“The government would always be the main actor and the key player in providing primary education in India. However, the years since independence have shown that the government alone cannot deliver success. Civil society must become proactive to ensure system-effectiveness. ... the system required a multi-pronged strategy, partnerships between people and organizations, and very strong community support.”\(^1\)

“Education should be seen as a partnership between teachers, parents/community and students”\(^2\)

1. Community Participation

It is now axiomatic that development must be socially just, economically viable and environmentally benign and, for that purpose, people have to be placed at the centre of planning and implementation.\(^3\) Education, as perceived by the National Policy on Education, 1986 is an instrument for empowerment of people. Involvement of local community, village panchayat and non-governmental organisations is critical for the successful implementation of any programme including education.

It is now well established that the process of development can be accelerated only by promoting the participation of people and community in a perspective that includes designing and implementation of such activities. Developing on this theme, the Programme of Action, 1992 states unequivocally that the successful implementation of programmes like elementary education including non-formal education, early childhood care and education, adult education, education of the disabled, etc., will require people's involvement at the grass-roots level and participation of voluntary agencies and social

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\(^3\) [http://education.nic.in/cd50years/r/2V/7B/2V7B0801.htm](http://education.nic.in/cd50years/r/2V/7B/2V7B0801.htm)
activist groups on a much larger scale. The Total Literacy Campaigns, with their unique social mobilisation of community and non-governmental organisations and partnership between government, NGOs, teachers and others have demonstrated how governmental efforts can be effectively supplemented through people's participation. The one message that comes out loud and clear from these campaigns is that social welfare, including educational goals, cannot be achieved without the enlistment of community.

Community participation and their support in development related activities is not a new concept and in fact it is strongly recommended by many committees and commissions that are appointed to look into the status of education in India. Based on the recommendations of these committees and commissions, the policies were also formulated which strongly emphasized the need of community participation to enhance the quality of education at primary level, and more for decentralization of educational activities. The National Policy on Education 1986 and its revision also envisaged a greater role for community in the field of education at the local level.

While the provision of equal access to education and universalisation of elementary education are obligations to be met by the government, developments during the last 60 years have not demonstrated success through the efforts of the government alone. It is in this context that during the past three decades, issues related to relevance, appropriateness and demand based education have come up for consideration in education policy and practice. It has been found in many studies such as PROBE that more than half of the drop outs gave irrelevance of education to the life situations in which they are in, as the main cause for dropping out from the schools.4

National governments as well as international development agencies have realized the role that community can play in the realm of education, and have strongly advocated community participation as a critical element in the strategy for reaching the goal of education for all. Community participation is taken to mean active participation of the clientele, especially parents in the affairs of education, including planning, finance and management.

The present chapter discusses community participation and its understanding in school related activities to enhance the quality of primary education. It also discusses some of the experiences of non-governmental organizations and case studies of some of the education projects implemented earlier in India those are relevant to the study. As said in the first chapter, the whole thesis focuses on policy studies at macro level and implementation of education programmes at micro level with reference to Scheduled Tribes’.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a central government initiated programme. One of its objectives is sensitizing the community to participate in the education related activities by forming community based organizations at micro level to improve education. Community participation is one of the major components in the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Keeping this in view, it is relevant to give an in-depth understanding on community participation in the present chapter. An in-depth discussion on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is given in the next chapter.

2. Decentralisation

Decentralized planning and management of elementary education is a goal set by the National Policy on Education, 1986. The Policy visualizes direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committees (VECs) for management of elementary education. The PoA, 1992, emphasized micro planning as a process of designing a family-wise and child-wise plan of action by which every child regularly attends school or NFE centre, continues his or her education at the place suitable to him/her and completes at least eight years of schooling or its equivalent at the NFE centre.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provide for decentralisation of the activities and facilitate transfer of power and participation of the local self-government institutions or the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It has created a congenial ambience for the PRIs to play a more dynamic and proactive role. States are expected to evolve institutional arrangements both in rural and urban areas for undertaking these activities. These structures have been providing voice to women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, minorities, parents and educational functionaries. They have also, been delegated
Community Participation in Education: An Understanding

with responsibilities with regard to location and relocation of existing primary and upper schools on the basis of micro planning and school mapping. In this regard, decentralisation of school management to grassroots level bodies is an important policy initiative.

