEP on poverty reduction was indirect and incidental rather than direct and intentional.

The Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) started in 1987 in Rajasthan is another major externally funded project in primary education in India. The primary objective of the project was to overcome the problem of teacher absenteeism in the remote rural areas of Rajasthan. Rajasthan has sparsely populated regions which are remote and inaccessible. Many of these localities are not entitled to have primary schools as per the existing norms and hence many villages do not have schools. More importantly, even in those remote villages where schools are provided, teachers are not available for long periods. The specific objectives of the SKP were: (i) to overcome teacher absenteeism in remote villages; (ii) adaptation of educational progress to the local circumstances; (iii) to improve enrolment; and (iv) to decrease drop-out rates of children, especially girls.

The major strategy adopted by the SKP is to substitute the department appointed teacher by a local teacher - male or female. Such substituted teachers were called 'Educational Workers' or 'Shiksha Karmis'(SKs). The SK is an educated unemployed youth of the locality. The educational qualification of the SK may be lower than what is normally prescribed by the department. They may not be having any teaching experience. Such identified local SKs will be intensively trained to make them competent to teach primary school students. The training under the SKP is rigorous. It provides an initial training of 37 days for the selected SKs. This is followed by regular and recurrent refresher courses, regular monthly meetings and discussions with other SKs. As of 1995-96, 1,322 day schools are functioning and 88 new schools are in the process of being established in a total of 65 blocks; 2,994 Prehar Pathsalas are functioning and 292 are in the process of being opened; 48 Angan pathsalas for girls are opened; it is estimated that 3,073 male and 403 females SKs are trained and are working; around 1,20,000 children are getting education under this programme. The second phase of the programme started in 1994 with the same objectives to extend the programme to more blocks.

This project has certain features which have implications for poverty reduction considerations and for designing other externally funded primary projects in this country. This project has a focus on rural areas, that too remote rural areas. In that sense, it targets those poor people who are not normally covered by the formal system. This project has considerable amount of focus on women, who are the most deprived sections, especially in the rural areas. The Mahila SKs, Mahila Prashikshan Kendras, Mahila Sahyogis and Women Groups and their representation in the Village Education Committees (VECs) are examples of this specific targeting of women in the project. In this sense, although the SKP is not a direct anti-poverty programme, it has a lot to do with poverty; through its targeting strategies it directly addresses the issues of the poor in education.

Another important feature of the project is its management structure. The project is implemented through a Governing Council and an Executive Committee. These Council and Executive Committee are autonomous bodies essentially created to facilitate implementation of the project. This is a significant change introduced in the project implementation structure in India. Henceforth, all the externally funded projects are implemented through autonomous societies.

Another externally funded project which indirectly addresses the educational issues is the Dutch assisted Mahila Samakhya Project. As the name indicates Mahila Samakhya is a women empowerment programme for equality. This project acknowledges the centrality of education in empowerment of women. The women collectives - Mahila Sanghas - are formed at the village level to discuss general issues facing women. This project is implemented through an autonomous society and is in operation in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The essential elements of this project are translated into action in other states under various projects and programmes.

The next major externally funded primary education project in India is the Bihar Education Project (BEP). In fact BEP is the first comprehensive externally funded Education For All (EFA) project initiated in India. The project is funded by the UNICEF,

Government of India (GOI) and Government of Bihar on a 3:2:1 ratio. The project focuses on: i) elementary education for all children in the age-group 6-14 through formal schools or their alternatives; ii) adult education for age-group 15-35; and iii) early childhood education for pre-school age-group children. Unlike earlier projects, attempts were made to facilitate district level educational plans to reflect local specificities. It may be noted that all externally funded projects with the exception of Lok Jumbish (LJ) project, recognise district as the unit for planning and decision making. In that sense, BEP is an advance on all other projects.

The project in the initial stages (1991-92) covered three districts and later it was extended to four more districts. It was expected that the project activities will be extended to ten districts by the year 1993-94 and to 20 districts by 1994-95. However, the review-cum appraisal mission in 1994 recommended that the project may consolidate its activities in the existing seven districts before being expanded to other districts. Hence, the project activities are even now confined to only seven districts. Now in 1997, there is an effort by the GOI and GOB to extend the project activities to ten more districts under the DPEP. Negotiations are taking place now and it is expected that the IDA will be funding the additional investments in the new districts.

This project was targeting the educationally backward districts of Bihar. An analysis of various activities initiated by the project shows that it could target the most poor and vulnerable sections of society. The major project activities can be categorised into: i) mobilisation of community for educational purposes; ii) creation of organisational arrangements for education of children and adults; and iii) improving teaching-learning process in schools, NFE centres and adult education centres. The community mobilisation was facilitated through: i) constitution of VECs with women representatives; ii) Mahila Samakhya activities; iii) school mapping activities; iv) school construction activities; v) various mobilisation and campaign activities like public meetings, workshops etc. As of 1996-97, nearly 10,000 schools in the project area have VECs constituted and the Mahila Samakhya has covered nearly 1,780 villages.

These mobilisations to generate demand for education are at times complimented through creation of institutional arrangements to enrol more children in primary schools or their alternatives. The school construction activities are funded from the share contributed by the national and state governments; the external funding is not utilised for this purpose. Nearly 500 school buildings are being constructed under the BEP.

Teacher training is another area where the BEP has made considerable progress. All training programmes for the teachers are based on the Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL). The project is providing free learning kits to all children in primary classes. This has already been done in grades 1 and 2 and it will be extended to other grades as well. Another significant contribution of this project is provision of Rs. 500 to all teachers to make low cost local teaching aids. Like the APPEP, the BEP also has succeeded in increasing teacher training centres. The training strategy adopted is also very useful to emulate other project areas. Like in APPEP, the BEP also followed a cascade model of teacher training programme.

The teacher training strategy followed in BEP is as follows: i) formation of a core team at the state level; ii) developing limited number of key resource persons at the state level; iii) developing master trainers at the district level; iv) developing trainers at the block level; and v) organisation of training programmes at the block level and cluster level meetings at the cluster level to share experiences of teachers.

The BEP introduced the idea of focussing at the district level. Although the district perspective plans were not developed in a systematic way, an initiative was made which was capitalised in the subsequent projects. As mentioned earlier, the targeting was helpful to reach the poor in most of the cases. This has been done through selection of the district and targeting various activities especially, VECs, Mahila Samakhya and construction activities.

An issue that became important in the BEP is the role of the funding agency in the day-to-day functioning of the project activities. BEP in its management structure could

not distance itself from the involvement of the donor agency. This led to a situation whereby "BEP came to be perceived as a UNICEF project and given the national psyche, district functionaries and NGOs tend to look to the UNICEF office rather than to the state Project Director for direction. The tendency was to submit reports to the UNICEF office rather than to the state project office" (Ayyar, 1993). This had far-reaching implications for the evolution of the management structure and the role of funding agencies in all subsequent externally funded projects in India.

The Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Project funded by World Bank is a major project covering ten districts. The approved outlay is Rs. 7287.9 million. The IDA credit is Rs. 163.10 million, the remaining project expenditure is met by the state government. The credit agreement with IDA was signed on 07.07.1993 and the project has been operational from the end of 1993-94 financial year. The objectives and arrangements for programme implementation are similar to DPEP and hence a detailed discussion is not attempted here.

5. Primary Education Projects funded by European Countries

Three major primary education projects in India are funded by the European countries. Two of them - Madhya Pradesh funded by the European Union and Andhra Pradesh funded by the ODA - are covered under the DPEP. The Lok Jumbish project in Rajasthan funded by SIDA became operational before the DPEP.

All the three projects under consideration are still in the process of implementation. The earliest of all these projects is the Lok Jumbish which is implemented from 1992; the DPEP in Madhya Pradesh is implemented from 1994-95, and the DPEP in Andhra Pradesh is implemented from 1996-97. The Lok Jumbish covered 25 blocks in its first phase (1992-94) and another 50 blocks in its second phase (1995-98). The DPEP in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are expected to be completed by 2001.

District is the unit for project identification under the DPEP and block is the unit under the Lok Jumbish. And hence, the coverage of the project in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh is defined in terms of districts. DPEP covers 19 districts in Madhya Pradesh and five districts in Andhra Pradesh. While allocation of resources to Lok Jumbish is estimated at the project level, resource estimation in DPEP is made at the district level and then aggregated at the state level to arrive at total project costs. The total project allocations to Lok Jumbish was Rs. 160 million during the first phase and 800 millions during the second phase. Under the DPEP, the maximum permissible amount per district is Rs. 400 millions. These three projects were closely studied through their documents and discussions with administrators and beneficiaries.

All the projects under consideration have reasonably good amount of documentation. While the documentation in DPEP projects are mostly district level and subdistrict level medium term plans, annual work plan documents, mission reports received at regular intervals and specific documents pertaining to selected aspects of the project and its implementation, in case of Lok Jumbish the project document is prepared at the state level and there is no medium term plan document developed at the district or block levels. However, the project systematically brings out Annual Reports focusing on the progress made during the previous financial year. Lok Jumbish has the most developed and systematic documentation of processes and it regularly brings out process documentation pertaining to different dimensions of the project implementation. The mission reports - one mission every year - highlight the strength and weaknesses of the project implementation under the Lok Jumbish.

The discussions were held with people associated with design and implementation of the project at various levels - at the national, state, district and local levels. In case of Lok Jumbish, the discussions were held at the national and state levels only. In case of DPEP in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh discussions were held at state level with State Project Director and other staff; representative of SCERT; and project administrators of APPEP (in Andhra Pradesh). This was followed by discussions at the district levels. The districts selected for field visit were Karim Nagar of Andhra Pradesh

and Dhar of Madhya Pradesh. At the district level, discussions were held with the District Collector, District Educational Officers, District Project Co-ordinator, staff of the district project office, representatives of Mahila Samakhya groups, NGOs followed by meetings and discussions with the Mandal level planning groups, BRC incharges etc. elected representatives of Mandals and panchayats, Village Education Committee members and community at large. The researcher also had detailed discussion about the project and its implementation at the village level with parents and community at large. During the field visits, we could visit the remote rural areas to assess the villager's perception about the project, its implementation and expected benefits that they may get from the project. The villages visited in Karim Nagar include Malluppally village of Gambiraopet Mandal, Mucheriathanda of Mucheria village of Ganabiraopet Mandal, Nandipalli village of Gollapali Mandal, Chilvacode village, Madarm Thanda of Sarangapoor Mandal, Nayakapugudam village. The villages visited in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh are Nagda (schools and SSK centres), Badnawan, Bordi, Dotriya, Nandpal, Malcha Gaumal, Lal Matiya. The visits gave a chance to discuss issues with grassroot level functionaries and village level beneficiaries of the project.

The researcher also had discussions with representatives of the funding agencies like the SIDA, ODA and EU. These discussions provided an insight into their perceptions regarding the potential contribution of the project investments towards poverty reduction. The extensive discussions helped us to understand the varying perceptions on the same project by the funding agencies, national level administrators who co-ordinate the project, project functionaries at state and local levels and beneficiaries.

5.1 Project Identification and Design

Universalisation of primary education is a constitutional provision and national commitment in India. India has made remarkable progress in expanding facilities for primary education. This is reflected in terms of growth of institutions, teachers and increase in student enrolment. The process of educational development is uneven in India. Certain regions and groups of people are more benefited from the expansion of

educational facilities than others. Therefore, disparities in educational development in terms of regions and groups of people became glaringly clear. In the seventies, the focus of policy intervention and planning process was at the state level focussing more on educationally backward states. However, in the eighties it is recognised that there are educationally backward districts even in educationally advanced states and there are educationally advanced districts even in educationally backward states. Therefore, the planning process and intervention strategies focussed more on the educationally backward districts, defined in terms of female literacy rates below the national level, form the basis for prioritising educational investments. All the project locations are selected on the basis of low level female literacy.

The major objective of the projects is universalisation of primary education (classes 1 to 5) and Lok Jumbish attempts to cover elementary education (classes 1 to 8). Universalisation of primary education is defined in terms of (i) universal access to formal schools or their alternatives; (ii) reduction in drop-out rates; and (iii) improvement in the quality of education defined in terms of improved levels of learner achievement.

All the projects were designed by the nationals and were appraised and approved by the state and central governments and by the funding agencies. All the projects are funded on a partnership basis. The funding agencies, the central government and the state governments contribute funds towards the implementation of the project. However, there is difference in the sharing pattern in Lok Jumbish where the sharing ratio is 3:2:1 between SDA, central government and the state government. Under the DPEP, the central government funds 85 per cent of the project budget and the remaining 15 per cent is contributed by the state government. Needless to add, 85 per cent of the central share is nothing but a transfer of resources from the funding agencies to the project districts.

The project preparation process also varies between the Lok Jumbish and DPEP. In case of Lok Jumbish the project is funded on the basis of the state level document prepared by the Lok Jumbish team. Block is the accepted unit for project planning and

implementation. However, no block level plan document is prepared for funding purposes. Under DPEP the project appraisal and funding is based on the district level document prepared at the district level and state component plans prepared at the state level. Under DPEP, allocations are earmarked to the district where as in Lok Jumbish block transfer of resources are made to the project as a whole. The allocations to each block will depend upon the activities planned at each block level in the process of implementation of the project. The project by its very design is targeted towards educationally backward districts and blocks. In India there is a high correlation between educational backwardness and economic backwardness. Hence, areas which are educationally backward are also the locations where the poorest of the poor are concentrated. In this sense, the project in its design takes into account the concerns of the poor and the project strategies are targeted towards the poor.

It is interesting to note that in the discussions at various levels, the project administrators were not directly concerned with the impact of project intervention on poverty reduction. Most of them fail to relate the project investments with poverty reduction. However, all of them agree with the fact that the poor people are more benefited from the project. In fact many of the project interventions are specifically targeted towards deprived groups.

