

Experiences of impacting the quality of education in Karnataka



prajayatna
We Learn. We Live

A study on the progress of Prajayatna's work in 11
districts of Karnataka between
2000 and 2012

Background to the Study

Prajayatna is an initiative working towards improving the quality of education in Government schools in the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan by facilitating communities to engage with the schooling system. The initiative began in 2000 in Karnataka beginning with four districts and has since spread to 22 districts in Karnataka and 18 districts in the other three states, over the last 12 years.

This document primarily attempts to capture the experiences, progress and impact of the initiative's work in the 11 districts of Karnataka where the initiative has been active for more than 5 years. These being the 6 districts of Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural, Mysore, Chitradurga, Bellary, Bijapur (where work was initiated between 2000 - 2003), the two districts of Gulbarga, Uttara Kannada (where work began in 2004) and the district of Chamarajanagar (where work began in 2008). The districts of Ramanagar and Yadgir were new districts carved out of Bangalore Rural and Gulbarga in 2010, where work had already been initiated since 2000 and 2004 respectively.

Objective of the Study

The study attempts to look at the progress and impact of the initiative on key aspects of the education system, as defined from the perspective of the organization over the last 12 years, especially on:

- The impact of the community processes facilitated by Prajayatna and the School development plans made by the community with the support of Prajayatna in Government schools.
- The impact of the learning initiative Kalikayatna on children and teachers alike.
- The relationship of Prajayatna with the Department of Education and the consequent impact on various aspects affecting policy.
- The process of decentralized teacher empowerment through the Cluster Resource Center (CRC) initiative.
- Efforts to facilitate community based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) initiatives.

Methodology of the study

The study is a secondary research and draws from the internal documentation of the organization, progress reports, publications, partner evaluations and interviews with the Department of Education's representatives.



The premise of the initiative

Prajayatna, a development initiative presently functional across 4 states in India, has been working on a systemic approach to reforming the primary education system in India for more than a decade. Recognizing that numerous issues affecting the Government schools such as high student drop-out, low learning levels, poor infrastructure, lack of teacher involvement etc., were not specific to certain geographical areas but manifest as typical patterns across the country, the initiative views the various problems as symptoms of a larger systemic issue.

Thus to address these issues from a systems perspective, the initiative works in two key areas-Education governance (the way schools are designed and managed) and Learning (classroom engagement- what schools deliver).

Through these two areas the initiative focuses on :

- Decentralization of educational governance, where school development vis -à - vis quality of education is seen as a direct result of community ownership, where local communities can define and contribute much towards developing a vision for education in the country and ensure proper functioning and delivery of quality education by Government schools.
- Redefining the learning perspective and enhancing the quality of the learning process by making it meaningful, enabling and oriented towards developing capabilities in children within the Government schooling structure.

The organization also works with communities to own, establish and run early childhood care centers (ECCE) across its working areas. This experience and learning has now been the basis for impacting Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) centres provided by the Government (preschools known as Anganwadis), by ensuring proper management of the centre through the community and making the centres more focused on the learning of the children in the age group of 2 - 6.

Over the past decade, the work of the organization has grown organically, starting from 4 districts in Karnataka in 2001 to working in 40 districts in 4 states in 2013.

While there have been a few attempts to measure the progress of the work across the organization's work areas including external impact studies (one of which is being presently conducted in 11 relatively newer working districts in Karnataka), this document is an attempt to consolidate the impact of the perspective and the approach on the key structures, processes and policies that define the education system in Karnataka.



Prajayatna and community ownership

The significance and necessity for community participation in education has long been acknowledged and at least in theory, there was a space envisaged for institutionalization of community participation. The statement “Local communities, through appropriate bodies, will be assigned a major role in programmes of school improvement” from the National Policy on Education, 1986, clearly denotes the significance accorded to community involvement in education.

In the eighties, Village Education Committees/School Betterment Committees with representation from the local communities were set up to assist with the management and monitoring of schools, which were replaced by the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC) in all Government schools of Karnataka in 2001 by an order of the Government of Karnataka. The SDMCs were to replace the earlier Village Education Committees and the School Betterment Committees which were considered to have insufficient representation from the local community, specially the parents. The SDMCs had a majority of parents as members instead of mainly elected representatives from the Panchayat Raj Institutions and local elders which was there in the earlier structure. This body was further strengthened when the committee was given a constitutional endorsement by bringing it within the ambit of the Gram Panchayat as a subcommittee.

While the official byword was 'community participation', where largely the community has been seen as a passive consumer or at the most implementers of schemes decided and designed by the Government, this has been differently viewed by Prajayatna, where communities are seen as active owners and determinants of the education system.

The strategies that Prajayatna evolved to accomplish this was three fold

- Creating a structure for communities to participate – finding a means of engagement
- Institutionalize these structures and in the process build their capabilities to engage with issues of learning.

- Accompany these structures towards institutional maturity where they are able to plan, implement and review independently

1. Creating a structure for communities to participate – finding a means of engagement

With a view to legitimizing the role of communities in schools, especially the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC), Prajayatna facilitates several key processes which enable the community to begin engaging with the schooling system, which they had never been a part of.

Prajayatna collects extensive information called the Local Education Governance Data (LEGD), on the situation of the schools which give a detailed picture on infrastructure, teachers, students, the village in which the school is based etc. This information provides the tool for engaging the community in a dialogue about their school.

Utilizing this information collected, Prajayatna organizes a village level meeting with the community called the Shikshana Gram Sabha (SGS), where the following outcomes are facilitated:

- The issues of the school are identified by the community;
- The possible solutions for the identified issues are discussed;
- The credibility of the SDMC structure as a legitimate community structure to engage with the school is established and reinforced in the presence of the larger community ; and
- Responsibilities are distributed among stakeholders present to solve the identified issues ;

The Shikshana Gram Sabhas are conducted at the village or ward, where all the stakeholders - the parents, teachers, elected representatives, the school development and monitoring committee members, representatives of the local community based organizations such as the women's groups, youth groups and officials from the Department of Education, come together on a common platform to address issues pertaining to their school.

Over the years of work in the districts of Karnataka, Prajayatna has seen several instances that have reaffirmed the belief that communities not only participate but also take initiative and responsibility to ensure that their collective needs are addressed. These Sabhas also enable in the mobilization of resources required for the school. Since representatives from related Departments participate in the meetings, information regarding the various schemes/ allocations available for the school is shared amongst all the participants. This enables the stakeholders to assess the requirements and availability of funds and to make alternative arrangements to address any shortfall for implementing the school development plans.

2. Institutionalization of community ownership of schools and building capabilities of the SDMC

While there has been active involvement of communities from the beginning, for school development to sustain, organized institutions and structures that support and take forth democratic participation become necessary to fulfill the goal of providing quality education.

The formation of the SDMCs and their participation in the Shikshana Gram Sabhas contributed towards institutionalizing the process of community participation. However, it was necessary that these community-based structures build their capabilities as vibrant functional institutions and also engage with the existing governing bodies - the Department of Education and the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

This was necessary to ensure that the initiatives taken up by communities did not happen parallelly to



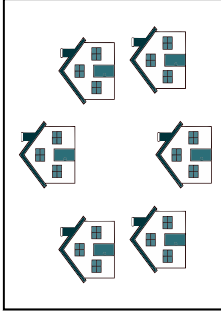
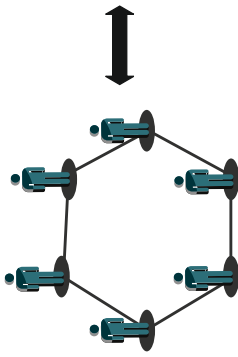
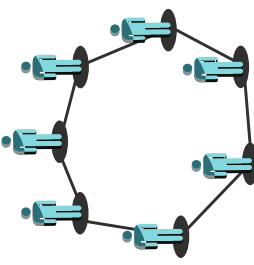
the work done by the Government Departments, but instead worked in a manner which was complementary to one another. A shared vision and mutually supportive environment was required to take on the varied problems faced by the schools.

In order to facilitate such an environment, Gram Panchayat Network meetings (meetings where elected representatives of the Gram Panchayat- the local unit of self governance, the SDMC members of all schools within the Gram Panchayat, teachers of all schools etc) are organized by Prajayatna to bring educational concerns to the forefront of a Gram Panchayat plan. These meetings enable the SDMCs, teachers and concerned members of the community to share issues about their schools with the members of the Gram Panchayat, particularly the Standing Committee called the Civic Amenities Committee (CAC) which is responsible for education within the Gram Panchayat. All schools belonging to the villages within a Gram Panchayat are encouraged to participate in these meetings. Several aspects that come within the purview of the Panchayats are highlighted in these meetings and solutions sought. The plans made at the school level in the Shikshana Gram Sabhas are shared and these are consolidated to form an educational plan for the entire Gram Panchayat.

These meetings enable the stakeholders to identify issues that could be addressed at respective levels of governance and approach the concerned stakeholders at these levels such as the taluk or District in order to address issues which cannot be addressed at the Gram Panchayat. This process supports in building linkages with the various



Operationalising the strategy

Processes	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Shikshana Grama Sabha</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Strengthening of SMC</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Gram Panchayat Network (CAC - SMC) meeting</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Taluk Education Standing Committee</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>District Education Standing Committee</p>  </div> </div>
Participants	<p>All SMC members, teachers and community members</p> <p>All SMC members and teachers</p> <p>Gram Panchayat CACs, SMCs organised by CRP and PDO</p> <p>Standing Committee Members, Executive Officer</p> <p>District Standing Committee on Education and Health, Chief Executive Officer</p>
What happens	<p>School information is shared, issues are discussed and solutions are sought</p> <p>Formation of SDP (School Development Plan)</p> <p>Review every month (plan- implement – review)</p> <p>Consolidation of School Development Plans and formation of Gram Panchayat Education Plan and drive the agenda of education</p> <p>Follow up quarterly (plan-implement-review)</p> <p>Formation of education plan by consolidation of GP Plans</p> <p>Activating and strengthening of the Standing Committee by having meetings once in two months</p> <p>The institutional capability of the Standing Committee on Education to be strengthened through quarterly meetings</p>

Every State is divided into districts and each district is divided into taluks/Blocks which are further subdivided into Gram Panchayats for purposes of administration and governance. The Panchayat is basically a decentralized governance structure and exists at three tiers namely, the Gram/Village level, taluk/Block level and the District/ Zilla level.

structures at the different levels of governance and contributes towards creating a more decentralized approach to governance.

These meetings have had a major impact on the Gram Panchayats to come forward to work towards the development of the schools in collaboration with the SDMCs thereby redefining each other's roles in the context of education governance.

Over a period of time, the need to institutionalize the role of the Gram Panchayat in the context of education governance was seen to be imperative. As the local self government responsible for development of the Gram Panchayat, they needed to play a more active role and be accountable for all the schools in the GP through the GP plan. It is envisaged that this in turn would feed into the taluk and District level plans to truly reflect the needs of the schools/ communities.

One of the processes as a preparation towards this goal is the taluk level workshops. These workshops are organized where the participants are the Gram Panchayat Presidents, Vice Presidents and members of the standing committee responsible for education (the Civic Amenities Committee- CAC) from all the Gram Panchayats. The taluk Panchayat President and the Executive Officer of the taluk are

also participants in these workshops. These meetings enable the Gram Panchayat to develop a deeper understanding of education and the system and ways of resolving them as the local self Government. The presence of the taluk Panchayat representatives enable them to address certain issues that can be resolved at the taluk level. This process also supports in creating better linkages with the different levels of governance.

3. Accompanying these structures towards institutional maturity

In the context of effecting change in the structures and practices at a systemic level, a structure comprising of the representatives of the various stakeholder groups at the taluk level was developed. It was envisaged that this structure consisting of the SDMC (school level community representation) and CAC representatives (Gram Panchayat community representation) would function as an advocacy body representing people's articulations and expectations and would work with the existing structures such as the Standing Committee in the taluk Panchayat, the Department officials, among others.

taluk level structures were formed by Prajayatna in various taluks of all the working districts. In the light of the objectives of these structures, it was recognized





that the capabilities of these structures have to be built to function as accountable structures. Towards this, meetings were organized across all the taluks where such structures were formed.

Initially taluk level meetings were held in the districts to form these advocacy structures - taluk governance structures (taluk education committees). A process was conducted at the taluk level, wherein one/two active SDMC member from each GP was identified and an election process was held at the taluk level. These meetings were facilitated to enable the SDMC members to understand the need for a structure at the taluk level – especially as an advocacy group. The need to work with other existing bodies in the taluk in order to increase accountability and transparency in the system was also discussed in the meeting. They were facilitated to identify persons who would represent them and work for the development of the schools in the taluk.