During the 8th plan period several innovative efforts have been made under the ongoing projects to establish decentralisation. For instance, the District Primary Education Programme has shifted the planning mechanism from the state to the district level, and Lok Jumbish has gone one step further by assigning decision making processes to a block level committee. At the village level, a VEC has the main responsibility for community mobilisation, school mapping, micro planning, renovation and construction of school buildings and improvement of pedagogical curriculum. In fact, the VECs of Shiksha Karmi schools have been activated as a result of the Lok Jumbish programme.5

3. Community Participation in Education

“The history of modern nation-state, as well as advances in economic development, is the history of the progressive erosion of the self-sufficiency of the rural community and the consequent decline in the amount of influence the rural community has on its own destiny”.6 The traditional rural society is characterized by a pattern of patron-client relationships in which a small privileged group dominates the majority. Features of modernization, such as the spread of education and the diversification of the economic base, weaken the oppressive hold of the traditional power structure.7 However, modernization also deprives the poor of the security and certainty of customary social and economic relationships. One should be cautious about idealizing traditional rural communities and the prospects of effective community participation. Community participation has real and practical meaning because its contribution is vital for realizing the goals of basic education.8

5 http://www.education.nic.in/eleedu_1.asp
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
Community participation can refer to parents assisting children with homework and engaging learning activities. In a broader sense it refers to mutual collaboration, support and participation of families, community members and agencies and school staff, in the community or at school, in activities and efforts that directly and positively affect student outcomes.\(^9\) When we talk of community participation in primary education, it is the involvement of parents and community as partners in supporting educational activities. Thus, community participation could be considered as a tool for self development and empowerment of the community besides facilitating the achievement of the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education.\(^10\)

One of the indicators for measuring community participation is the proportion of the child population in a school. The more the number, greater is the community participation. This type of participation also ensures community development because it fulfils the most important requirement of educational development. Another aspect related to this is the manner in which the communities create conditions for greater participation of children in education. Ideally, in the context of education, the notion of community participation envisages different social and economic groups under one common umbrella i.e. community. Functionally, the community should represent people from all strata of a particular locality.\(^11\)

The privileges enjoyed by the community representatives began to be extended to other sections of the populations, through efforts from within the community. The movement to enhance community participation in education has traveled a long way from a state of informal initiative to formalized policy interventions, in recent years. This can be witnessed in all the major education policy documents and recommendations of the various commissions that were appointed in the post independent India. In the pre-independent India too the community members themselves were monitoring the education activities in their villages. The historical context of community participation in Indian education will be dealt in the following discussion. Mainly the transformation of


\(^10\) \textit{Ibid}.

Community participation in school related activities has gone through four important stages that can be summarized as the following:

1. **The first stage** consists of creating awareness among the parents about the importance of sending their children to schools regularly. This assumes that persuasion, rather than enforcement or compulsion, is the means of ensuring universal participation of children in indicative of a shift from compulsion to persuasion, combined with incentives to promote universal primary education as elaborated in various policy documents on Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) and Education for All (EFA).

2. **The second stage** is characterized by increased awareness which, in turn, creates more demand for education. The government not being totally prepared to meet this increased demand, communities are invited to provide the schooling facilities in un-served areas. This intervention fulfils the twin objectives of providing facilities to promote UEE and mobilizing community resource for education.

3. **In third stage**, community support is sought and ensured while framing the provisions for establishing and managing new schools. This ensures not only participation, but also a sense of ownership as communities often provide the required space and other infrastructural facilities to run the school.

4. **In the fourth stage**, sustainability of community participation is then to be ensured through the setting up of school betterment committees, which include members of the locality. These committees are primarily responsible for reviewing, organizing and mobilizing human, physical and financial support to better the functioning of schools.¹²

Thus, community support, which begins as merely supplementary to the functioning of the school, shifts the emphasis to ownership of schools by the community. Community

participation gets integrated into the action plan for the goal of UEE. The constitution of School Education Committees (SECs)/School Education Management Committees (SEMCs) and vesting authority in them to oversee the functioning of the primary school is one such example. Such committees have been constituted in both project and non-project areas, delegating certain powers and functions in the governance of primary education. This can be seen through the implementation of legislative measures proposed under the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution. It gave the thrust for decentralization of management of education and devolution of powers in the case of school education to the panchayat raj bodies. Madhya Pradesh has been one of the first states, post 1993, to actually implement this devolution of power. Decentralized governance entitles the community to be active partners in the process of planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the school activities through the VECs. Further, this ensures the effectiveness of their representatives in monitoring the functioning of schools through the mechanism of gram sabhas.

3.1. Community Participation in Education: The Historical Context

India has a long tradition of communities supporting education. In the pre-colonial period, facilities of mass education were available in Pathshalas and Madrasas. These institutions were maintained locally with the help of parents and local communities. The arrangements included caring for the teachers as well. The community also contributed space for school and materials for the students. The school space was used for other purposes when the school was not functioning. The content of the education was not designed by any central authority, but loosely outlined by the teacher and the community together. Such education through more or less totally supported by a section of the community, catered to a very small proportion of the population.