What is more surprising is the fact that even the representatives of the funding agencies are not in a position to relate the project objectives with concerns regarding poverty reduction. However, during discussions, they could throw light on the implicit assumptions of the project which have implementations for poverty reduction.

Perhaps, it is important to make a distinction between poverty and the poor. While the project administrators believe that the project is directly addressing the poor and they are benefited from it, they show less concern towards the impact of the project interventions on poverty reduction. In other words, most of those who are associated with the design and implementation of the project do not see it as an investment to reduce poverty. However, it needs to be noted that the project functionaries with social science

academic background could better appreciate the objectives and their impact on poverty reduction.

5.2 Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan

The Lok Jumbish project of Rajasthan funded by the SIDA is a comprehensive project aimed at providing elementary education to all children covered under the project blocks. The specific objectives of the project are: i) providing access to education to all children upto 14 years of age through formal schools as far as possible and through NFE wherever necessary; ii) ensuring that all enrolled children attend schools or their alternatives regularly and complete primary education; iii) ensuring that quality of education is improved and all children achieve at least minimum levels of learning; iv) empowerment of women to make education an instrument of women's equality; v) relating education to the immediate environment, people's culture and their living; and vi) effectively involve people in planning and management of education.

Phase one of the programme commenced in 1992. It included 25 blocks with a total population of about 4.6 million. The project investment was to the tune of Rs. 160 million. The investment responsibility was in the ratio of 3:2:1 between SIDA, GOI and Government of Rajasthan (GOR). Phase two of the project was supposed to commence from June 1994. However, clearance for the second phase by the GOI was obtained only in March, 1995. The GOR provided the maintenance funds between June, 1994 and March, 1995. Phase two is initially expected to cover three years and the project will be extended to another 50 blocks making the total number of blocks to be covered under the project to be 75. The expected project funding for phase two will be around Rs. 800 millions.

Phase one of the programme covered 25 blocks; the total funds available during this phase was Rs. 148.44 million; Rs. 25.84 million was provided by the GOR and the remaining by the GOI and SIDA. The fund utilisation was of the order of 94.3 per cent. The percentage distribution of funds by different programme components during the first

phase is as follows. the project expenditure (1992-94) was Rs. 140.30 millions. Of this 41.5 per cent was on primary education, 8.7 per cent as non-formal education, 7.7 per cent on mobilisation, 8.7 per cent on women's development 2.1 per cent in early childhood education, 17 per cent on qualitative improvement etc. (LJ Finances, 1996). The first phase of the project came to an end in 1994. Due to delay in signing of the agreement, phase two could not start in 1994, it started only in July 1995. The expenditure incurred by the project during 1995-96 to 1997-98 is given below:

Table : 1
Annual Expenditure : Lok Jumbish (In Percentages)

	Activities	1992-94	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98[*]
1	Management	5.6	6.4	5.6	4.8
2	Primary Formal	41.5	35.0	36.5	33.7
3	Non-formal Education	8.4	11.6	11.5	13.6
4	Quality Improvement	17.0	18.0	15.2	12.6
5	Mobilisation	7.7	5.8	9.2	10.4
6	Women development	8.7	7.3	8.7	9.3
7	Early Childhood Education	2.1	1.7	0.6	1.1
8	Building development	6.1	13.7	11.4	13.6
	Total in millions	140.30	182.087	293.7	170.201

Note : percentages at times do not add upto 100.

* only upto December 1997.

Source : L.J. Annual Reports

The project succeeded in developing norms for provision of educational facilities; these norms are more or less in conformity with Rajasthan government norms. The project strategies include decentralisation, focus on gender, involvement of teachers in decision making to make them resource groups to initiate changes in primary education; training as an important strategy to develop local capacity to plan and implement programmes and to develop a democratic and shared value system on education.

Decentralization in the project meant developing, controlling, supervising and inspection systems from below with accountability largely on the community. For decentralisation to be successful, the villagers should know the power, responsibility and resources vested with them. In fact, for planning purposes each block is seen as a mini-

project with its own specific plans, operational budgets and management structure. This strategy transfers the power in the real sense of the term to the local people.

Lok Jumbish Project is managed by an autonomous and independent body, namely, Lok Jumbish Parishad (LJP), jointly established by the GOI and GOR. The project is managed by various structures created at the state, district and block levels. At the state level, there is a General Body headed by the Chief Minister. The General Body lays down policy guidelines, review progress, approves budget and activities suggested in the project etc. There is an Executive Committee headed by a Chairman; the state education secretary is the ex-officio Vice Chairman. The EC has a wider representation which includes officials from GOI and GOR, representatives of teacher unions, voluntary agencies and educationists. There is a state Coordination Committee headed by the state Education Secretary. This committee helps facilitate inter-departmental cooperation and coordination.

The LJ has a state Project Director appointed by the GOR. The state project office has professionals to take direct responsibility for the identified subject areas. The technical resource support at the state level is drawn mainly from voluntary agencies like the Sandhan, Vihan, Digantar etc.

The LJ activities are more focussed at the block level and hence district level structures are yet to be fully operational. However, all blocks of Bikaner district were brought under LJ in 1994, Ajmer and Durgpur in 1995 and 1996 and Barmer and Jaisalmer in 1997. In other words, as of 1997 all blocks in the five districts are brought under LJ.

At the block level there are Block Management Committees and Block Steering Groups. The technical support at the district level is provided by the DIETs and DRUs. Similarly the technical support at the block level is provided by Cluster Resource Team and NGOs. At the cluster level there is a Mobilising Agency and a Field Centre. At the village level, there is a VEC, Women's Group and a Building Construction Committee.

Lok Jumbish project encourages NGOs to actively participate in all project activities. And many NGOs are involved with the implementation of the project.

The project has an added emphasis on gender issues and it forms the core of the project activities. Focus on gender can have better reach out to the deprived groups. In general, women are more deprived than men in terms of access to social resources including education. Educating women will have more positive impact on the education of the next generation. The gender-oriented programmes of the Lok Jumbish provide adequate scope for intervening actively to promote education of the girl child. The women are represented in the VECs and they play a significant role in local mobilisation. The project attempts to appoint women teachers in rural areas. The convergences with ICDS programmes, the formation of Women Teachers' forum, Women's Residential Institute for Training and Education (WRITE) are other major activities directly focussing on women.

The provision of infrastructural facilities in the rural areas mean transferring resources to the now deprived regions. The construction of Ashramshalas target the tribal groups who are the most deprived. Through proper selection of deprived localities, the equity effects of the project investment is improved under the Lok Jumbish.

One of the major activities which is effectively used to mobilise the community and ensure community participation and involvement is the school mapping and micro-planning exercises initiated by the project. School mapping is seen essentially as a medium of participation to review and assess the local educational situation so as to develop a reliable bench mark information base for local decision making. Such information base improves the participation capacity of people in decision making process. This, combined with the micro planning exercises, will ensure that the facilities are not only created but the poor are in a position to take advantage of the facilities thus created. In other words, these exercises ensure that the investments actually reach the targeted groups.