The representatives of the taluk education committees came together at the district level to plan for the work at the district along with the team of Prajayatna. This enabled the committee members to

understand their work in a broader perspective and to be a part of the work at the District level. It also supported them in understanding the complete cycle of planning, implementation and review.

On reflection within the organization, it was seen that formation of an alternate body at the taluk and district level defeated the purpose of institutionalizing community ownership within the system as the taluk Panchayat and the Zilla Panchayat were the governing bodies elected to look into the same. It was recognised that alternate committees would be at cross purposes with the Panchayat Raj Institutions. As both the taluk Panchayat and the Zilla Panchayat had standing committees responsible for education, it was decided to work towards strengthening these bodies and activating them to take responsibility for the agenda of education. This was envisaged to create a through line between the school (village) -Gram Panchayat-(block)taluk Panchayat-(district)Zilla Panchayat governance bodies in terms of planning and implementation. At present, focus is on strengthening the standing committees at taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat through workshops and meetings.

Qualitative and quantitative impact of key processes of Prajayatna

Between 2000 and 2012, Prajayatna supported the formation of School Development and Monitoring Committees with active involvement and support of local communities, built the capability of these SDMCs to identify, plan and resolve issues related to the school and networked the SDMCs with Gram Panchayat and taluk Panchayat Standing committees to enable better engagement with the education system.

While this had definite consequences in the way communities have become involved in redefining education, each process of Prajayatna had its own impact both in the short term and in the long term. For instance, the organizing of Shikshana Gram Sabhas resulted in the following :

- The community engaging with the school where their opinions, comments and suggestions on the existing situation of their school are elicited; leading to the formation of a school development plan;
- Introduction of the community to issues in their school and the possibility of finding solutions among themselves;
- Recognition of problems such as infrastructural issues by the Gram Panchayat representatives and their commitment in resolving them in that forum;
- Discussion on the causes of poor enrollment and the low retention of children in schools and the possible role, the community members can play in such a scenario;
- Discussion on the shortage of teachers, inadequacies in teaching and learning of children;
- Plans to encourage and improve attendance of children, submitting petitions to the Department for resolving teacher and infrastructural issues, ensuring proper management of the school, etc are formulated; and
- Discussion on the need for creating a learning environment for the children right from an early stage and thereby the importance of the preschool – the government run angawadis, the need for it to function properly and with the necessary facilities for which plans are made.

The discussion at these meetings, facilitated by Prajayatna, focuses on enabling the community to bring about changes envisaged by them and to engage with other stakeholders on collective decisions.

One of the important outcomes of the Shikshana Gram Sabha is a detailed annual School Development Plan. This plan delineates the requirements of the school as prioritized by the stakeholders with the details of resources required for implementing it, along with identified sources where the resources can be mobilized from. The plans also set a timeline for the implementation and responsible people from amongst the stakeholders are identified for monitoring and ensuring completion. The SDMCs are entrusted with ensuring the implementation of the same. The Shikshana Gram Sabhas have been seen to have contributed to school development in several ways. Communities in several villages began to contribute time, effort and financial resources for meeting the various requirements in their schools.



Impact of the Shikshana Gram Sabha : some case studies

Kiruvatti, Sirsi taluk, Uttara Kannada: In August 2006, people from the village of Kiruvatti had gathered for a meeting facilitated by Prajayatna to discuss the state of their school. Community members, officials from the Department of Education and Gram Panchayat members had attended this meeting. Retention of children in school was identified as one of the main concerns. In 2005, there were 55 children enrolled at the beginning of school but towards the end of the year only 20 children remained. This was attributed to children who migrated seasonally along with their parents who went to work in coffee estates. People of Kiruvatti belong to backward communities and are mostly daily wage agricultural labourers.

To address this major issue that was identified, members of the community and others present decided that a temporary hostel was required for the school students. This hostel was to be operational only in the season when there was migration from the village so that the students could stay behind to attend school while the parents migrated in search of work.

Parents of one of the students in this school came forward with the offer to let out their home for the children to stay while they migrated to work. This place was later assigned as the boys' hostel. Others from the village as well as the Gram Panchayat members contributed various essential requirements for the student's hostel. The Department of Education provided the electricity connection to this home and also got it painted. A cook was arranged to prepare the meals for the children.

In the month of November in the same year, the hostel was formally inaugurated by the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA).

Bysaigidere, Hagridommanahalli taluk, Bellary: There was a high rate of dropouts in children passing out from higher primary school to the high school since the nearest high school was more than 10 km away from Bysaigidere village. To address this, members of the community and teachers of the higher primary school had decided that they would require a high school in their village. The high school was sanctioned and since there was no separate land or building available, the high school was conducted in the premises of the primary school. After a while the need for a separate building was required.

Being an agrarian community, getting land allocated for the school was difficult. Eventually grazing land belonging to the Gram Panchayat was identified, but this waste land was too uneven for construction to be started and needed to be leveled first which required a lot of effort in terms of money and time. The funds available with the school were insufficient for this and construction of the building was stalled.

The head master of the school came up with the idea of conducting a play in the village to raise the required funds. A play was organized and conducted by volunteers from the community. People from the village as well as from neighboring villages watched the play and a sum of Rs 30,000 was raised through the sale of tickets. This money entirely went toward getting a machine to level the land and people from the village supported the leveling by doing manual work. The school building was constructed and the high school shifted to its own premises shortly.

Salotagi, Indi taluk, Bijapur: The main issue discussed in the Shikshana Gram Sabaha organized by Prajayatna was the abysmal conditions of the existing rooms of the higher primary school in the village. The model higher primary school had rooms that were constructed in the year 1958, when the school was initiated and besides this, additional rooms were required to accommodate the present batch of children. Due to the lack of rooms and the bad condition of the existing ones, the classrooms were held outside. Although the SDMC members had given applications to the concerned departments, no responses had come forth. Post the meeting facilitated by Prajayatna in August 2004, the community members decided to apply once again for the urgently required classrooms. This time, they decided to protest if their request

was ignored. The application was sent to the concerned department on the 30th of August 2004 and as planned the SDMC president and members decided to protest when no response was received even after 15 days of filing the application.

People from the village, gathered on the Salotagi – Gulbarga main road on the 15th of September 2004 and held a peaceful protest march on the road. This finally drew the attention of the authorities. The Deputy Commissioner visited the site of the protest and promised to address the problems faced by the school. Within a short period, a total of 5 additional rooms were sanctioned to be constructed for the school in Salotagi.

Shirogada, Annur taluk, Chamarajnar: In 2009, the Department of Education had decided to close the only school in the village as there were very few students. Although there were children in the nearby Soligere Haddi village, half a kilometre away, a small ravine cutting across the roads between these two villages prevented those children from attending the school in Shirogada but instead had to travel 3 kms to another school.

The people of Shirogada realized that their school wouldn't be closed if the strength improved by getting children from the nearby Soligere Haddi village and they got together and built a wooden bridge across the ravine for people to cross over. Children started coming to the Shirogada LPS and the school is functioning till today.

Karjagi Tanda, Gulbarga district: The open well in the premises of the Karjagi Tanda Lower Primary School in Karjagi Gram Panchaya, Gulbarga district, was a threat to the safety of the children. This threat continued to exist ever since the school was initiated six years ago. Despite continued efforts from the head teacher to resolve this issue the Gram Panchayat remained nonresponsive to his application vis-à-vis the dangers that the well posed to the children. This issue was discussed with the community during the SDMC meeting in 2012, wherein a decision was made to garner the support of the Gram Panchayat to close the well during the Panchayat level meeting. Once it was discussed in the Panchayat meeting, the President of the Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Development Officer visited the place and realized the need to close the well immediately. A decision was made in the Panchayat meeting to close the well which was then done without any waste of time. The children now play freely in the school premises.



The school plans made addressed various issues categorized broadly under Enrolment and Attendance of children, Infrastructure, Learning, School Management and Anganwadi (Early Child Care Center). Each of the main categories has several sub categories which pertain to the common issues faced by the schools and anganwadis. When plans for schools/anganwadis were made these issues were identified and prioritized. For each plan made to resolve any of the identified issues, responsible people were assigned amongst the stakeholders and a schedule for implementation was set. The financial and other resources needed were estimated during the planning sessions and various potential sources to mobilize these resources were also identified.

In order to do this, as mentioned earlier, the formation of SDMCs was in itself very important to institutionalize this process and it was ensured that the SDMC was formed in all the 9461 schools. The Standing Committee of the Gram Panchayat (the CAC-Civic Amenities Committee) was made aware of the necessity to ensure the formation of the SDMC in every school. Similarly in many cases the CAC was not formed. With information sharing during the meetings at the taluk level and at the Gram Panchayat level, the CACs were formed in most of the Gram Panchayats. In many GPs across the taluks, Prajayatna's support was taken in the formation of the SDMC and CACs.

Prajayatna's processes have facilitated the preparation of 9461 annual school plans in 1749 GPs of Karnataka. A total of 11811 processes have been held at various levels apart from regular interactions with the Department of Education which has been facilitated across the years (2000-2012).

Districts	Shikshana Grama Sabha	Gram Panchayat Network Meeting	GP President and Secretary workshop	taluk Education Committee	Total
Bangalore Rural	962	165	14	41	1182
Bangalore Urban	786	113	11	43	953
Bellary	813	247	18	48	1126
Bijapr	1021	239	19	28	1307
Chamarajanagar	502	86	15	31	634
Chitradurga	1275	191	19	51	1536
Gulbarga	971	171	17	41	1200
Mysore	1384	229	43	72	1728
Uttara Kannad	908	200	29	36	1173
Ramanagar	480	52	5	14	551
Yadgiri	359	56	3	3	421
Total	9461	1749	193	408	11811

Facilitating formation of institutional structures - some examples

Formation of SDMC

Many of the School Development and Monitoring Committees were formed in accordance to the byelaw of the SDMC in 2011. Despite this development, the School Development and Monitoring Committees' in some of the Gram Panchayats were not formed. In the Gram Panchayat meetings facilitated by Prajayatna, the Civic Amenities Committee members obtained clarity about its role in the formation of the School Development and Monitoring Committee. Through this it was shared with all the members that the Gram Panchayat had the responsibility to ensure the formation of the SDMC in every school based on which they planned for the formation of the SDMC in all the schools in the GP. In accordance to the plan made, the parent's council meeting was organized in the Rajeev Gandhi Tanda, Mashallavaadi schools in Mashalla Gram Panchayat and Badadala Hosa Badavane Lower Primary School in Badadala Gram Panchayat wherein the Civic Amenities Committee provided support to ensure the proper formation of the School Development and Monitoring Committee.

Similarly, the Allagi Gram Panchayat has provided support to Bhankalaga Higher Primary School, Devala Ganapura Gram Panchayat to Kerakanahalli Higher Primary School and Mallabada Gram Panchayat to Chincholi Higher Primary School for the formation of the School Development and Monitoring Committee.

In Jevargi taluk, the Gram Panchayat has provided support to eight schools for the formation of the School Development and Monitoring Committee. Gamvarha Gram Panchayat has provided support to Gamvarha Hosa Badavane Lower Primary School, Kollur Gram Panchayat has provided support to Avarada Higher Primary School and Kudi Gram Panchayat has played a major role in providing support to the four schools in the Panchayat for the formation of the School Development and Monitoring Committee.

Formation of Civic Amenities Committee in the Gram Panchayat

Section 61 of the Gram Panchayat Act provides opportunity for the formation of the Civic Amenities Committee, for the implementation of effective administrative responsibilities. Standing committees should be compulsorily formed in the first meeting implemented after the formation of the Gram Panchayat and selection of its President and Vice President. There are various reasons wherein they are not formed either due to the non availability of information or lack of understanding with regard to its necessity. There have been vibrant discussions on



this issue in all the Gram Panchayat level meetings in the reporting area.

These discussions were also conducted in Chamarajanagar taluk's Harave Gram Panchayat in 2012. The Gram Panchayat members who participated in this meeting having understood the necessity of forming the standing committees made a decision to form one in the subsequent Gram Panchayat common meeting itself. Accordingly, the standing committees have been formed after a discussion about the significance of its role and responsibilities in the development of the schools .

