About Pratham

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Pratham

Primary Education - India’s Biggest Challenge!

Research strongly suggests, that education is one of the key antecedents, if not the most critical antecedent for the socio-economic development of an emerging economy. While India has made rapid strides in tertiary education, with state of art technical, managerial, scientific and liberal art institutions, the state of affairs in basic primary school education leaves much to be desired. Various estimates indicate that, in the primary school age group, there are about 70-80 million children (which is more than 50% of all Indian children in this age group), who are either not enrolled in schools or are in school but are not learning. Even though, it is now enshrined as a fundamental right, in reality universal elementary education continues to remain a very distant dream.

The severity of the problem and its potential fallout in the very near future, has made developmental economists led by Dr. Amartya Sen, to powerfully argue that the very sustainability of our economic growth may be threatened, if we do not urgently invest in basic school education. It is hard to understate the impact school education or the lack of it can have on labor productivity, income growth, quality of democratic functioning, population growth, sustainability of political and economic reforms, health, law and order, environment etc.

Even though the central government, the state governments and various non-governmental organizations have stepped up their efforts in this direction, it falls far short of a revolutionary intervention, which is perhaps needed to address this problem in a meaningful time-frame. The Pratham Movement has grown to bring about this revolution.

The Pratham Movement

The Pratham Movement (www.pratham.org), an inspiring coalition between community members (who are the grass-root workers, mainly women, and who form the real engines of this movement), corporate leaders, academics, members of the local and central governments, NRIs and qualified professionals from the corporate and non-profit world, has spread to 29 centers across 10 states in India since 1994 to address the problem of children being out of school and not learning.

Goal

✓ Our goal is to ensure that by 2010, Every child in India is in school……and learning well.

- In an environment that is mentally stimulating and physically attractive.
- With teachers who are committed, dedicated, skilled and happy and are able to teach children not only the essentials of reading, writing and arithmetic but also good living habits including personal hygiene, clean and healthy environment and respect for other people, their beliefs and their properties.
- Within a community that cherishes children and provides its best to children's care and development.
Mode of Work

✔ Pratham has been serving underprivileged Indian children through five main programs.

- **Balwadi** Pre-School Program for 3-4 year olds from low-income families.
- **Balsakhi** Remedial Education Program that provides support for the weaker municipal primary school children.
- **Bridge Course** targeting children who have never been to school or dropped out. Objective being to enroll them in schools.
- **Outreach Program** for working children, child labor and children in conflict with the law. Objective again being to get them enrolled in schools.
- **Computer Assisted Learning Program** that strives to familiarize municipal school children with computers.

✔ Programs are for underprivileged children, mainly in slum areas. Each program unit has an average of around 20 children and instructors are young women from the local community, who are at least educated till Std X. Space is provided by the community and classes are held either in municipal school, community space or teacher’s home.

✔ At Pratham, we believe we can achieve our goal by working in collaboration with the local government to improve access to schools and the quality of learning in them. Pratham does not itself build schools but strives to strengthen existing government school system. Pratham:

- Strives to build a working partnership in the field of education between the people and the government.
- Creates programs to supplement the municipal school system, rather than supplant it.
- Seeks to make governance of education more effective through people's democratic participation. Aims at a private-public partnership to address issues related to education and arrive at solutions to be put into practice.

Achievements

✔ Since 1994, Pratham has demonstrated, that it can reach out to the grassroots and get underprivileged children in both urban and rural settings to school and learning. **From a humble start in the slums of Mumbai, by 2001-02, about 10,000 volunteers of the Pratham family were in the field, in 29 centers across 10 states in India, reaching out to over 200,000 children and mainstreaming over 30,000 children.** Till date we have reached out to over a million children.

✔ One of the **biggest achievements** of Pratham has been that it has managed to **mobilize thousands of community women, across India, to take charge of the educational needs of their community. These young women exhibit an amazing and infectious ‘can do’ attitude, which truly is what the Pratham Movement is about.** These young and empowered women, in turn, mobilize their entire community to take responsibility of
their children’s education and try to find ways and means of providing for that. This is perhaps a practical and sustainable approach in the sense that when the community takes ownership of its educational needs, then the change that happens is bottom-up, democratic and is more likely to sustainable.

- The Pratham model is simple to implement and easily replicable. No immovable assets are acquired unless a donor specifically requests and the need is clearly established. Administrative costs are kept low. Every attempt is made to reduce overheads as much as possible.

- **Pratham is highly cost effective and has spend in the region of Rs. 500 /- to educate per child per year.** Given the extensive network of Pratham in the slum areas, it is easy to layer other services (health, computer education) at a minimum additional cost of delivery.

- In our journey, we have **affirmatively and emphatically** answered the following questions:
  - Can one work with the government?
  - Can NGOs achieve scale and have a comprehensive mass approach?
  - Is it possible to mobilize a community to create sustainable solutions?