The project has succeeded in mobilising large number of people in the participatory process of planning to prepare village plans, institutionalising such efforts through formation of VECs and women groups. Enrolment in the rural areas where project is in operation has grown at an average annual rate of ten per cent per annum - eight per cent for boys and 12 per cent for girls. This in no way is a small achievement since the project activities are concentrated in deprived regions and among the deprived groups.

5.3 The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

The project funded by European Union in Madhya Pradesh and the project funded by the ODA in Andhra Pradesh are designed, developed and implemented within the frame work of commonly agreed parameters evolved under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). BEP saw the emergence of comprehensive primary education programmes focussing on the district level arrangements to initiate planning and implementation of project activities. With BEP and Lok Jumbish, the idea of external funding for comprehensive area specific primary education project got currency; with DPEP, the GOI accepted the idea of a large scale external funding in the primary education sector.

The external funding for primary education operate under the policy parameters laid down by the 46th meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in March,1991 and reiterated in the 47th CABE meeting held in May,1992. The policy parameters stipulated by the CABE includes that: i) external funding should be an additionality; ii) the projects should be in total conformity with national policies and programmes; iii) project formulation should be the responsibility of the national agencies; iv) external funding should be used for educational reconstruction. These parameters form the basis for negotiation for any externally funded projects in primary education in India. DPEP is conceptualised as a centrally sponsored externally funded project. The total external funding for primary education envisaged during the Eighth Five year Plan period (1992-97) is around Rs.24,517.9 millions of which DPEP accounts for more than 70 per

cent. It is estimated that the total outlay for DPEP during the Eighth Five year Plan will be Rs. 19,500 millions of which Rs. 17,200 millions will be mobilised from external sources.

It is important to know the primary education scene in India to understand the DPEP context. Primary education in India has expanded tremendously in the post independence period. This reflected in terms of growth of institutions, growth in enrolments and teachers. The number of primary schools increased from 209.7 thousand in 1950-51 to around 578 thousand in 1993- 94; the student enrolment increased from 19.5 millions in 1950-51 to around 108.2 millions in 1994-95; the system at present has around 1.9 million teachers. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) increased from 42.6 per cent in 1950-51 to 102.7 in 1991-92. As per the latest survey (NCERT, 1995) over 95 per cent of the rural habitations are provided with a primary school within a walking distance of one km.

It can be seen that the expansion of the system is very impressive. However, the system is plagued with high level of drop-out and low levels of learner achievement. Drop-out rate used to be around 48 per cent in the eighties. The recent estimates in the context of the Ninth Plan shows that the drop-out rates have declined to around 36 per cent. Recent studies have shown that (Varghese, 1995a) the levels of learner achievement are very low in all the states. Therefore, one can argue that additional investments to expand access may benefit only a few whereas investments to improve quality may benefit all those who are enrolled in the system (Varghese, 1996b). The emphasis in the recent intervention strategies is on quality improvement in primary education.

To be more specific, the primary education scene in India is characterised by the compulsions to expand access which benefits a few and compulsions to improve quality which benefits all those in the system. The few who are going to be benefited from improving the access conditions are the most deprived and marginalised groups in society; they are mostly poor, living in remote rural areas or urban slums, the socially

deprived groups and majority of those remaining non-enrolled are girls. Therefore, in the present context, investments to expand access are targetting the poor.

Most of the primary schools are funded and managed by the government. Nearly 97 per cent of the primary schools are funded by the government and nearly 89 per cent of the primary schools are managed by the government. It is often found that levels of learner achievement of those who are studying in the public funded institutions are poor when compared to those who are studying in the privately funded institutions. It is relatively the poor who attend government schools especially in those localities where alternative private educational arrangements are existing. Therefore, investing in quality improvement programmes in the publicly funded institutions are more rewarding to the poor. The DPEP in its conceptualisation takes into account these two dimensions by which the additional investments disproportionately benefit the relatively poorer sections of society.

The government in the recent past has taken steps to improve quality of primary education. The Operation Blackboard Scheme, the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET), the efforts towards achievement of Minimum Levels of Learning and decentralisation of educational planning and management are some of these efforts in this regard (Varghese, 1995b). From the resource point of view, allocation to elementary education as a share of GDP has increased in India from 0.5 per cent in 1950-51 to 1.7 per cent in 1994-95. The plan allocation which is a reflection of new activities has been declining in India from the Second Five-year Plan period onwards (Tilak, 1995). However, in the recent past there has been a change in this pattern and plan allocations did increase from 24 per cent in 1969 to around 47 per cent in the Eighth Plan period (1992-97). Even now it has not reached the 56 per cent level of the First Five-year Plan. The external funding is the new source of funding for primary education in India.

The DPEP funding in India comes from various agencies. Although the focus in this paper is on the funding by the European agencies, it is important to know how large scale funding was facilitated. The World Bank is the single largest contributor of external

funding under the DPEP. The World Bank funding of DPEP comes from the Social Safety Net (SSN) account. Lending by the World Bank in the sixties and seventies was dominated by project lending where macro-economic policy changes were not conditionalities to approve and release loans. Many of the Bank loans from the eighties are more in the category of adjustment loans essentially for stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes (World Bank, 1988).

The Bank Introduced a number of credit arrangements (Jones, 1992) to meet the ever increasing loan requirements of developing countries within the framework of the adjustment loans. Unlike the project lending, structural adjustment loans are characterised by their conditionalities with respect to the reform measures that are to be undertaken by the recipient governments. In the eighties a larger number of adjustment loans went to African and Latin American countries. Studies on the impact of structural adjustment loans showed that it led to a decline in public expenditure; a decline in expenditure on social sectors especially education and health sectors (Lewin and Berstecher, 1989; Woodhall, 1991). It was found that the structural adjustment programmes in the short run create problems for the poor and consequently SSN programme to protect the vulnerable sections of the society was initiated by the Bank. The funding for DPEP by the Bank comes from this account. In other words, structural adjustment loans to India provides the context for DPEP funding by the World Bank (Varghese, 1993).

Some characteristics of planning and implementation of the programme are common for both the states under consideration. Therefore, we may look into those common dimensions before coming to the specifics of each of the state.

The DPEP targets the educationally backward locations keeping districts as the unit for planning and management of education. The two criteria adopted to select districts under DPEP are: i) districts where female literacy rate is less than the national average; and ii) districts which have successfully completed total literacy campaigns. DPEP is an attempt to develop local specific plans through a participatory process. The DPEP emphasis is on planning from below. The normal practice of planning in India is to

regionalise national and state level plans at the district levels. This process has been reversed under DPEP (Varghese, 1994). First, the district plans are prepared and then only state level plans are prepared. These plans are prepared by people from the district level itself and planning competencies are developed as a result of this process. The planning is seen as a participatory process. Participation means involvement of various departments, educational functionaries, teachers, parents and public at large.