Formation of the taluk Panchayat Standing Committees in Surpur taluk of Yadgiri District

A meeting was held with the taluk Panchayat of Surpur in order to enable them to understand their roles and responsibilities. There was discussion and decision made with regard to the support required to the Gram Panchayat to provide quality education to

the children. The Executive Officer, Taluk Panchayat Vice President and 23 Taluk Panchayat members participated in the Taluk Panchayat general meeting.

Decisions

- taluk Panchayat standing committees would be formed in the next meeting.
- The educational plans made by the Gram Panchayat would be consolidated at the taluk level and the same would be executed
- Provide financial support to the Gram Panchayats to take up education related responsibilities
- Conduct standing committee meeting once in every two months

In the follow up meeting twenty nine officers from the Department, thirty taluk panchayat members including the President and Vice president, Executive Officer and organizers participated in the meeting. There was a discussion on the importance of the standing committee, its role and responsibilities. In accordance to the decisions made in the previous taluk panchayat general body meeting, the general standing committee, social justice committee and committee for finance was formed in accordance to the rules and regulations. These Standing Committees were to conduct their own meetings in the near future.

Active SDMC- a case study

Mashallah is a lower primary school in Gulbarga district's Afzalpur taluk. All the children enrolled here attend the school on a regular basis. The school has all the required basic facilities since it has an efficient School Development and Monitoring Committee. The stakeholders are involved in supporting the teachers to facilitate learning by providing the requirements for a conducive learning environment. This school stands out as a model that represents the possibilities of what an involvement of the School Development and Monitoring Committee and community could do in the domain of public education.

The School Development and Monitoring Committee meets every month in the school to discuss on the issues related to the school. The School Development and Monitoring Committee not only



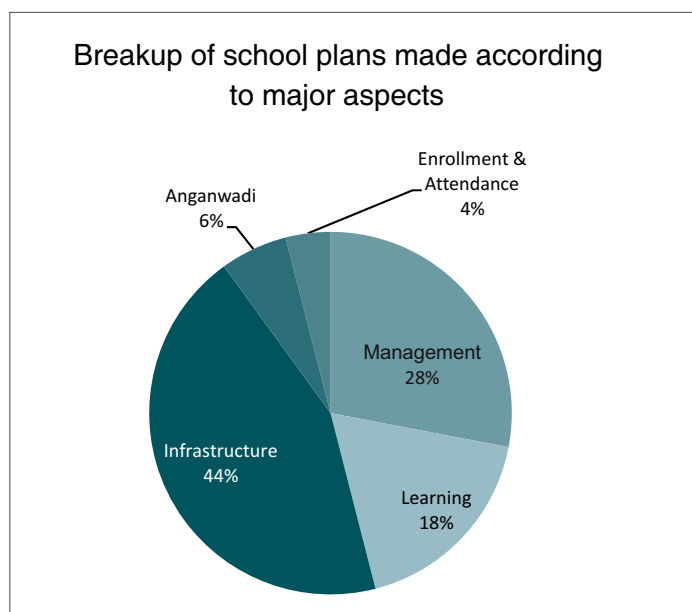
provides support to the teacher but also concentrates on the attendance of the children in the school. As a consequence of this all the 103 children in the school attend the classes on a regular basis. The School Development and Monitoring Committee is involved in the working of all the basic facilities.

The School Development and Monitoring Committee ensures the quality of midday meals in the school on an everyday basis. Since there was a difficulty of water flowing from the school tap, the School Development and Monitoring Committee followed up the issue on a regular basis with the Gram Panchayat and ensured water facility through a 200 meter pipeline which was laid in the school. A follow up with the Gram Panchayat has resulted in a 100 feet compound for the school. The toilet facility provided to the school is managed efficiently. Twenty five plates have been provided by the Gram Panchayat for the midday meals of the children. As a result of a discussion about the creation of a positive ambience in the school. A garden for the school was developed with Rs. 30, 000, an amount obtained by combining the school grant and contribution of the teachers.

The School Development and Monitoring Committee that discussed about the basic facilities for the school has made plans for a permanent water supply, leveling of the school field, completion of the construction of the compound and obtaining teaching & learning material that would enable the learning of the children.

The developments in the school have inspired the head teacher and other teachers to involve themselves totally with the School Development and Monitoring Committee in the development of the school.

Given below is an analysis of the areas that has been impacted through the involvement of the communities:



To ensure that the school plans made are implemented, regular follow up meetings were conducted with each of the schools. These follow up meetings ensured that the SDMCs regularly reviewed the status of the plans and ensured that tasks were completed as per schedule. These meetings also enabled Prajayatna to gauge the capabilities of the SDMCs on various aspects and ongoing support was provided to ensure that the SDMCs develop into institutions that can independently manage their schools and the various developmental concerns related to the schools. Similarly, follow up meetings were conducted at the Gram Panchayat level too, which helped review the progress made for the entire Panchayat and supported the Panchayat to develop as an institution that addressed the educational needs of the community and schools that came within the purview of the Gram Panchayat.

Gram Panchayat Network : A case study

An example of such a change is the Kokatanur Gram Panchayat, Sindagi taluk, Bijapur....

In this Panchayat, Prajayatna had conducted a GP network meeting on 22nd February, 2006. 28 members from the SDMCs and one teacher each from the 8 schools in the Panchayat had participated along with members from the Gram Panchayat. School level plans were made along with the Panchayat members on the basis of the discussion where the SDMC members and teachers had shared their concerns regarding the issues faced by their respective schools.

- Subsequent to the GP level planning meeting, Prajayatna conducted a joint workshop for the SDMC and CAC (the standing committee within the Gram Panchayat that focuses on education and health) members in March 2007. Post these meetings, over the course of two to three years it was seen that several of the plans made in these meetings were implemented by the SDMCs of each school along with the support of the Panchayat.
- 3 of the schools (Urdu HPS-Kokatanur, HPS-Bommanjogi, and Urdu LPS-Bommanjogi) were provided water connections from the GP and one school (LPS-Joguru Vasti Kokatanur) was provided with a bore well through an allocation of Rs 40,000 from the Zilla Panchayat.

- Electricity connections were provided to 3 schools (HPS-Kokatnur Tanda, HPS-Bommanjogi Tanda, and Urdu HPS-Kokatanur).
- Through the efforts of the SDMC members and with the support of the GP, a total of 4 teachers were sanctioned to the schools (1 teacher for HPS-Kokatanur, 2 teachers for Urdu HPS-Kokatanur and one teacher for Urdu LPS-Bommanjogi).
- Classrooms were constructed in 4 schools from allocations made by the SSA (one room each in Urdu HPS Kokatanur, LPS-Kantihalli Vasti Kokatanur, HPS-Bommanjogi and Urdu LPS-Bommanjogi).
- For the HPS-Kokatanur, the roof which was only partially done was completed by the GP and for the LPS-Kantihalli Vasti Kokatanur, fencing was put up around the school as a compound at a cost of Rs 50,000. Kitchen rooms were constructed for two schools (LPS-Kantihalli Vasti Kokatanur and LPS -Joguru Vasti Kokatanur) with an allocation of Rs 50,000 each from the taluk Panchayat.

Most of the basic infrastructure requirements, especially the ones under the purview of the Gram Panchayat were addressed in all the schools. The works implemented by the Gram Panchayat and the SDMCs of the 8 schools have benefitted 1433 children belonging to Kokatanur Gram Panchayat.

Impact as seen

● Infrastructure

It was seen, in the early period of work (this was especially seen during the period 2000-2005), many of the schools lacked essential and basic infrastructure. Therefore many of the meetings facilitated by Prajayatna saw the communities demanding for better basic facilities for their children in order to build an environment for the children which was conducive to learning. It can be seen that 44% of the plans made by the schools were to improve the infrastructure in the schools. Several efforts have gone into ensuring the implementation of the same.

Schools were conducted in temporary and makeshift premises, often donated by the local people. In several villages there were no schools, the local communities in meetings facilitated by Prajayatna decided to approach the authorities to ensure that schools were opened in their villages, where there were several children of school going age.

In 2008, when Prajayatna had organized a Shikshana Grama Sabha in Mavalli, it was found that the only material possession belonging to the single primary school in the village was an attendance register!

Mavalli is a village in Uttara Kannada district, comprising of 28 families with a total population of 298. Most of the people in the village are paddy growers and only a few own land. The primary school in the village had only been initiated in 2007. This school which had 15 children was operating out of a home, belonging to one of the community members and the single teacher in the school was deputed from a nearby village.

Post the meetings organized by Prajayatna, the local people managed to get a building allocated for the school. Basic furniture for the school was mobilized by the people. The Panchayat also repaired the roads near the school and laid a 200 metre water pipeline for which the manual digging work was done by people from the village, thus providing a water connection for the school.

Applying for a new school, getting it sanctioned and ensuring that it is set up, is a long process. Prajayatna has supported communities in approaching the appropriate authorities and making sure that through regular follow-ups with the sanctioning authorities this process is enabled in a faster manner.

In villages where the schools were conducted in provisional places, arrangements were sought to

In eleven such villages in the districts of Uttara Kannada, Mysore, Gulbarga, Chamrajnagar and Chitradurga primary schools were sanctioned and these villages for the first time had a school of their own. Similarly, 9 Anganwadis were initiated in the districts of Uttara Kannada, Chamrajnagar and Chitradurga.

procure land for a permanent school building. In many villages, people came forward and donated land for the school and in other places land was sought from the Panchayats or other concerned Departments.

For schools in 31 villages, new land was identified and procured through the efforts of the various stakeholders.

The major issues which have been planned for and have got addressed belong to basic infrastructure requirements. Water connections for schools, construction of classrooms, toilets and compound walls have got the maximum priority when it came to fulfilling the basic amenities for the school.

The SDMC President of the Kengal Gollarahatti lower primary school in Honnenahalli Gram Panchayat of Bangalore Rural district had managed to secure two acres of land for the school from different local donors. Similarly in Kannamangala HPS of the same district, the SDMC members and the local community members had mobilized an amount of Rs. 5,90,000 from donors and along with Rs.2, 80,000 available from the school grant purchased a 51 * 29 feet site for the school.

Classrooms, considered as a basic requirement, were nonexistent in many schools. Children were taught, sitting under the trees or temporary arrangements were made such as tin sheds or such which were often inadequate during heavy rains or harsh climate.

In Allabur village, Bellary, when Prajayatna had conducted an SGS, the Upper Primary school had a strength of 235 children, when Prajayatna had conducted an SGS. The nearest high school was located more than 10kms from Allabur, which had problems of bad roads and poor bus connectivity, endemic to rural India.

Since the dropout rates were high amongst children passing out of the Upper Primary school it was realized that a high school was required for the village. Through concerted efforts from the community members, a high school was sanctioned for the village in 2003. Since, there was no land allocated, the high school was initially conducted in the premises of the Upper Primary school. Later, eight acres of land was donated by community members for the construction of a separate building for the high school.

Across the 11 districts through the various processes of Prajayatna,

- 657 classrooms have been constructed through allocations which were available from different sources such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Zilla Panchayat etc.
- 209 Anganwadi rooms have been constructed.
- 80 schools in the districts of Uttara Kannada, Mysore, Chitradurga, Gulbarga, Chamrajnagar and Bangalore Rural have got additional classrooms built, which were required due to increase in student enrollments.
- Compounds walls have been built for 688 schools.
- Gates/Fences for 93 schools were built in order to protect the land of the school from being encroached and to protect the property of the schools.
- 94 schools were sanctioned land to be used for playground for the schools. Another 82 playgrounds were leveled by the Gram Panchayats and the community in order to enable the children to use the space.

In several schools water connections were not provided by the concerned authorities and in some, water storage facilities as well as pipes and equipments such as motors to draw and use water available in tanks and wells were needed. Besides drinking purposes, water is required for maintenance of toilets and for the mid-day meals served in schools.

Communities have addressed water related requirements in 1062 schools. Motors, accessories and storage facilities such as tanks were procured for 136 schools.

A few examples.....

The Benakanahalli Camp Lower Primary School in Kachakanooru Gram Panchayat of Yadgiri District, had severe water shortage. The SDMC members made a decision in their meeting to contact the Gram Panchayat to solve this problem. Accordingly they contacted the Gram Panchayat and explained to them the situation which was even affecting the preparation of midday meals. The Gram Panchayat got a well dug at a cost of Rs.60, 000/- and thereby solved the problem.

In Bellary district, the taluk Panchayat had made arrangements for the construction of a toilet for the physically challenged children in the Vanenur Higher Primary School.

A kitchen has been constructed in the Ramatirtha HPS in Allur Gram Panchayat of Gulbarga District through a grant of Rs.60, 000 from the taluk Panchayat.