13 Ibid., pp. 154-155.
14 Ibid., p. 155.
During British period in India, local bodies like the panchayats and municipalities were set up and apart from other function; they had the responsibility of organizing school education too. The government stipulated the content of education, but the organization and administration of the schools was left to the local bodies. Many of the buildings and stories bear testimony to the fact that the middle classes were involved in the educational development.\(^\text{17}\)

Universalisation of elementary education has become one of the constitutional prerogatives of Independent India. To fulfill this goal, major initiatives and resources were needed. After independence primary and middle schools were taken out of control of local bodies and the charge of salary and service conditions of teachers were transferred to governmental regulation. Thus, centralization of education started which alienated it from community. The notion began to proliferate that everything belonged to the government and not to the community; therefore it was the government’s responsibility to look after it. Centralisation though born out of an intention to improve the quality of education, failed to effect such a change. However, even in this bleak scenario, the community was coming forward in certain places to improve conditions of schools.\(^\text{18}\)

### 3.2. Community Participation in Education: The Present Context

To achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education in India many programmes have been implemented since India’s independence. The successive governments have been implementing multi pronged strategies including making the community part of it to spread literacy in all the regions and to all the communities in the country. The successive governments have also realized and made the community part of the programme implementation and given a legal authority in all the states in India. In the present context, especially implementation of education programmes, the School Education Committees, Parent Teacher Association, Mother Committees and Women Groups are playing a crucial role to implement Universalisation of Elementary Education. The

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
following discussion is made on the functions and responsibilities of these committees in the implementation of education programmes at village level.

3.2.1. School Education Committee (SEC)

The composition, structure and functions of School Education Committee (SEC) discussed in this sections gives a general picture about its role in education. The community structures in education have set up by the respective state governments commonly known as School Education Committee (SEC) in all villages to function as an interface between the community and the primary education system. This generates community’s interest and involvement leading to community ownership of the programme. Studies have shown that SECs have played an important role in mobilizing the community, motivating parents to send their children to school and even managing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Alternative Schooling (AS) centres and Integrated Schools (IS). In some places SECs are supervising construction of schools and classrooms. These committees have assisted in enrolment, retention and reduction of drop-out rate, besides strengthening and maintaining the physical infrastructure of the school. In some places, they raise contributions for schools, prepare village educational plans, appoint para teachers and conduct house-to-house surveys and micro planning.

SECs meet once in a month, and review functioning of the school. They also discuss about enrolment and drop-out position, progress of civil works and effectiveness of mobilisation campaigns. These committees are adequately represented by women, disadvantaged groups, parents, social workers and prominent persons. In some states, women comprise half of the total members. The head-teacher of the village school and member of the village panchayat (local body) are ex-officio members of the committee.

In the context of Andhra Pradesh, School Education Committee (SEC) was restructured and renamed as School Education Management Committee (SEMC) in 2006. Before discussing about the composition of SEMC which is presently in function in Andhra Pradesh, it is felt to give a brief history and understanding about the earlier education committee i.e. School Education Committee (SEC). In Andhra Pradesh the School
Education Committees have been constituted through Act No. 13 of 1998. The School Education Committee shall consist of five members of whom there shall be four parents of the children enrolled in the school and elected by the parents of the children; the head master or the senior teacher is the member convenor of the committee. Of the four parent members, there shall be at least two women and one of the members belonging to the Scheduled Caste. One of the parent members is elected as the chairman. It provided that in high schools, a Class-X student who secured 1st rank during his Class-IX in the school shall also be a member without right to vote.

The functions of the school committee shall include the following:

a. Manage the school education fund for school development;

b. Assist the teachers in ensuring the attendance of the children;

c. Ensure enrolment and retention of all the children;

d. Hire the services of local persons as teachers or instructors, as the case may be, where there is a felt need, on voluntary basis or on payment of fixed honorarium. No regular post is filled on a permanent basis in this manner.

e. Hold meeting of parents who fail to send their children to the school;

f. Review and monitor the school health programme;

g. Ensure excellence in the overall performance of the school and the children;

h. Conduct parent day celebrations periodically to involve all parents in the management of the school and to motivate them to send their children regularly to schools;

i. Raise, maintain and manage school nurseries for the purpose of afforestation and ensure clean, healthy environment around the school;

j. Help, augment infrastructure facilities needed by the school;

k. Ensure effective use of educational equipment in the school;

l. Collect membership fee and corpus fund for the development of the institution from all the parent-teacher association members ad donors;

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m. Distribute incentives such as text books, mid-day meals etc. and wherever felt required to provide uniforms and scholarships; and

n. Co-ordinate with the Panchayat Education Committee for assistance as and when required.