The DPEP objectives include : (i) universal enrolment; (ii) reducing drop-out rates to less than 10 per cent; (iii) improvement in learner achievement at least by 25 percentage points over and above the baseline levels; and (iv) reducing inequities of all types to less than 5 per cent. The programme promotes local area planning, school mapping and micro-planning. Schools are given a central place to initiate quality improvement programmes. Enhancing teacher competency through in-service training is a major component in the DPEP. The districts are given a maximum amount of Rs. 400 million; each school is given a lump sum amount of Rs. 2000 p.a. and each teacher is given an amount of Rs. 500 p.a. to experiment with locally based teaching aids.

The programme is implemented through an Autonomous Society mode. At the state level, there are General Councils, and Executive Committees. The project implementation is facilitated through the State Project Office, District project Offices and Block level structures. New structures like Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres will be created under the programme. The VECs and local community will play a significant role in mobilising the community and monitoring educational activities at the local level. These are some of the common elements that one may find in DPEP programmes across states.

5.4 DPEP in Madhya Pradesh

DPEP phase 1 in Madhya Pradesh covers 19 out of 45 districts of the state. The project districts account for 198 blocks of which 78 are tribal blocks. The project in total

covers 211 towns and 33,959 villages. The initial budget of the project was for Rs.6,850 millions for the period 1994-2001.

The project document was prepared at the district level through a process of participatory planning. Under the planning process each district drew up a plan for the whole project period. These plans clearly identified the problems, elaborated the strategies and activities. The plans were drawn through a participatory process. In the preparatory phase extensive consultative meetings were held at the state, district and local levels. Educational functionaries, teachers, parents, NGOs and the community at large participated in the plan formulation exercises.

The project has added focus on gender issues. A core group has been constituted which will act as the state level steering-cum- resource group in all matters pertaining to girls' education. A women cell has been created at the State Project Office to operationalise and monitor gender related activities in all districts; Mahila Samakhya society has been created to undertake women empowerment programmes. The specific strategies to increase girls' enrolment are: change in school timings to meet the requirements of girl children; the VECs have been given power to decide on the school timings to suit the local requirements; the project envisages to increase the share of women teachers in the rural areas; Shishu Shiksha Kendras(SSKs) and Joolagarhs to take care of the younger siblings will be started in the non-ICDS localities; the SSKs will be attached to primary schools or their alternatives; their timings will be coinciding with that of the schools.

Another focus of the project is on tribal issues. It envisages to relax norms to open schools in tribal areas from the present norm of 250 population to 200 population wherever needed; alternate school centres will be created where 20 children are available for schooling; opening of Ashram schools (hostels attached to schools) for sparsely populated and geographically isolated habitations; the incentives like provision of free textbooks to all ST children and free uniforms to ST girl children and scholarship to ST girls from grades 3 to 5 by the state government will continue; classroom interactions in local dialect will be introduced as far as possible so as to avoid the language barriers

between home and schools. Supplementary materials will be developed to make education more locally oriented.

It is expected that 2,350 new primary schools will be created and approximately 25,000 new school places will be created. The VECs and Gram Panchayats will be responsible for selection of school sites; 4,273 additional classrooms will be constructed in the existing schools; and a total of 8,973 teachers will be appointed during the project period.

Table 2
Project Activities completed till December 1997

Activities	Number
New Primary Schools	2,339
Alternative Schools	3,162
Shishu Shiksha Kendras	4,028
Village Education Committee	28,236
Cluster Resource Centre	2,809
Block Resource Centre	198
No. of teachers trained	57,166
Total Expenditure	1,762.6 millions

Rajiv Gandhi Prathmik Shiksha Mission (RGPSM) is registered as a state level autonomous society to implement DPEP in Madhya Pradesh. It has a General Body (GB) and Executive Committee (EC). The GB is headed by the Chief Minister and the Ministers in-charge of School Education and Social Welfare are Vice-Presidents. GB has wide representation and it lays down broad guidelines for programme implementation and approves annual budgets. The EC is headed by the Chief Secretary and senior most secretaries in-charge of school education and tribal development are Vice-Presidents. The State Project Director is its member secretary.

The district set up has a unit of RGPSM headed by the Zilla Panchayat Chairman; the District Collector is the district mission director. The district project director will be the member secretary. At the block level there is no project staff. The Chairman of the Janpad Panchayat will be the chairman of the block unit of the society and members of the

Standing Committee on education on Janpad Panchayat will be members at the block level unit. The Block education officer is the member secretary of the block level unit. At the village level VECs will be constituted. The chairman of the VEC will be the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat; the deputy Sarpanch will be the Vice-chairman; another three members of the gram panchayat will be members of the VEC; representatives of the village and one nominee of the local legislative representative also will be members of the VEC; in total a VEC may have 15 members. Nearly 28,000 VECs are expected to be constituted in the project areas.

5.5 DPEP in Andhra Pradesh

The DPEP in Andhra Pradesh covers five of the 23 districts. The objectives of the project are similar to that in other states. The districts selected under the DPEP are educationally backward and have substantial share of scheduled caste and tribal population. The project is prepared at the district level as per the DPEP guidelines. The key strategy followed in the project is decentralised planning at the district level. Planning process was participatory. Village level awareness campaigns were conducted to prepare district plans and to generate demand for primary education. The state has various schemes on primary education. Under DPEP a concerted effort has been made to integrate various existing schemes into the district plan. The total project cost is Rs.2423 million.

In the decentralised planning process, the plans were disaggregated at the Mandal level. This is in contrast to the block level disaggregation that we find in other states. The district Plans were finalised after the Mandal Plans were prepared. Needless to add, the state plans were finalised after the district plans were prepared. It is expected that 891 primary schools will be opened during the project period. It is expected that ECCE centres will be opened where community participation is forthcoming and NGOs will be encouraged to start ECCE centres. There is a provision to open special primary schools for the handicapped. A total of 15 special schools - three in each district - will be established during the project period. Community--supported teachers will be appointed

during the project districts. However, these teachers will be paid a stipend of Rs.1200 in the first year and Rs.1500 in the second year by the state government. From the third year onwards they will be paid regular scales by the government. It is expected that a total of 6,175 teachers will be appointed in the project period; additional classrooms with community support will be started especially in areas where there is concentration of poor and marginalised groups; the community has to bear only 10-20 per cent of the construction costs; there is a proposal to develop model education villages; an amount of Rs. 0.3 millions for each district will be given to District Collectors to start one model education village in every Mandal.

The Mahila Samata programme is now operating in two districts. This programme envisages to enhance the self-confidence and self-image of women and to provide necessary support structure to women for their education; community mobilisation and microplanning are essential components of programme implementation. Priority will be given to ST areas to open new schools and all existing single teacher schools in tribal areas will be converted into plural teacher schools. The project envisages to organise specific enrolment drives in collaboration with NGOs, and elders in all villages. This will be followed up by developing school census register to monitor enrolment and retention of children; a child-to-child approach where a child in the terminal grade will be motivated to encourage a younger child to come to school will be adopted.