In Uttara Kannada District, drinking water facility was provided to the Kodasege Higher Primary School at a cost of Rs.13, 000 under the Suvarna Jala Yojane

Toilets, for teachers and students have been constructed in 632 schools while separate kitchens for the preparation of mid-day meals have been built in 169 schools.

In several schools, although land had been donated previously by local donors, the land was not registered in the name of the school. This often created problem for the schools with some of the facilities sanctioned by the Department being withdrawn due to the property of the school not being registered which legally means that the school does not have a space of its own.

In Jigani Higher Primary School, Anekal taluk, Bangalore Urban, as the old building was in a dilapidated state, the entire school building was demolished and 12 new rooms constructed, as the old building was in a dilapidated state. The new rooms were constructed through funds available from the Gram Panchayat and the SSA.

Since the funds available were insufficient, the SDMC members raised money from various other sources as well. They were able to raise Rs. 2.5 lakhs from the Granite Association and a software company donated Rs. 2.7 lakhs towards the construction of toilets and also provided 2 computers and three desks. The President of the SDMC provided a gas stove for the preparation of mid day meals and a donor from the local community provided Rs 40,000 to purchase benches for the children to sit.

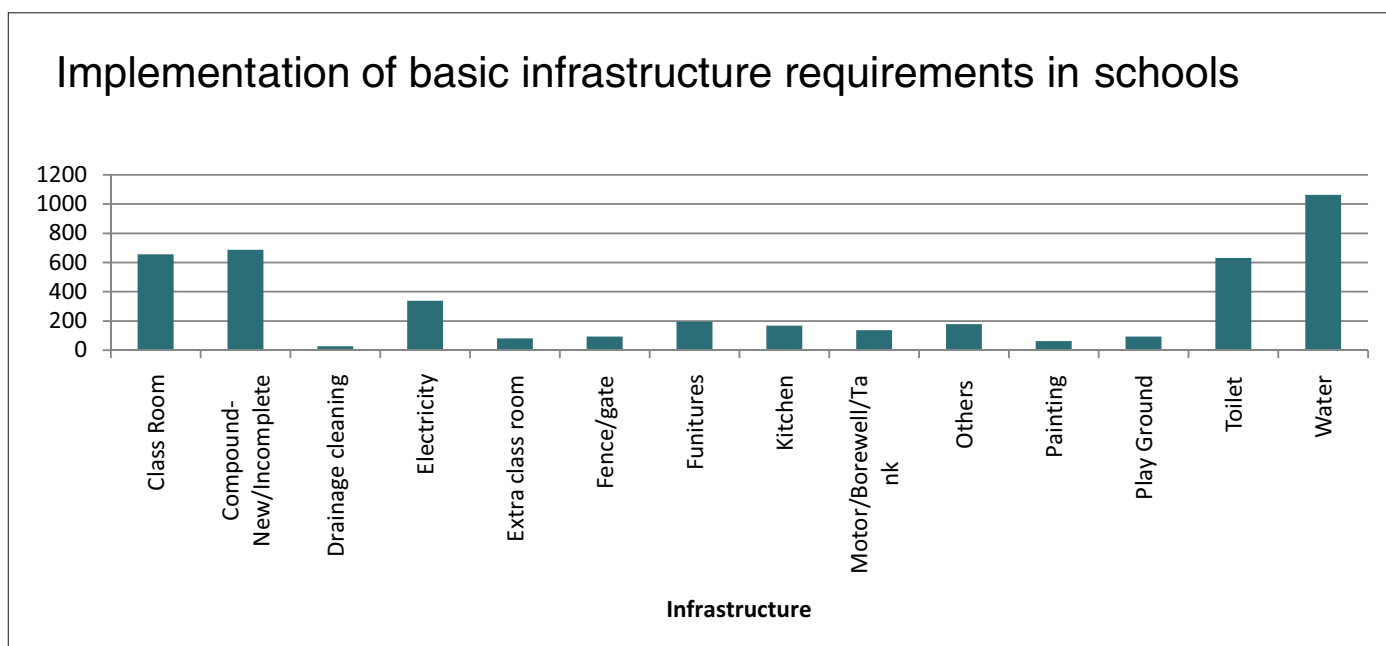
Prajayatna, in the meetings organized at the village level had created awareness on this issue, resulting in land registrations for 284 schools.

To ensure that these infrastructure requirements are met, Prajayatna has in the meetings held at the village and Panchayat level, created awareness on the various allocations that are available for implementation. People are then supported to ensure that the available funds are released to their schools and once work is initiated the SDMCs play the key role in monitoring and ensuring that the works are completed satisfactorily. There have been several instances when members of the community besides parents and SDMC members have contributed towards labour, materials and support in monitoring.

- Management

For the upkeep of school infrastructure and amenities available in schools, separate plans were made by the SDMC members and teachers. Other than the regular maintenance work there is also additional one time repair work and less frequent work such as painting of the school, drainage cleaning, etc. Close to 10% of all planned activities in school were related to repairs and maintenance.

Creating a pleasant environment conducive to learning, in and around the school has been an important requirement in many schools. School committees and local organizations have been regularly taking up activities to better the school surroundings. In the village level meetings very often complaints from the schools regarding external



factors which disturb the schools had been taken up and resolved, often through the intervention of the Gram Panchayats. These include, inconveniences caused by the proximity of liquor shops, theatres, marriage halls, dump-yards, busy roads, etc.

In Chandagalu Gram Panchayat of Mysore district, the Cheernahalli school premises was constantly being misused by the local community members who indulged in drinking and gambling within the school premises after school hours. This problem was discussed in a meeting organized by Prajayatna at the Panchayat level. The Panchayat took a serious stand on this issue and efforts were also made to sensitize the people on taking care of the school. Further, trees were planted within the school campus and the Panchayat members have regularly followed up to ensure that the school was not inappropriately used.

In 214 schools across different districts, gardens were set up to grow flowers and vegetables in the school premises.

In 342 schools, the schools premises and the surroundings have been cleaned to create a learning environment for the children.

Besides creating a clean and peaceful environment near the schools, the school committee members and teachers have undertaken activities to make the school more attractive to children. Bright illustrations which are informative and attractive are seen on the school walls; pictures of national leaders, donated by local community members also adorn the walls of many schools.

In Tagadur School of Tagadur Gram Panchayat in Mysore district the Gram Panchayat had contributed a sum of Rs. 1, 00,000/- for planting trees.

- **anganwadis**

Besides the implementation of various basic infrastructure requirements in schools, anganwadis (Government run pre schools) has been a major issue which has come up for discussion repeatedly in most of the meetings. With lack of information and

transparency in its functioning, the community has many issues with regard to anganwadis. With the communities also realizing the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education, the very objective of the anganwadis is discussed in these meetings and the need to ensure learning has been one of the major decisions taken in these meetings. In order to ensure this, the need for basic facilities in the centres and for the community to ensure this, is understood and decisions have been taken regarding this. Hence the anganwadis have seen improvements through the efforts of local communities.

In Sodekoppa village of Bangalore Urban district, the anganwadi did not have a building of its own. There were 25 children of anganwadi going age in the village and this issue was discussed in the Gram Panchayat Network meeting organized by Prajayatna. A plan was made in the meeting and the Gram Panchayat made arrangements for the anganwadi to be run from the community hall in the village till a permanent place was sanctioned.

Temporary arrangement of place has been done for the Durgi Gowligowda and Bamanawada anganwadis. A rent of Rs.200 for the anganwadi premise is paid by the Gram Panchayat. Similarly in Uttara Kannada district, in Durgi Gowligowda and Bamanawada , temporary premises were arranged by the Gram Panchayats.

Havinal, a small village belonging to Aldal GP is located 2 kms from the headquarters and 8 kms from the taluk. As it is located on the main highway road leading from Surpur to Bangalore, it has good transportation facilities and other basic infrastructure. There are 105 households comprising of a population of 625 persons. The main source of livelihood is agriculture with some of it being dependent on the rains and the remaining having their own irrigation facilities such as the borewell etc. In the Shikshana Gram Sabhas conducted in this village, all stakeholders had come together to discuss the status of their school and anganwadi . The issue of the anganwadi centre running in a dilapidated building where snakes and other creatures had made their home was discussed. In this condition the parents had refused to send their

children to such a centre where it was dangerous for them to even sit. The case of a building which had been built for the purpose of the anganwadi by the GP and which, for unknown reasons, had not been handed over for the past two years was also discussed. The parents of the children and the SDMC took the responsibility of shifting the centre to the newly constructed building. Within a week the walls were painted, room cleaned alongwith the surroundings and the keys handed over to the teacher.

209 anganwadi rooms, toilets and water connections for 44 anganwadis were provided through the various processes facilitated by Prajayatna.

- Learning

During the initial years of work, quality improvement in schools largely focused on schools providing a conducive environment for learning. School infrastructure and amenities being more tangible aspects, are easily perceived by the local communities and more often greater attention is paid towards these aspects. Addressing an infrastructure issue provided the community the much needed impetus to engage with an issue and gradually move to build their confidence to address other issues. Over a couple of meetings the issues have moved to more critical aspects like learning, quality of teaching etc. However, in Shikshana Gram Sabhas and other meetings where there is relatively an active community willing to engage with the schools holistically, Prajayatna has constantly stressed on the importance of prioritizing learning.

In schools where basic infrastructure issues have been addressed to a large extent, people began to address learning related concerns. Starting from more management related issues such as teacher's attendance and regularity, Prajayatna meetings gradually introduced parents to observing classroom processes. They were facilitated to engage with tools such as files used for documenting a child's progress. More interaction between parents and teachers was encouraged to familiarize people with what happens in the classroom.

In several schools regular parents meetings were organized in addition to the SDMC monthly meetings. Files have been procured for children in hundreds of schools by the communities themselves and efforts have been made to encourage teachers to regularly record the learning achievements of each child and share the same with their parents. This forms an initial step for parents and community members to get involved with observing the progress in learning of their children. The foremost aspect to ensure was the enrolment and retention of the children. Though enrolment was high in most of the districts it was seen that the children were irregular to school. It was realized that with the improvement of quality of the school, this issue could be resolved to a large extent. Plans to ensure that children were regular to schools were formulated and efforts were made to implement these through house visits, parents meetings etc, by both the GP and the SDMC.

Teachers encourage children to compile work done by them in school, in these files and gradually a collection of work done by the child is there for parents and other interested people to observe the progress in the child's learning. The files themselves or the finances to purchase them for all children are mobilized from the community or other concerned stakeholders.

985 schools have mobilized files for the children reaching out to 50000 children.

Starting from maintenance of files regularly, teachers, parents and SDMC members gradually started to involve in other activities to support and enhance children's learning and to supplement what is taught in the classrooms. Many schools set up small libraries within the schools, sometimes with the support of the Gram Panchayats.



The library in Manjagani Higher Primary School, Belambara Gram Panchayat, Ankola taluk , is maintained very well . Every day soon after the mid day meals the children from 5th to 7th standard obtain books from the teacher to read them. They also borrow books every Saturday to read at home. The teachers maintain records of the books borrowed and returned.

In Aralikoppa School in Kannigerie Gram Panchayat of Yellapura taluk the school library is entirely maintained and managed completely by the children of the school.

Other learning concerns such as utilizing local resources to support learning have slowly been taken up in the community meetings.



In 51 schools, local places of interest or other facilities and natural resources available in the vicinity of the school were utilized to teach children about different concepts that are related to these places. Additionally, these visits create awareness about the local resources itself.

87 libraries were set up to develop an interest in reading and expose them to different sources of information.



These visits enable the children to understand concepts/history in reality, through actually experiencing it, thus making this practical approach to learning more sustainable. Local communities have been involved in identifying suitable places and have supported teachers in organizing the visits.





The Standard 4 Students of Malaghana School Visit the Malaghana Post Office.....

Prajayatna facilitated the process along with the head teacher to visit the local post office along with the children to connect it to the lesson on the same.

The head teacher approached the post master for permission to take the children to visit the post office to which the post master readily agreed. A trip to the post office was thus made by the children of Std 4 along with their class teacher.

The interaction between the children and the staff of the post office began with the children being asked about the role of the post office to which they said that it was used for correspondence of letters. The children were told that Rs. 2.50 and 50 paise post cards were available in the post office through which they could correspond with all their relatives. They emphasized that primarily the address of the recipient of the letter and of their own homes need to be written behind the card for it to reach the intended destination. They said that confidential matter should be posted in an envelope with a stamp having a minimum value of Rs.5 or more in accordance to its weight.