**Uniqueness – The Pratham Magic**

There are four key elements, which make our work unique and special, and have helped turn ideas into a Movement.

- **Comprehensive geographical outlook.** Pratham takes a total geographical approach, be it a city, a rural block or a taluka. The "complete coverage" approach, coupled with close links and co-operation with the government, distinguishes it from other non-governmental organizations.

- **All encompassing.** The organization is based on a triangular partnership: corporate sector, government and the citizens. In each city, corporate leaders have taken the lead, the government has responded by opening its schools and sharing its facilities, and community volunteers, mostly young enthusiastic women from the slums, implement the programs. "Every Pratham programme has three basic elements: it is linked to the municipal/government school system; it can be reproduced on a massive scale; it draws new people into its existing network." Jacques Hallak Assistant Director General, 1999 – UNESCO.

- **Replicable and scalable.** The Pratham model is simple to implement and easily replicable. No immovable assets are acquired unless a donor specifically requests and the need is clearly established. Administrative costs are kept low. The simplicity of the model also allows it to be massively scalable – which is a critical requirement for Pratham if it has to achieve its goal by 2010. "This project is considered to be rare in that it is both ambitious and successful and a blend of corporate initiative and community efforts that is worth emulating elsewhere." Ministry of Human Resource Development. Department of Education. Government of India.

- **Strong foundation.** Given the extensive network in the slum areas, it is easy to layer other services (health, computer education) at a minimum additional cost of delivery. For instance, Pratham's young software team has recently launched children's computer games in Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati. This software has been based on Pratham's large-scale teaching-learning experiences with slum children. Basic health initiatives have also been introduced in the Balwadis.
Management

✓ Structure of the Movement

Pratham operates its programs through decentralized initiatives in the form of local trusts all over the country. Pratham initiatives begin, typically, at the behest of a committed individual who wishes to take the Pratham model to his home state, or a corporate leader interested in developing his part of India or local governments who are impressed by Pratham’s work. The Pratham family responds by sending key implementers, provides program training and support material and gives managerial guidance. With the co-operation, commitment and support of enthusiastic volunteers from the local community, the government and corporates, Pratham thus sets up a trust in a new area and serves the children there.

Apart from its operational trusts, which implement the programs, the Pratham Movement has also spawned three other initiatives that do not directly implement the programs, but provide a national level support to Pratham operations in India. The three initiatives are Pratham USA (PUSA), Pratham UK and Pratham India Education Initiative (PIEI). PUSA is based out of Houston, Texas, and rallies non resident Indian (NRIs) and other well-wishers to support Pratham operations in India. Pratham UK, based out of London also rallies UK and Europe based NRIs and other well wishers to support Pratham. PIEI, which was set up on the behest of corporate India, consists of an eminent board comprising of the leaders of corporate India and a resource center manned by qualified professionals from the corporate world, the social sector, the academia and the founders and key implementors of the Pratham movement. PIEI provides financial, organizational and managerial support to the Pratham Movement.

✓ Emphasis on processes

Pratham’s powerful mission, ‘Every child in school…..and learning well’ attracted very diverse volunteers. Amongst them were consultants from Mckinsey & Co., who did a comprehensive study of Pratham (and published an article on Pratham in the Mckinsey Quarterly, 2001). Since then, Mckinsey has been helping Pratham draw up its strategic plans and to set up processes to enhance Pratham’s effectiveness and it’s ability to rapidly expand. Recently, performance measurement processes were standardized by Pratham in consultation with Mckinsey & Co. Further, Pratham has also engaged Give Foundation, an NPO offering consulting services to other NPOs, to standardize accounting processes, MIS and install relevant software.

✓ Corporate Involvement

Pratham was established as a Public Charitable Trust by the Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, UNICEF and several prominent citizens of the country in 1994. UNICEF parented Pratham during the initial three years. In 1997, ICICI Bank, a private sector bank in India, assumed the parental role. Since then, the involvement of corporate India has significantly increased. Today, the board of Pratham India Education Initiative consists of eminent leaders of the corporate world. The board oversees, supervises and guides the progress of the Pratham Movement and the board members, through their respective companies, have also committed financial, infrastructural and human resources support to the Pratham Movement.
The Board

Under the Chairmanship of Mr. N. Vaghul, Chairman ICICI Bank, the Board of Pratham India Education Initiative comprises of:

Mr. N. Vaghul - Chairman, ICICI Bank
Mr. Mukesh Ambani - Chairman, Reliance Industries.
Mr. Ajay Piramal - Chairman, Nicholas Piramal Group
Mr. Kumar M. Birla - Chairman, Aditya Birla Group
Mr. Vijay Goradia - Chairman, Vinmar International
Mr. Rajat Gupta - MD worldwide, Mckinsey & Co.
Mr. K.V. Kamath - MD & CEO, ICICI Bank
Mr. Gautam Thapar - Vice Chairman & MD, BILT
Mr. Keshub Mahindra - Chairman, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.
Mr. L.N. Mittal - Chairman, LNM Group

National Executive Team

It comprises of the founders, key implementers, as well as qualified professionals from the corporate world, the social sector and the academia.