The project will be managed in an autonomous society mode as in other DPEP states. At the state level Andhra Pradesh Pradhamika Vidhya Parishad is formed as an autonomous society with General Council and Executive Council. The powers and functions of the society are similar to that in Madhya Pradesh. The General Council will be headed by the Chief Minister and Minister of Primary Education will be its vice-chairman. The State Project Director of DPEP will be the member secretary of the Council. The EC will be headed by the Secretary (Education) and the State Project Director will be its member secretary. At the district level, Primary Education Programme Committee has been created with District Collector as the chairman. Project specific appointment is still to be initiated at the district level and at present the project

activities are carried out through the existing staff. VECs are formed at the village level with 15 members. The Sarpanch is the chairman of the VEC.

The state government has succeeded in incorporating the positive contribution of the APPEP into the DPEP. This is more so in matters related to school improvement programmes. The actual implementation of the project started only by the end of 1996. Hence, most of the activities are in operation.

6. Project Interventions and Poverty Reduction

The projects under consideration are at various levels of implementation. The Lok Jumbish Project is in operation from September 1992, the DPEP Madhya Pradesh is in operation from December, 1994 (more than two years) and the DPEP in Andhra Pradesh is in operation since September, 1996. Therefore, it is too early to make any observation on the impact of these projects on poverty reduction. This is more so in case of educational projects. The intervention strategies may need a longer duration to translate into increased retention and improved learner achievement. The enrolment drives may be showing faster results. In all projects, the initial period is invested in developing the necessary arrangements at all levels to implement various programmes. Therefore, unlike direct poverty reduction programmes, the impact of education on poverty reduction cannot be assessed within a short span of time. What is attempted below is to highlight some of the features of these projects which directly target the poor. There are approaches and strategies in operation in the process of implementation of these projects.

Unlike various economic programmes which directly target the poor, educational programmes indirectly target the poor. The benefits accrued from education are long term in nature. Education enhances human capability and improves choices of the educated. Since all these projects aim at universalisation of primary education, the benefits on poverty reduction may be seen more in terms of human development that benefits essentially the younger generation which will have an impact on the well-being of the present and future generations. The poverty reduction efforts through education will

have its impact on the well-being of the children when they grow up since education will improve their life chances. More importantly, it will have a positive impact on the next generation to get increased and improved access to public provisions including education, employment opportunities and better living.

Targeting the poor in these projects may be seen as targeting only a section of the poor. Since the projects focus on primary education, they target the children. Needless to add, children constitute a substantial share of the poor. Investing in children does not mean investing on an individual in the Indian context. If education improves the employment status and income levels of the individuals who are educated also improves and it has an impact on the well being of the elderly family members who are normally looked after by those children when they are grown up. In this sense, the adults also benefit from the investment on education of the children.

Sustainable human development puts people at the centre and it does not mean that the present level and pattern of development should be sustained in the future as well; it does not envisage perpetuation of existing inequities in the future. The essence of sustainable development is that everyone should have equal access to development opportunities in the present and in future (UNDP, 1994). Therefore, investing in education should be seen from this angle. Let us now closely scrutinise the project approaches and activities which have direct implications for poverty reduction.

i) Targeting Deprived Regions

In India, like in many developing countries, there is a positive correlation between deprived regions, poor people and low levels of education. In other words, the now educationally backward regions have concentration of poor people. The planning and investment decisions in education were mostly taken at the state level. From the sixties, the focus of educational investments has been educationally backward states. In the eighties it was realised that there are educationally backward districts in educationally advanced states and similarly, there are educationally advanced districts even in

educationally backward states. To focus on deprived regions and the poor meant shifting the unit for planning and decision making in education from state to district levels. DPEP focuses on district level planning and implementation of educational programmes.

It is empirically true that female literacy lags behind male literacy rates. Therefore, focussing on low female literacy districts means further targeting of the deprived regions and the poor. The criterion for selection of districts under DPEP is female literacy below the national average. With this criteria, the funds flow to relatively more deprived regions in the country. Therefore, the project funds are targeted to the poor regions and poor people. This is the case in all districts selected under the DPEP (Table 3) and all the blocks selected under Lok Jumbish (Table 4) projects. Therefore, targeting the investments to the deprived regions implies targeting the poor.

ii) **Targeting the Public Funded Schools**

The poor in India attend public funded schools. The unaided private schools are almost an exclusive domain of the non-poor. The project funding flows only to government funded institutions which ensures that all poor attending schools are benefited by the project intervention. Through targeting the deprived regions, the access facilities are targeted to the poor, by focussing on the public funded primary schools for quality improvement programmes. These projects ensure the project activities benefit all the poor.

Further, all the projects focus on alternative schools targetting those areas where primary schools are not feasible as per norms or those children who could not attend primary schools wherever they exist. In any case the non-enrolled and dropped out children belong to the most deprived groups. The focus on government schools and alternative schools ensures that project intervention reaches the poor.

iii) **Focus on Decentralised Planning**

DPEP envisages decentralised planning at the district level. Planning at the district level used to be constrained due to non-availability of resources at this level. Even when plans were prepared at the district level, resource decisions were taken at the state level. This made decentralisation process less effective since the district did not have power, authority and resources to put their own targets and evolve their own programmes. DPEP has changed this process by directly providing the project funds at the disposal of district level authorities (Varghese, 1996a). This has changed the very process of planning. Plans become local specific, and reflect the concern of the deprived localities within a district. In other words, while planning is prepared at the district level, investment priorities are directed towards more deprived regions of the selected deprived districts.

When district is the unit for planning, blocks or Mandals become the unit for disaggregation and analysis. Reduction of inter-block disparity becomes a major concern; reduction in inter-block disparity means investing more in backward blocks. Thus, district level planning helps targeting the poorer blocks or Mandals in DPEP districts. In Lok Jumbish targeting goes a step beyond. Block is the unit for operationalising project activities under Lok Jumbish and the next level of activities are at the cluster level which is a group of villages. Thus, decentralisation process helps in targeting investments to the deprived regions depending upon the local requirements. In the final analysis the poorer localities get targeted whether we plan at the district or Block level. This is more so when school mapping and micro planning activities are undertaken.