They also explained about the different accounts that could be opened in the post office which was similar to that of an account in a nationalized or non nationalized bank. This could also be done at the post office through RDTDSB account which could incur an interest of Rs.100 in one year. Inspired by this information, six of the children made a decision to open an SB

account in the post office. The details of sending a money order was explained to the children.

Given below is the list of questions that the children had asked at the post office.....

Questions from the Children :

- Why is the colour of the post box red?
- Why is the photo of Mahatma Gandhi printed on the 50 paise post card?
- What is the qualifying age for opening an account in the post office?
- What is the minimum time period when withdrawal of money could be started?
- Why was the concept of registered post created?
- What is the relation between the value of the stamp and the weight of the post?
- What is the significance of the seal and why should it be put?
- To whom should the letter be given once it is put in an envelope?

After the discussion, the children returned to the school and there was a discussion amongst them with the teachers. This discussion was then documented in their books. It can be seen that the children were able to thus relate what was there in the text books to what was there in real life and in the process get a complete understanding of the functioning of the post office more than what was in the text book.



In many schools the shortfall of teachers had created a lot of problems. Teachers are often deputed to make up for the shortage but many a times, several schools across all districts are faced with the problem of teacher shortage. The SDMC members and the GP members were supported to petition for additional teachers and in some cases have been met with success, with the Department of Education sanctioning additional teachers. In most cases, the

sanctioning of new teachers or even deputing teachers takes a long time and during that period the children are adversely affected. To make up for these difficulties, in several schools, the SDMCs and other stakeholders sought other alternatives to substitute for the shortage of official teachers. In several cases volunteers or paid part time teachers were appointed with resources for the honorarium paid, mobilized locally from different stakeholders.

One out of the three teachers in Magdampura Higher Primary School in Yadagiri taluk's Pasapul Gram Panchayat was deputed to another school in a different Gram Panchayat, while one of the other teacher had gone on maternity leave. This resulted in the school being left with just one teacher.

This situation was discussed in the Panchayat level meeting and the issue was brought to the notice of the Gram Panchayat President and Secretary. A part time teacher was arranged by the Panchayat for a short term and the honorarium was paid by the Panchayat till other arrangements were made.

Some of the main aspects on which there was an impact of Prajayatna's processes with all stakeholders in the 11 districts of Karnataka between 2000-2012

Aspects Impacted	Number of schools impacted through community engagement
Setting up of new schools	11 (3- UK, 1- Mysore, 1-Gulbarga, 1-Chitradurga, 5-Chamrajnagar)
Creation of classrooms	657 (B rural 51, B Urban 54, Bellary 46, Bijapur 104, Chamarajnagar 112, Chitradurga 13, Gulbarga 57, Mysore 196, UK 24)
Teacher appointments	89 (Bellary 40, Bijapur 27, Gulbarga 1, Mysore 21)
Provision of learning files	985 schools (B rural 186, b urban 60, bellary 92, bijapur 75, chamrajnagar 5, chitradurga 98, Gulbarga 30 , Mysore 439)
Setting up of school libraries	87 (B rural 38, b urban 28, bijapur 15, chamrajanagar 4, chitradurga 2)
Utilization of local resources for learning	51 (B rural 14, bellary 2, chitradurga 35)

The total amount mobilized from various stakeholders during the period 2000 -2012 is Rs. 14,18,42,438 towards school improvement by the communities through Prajayatna's processes.

Prajayatna's processes have enabled the mobilization of financial resources for schools from various sources. The SDMC members, teachers and GP members have been supported to seek information on funds allocated and to ensure that these funds are released on time for the implementation of the required development works. At times, the stakeholders have been supported to find alternative sources of funds and in many cases they have been successful in raising funds to meet urgent requirements of the schools. Besides funds allocated to the school from the SSA and the Department of Education, the Gram Panchayats have contributed significantly in all districts. In several cases local donors, parent, teachers, other local organizations, taluk and Zilla Panchayats have made financial contributions towards the school.

To summarize, Prajayatna's work in decentralizing education governance through facilitating community involvement and ownership has over the years impacted several aspects of the schooling system in Karnataka, some of the key aspects being :

- Building credibility for the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMCs) with all stakeholders.
- Enabling SDMCs and communities to prepare and implement school development plans resulting in improved school infrastructure, better learning environments for the children.
- Enhanced capability of the community to access resources from different sources and ensure effective use of government plans and schemes.
- Increase in teacher accountability to local communities.
- Increased interaction on learning between the communities and the teachers.
- Improved attendance and retention of children in schools.
- Gram Panchayats realizing their responsibility towards education and enabling access to resources etc.
- Enhanced interaction between the different levels of governance structures—the Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- Enhanced accountability and transparency between the SDMC and the GP.



Kalikayatna

Across the world, researchers, teachers and educationists have been working towards a better understanding of how learning takes place amongst children. Despite the advancement in our understanding of children and of their learning process, many of the practices followed in our schools have not complemented this understanding. More importance is given to 'what' children learn instead of 'how' they learn.

Such an approach has led to classroom practices and teaching methodologies which have time and again proved to be inadequate. These practices ignore the innate learning abilities present in children and coupled with this, the pressures of producing results for purposes of external accountability. This has created a system where learning means providing information to children within a prescribed framework and assessments focussing singularly on children's capability of reproducing this information.

Prajayatna's initial efforts to improve quality in learning clarified the critical need to re-examine fundamental questions concerning learning. Questions such as: What does learning mean? How do individuals learn differently from one another? Do our present assessment systems really value what children have 'learnt'? It was with the intent of deeply enquiring into these concerns that Kalikayatna, the key learning initiative of Prajayatna was initiated in the Bilikere cluster of Mysore district, in 2005.

Kalikayatna was initiated with the realization that understanding how children learn is the most important factor that can contribute towards improving learning in schools. Unlike many of the teaching methodologies tried out in schools, Kalikayatna is not an alternative methodology but an approach that bases itself on fundamental principles of learning. These fundamental principles have guided the organization in developing classroom processes that have been successful in addressing



several concerns related to learning in a classroom environment.

The approach is based on the understanding that children cannot be 'taught' and that the process of learning, which is natural to all living organisms, can only be facilitated by a teacher or instructor by creating an appropriate environment for learning to take place. Based on this fundamental principle, the teachers or facilitators involved, focus on understanding how children learn and attempt to support children in contextualizing their learning.

The Kalikayatna approach concentrates on developing capabilities in children instead of merely providing information to children. This fundamental change from the traditional approach to learning has necessitated the redefinition of various classroom processes such as assessment, use of textbooks, class wise segregation of children and subject wise teaching.

Jointly with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Prajayatna has been able to take this approach to schools in different districts of Karnataka and by the end of the academic year 2011-12, the approach was being effectively implemented in 83 schools with 7146 students and 210 teachers.

2005 - 06					
District	Taluk	Cluster	Schools	Children	Teachers
Mysore	Hunsur	Bilikere	23	930	33
2006 - 07					
District	Taluk	Cluster	Schools	Children	Teachers
Mysore	Hunsur	Bilikere	23	1162	39
2007 - 08					
District	Taluk	Cluster	Schools	Children	Teachers
Mysore	Hunsur	Bilikere	23	1405	62
2008 - 09					
District	Taluk	Cluster	Schools	Children	Teachers
Ramanagara	Channapatna	Ythalli	21	524	23
Bellary	Kudligi	Gajapura	15	972	28
Bijapura	Muddebihal	Konnuru	8	871	20
Yadagiri	Yadagiri	Kandakuru	15	1590	26
Chitradurga	Chitradurga	Godabanahal	13	525	18
sub total			72	4482	115
2009 - 10					
District	Taluk	Cluster	Schools	Children	Teachers
Ramanagara	Channapatna	Ythalli	21	665	31
Bellary	Kudligi	Gajapura	15	1236	36
Bijapura	Muddebihal	Konnuru	8	1140	25
Yadagiri	Yadagiri	Kandakuru	15	1818	33
Chitradurga	Chitradurga	Godabanahal	13	677	21
sub total			72	5536	146
2010 - 11					
District	Taluk	Cluster	Schools	Children	Teachers
Ramanagara	Channapatna	Ythalli	21	791	47
Bellary	Kudligi	Gajapura	15	1599	45
Bijapura	Muddebihal	Konnuru	8	1377	32
Yadagiri	Yadagiri	Kandakuru	15	2186	46
Chitradurga	Chitradurga	Godabanahal	13	823	31
sub total			72	6776	201
2011 - 12					
District	Taluk	Cluster	Schools	Children	Teachers
Ramanagara	Channapatna	Ythalli	15	577	36
Ramanagara	Channapatna	Kodamballi	14	405	21
Bellary	Kudligi	Gajapura	13	1374	41
Bijapura	Muddebihal	Konnuru	8	1363	29
Yadagiri	Yadagiri	Arakera	10	1255	25
Yadagiri	Yadagiri	Kandakuru	11	1464	27
Chitradurga	Chitradurga	Godabanahal	12	708	31
sub total			83	7146	210

Being a new perspective, it was understood that the acceptance level of the approach would be minimal without processes that would prepare the ground for the changes that were to be gradually introduced.

The participation of local communities, being the primary stakeholder, was critical for a meaningful impact on children's learning. Traditionally, since the involvement of community members in learning related aspects in schools was negligible, it was important for Prajayatna to facilitate an environment that sought the involvement of community in different ways and ensured that they not only participate but partnered in the development of the approach. Several community level meetings were conducted to understand the needs and expectations of the local people.

Simultaneously, from the very beginning, Prajayatna from the very beginning took efforts to ensure that the functionaries in the Department and the teachers were co-creators of the entire approach starting from strategizing to implementation. This perspective reflects the underlying principle of the learning initiative which signifies empowerment, collaboration and responsibility. It was realized that introducing a new paradigm of learning and assessment within the existing systemic framework required a very sensitive and open attitude to listen and absorb the various concerns, anxieties and diffidence within the system.

Kalikayatna was initiated with the intention of addressing several problems related to learning in classrooms as seen in primary schools. Initially the following key objectives were identified, and the approach was developed to meet these objectives through various strategies and processes:

- To develop an effective model of assessment that provides feedback on the learning level of the individual learner.
- To establish a 'learner centered' schooling process in which every learner is self directed in developing his/ her innate capabilities.
- To promote a new approach to teacher empowerment that promotes a higher level of

motivation among teachers to facilitate learning in children and encourages collaborative learning among the facilitators/ teachers.

- To facilitate the redefinition of the functions (roles/responsibilities) of existing structures in the Department of Education towards realizing the objectives for learning.
- To facilitate the stakeholder representatives at the village, Gram Panchayat, cluster and block level to take greater ownership in the process of improving learning among children.

Some of the key features of the Kalikayatna approach

- Integrated curriculum
- Teacher's empowerment
- Mixed age groups/classes-collaborative learning
- Continuous and ongoing assessment

The processes developed to support the learning approach have incorporated these salient features that were based on the fundamental principles guiding the learning initiative. Classroom processes are broken up into three sessions. In the first session, the whole group session, the entire class is introduced to a theme (broad topic) or concept identified by the teachers. This theme or concept is used to discuss and connect to various related sub concepts which are within the children's context. In the subsequent session, the learner group, the children's understanding and interpretation of the concept is discussed amongst the children themselves, in smaller groups. The teacher moves amongst these smaller groups adding to the discussion and clarifying doubts.

Finally, in the individual practice time session, each child is allowed to spend time by him/herself to practice and to reflect on the new ideas and concepts that were discussed in the class. During each session, the teacher, observes children- and makes relevant notes based on these observations. The work done by the children constitute the child's



portfolio which along with the teacher's observations is the principle tool for assessment. This allows for a comprehensive evaluation of each child which is done in an ongoing manner thus not subjecting the children to one time tests or examinations.

Outside the classroom, processes have been developed to enable teachers to create content for classroom processes and for them to plan and review. Teachers' empowerment is an important aspect of Kalikayatna. Teacher's collective meetings are held at the cluster level every month and in these meetings teachers share the problems and issues faced in classrooms and find solutions for it from amongst themselves. These meetings are useful for teachers to self-reflect and assess their own capabilities to facilitate classroom processes. Each month, in these collective meetings, teachers identify the concepts to be introduced to the class in the upcoming sessions and make detailed plans to facilitate the discussion/activities that enable children to understand these concepts.

There has been regular review of the approach and the programme has been modified accordingly to ensure its alignment to the underlying guiding principles of learning.