Mr. Aditya Nataraj, C.A, M.B.A, (INSEAD) – Director, Program Manager, Gujarat.
(5 years experience in India, France, UK. With Pratham since January 2002)
Mr. Ashok Gaitonde, ACA – Chief Financial Officer.
(Over 30 years experience with national and multinational banks in India and abroad)
Mr. Chetan Kapoor, MBA – Member.
(Experience in Communication and IT, corporate communications)
Ms. Farida Lambay, M.S.W, M.Phil – Director, Child at Risk Program, Resource Center and Program Director, Gujarat & Mumbai.
(Over 25 years experience as an Educationist and Social Worker)
Dr. Madhav Chavan, PhD (Chemistry), USA. – Director, Resource Center.
(Co-founder of Pratham Mumbai and Research and Teaching experience in India and USA)
Dr. Rukmini Banerji, PhD, University of Chicago, Rhodes Scholar at Oxford – Director, Research and Assessment, Resource Center and Program Director, North India.
(International research experience in UK and USA. 7 years of experience in building Pratham)
Mr. M. Rajan, B.Sc, Retd. UNICEF – Convener, Exchange Forum and Governing Council.
(34 years of experience with UNICEF globally in planning for development of children).
Mr. Sabyasachi Das, PGDBM, IIMA – Director, Fund Mobilisation and External Relations.
(6 years marketing and research experience in India and USA)
Mr. Ujwal Thakar, MSC, CAIIB – Chief Executive Officer.
(28 years as a Sr. Banker in domestic and international banks in India and abroad)
Ms. Usha Rane, M.A. – Director, Curriculum, Resource Center and Program Director, Maharashtra.
(20 years of experience in the social sector. 7 years of experience of building Pratham)
Support and Recognition

Former President of India, **His Excellency Mr. K.R. Narayan is our Patron**. In 2000, Pratham was ranked amongst the world’s three “most innovative development projects” by the World Bank – Government of Japan: Global Development Network. The following organizations, in recognition of our efforts and drawn by our cause, have extended invaluable support to the Pratham Movement.

✓ **Corporations**


✓ **Foundations**

Azim Premji Foundation, HPS Foundation, American India Foundation, Yashwantrao Chavan Pratishthan, Paul Hamlyn Foundation - UK, CIDA – Canada, NOVIB (Oxfam) – Netherlands, Save the Children –UK, UNICEF.

Future

**Increase Scale of Operation** to reach out to 375,000 children directly through our various programs and have a catalytic impact on 3.5 million children in 2003-04. Increased level of advocacy are planned to create a demonstrative effect and hence create a catalytic impact.

**Lack of Learning and Read India** - Pratham’s exhaustive door to door survey of over 100,000 slum households has brought to the forefront the unfortunate fact that children who are going to government municipal schools are not learning. Infact, a large percentage of children cannot even read. To tackle this Pratham has embarked upon the **Read India Campaign**. This involves an innovative technique developed to get children to be able to read & comprehend fluently within 2 months. Over 80,000 children across India tested with this technique with strong validation. This technique is now being used to support the learning of both in school and out of school children across India.

**The Library Project** - From **Learning to Read to Reading to Learn** - To further the learning process by developing a reading habit, an exciting library project is being envisaged by Pratham. The idea is to first enable children to read, write and do basic maths and then to get them to enjoy learning by reading various kinds of children’s books. This will be done through a library in their own slums. Pratham plans to provide one million children with books and build 5000 libraries across India. This will help in developing a reading habit amongst children in slums. A good reading habit is essential for greater learning ability.

**Child Labor** - Increase Child at Risk Initiatives to bring education to the working child across India. Pratham also wants to scale up its efforts towards working children in the coming year. As
a special effort to understand the lives of the working children and to explore avenues of educating them, Pratham started its Outreach Program in April 2001 and within a year the program had reached out to about 10,000 children. But the problem of working children is rampant and runs into tens of millions across India with more than 30,000 working children in Mumbai alone. Pratham plans to actively engage these children across India and explore avenues for educating them.

Bridge the Digital Divide - To bring greater access to computers in government municipal schools. Pratham plans to bring more and more IT exposure to government school children and assist their learning process through computers. Government schools, where most economically under-privileged children attend, to a large extent, do not expose its students to computers. Pratham is attempting to address this in western and northern India by creating computer learning centers in the government schools themselves.

For further information on the Pratham Movement please visit www.pratham.org

For further information on Pratham India Education Initiative please contact Mr. Ujwal Thakar at umthakar@yahoo.com or Dr. Madhav Chavan at madhavchavan@vsnl.com