Table 3
Population by District (1991)

State/District Name	Total Pop.	Rural pop. %	SC %	ST %	Total SC/ST %	% of pop. (0-6 yrs)	Total Lit. %	Female Lit. %
Andhra Pradesh								
Total	6,63,54,559	73.16	15.93	6.31	22.30	17.98	44.09	32.72
Karimnagar	30,29,822	79.51	18.57	2.73	21.30	15.79	37.17	23.37
Kurnool	29,67,837	74.15	17.43	1.90	19.33	18.64	39.97	26.04
Nellore	23,89,765	76.20	21.86	8.95	30.81	15.04	47.76	36.99
Vizianagaram	21,04,458	82.80	10.44	9.01	19.45	15.88	34.19	22.47
Warangal	28,13,634	80.60	17.19	13.67	30.86	17.05	39.30	26.08
Madhya Pradesh								
Total	6,61,35,862	76.79	14.55	23.27	37.82	19.78	44.20	28.85
Betul	11,80,527	81.29	10.79	37.51	48.30	20.56	45.89	33.90
Bilaspur	37,96,553	82.92	18.12	23.02	41.14	19.77	45.26	27.26
Chhatarpur	11,58,853	80.72	23.70	3.76	27.46	20.82	35.2	21.32
Dhar	13,66,626	86.86	6.94	53.48	60.42	20.25	34.54	20.71
Guna	13,09,451	80.49	18.08	12.01	30.09	21.18	34.58	17.99
Mandsaur	15,55,481	76.92	15.86	4.80	20.66	18.55	48.67	28.32
Panna	6,84,721	86.93	20.41	14.90	35.31	20.78	33.68	19.41
Raigarh	17,24,420	90.41	11.38	47.70	59.08	18.03	41.22	26.46
Raisen	8,77,369	84.12	16.56	14.41	30.97	20.42	40.76	25.47
Rajgarh	9,92,315	83.19	18.00	3.30	21.30	19.57	31.81	15.62
Rajnandgaon	14,39,524	84.24	10.98	25.16	36.14	19.13	44.39	27.83
Rewa	15,50,140	84.73	13.72	23.30	36.99	18.95	44.15	29.13
Ratlam	9,71,309	68.12	14.79	12.42	27.21	21.19	44.38	26.88
Satna	14,62,412	80.25	17.84	13.81	31.65	20.55	44.65	27.80
Sehore	8,40,427	81.99	20.30	10.18	30.48	20.87	40.43	21.99
Shahdol	17,43,068	78.88	7.70	46.32	54.02	20.29	34.78	20.09
Sidhi	13,71,935	93.53	11.37	30.44	41.81	22.67	29.15	13.61
Surguja	20,82,930	87.96	5.52	53.66	57.18	20.18	30.09	17.4
Tikamgarh	9,40,609	83.10	22.75	4.13	26.88	20.65	34.78	19.66

Source: Census of India, 1991

iv) **Focus on School Mapping**

School mapping is a useful educational planning tool to arrive at rational decisions regarding location of schools so that everybody has a primary school within the permissible distance and each school serves a maximum number of people. It is an analytical tool to level out existing geographical inequities in the distribution of educational facilities. The areas now deprived of primary schools are the most deprived villages. Through school mapping exercises, the investments are directed to these most deprived regions since new schools are opened only in school-less habitations.

Table 4
Literacy Rates of Districts where LJ Blocks are Located (1991)

	Total	Male	Female
Ajmer	53.6	70.0	35.7
Alwar	42.1	59.8	22.1
Banswara	32.6	51.2	13.2
Barmer	22.9	36.3	7.8
Bharatpur	42.1	61.0	19.3
Bikaner	41.7	54.6	27.0
Bundi	32.4	46.9	16.0
Chittorgarh	35.3	51.8	17.7
Churu	34.0	49.8	17.2
Jaipur	49.2	65.1	31.1
Jaisalmer	29.9	44.7	11.5
Jalore	23.4	38.1	7.7
Jhalawar	33.1	48.5	16.2
Jodhpur	40.5	56.2	22.9
Pali	36.7	54.4	18.0
Sirohi	32.6	46.8	17.4
Tonk	33.9	50.7	15.6
Udaipur	35.0	50.2	19.2
Rajasthan	38.8	55.1	20.8

It needs to be noted that even when the share of civil work is limited to 24 per cent in all the three projects, this is one of the few investments under the project which is

entirely targeted to the most deprived localities. The decision to open a school in a locality also means appointment of teachers, provision of teaching learning materials etc. In other words, location of a school is a crucial factor in deciding the amount of resource flow to a particular locality. For example during a project period of six years, a locality which has opened a new primary school will be getting roughly Rs. 700 thousand, which is almost close to 0.2 per cent of the total allocation to the district under the DPEP. If hundred schools are opened under DPEP in a district, then one-fifths of the project money exclusively reaches the most deprived regions. Needless to add, these villages will have claims on other investments like any other village. Therefore, through school mapping exercise the funds, directly and specifically reach the most deprived groups over and above what is normally available to the less deprived localities.

v) **Focus on Community Participation**

Community participation in educational planning ensures that the amount is spent on the most needed items. The local areas through the VEC, Panchayats, Parent Teacher Association and community at large, have a claim not only on the resources but also a say on the items on which they are to be spent. This also ensures that the funds are spent most judiciously taking into account the local needs. Community participation has other indirect benefits.

It organises people for educational and social purposes and very often mobilises financial resources. In Andhra Pradesh nearly Rs. 2.8 million mobilised by the community under the DPEP. Similar examples are available in other states also. In other words, through community mobilisation the total resources made available to the poor people increases.

Another dimension of the community participation is the utilisation of the funds and resources. In the project district, school buildings are being constructed in close collaboration with the VEC members. Their overseeing of the civil work helps reduce wastages and pilferages; the community also contributes free labour and at times, land for

school construction. In this sense, the total financial and non-financial resources available to the locality will be much higher than what is provided by the project.

vi) **Focus on Micro-planning**

Provision of facilities and inputs does not mean that the poor will be able to take advantage of it. In fact, education in poor households may not be a priority item on which they are willing to invest. Sensitisation activities may generate demand for education and the poor may be willing to invest time of their children in schools rather than at work locations. The micro-planning exercise draws village education plans, develops village education register, identifies households which are not sending children to school, ascertains reasons for not sending children to school and encourages parents to send their children to school and monitors the village level school activities. Micro-planning is a participatory process where community participation is the foundation of these activities. This community participation based micro-planning activities ensure that these investments reach the poor. Micro-planning and community participation improves social awareness and increases collective bargaining power of the poor and it improves their access to public and social services.

vii) **Focus on Deprived Groups**

The project activities focuses on the deprived groups like the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. As can be seen from the table 3, many locations have tribal concentration. By focussing on these areas, the investments are directed towards the most deprived groups. Relaxation of norms to open educational facilities in the tribal areas, opening of Ashram Salas, provision of free textbooks, uniforms and scholarships for tribal children, development of learning materials in tribal languages are items on which the investments are directly targeted to the most deprived groups.

viii) **Focus on Women and Girls**

Even in the deprived regions and among the deprived groups, it is women and girl children who are the most deprived. The project activities directly address these issues to increase enrolment of girl children. The provision of Shishu Shiksha Kendras to take care of the younger siblings, the emphasis on convergence with ICDS programmes, free uniform to girls belonging to scheduled tribes, free textbooks to girls in general and various incentives help enrolment of girls.

The other activities which have direct focus on enrolment of girls are those targeted at women. The women empowerment programme is common in all the projects. The Mahila Samakhya Programme of Madhya Pradesh, the Mahila Samata programme of Andhra Pradesh, Women Teachers Forum and Women's Residential Institute for Training and Education (WRITE) of Lok Jumbish are examples of this.