Impact of Kalikayatna

Overall, through the 5 years since Kalikayatna had been introduced in the schools where the approach is practiced, several positive impact areas have been observed. Some of these points are summarized as below :

- Children become active learners and not passive learners;

- Integration of subjects and mixed age-group has reduced the need for subject wise/class wise teachers in each school;
- Since the goal is not 'recall' of information, the class processes focus on capability building;
- A comprehensive assessment tool has been streamlined where the progress of the learner is mapped through the profile and is not based on a one time based test/exam;
- The profile of each learner helps in tracking the individual styles of each learner and provides useful feedback to learners, parents and teachers;
- Teachers are empowered to develop their curriculum based on the child's context, at the same time ensuring implementation within the framework set for an entire cluster. The traditional top down approach has been replaced to bring in a teacher generated curriculum practices;
- The monthly teacher's collective ensures sharing and learning from each other and has helped in developing problem solving and creative thinking among teachers. The teachers empowerment model has decentralized the training of teachers thus making it more need-based and thereby relevant to the teachers; and
- Schooling has moved from 'information transfer' to facilitating capability development.



Kalikayatna and children

The environment in Kalikayatna schools has seen remarkable changes as compared to their previous situation or as compared to other Government primary schools. Some of the key learnings that the initiative provided were as follow:

- Children process information better when their learning is contextualized to their experiences within their surrounding environment.
- Children learn better and seek more information when they have a comfortable relationship with the teacher.
- Children learn to share their understanding and resources in learning spaces that are collaborative.
- Given a nurturing environment, children are able to think and articulate their thoughts effortlessly and are not scared of making mistakes.
- The fearlessness that children imbibe in classroom processes translates into self confidence and a respect for oneself and others.

Some of the easily noticeable changes that can be seen are as follow:

- In the classrooms , students have more freedom to share, discuss and question
- Students are involved in self-evaluation of their work, identify their mistakes and also provide feedback to their peers.
- There is an environment of collaboration rather than competition
- Children take more responsibility to make use of learning materials that are available in school
- Children have the opportunity to display their work in the classrooms

Although initially most of the teachers in the clusters where Kalikayatna was introduced were hesitant and skeptical about the approach, over time they have understood the positive aspects of the approach and have become comfortable with the classroom

processes. Teachers themselves have seen the improvement in children and this has been a strong motivation for them to become more involved with the Kalikayatna approach.

Some of the common observations most teachers across different Kalikayatna schools have made about the children in their schools are: (collated in individual discussion with the teachers involved in the process)

- Children are learning to think more independently now;
- Children gather information, discuss about it and are beginning to learn how to construct knowledge on their own;
- Children are beginning to ask questions that tend to be exploring and inquiring;
- Children are now more involved in comparing, differentiating, reflecting and thinking;
- Unlike in earlier experiments and new methodologies that were introduced in schools, where children were made to learn what was in textbooks or cards, here children are learning more from their immediate environment and experiences; and
- Children are observed to be making use of the blackboards more often, sometimes more than the teachers.

Kalikayatna and teachers

In the schools where Kalikayatna has been implemented, several positive changes can be seen in the teachers of these schools. Since the teachers are not restricted to their textbooks, the teachers develop the ability to prepare plans suited to children's needs and to the learning contexts and environment present in their schools. While developing the capability to facilitate, teachers learn to be true co-learners in seeking information and other resources. Since they have the freedom to decide the processes in the class, teachers develop the skill of classroom management- and learn to manage mixed age group and deal with multiple levels.



Some of changes in teachers that have been documented, categorized under few important aspects are as follow:

Planning and preparation

- Teachers are able to prepare individual daily plans based on the discussions during the teachers collective meeting.
- Teachers are able to identify the resources required to develop materials for classroom processes and also tap them as required.
- Teachers are able to prepare worksheets to suit the needs of their students.
- They raise relevant questions in the collective.
- They are able to contextualize the learning process and link the concepts to different relevant sub concepts.
- Teachers have developed adequate facilitation skills.
- They provide opportunities for students to ask questions, reflect on their learning and just 'be' themselves.
- They encourage students to think and connect rather than giving direct information.
- They provide appropriate feedback and show the appropriate models when required.

- They try to bond with the children by being open and approachable.
- Teachers are learning to observe the students during their engagement with their work.
- Teachers are seen suggesting alternative roles to students who are normally inhibited or those trying to dominate others.
- They are able to gauge the needs of individual students and identify their performance levels.
- The teachers have a good relationship with all the students thus enabling them to understand the children better.

Documentation

- From expressing resistance to difficulty in making observations and recording about children, the teachers have learnt to observe keenly and are making efforts to record at least few aspects for every child.
- Feedback is given to the students on their work which is recorded in their files in order to enable the learner and the teacher to move forward.
- Some teachers are also documenting their daily processes and activities.
- Lot of teachers are seen filing their daily plans, notes made during collective meetings.

Cluster Resource Centers

During the early nineties the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched in Karnataka and the concept of a Cluster was developed by the Department of Education to support classroom processes. All Government schools in two to three Gram Panchayats were grouped together to form a Cluster and each of these Clusters was managed by a resource person (CRP) and was allocated with a resource centre (CRC).

Although the cluster was envisaged as an important structure in decentralized educational governance, in Karnataka, it had a basic physical infrastructure and most of the centres were functionally non-operational. Neither were the Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) able to regularly conduct academic support activities and teacher meetings due to administrative duties, nor did the CRCs have any resources to support teachers and school processes.

It is in this context that Prajayatna had initiated a project with the SSA- Karnataka, to strengthen the Cluster Resource centres. The key objective of this project was to build the institutional capability of the Cluster Resource Centre to function as a structure that plays an effective role in decentralized educational management.

Sub objectives

- To ensure that the CRCs function as a resource centres in terms of information & material resources
- To enable CRCs to support in the coordination of academic activities, this would involve-teacher development, generating materials for classroom processes, facilitate networking amongst all stakeholders at the cluster level.
- Develop an information management system for streamlining all kinds of data regarding the schools in a particular cluster, and enable the CRPs to streamline their administrative duties, and also support academic activities.

While the project is being implemented in all the working districts of Karnataka, in the selected 11 districts, Prajayatna has been working with 126 clusters. The activities carried out by Prajayatna to

strengthen and convert CRCs to dynamic centres included:

- Mobilizing resources for all the CRCs. This included both financial and material contributions towards resource materials, basic infrastructure, and maintenance.
- Supporting the CRPs in ensuring that monthly meetings of teachers are organized regularly in all clusters. Supporting the CRPs with facilitating the monthly teachers meeting.
- Participating and contributing in the monthly teachers meetings across all clusters.
- Conducting trainings and capability development initiatives to enable the CRPs to carry out their work (administrative and academic) effectively.
- Arranging for part time volunteers to assist the Cluster Resource Person with administrative tasks in the initial stages. These volunteers were trained by Prajayatna and ongoing support provided consistently.
- Identifying both local places and people who could contribute as a resource to enhance learning amongst school children. Preparing a resource directory for each cluster and supporting teachers and CRPs in making use of the local resources.
- Developing an information management system.

District level meetings were held with the District Institute of Education Training (DIET) at regular intervals to review the progress of the process in which the DIET Principal, DIET senior lecturers, the Block Resource Coordinators (BRCs), CRPs from the CRC, volunteers of the CRC and Prajayatna team members participated.

When Prajayatna had initiated the project, the cluster centres were only utilized for the monthly meetings of teachers (Samalochana Sabhes). These meetings were also not regularly conducted in many districts although it was mandatory. Most of the cluster centres remained locked and unutilized during the remaining period.

Many of the centres required major repairs for the buildings and most required some minor repairs. Even basic amenities such as electricity connections, water and toilets were not available in most centres.

The centres were not at all utilized as a resource centre and none of them had material resources or information that was required of a resource centre. Computers and internet facilities were not available in any clusters and libraries were found in few clusters which had only training manuals provided by the Department. Information related to schools and cluster centres were managed manually by all the CRPs.

Impact in strengthening the CRCs can be seen under the following broad areas :

Infrastructure and resources to support the Cluster to work as an effective Resource Centre

Prajayatna has been able to facilitate the CRCs with the following:

- Educational books- a set of useful and interesting books for both children and teachers have been provided to each cluster.
- Stationery have been provided to each cluster for preparation of material to be used in classroom processes.
- Computers have been provided to all 126 clusters. Internet connections have been provided in 24 clusters.
- Basic infrastructure -Many of the centres were without their own rooms, electricity, water

connections, etc. 22 rooms were mobilized by making alternate arrangements in the schools nearby, community halls etc. Maintenance work such as repairing the roof/floor, walls, doors/windows, painting was done in 67 Centres. Electricity connection was given in 38 Centres to facilitate connection of the computers etc. Cupboards have been mobilized in 66 Centres, and tables/chairs have been provided in 73 Centres. A large part of the infrastructural repairs were undertaken by the Gram Panchayat including 4 computers and 9 printers.

Finances required for these were mobilized through the community meetings which were facilitated by Prajayatna.

A total amount of Rs. 11,42,316 was contributed by different stakeholders across all the 11 districts towards CRC improvement, as the communities perceived the importance of the CRC in enhancing learning of their children. A majority of the funds were contributed from Gram Panchayats (45.4%), teachers (13.9%), local donors/villages/SDMC (13.7 %) and elected representatives (8%).

Since all clusters now have basic resource materials, teachers have been encouraged to make use of the clusters for accessing the library and internet. The cluster centres are now seen to be more frequently open and on an average the clusters are open for 3 days in a week.



Enabling CRCs to support in the coordination of academic activities

Teachers meetings are organized for each cluster, every month. These meetings discuss issues related mainly to classroom processes, especially concerns related to learning. Prajayatna has participated regularly and supported the teachers in addressing concerns related to learning. 360 meetings have been facilitated by Prajayatna across all 126 CRCs from 2010 to 2012. Prajayatna has also supported the CRPs in ensuring that regular meetings are conducted each month and to independently facilitate such meetings.

Many of the CRPs who had no exposure to computers have been trained by Prajayatna on computer basics. This would help them in both administrative works and for supporting teachers in gathering and preparing information for academic activities.

In all clusters, paid part time volunteers were identified and trained by Prajayatna. The monthly honorarium paid to the volunteers was also mobilized by Prajayatna from various donors. These volunteers have supported the CRPs in mainly carrying out administrative tasks such as collecting and consolidation data, maintaining minutes of teachers meetings, maintenance of the cluster premises, etc. The volunteers were also involved in creating resource directories for each cluster. An exhaustive list of local resources has been identified for each cluster that can be utilized by all the schools in the vicinity. In many of the schools, the teachers and CRPs along with Prajayatna cluster facilitators have utilized local resources to enhance lessons taught in the classrooms. The teachers were supported by the CRPs and Prajayatna to build linkages with the concepts taught in their classes to the experiences gained through these visits.

The volunteers in the clusters have been involved in a door to door survey to make a detailed database of all children in the village. This information would help the CRPs to keep track of enrollment and attendance of children to school on a regular basis.

The volunteers have been identified to support the CRCs in the transition phase till they are equipped to take on full responsibility of the processes

Information management

A web based information management system using open source software was developed by Prajayatna. This system was envisaged after conducting a study to understand the existing information management practices. Since a significant portion of the CRPs time goes into collecting, consolidation and sharing school information manually, this system is expected to reduce the CRPs workload and it would help them in focusing their efforts on improving classroom processes. The web application developed by Prajayatna supports the online management of school and cluster information. Information of all the clusters has already been updated to this system. The application is currently hosted and administered by Prajayatna and it is envisaged that the Department of Education could utilize this as a prototype/template for all 4300 clusters in Karnataka



In India, decentralization has long been acknowledged as necessary for effective governance given the diversity of the country. The initiative by the Government to establish Local Governments in the year 1957 and later the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution have been conducive in creating more empowered Local Self- Government structures in the country.

Since 2001, Prajayatna has been working with Gram Panchayats, organizing workshops with Gram Panchayat Presidents and Secretaries at a taluk level. These workshops focused on making them aware of the responsibilities of the Gram Panchayat and the need for educational planning for the schools coming within their purview.

In 2002, the Department of Education invited Prajayatna to be the resource agency to conduct training workshops for Gram Panchayats in 6 districts of Karnataka (Bangalore Rural and Urban, Mysore, Chitradurga, Bijapur, Bellary) at the taluk level for the Gram Panchayat Presidents, Secretaries and SDMC members.