Two other activities that need mention are representation of women in VECs and other decision making forum and appointment of female teachers in the rural areas. There are also efforts to create Mother Parent Teacher Association Councils in some of the project districts. These activities have a greater impact among the poor, to be mobilised to assert for their rights and rights of their girl children for education.

ix) **Focus on School Improvement Programmes**

All the above mentioned activities help bring the poor to schools and their alternatives. It is equally important that they are retained in the system and learn basic literacy and numeracy skills. The project/programme through micro planning and community mobilisation activities ensure that the poor children are mobilised and retained in the system. However, the major focus of the project is on teaching learning activities to ensure that schools are enjoyable learning institutions. Focus on revision of textbooks, activity based teaching, child-centred learning are some examples. The inservice teacher training is a major activity in the project districts. These training programmes help

improve classroom teaching-learning process. Focus on improved classrooms transaction ensure that the children learn what they are supposed to learn. And in the ultimate analysis it is the improved learning that will help them to improve their life chances leading to better rewarding jobs and more active participation in decision making processes.

Apart from these project specific activities, there are other programmes initiated by some the state governments which are seriously implemented in the project districts. Two such programmes which need mention are the Janma Bhoomi Campaign in Andhra Pradesh and Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in Madhya Pradesh. The Janma Bhoomi programme is developed on the ethos of community self-help and the campaign encourages communities and institutions to improve and maintain their environment. This programme helps mobilise community and is found to be encouraging educational activities. The EGS ensures that schools will be provided within a short period in those places where the community demands schools. The demand of the community should be presented through a group of parents. The Gram Panchayat will submit the demand to District EGS centres along with the name of a Shiksha Karmi. The EGS centre will allocate the teacher and resources required. The teaching learning material will be purchased by the Gram Panchayat. These schools are opened in the most deprived regions.

7. Impact on Poverty Reduction

We have made an attempt in the previous section to identify project intervention strategies that directly target the poor. This section attempts to make an assessment based on our field work experiences. The discussions are based essentially on the field work conducted in different villages of Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh and Karim Nagar district in Andhra Pradesh. For constraints of time and resources extensive field work could not be carried out in Lok Jumbish Project locations.

The DPEP project documents in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are prepared through a consultative process. A large number of meetings were held at local levels to prepare the district plan documents in both the districts - Dhar and Karim Nagar. The project functionaries are familiar with the document, project strategies and implementation tasks and they show a sense of ownership of the document.

District level authorities in Karim Nagar feel that the document reflects their requirements and local specific needs. This is in contrast to their experience with the implementation of APPEP project. In their view, the design and implementation strategies of APPEP were in a sense imposed on them by the funding agencies and state governments. Perhaps the interventions by funding agencies in implementation of APPEP was stronger than that in DPEP. More over, the project functionaries at the local level feel that the project intervention strategies are evolved through a consultative process which they initiated.

The district project teams in Andhra Pradesh feel that they are given absolute freedom to design the programme components within the confines of the parameters. However, the members of the district project team in Dhar district feel that many of their proposals are revised, and at times removed from the document at higher levels. Sometimes, the district functionaries are not informed about the reasons for effecting such changes. Even during the visits of missions, changes in the suggested strategies are made without due consultation with the district level authorities. Our own assessment is that project team in Dhar district are constrained to initiate local specific activities.

Karim Nagar district has prepared Mandal level plans and village level micro-plans for most of the villages. However, such documented evidences are not so clearly visible in the case of Madhya Pradesh. In Lok Jumbish, district plans are not prepared since district is not the unit for initiating planning exercises. Although block and cluster level activities are undertaken in participatory manner, block level plan documents are not prepared in the manner the district plan documents are prepared in Madhya Pradesh and

Andhra Pradesh. However, planning for project activities are more detailed in Lok Jumbish project than under DPEP.

Community participation is an important component in all the projects. The Village Education Committees are active in all the project areas. The format for formation of Village Education Committees are designed at the state level in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In Lok Jumbish Villages, VECs are evolved through a participatory process and later formalized into a Committee. In DPEP, the VECs are formed and then activated into participation in project activities.

The VECs have representations of deprived groups and women. In fact the proportion of representatives from those groups are already provided in the guidelines. In Andhra Pradesh, it is found that most of the poor and deprived groups are more vocal and articulate with respect to their demand for education.

The Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) has a significant influence on the local mobilisation and its impact on generating demand for education. The community demand for education is very strongly felt in the remote villages of Andhra Pradesh. Most of the rural people in Karim Nagar identify DPEP with new schools to be opened in their own localities.

Awareness regarding education is very strong in the rural areas. In Madhya Pradesh most of the people look forward to the administration to provide schools or their alternatives. In Andhra Pradesh too people expect the administration to provide schools but they are willing to contribute. In Lok Jumbish monetary contribution for school buildings is not envisaged. Perhaps, the expectation is that the community will maintain the school buildings once constructed.

It is interesting to note that the preparation on education and willingness to participate vary across districts. In Andhra Pradesh, the poor are willing to forgo the income from child labour and are willing to send their children to school. The project has

taken note of this change in the demand pattern and they have made it a condition for the communities to contribute to school buildings. Response is very encouraging and all the households willingly contribute to the construction cost to the tune of Rs.20,000 - 25,000. In Madhya Pradesh community contribution is voluntary and it is not relied on as a major source to construct buildings. However, in all places communities do contribute.

Our fieldwork interactions show that community participation has a very positive influence on the functioning of the schools. The villagers who contributed feel that the village school belongs to them and their children and they ensure that children are sent to school regularly and teachers come to the school as per schedule.

While the school mapping exercises help identify the school locations, the community participation improves the effectiveness in the functioning of schools through bringing children to schools, providing local support to teachers and creating a very conducive environment for the schools to function.

The VEC plays an important role in local level planning and management. In Madhya Pradesh, the Panchayat Raj Institutions are strong and at times strongly influence the functioning of VECs. In Andhra Pradesh, the VECs functions are less influenced by Panchayat Raj institutions. In both cases it is important to note the increasing interest shown by panchayat raj institutions in matters related to education.

Most of the new teachers appointed under the project are local and work at very low salary levels - sometimes less than one-fifths of the salary of a regular school teacher. Such new teachers, in Madhya Pradesh, are numerous. All of them are not pre-service trained at the time of recruitment. However, they are provided intensive training after recruitment. These teachers are expected to be absorbed and regularised at later stage. This pattern of teacher appointment reduces cost on account of teacher salaries in the initial stages. It is yet to be seen how far this policy is reliable especially when trained teachers remain unemployed and the intake in teacher training institutions continue at the same level.

A very encouraging trend seen in the villages is that people not only demand education, but also demand quality education. Many a time, quality education is associated with the medium of instruction namely English. Even in remote rural tribal areas people would like their children to be taught English even when the medium of instruction is the regional language. The villagers see English as a passport to modern sector salaried employment.

The assessment is based on the initial enthusiasm witnessed in the districts and villages. Since the focus in the initial stages is expanding access through creation of educational facilities, the project interventions are visible to them in the form of buildings and new teachers. However, the challenge lies in sustaining this community awareness and contribution and translating them into the educational process so that all children receive quality education.

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