These pioneering workshops covered aspects on roles and responsibilities of the Gram Panchayat vis-à-vis education and the need to integrate the planning for the schools in Gram Panchayat educational plans. The insights gained from these workshops greatly interested the Department of Education which invited Prajayatna to conduct these workshops in other districts as well.

In 2003, Prajayatna jointly with the Department of Education conducted similar workshops for 19 taluks in 17 districts. The SDMC members were also a part of this training.

Based on the experience of conducting these workshops and a request from the Department of Education in 2004, a group from each district comprising of Department officials were trained by Prajayatna and these officials in turn conducted the workshops for the SDMC and the Panchayat members. Through this model, workshops for the Gram Panchayats and SDMCs of the remaining taluks in the 17 districts were completed.

Year	Districts	Workshop	Participants
2000-01	4 districts	taluk level workshop	GP Presidents and secretaries
2002	Bangalore Rural & Urban, Mysore, Chitradurga, Bijapur, Bellary	taluk level workshop	GP Presidents, secretaries and SDMC members
2003-04	17 districts	taluk level workshop	GP Presidents and secretaries, bureaucrats, SDMC members
2006	Nine districts	Joint training Workshops	SDMC, CAC members

The stipulated tenure of the SDMC is three years and soon after the first batch of SDMCs had completed their tenure, several studies and evaluations were conducted to understand the effectiveness of this new structure. Recommendations were made and these eventually led to the modification of the bye-laws governing the SDMCs.

A task force was set up to form new bye-laws and members of the taskforce had interacted with organizations including Prajayatna, to incorporate feedback from experiences gained at the field level.

On the 14th of June 2006, a new SDMC bye-law was passed and the SDMC came to be formally recognized as a subcommittee under the Civic Amenities Committee (CAC) - a standing committee of the

Gram Panchayat. Subsequently, workshops were organized by Prajayatna for the members of the SDMC and the CAC to familiarize them with the new bye-laws and to train them on planning for their schools. Such workshops were held for all the schools in the nine working districts of Prajayatna. Based on these experiences, the training of the SDMC and the CAC was extended to the entire State by the Department of Education, where Prajayatna was the resource partner to train facilitators at the Divisional, District and taluk level as well as resource persons for GP level process along with the Cluster Resource Persons of the Department of Education.

Prajayatna's processes have focused on strengthening and institutionalization of community ownership for ensuring educational development. Communities are encouraged to engage with other stakeholders (like the bureaucracy and the Panchayat Raj Institutions) and to make them accountable not just by demanding change but by involving themselves to bring about the change that is envisaged.

Prajayatna was directly involved in the formation of 291 such SDMCs and the remaining SDMCs were formed on the information disseminated during the Shikshana Gram Sabhas and various meetings at different forums.

It is also recognized and asserted that the State is an important stakeholder and the primary responsibility for public education rests with the State.

From the beginning, Prajayatna has attempted to include the Department of Education in all the key processes. Officials from the Department are invited for meetings such as the Shikshana Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat Network meetings. Newsletters which document the work in each of the districts are shared with the Department officials to keep them updated on the progress through different interventions and to provide feedback on various issues as articulated by the community.

Recognizing the organization's experience in working with communities, the Department has partnered with Prajayatna in several initiatives. In 2004 Prajayatna was selected to be a part of the state level Grant In Aid Committee which was responsible for addressing issues related to out of school children.

This committee was responsible for planning programmes such as bridge courses and working on strategies to enroll out of school children back to school. Prajayatna's experience with communities in addressing these issues has enabled to add value to the work done by this committee. Various innovative initiatives taken up by local communities to enroll children into schools in the districts where Prajayatna



had worked was shared with the functionaries and other members of the committee. Prajayatna has attempted to formalize some of these initiatives by supporting the Department to facilitate the community or start similar initiatives.

From 2007 Prajayatna has been a part of the core team in the Department of Education, responsible for planning on community participation. Set up by the SSA, this team comprises of representatives from NGOs, Department of education officials and is headed by the State Project Director. This committee was instrumental in the designing of the SDMC training module that has now become an essential tool of the training conducted by the Department.

Prajayatna's contribution towards Education Policy and Advocacy

- Played an important part in the preparation of the training module for SDMC .
- Pioneered the SDMC training by initiating GP level joint trainings for SDMC-CAC (school committee -Gram Panchayat linkages) when the bye-law was first formulated and implemented.
- Initiated the involvement of GPs in education and decentralization. This was supported by Sankalpa – a training programme in collaboration with the Department of Education in 2002. This was a block level training for GP Presidents and Secretaries alongwith the SDMC members to take responsibility for education. This initiated a discussion on the role of GP in education.
- Played a significant role in the formation of the bye-law of the SDMCs for High Schools, Bal Vikas Samitis (parent's committees) of Anganwadis etc.
- Pioneered a learning approach – Kalikayatna along with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in Karnataka.



Early Child Care and Education (ECCE)

Preschool education is aimed at ensuring holistic development of the children by providing a conducive atmosphere for the physical, emotional, cognitive and social development of children. In India, Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) has received more attention than before, since the 1960s-70s, when the extent of malnourishment especially amongst children was recognized as a serious problem in the country. It is in this context that the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) was first proposed in 1975 by the Department of Women and Child Development, as a scheme for the wellbeing of children below 6 years, particularly for socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

The ICDS initiative encompasses aspects of care (health, nutrition) and education with an aim to universalize these services. It operates from the premise of a vulnerability perspective that views 0-6 year old children from low-income families as those requiring particular care and attention in terms of health and nutrition. The scheme also intends to offer preschool education for the 3-6 year olds. The ICDS primarily functions through child care centres known as Anganwadis.

Similar to the primary education system, the Anganwadis are also managed by a highly centralized structure with very little or no involvement from the local communities. Quality in these anganwadi centres has been a serious concern since the inception of these centres.

Initially, Prajayatna's work on ECCE was started as a preventive strategy to address the issue of child labour. A high incidence of children dropping out of school to take care of younger siblings was seen in low income areas where it was common for both parents to be working. The absolute lack of a learning environment led to the drop out of children from school at an early age. Almost all the adults and working children in these areas are a part of the informal economy and face irregular employment, low-incomes, lack of opportunities for training and indebtedness. Experiences of the organization in working with communities living in such a situation reinforced the need to enroll caretakers/parents to



take responsibility for the health and education of their own children. Scientific studies have shown the need and importance of ECCE for the optimum development of the child to reach his/her maximum potential.

In the absence of Government set up centres in many of these areas, Prajayatna jointly with the local community members had set up community owned early child care centres. The organization worked with the communities to develop their capabilities to manage their centres and to enable people to articulate and fulfill their needs related to child care and education.

By 2005, there were 180 such community- owned centres (COC) facilities in and around Bangalore Urban and Rural. Since Prajayatna's work has always been with the existing mainstream system, the organization's work in early childcare has also been guided by that approach. It was understood that to have significant impact on addressing the issues related to early child care and education it was necessary to work with the ICDS structure which has the largest network of ECCE facilities in the country. It was imperative to consolidate the work in the COCs in a manner that could impact the existing system.

The organization had by then developed and streamlined processes that had enabled the effective functioning of the 180 centres through the local communities with little or no intervention and support from the organization. Quality in these community owned centres was noticeably better than the government run Anganwadis and it was understood that the practices followed in these centres and the learning gained from setting up and running these centres needed to be integrated into the larger system of the government managed early child care facilities. For this to happen it was recognized that

there was a need to dialogue and bring together people at various governance levels (village, Gram Panchayat, taluk, District level) across districts within Karnataka.

Initially, a partnership with the ICDS was taken up, reaching out to 325 Anganwadis, as a pilot initiative on building the capabilities of Anganwadi supervisors who in turn would work with the anganwadi workers towards enhancing learning outcomes of children and building local parents structures (Bal Vikas Samithis).

Towards consolidating the learning of the organization, work with Anganwadis in other parts of the State was initiated. In collaboration with the Department of Women and Child Development, 200 centres across 5 educational districts were initiated in 2009, of which 133 centres are in the working districts mentioned in the report namely, Bangalore Rural, Mysore and Gulbarga. The main objective of the initiative has been on building the institutional capabilities of the Parents Committee – Bal Vikas Samithi (BVS) to enable them to govern these centres for better quality services. Efforts have also been made to see that the local self- government, the GP considers the Anganwadis as their responsibility and as an important agenda of development. Another major objective of the initiative was to empower the teachers with regard to the importance of ECCE and ensure that the centres were places where children were learning, preparing them for schools in the future and leading to their overall development.

Community and ECCE

As the primary objective was to strengthen the institutional capabilities of the community to take responsibility for the centres, a parent's structure was formed for each COC. These committees meet every month to discuss the progress of the centres in terms of learning, health, maintenance, infrastructure, enrolment and attendance. These members plan and budget for the centre and also have developed the experience of collecting resources and purchasing the learning and other play materials for the centre.

This involvement enables the parents, and the cluster committee members to examine what is being learnt by the child.

Similarly in the anganwadis, where the communities are far removed from the functioning of the anganwadi, there was a need for creation of a platform where the communities could participate in the development of their children. In 2007, the Department for Women and Child Development introduced the Bal Vikas Samithi-a committee consisting mainly of parents. With the advent of the Bal Vikas Samithi-a committee consisting mainly of parents was stipulated by the Department for Women and Child Development in 2007. The members of these committees were not clear of their role and responsibilities and at times were unaware that such a committee existed. Efforts were made to strengthen these structures with the objective of creating an institutionalized mechanism of participation of the parents in the regular functioning of the centres.

Towards, this, village level processes are conducted, where all the stakeholders come together to discuss about their children and the early childhood care and education facility in the village, represented by the anganwadi. Many issues ranging from the teachers being overburdened with work, low quality of the food being provided, lack of basic amenities, lack of a learning environment, efficiency of the teachers etc., have been resolved through such meetings. This is followed up by the Bal Vikas Samithi every month where the implementation of the plans is reviewed and any other issues facing the centre are discussed.

In order to institutionalise this process further, similar to the schooling process, a network is formed at the Gram Panchayat level with all the Bal Vikas Samithis coming together at the Gram Panchayat level and a joint meeting held with the Gram Panchayat. This is done to institutionalize the process with the Gram Panchayat taking responsibility for the Anganwadis in their vicinity. The Gram Panchayat members, President, Secretary/Panchayat Development Officer, Bal Vikas Samithi members, Anganwadi

teachers, supervisor (from the Department of Women and Child Development), head teachers from the schools, health worker come together and discuss the issues of the centres.

The plans made at the Anganwadi level is shared and consolidated with the Gram Panchayat making a plan for the development of all the Anganwadis in the Gram Panchayat. This process supports both the structures, namely the Gram Panchayat and the Bal Vikas Samithi, to work together in collaboration and helps in redefining the role of the Gram Panchayat vis-à-vis the Bal Vikas Samithi. It is seen that these meetings have enabled the Gram Panchayats to understand the importance of the Anganwadi and their responsibility towards the same.

The major impact can be seen in different aspects of ECCE

Enrollment

A clear indicator of the impact of the intervention is the increase in the enrolment and attendance in the centres. It would be appropriate to mention here that the Bal Vikas Samithi has paid special focus to ensure that all children in the village have been enrolled to Anganwadi/ school and if not, made efforts to enroll them. This has resulted in the enhancement of enrolment and attendance in the Centre.

It was seen that the attendance had improved with 507 children being more regular in their attendance to the centres. 69 children were enrolled to the anganwadi centres from private nursery schools when the parents saw the improved quality of the centres.

Similarly it was seen that all the children in the low income areas were enrolling their children to the Community Owned Centres thereby developing a culture of ensuring that all the children in the areas had access to an ECCE facility.

Teacher Empowerment

It is important that the teachers are supported and their capabilities built to handle the various learning needs, especially of children in the pre-school age. This calls for a teachers training that requires to be contextualized according to the needs of the children and teachers.

In order to address these diversities, Prajayatna has developed an empowering approach to teacher training that is ongoing, decentralised and evolving. Drawing from and developing on the learnings from the teacher collective concept in the Kalikayatna intervention for primary schools, this approach comprises of a teachers' collective meeting every month to enable and equip the teachers to facilitate the learning process with the children. This is conducted at the circle level where all the teachers in the Anganwadis of the Circle (30-35 Anganwadis is designated as a Circle with a supervisor to oversee and monitor the activities) come together. In the Community - Owned Centre (COC) approach, the meeting is at the cluster level (for every 15-20 COC with a lead teacher to oversee and monitor the activities).

In these meetings, the teachers' share the specific challenges they face in their classroom environment based on which relevant strategies and activities are developed to address the needs of both the teachers and the children. Teachers are supported to enhance their awareness about educational approaches and innovative practices by discussing various concepts and inputs on how children learn specially in the context of 2-6 year olds. Monthly plans are developed based on the concepts for the month. The teaching and learning materials required for the



planned activities are discussed and prepared if required in the session itself or planned for a later date. These meetings enable the teachers to support each other in developing their facilitation and relationship with children.

Children's learning

Studies have proved that the learning pace of children is faster during their early years than at any other time in life. The learning intervention in the ECCE initiative is based on an approach of 'how children learn'. It is in this context that the children are enabled to adapt to their constantly changing environments through play and experience.

Towards this an abilities framework has been identified with both the parents and the community, based on which, through concepts, the teachers facilitate processes with the children. These concepts have been drawn from the framework of contents which children of this age group are meant to learn and are contextualized according to the local need and surrounding.

The concepts are facilitated mainly through discussions and activities. The learning level of each child in the ECCE initiative (consisting of COC and the Anganwadis) is mapped, which in turn provides a basis for the teachers and the parents to assess and support the learning of the child.

A similar learning approach has been introduced in the Anganwadis. The children in this process are supported to develop capabilities which enable them to be enrolled to primary school. Over the past decade, more than 10,000 children have passed out from these centres to enter primary schools. As articulated by the teachers and parents of those children who have been exposed to such a learning environment in the Anganwadis, and are now attending primary schools, they feel that their children perform much better in primary schools.



Examples of changes seen in the children after attending the preschools - COC

Suhana of Kanakapura....

Suhana – daughter of Nargis is a special child who is 4 years of age. Suhana is enrolled in the Tippasandra Rehamanianagar COC since June 2011. In the context of her being a special child, the child prior to coming to the centre had several challenges –physically and mentally .Once she started coming to the centre, Suhana has showed many positive developments couple of which are aspects like being able to comprehend what the teacher says and also learning to talk a little with the children in the centre.

Hafiza's Excellence....

Hafiza, a four years and eight months old girl child has been a regular student at the Maralawadi centre for the last two years and six months. In the course of her learning at the centre she has developed excellent storytelling and communication skills. Hafiza's parents are so overwhelmed with the progress in their child's development that it has resulted in their enthusiastic participation in the Parents Committee.

Nijba and Puneeth....

Nijba, a four years old girl joined Lions Preschool, a private school. Since the child continuously cried in the class, the management asked the parents to take her back home and to bring her back only the following year. The eager parents looked for an alternative for the child's preschool education resulting in her joining the Kalaknagara (Kanakapura) COC. This happened after the teacher Aisha Banu was explained in detail about the child's discomfort in the other preschool. In the initial days at the centre Nijba did cry but under the care and attention of the teacher, she soon started participating in all the activities. At present she is happy at the centre and learning.

Four and half years old Puneeth's case was no different from Nijba's. During his initial days at the centre he too was extremely uncomfortable. Gradually the duration of his discomfort decreased and now, he goes to the teacher on his own to inform her about that day's timetable, resumes his every day activities and helps the other children in rectifying their writing, stories and songs.



Parents Involvement in Learning

It is seen that learning of small children becomes effective only when their parents are also actively involved in it. In the centres, they are involved from the very beginning when they plan and budget for the centre and gradually participate in the learning process by visiting the class as and when possible. Since all the learning that the children do is documented, parents visit the centre and are able to see where and how their children are learning and then identify areas where they need to be supported at home.

Rs. 74410 was raised mainly through the Gram Panchayat and the local community to provide for learning and other play materials for the centres in Gulbarga, Mysore and Dodaballapur. This was especially needed in the centres where there are no provisions made for any materials for the children from the Department.

Islampur is situated in the heart of Doddaballapur town. It is a busy area with lots of vehicles passing through, the entire day. The Anganwadi centre is situated right next to this busy place. The centre was being run in a place given by Mr. Abdul Rasheed, the Area Councillor. As the number of children increased in the centre, the place became too small to accommodate all the children. The meeting of the BVS along with members of the self help groups was held and the issue discussed. They collectively decided to address the issue by approaching the Area Councilor once again. They met with the Councilor and explained the constraint of space. As a result, the Councilor agreed to build one building in the land that belonged to the Dargah, which was available next to the existing Anganwadi. Mr. Abdul Rasheed with the support of the Dargah committee built a building for the Anganwadi which cost Rs. 3,60,000. Water connection has been made. The parents of children are actively involved in providing necessary support to centre. They have provided learning materials worth Rs. 7500.

Infrastructure and maintenance of the anganwadi centres

Initially, more focus on improving the infrastructure was observed, with the Anganwadis being in very poor conditions in terms of basic amenities such as a building, water, electricity etc.

From 2009, in the 4 circles consisting of 133 anganwadis across 3 districts, impact could be seen in the following aspects

- Land was identified for 17 centres following which efforts are on to get the buildings sanctioned. The need for a conducive learning environment for the children prompted the community to ensure that their children had access to basic amenities in the Anganwadis. Most of the land was donated by persons in the community and in some cases the Gram Panchayat identified land for the centres. Land worth Rs.34,50,000 was mobilised for the centres.
- Subsequent to the community meetings follow up by the BVS ,16 buildings were mobilized through the Gram Panchayat and the Department of Women and Child Development. These buildings were built at the cost of Rs. 61,90,000.
- A total of Rs. 5,98,300 has been raised for providing basic infrastructure for the Anganwadis across the circles such as repair of centres, water connection, compounds, toilet repairs. The difference can be seen in the centres which have a more child friendly environment thus encouraging more children to attend and learn in the centres.
- Rs. 376785 was mobilized for the procurement of furniture, plates/glasses for the nutrition of the children and other materials for the centres such as cupboards, fuel etc.

The story of Palya Anganwadi

This is a small anganwadi centre located in Palya village falling in the vicinity of Deviramanahalli Gram Panchayat of Nanjangud taluk, Mysore district. When work was initiated in the circle, the children were found to be sitting in the verandah of the house of the assistant teacher. The teacher was absent due to which the centre was being managed by the assistant teacher. On being asked about the actual building of the centre, a cowshed was shown as the place of the anganwadi. When it would become very hot for the small children to sit out, they would be shifted to the cowshed. It was in this scenario, that Prajayatna started engaging with the teacher and community. It was realised that though the children were being seen by the parents everyday to be sitting in the cowshed/ verandah of the assistant teacher's house, not much effort had been garnered to find an alternate solution to the problem. One of the main reasons for the inaction was the issue of finding land in the village. With no learning and play materials for the children in the centre, it was seen that the children mainly came for the food. It was realised that these issues could only be resolved together with the stakeholders of the entire village.

A meeting was organised with the parents, Gram Panchayat member, the local youth organisation representatives, self help group representative, school teacher and the anganwadi teacher. There was a long discussion about the need for an ECCE intervention. In comparison to the children who did not attend any anganwadi prior to the school, the school teacher felt that the children who attended anganwadis were more articulate and able to interact better. Discussing the various issues of the anganwadi, foremost of which was the lack of a building, the President of the Youth association offered to lend their office space for the children till a permanent structure was made for them.

Soon after the meeting, the children were shifted to the office of the Association. But as the room was being used for other purposes as well, charts and other visual objects for the children could not be exhibited in the centre. The youth and the Gram Panchayat together pursued the matter further. The

school authorities having built new classrooms, then agreed to give one of the older rooms in the school for the utilization of the anganwadi which was then handed over to the anganwadi teachers. This also enabled in developing a relationship between the school and the angawadi which is envisaged to support the school too.

A total of Rs. 11,404,575 has been mobilised from the community in the three districts. Though the Gram Panchayats have no funds for the management/maintenance of Anganwadis, 48% was mobilized by them from the Department and the other funds of the Panchayat.

The remaining 52% amounting to Rs.5937225 was contributed by the other stakeholders of which 13% has been contributed by parents and 6% has been contributed by local community based organizations such as the self help groups, youth groups etc and another 11% by companies and other local donors etc. 17% was seen to be contributed by the elected representatives such as the Member of the Legislative Assembly from their development funds and another 4% by the PRI institutions. The remaining was contributed by teachers, SDMC and BVS members.

Children's health

Health is a major indicator for the overall well being of the child. Through the ECCE approach it was seen that there has been an improvement in the health indicators with nearly all the children being immunized. The awareness with regard to health, hygiene and nutrition has been facilitated through various immunization camps and health programmes in both the Community Owned Centres (COC) and the Anganwadi centres. In realizing the importance of this, the parents have also built up strong links with the Primary Health Centre to ensure regular check up for the children. Through the COC, it was ensured that the children were given healthy food by equipping the parents with information on the nutritional needs of the child and what needed to be done to ensure that. In the Anganwadis, the quality of the food that was provided to the children is being monitored by the BVS (Bal Vikas Samiti).

Prajayatna - ECCE and the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD)

- 43 COCs initiated by Prajayatna have received support from WCD and are now functioning as Government run anganwadis. 30 more centres are now in the process of being approved by the Government to be converted to anganwadis in future.
- The organization works closely with the WCD (Department of Women and Child development) to develop an integrated approach and improve on the existing quality of services.
- A baseline study of 204 Anganwadis has been completed and shared with the WCD.
- The Child Development Project Officers collaborate with Prajayatna in teacher training and in processes with the community.

Additionally,

- Prajayatna was invited to contribute to the development of the bye laws for the functioning of the Bal Vikas Samithis.
- Prajayatna has trained 529 ICDS functionaries on community ownership and institutional building across 9 districts of Bangalore education division in 2007 when the bye law for the Bal Vikas Samithi was first formulated.
- Prajayatna was part of the core team which formulated a training package for the WCD functionaries as well the Gram Panchayat and Bal Vikas Samithi members for the first time in the State in 2012 . It was part of the resource agency to facilitate these meetings at the State and district level. This also involved the preparation of a manual for the training.
- The COC model has been selected from Karnataka as a case study for one of the best practices by the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University, Delhi (AUD) and has been presented at different forums at the national level.



Prajayatna's contribution in the field of ECCE

- An approach of ECCE where the communities are enabled to initiate their own centres with technical support in terms of capacity building was developed by the organisation. This has introduced a great degree of accountability due to the close engagement of the community with the centre. Greater ownership by the communities has also resulted in betterment of infrastructure and basic amenities for the centre, thus creating a more conducive environment for children.
- Developed an approach to formation and functioning of Bal Vikas Samithi- as an effective parents' structure at the anganwadi level. This has resulted in building the credibility of BVS as an effective, accountable institution.
- A new approach to teachers' empowerment has been evolved for the development of the anganwadi teacher. This has been important especially in a scenario where there has been no teacher empowerment process- other than the traditional induction and occasional refresher trainings- for anganwadi teachers.
- Evolved an approach where the Gram Panchayats are encouraged to take greater responsibility of Early Childhood and Education in their areas.

Over the last decade, in the 11 districts of Karnataka, Prajayatna has engaged with several systemic aspects of education through multiple interventions and strategies.

Primarily the initiative has focused on supporting communities to build a vision of education, engage with the schooling system, the education bureaucracy and impact the qualitative functioning of schools. The initiative has also pioneered a learning approach in collaboration with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan-Karnataka, which holds much promise in impacting the quality of learning in government schools. The focus of the organization has clearly been on impacting the design, functionality, effectiveness of Government schools so as to enable all children who go to these schools to have access to high quality learning.

Additionally in the process of strengthening the Cluster Resource Centres, the organization has developed an approach to decentralizing the teacher training process through these centres .

Prajayatna has also attempted to facilitate a systemic approach to impacting Early Childhood Care practices in Karnataka.

Much of the organisations' efforts have been possible because of its constructionist and collaborative approach, the relationship developed with the local communities, local government structures, teachers, parents, Department of Education, academicians and other stakeholders and its ability to build on its rich field experiences as demonstrated in this document.

The initiative demonstrates the complexity involved in applying systems thinking in a development scenario, the need to differentiate the systemic nature of a problem from its symptoms, the perspective with which a problem needs to be approached and the understanding that collaborative strategies and efforts are highly necessary to engender any kind of systemic reform and sustainable change process.





Prajayatna

No. 251/16, 1st Cross, Dattatreya Layout, Kempegowdanagar,
Bangalore - 560 019. Tel: 080 - 26670696
E-mail : prajayatna@prajayatna.in