The term of office of the members of the school committee shall be two years. There shall be a school education fund for every school consisting of the following:

i. Funds released by the government or local bodies for management or improvement of infrastructure of the school which will not include salary grant released by government;

ii. Funds for school contingencies released by local bodies or government;

iii. All accounts transferred from the panchayat education fund from taxes levied and collected under sub-section (2) of section 37 of the Andhra Pradesh Education Act 1982;

iv. Membership fee from parents;

v. Corpus fund collected from members and donors including grant-in-aid from government for further development of the school; and

vi. Fee collected, if any, from parents.

The fund should be operated in such manner as may be prescribed by the school committee. They are not the part of gram panchayats. They are separate bodies. In addition to school education committee, committees at level of panchayat, mandal, municipality, district and state have been constituted under Act No. 13 of 1998. There should be a separate bank account in a nationalised bank or in the nearest post office for the operation of the school education fund. The joint account is operated by the chairman and the member-governor of the school committee.20

3.2.2. School Education Management Committee (SEMC)

After Congress party resumed in power with Dr. Y. S. Rajeshekara Reddy as Chief Minister in Andhra Pradesh, the composition and name of School Education Committee

20 http://education.nic.in/cabedecentralise.asp#DECENTRALISED
(SEC) was restructured and renamed as School Education Management Committee (SEMC) through G. O. Ms. No. 95, dated 02/12/2006. As per the G.O, the newly formed SEMC has total seven members in which four of them are parents of the school going children and one panchayat ward member as its members, school head master or senior school teacher as its convenor and panchayat president as its chairman. As it is observed the PRI members are also made part of the SEMC and accountable to the village education, which was not there in the earlier composition of SEC. The rest of the functions and duties are same as described in the above. However, the prime objective of the SEMC as per the above mentioned G.O. is that “shall review the functions of the school once in every month and shall take all such steps necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives set forth in the Andhra Pradesh Education Act”.

As per the above G.O, the district in-charge minister shall nominate four parents of the school going children as SEMC members for the purpose keeping in view their commitment, interest and experience in the matter of improving school education. Out of the four parent members, there shall be at least two women and one person belonging to Scheduled Caste or Schedule Tribe or Backward Class or Minority Community. The respective panchayat ward member in which the school is located becomes as member (representing PRI) along with the four parent members (representing the parents of the school going children) in SEMC. The respective panchayat president in which the school is located becomes its chairman. The respective school head master or senior school teacher is the convenor of the committee. All the funds received by the school shall be operated in the joint account of the chairman of the SEMC (i.e. panchayat president) and convenor of the SEMC (i.e. school head master or senior school teacher) in the nearest bank or post office. The other functions and roles and responsibilities of SEMC are as it is as mentioned in the above.

3.2.3. Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

In Andhra Pradesh each school has a Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The PTA in the state was established in the year 1964 with the object of creating good relationship between teacher and parents and facilitating the school improvement schemes by all ways
and means. The objectives of the association are: to develop good relationship and better 
co-operation between the parents and the teachers; to guide the students for their 
improvements in social, economic, cultural and educational activities; to develop 
leadership among students; to give necessary assistance to the parents and teachers to 
publish literary magazines, organizing cultural, library meetings etc. These functioning of 
PTA are watched at district level and state level. 21

4. Community Participation: Government Initiatives

Community participation is an inbuilt intervention in almost all the education 
programmes that were implemented in India since mid of 1970s. It elicits the 
involvement of the community including minorities, women and the socially deprived 
groups, making them stakeholders in the primary education system. It is meant for the 
involvement of community in education related activities for achieving universal primary 
education. As a whole and given the social, economic and cultural diversity in India, 
community participation is an enormous challenge.

In India, to ensure their participation, a wide range of communication and media options 
are adopted for community participation in the education related programmes and 
projects. Kalajatha activities 22 are important method to sensitize the illiterate community 
in almost all the parts of India. It can be played in different means like folk forms, puppet 
shows, traditional media, street plays, films and songs to create awareness. Rallies, 
workshops, meetings, house to house campaigns and camps are also important activities 
to motivate parents to send their children to school. 23 Towards the objective of 
Universalisation of Elementary Education, the state governments as well as Government 
of India realized the importance of community participation in education programmes. 
The following are some of the education programmes that were implemented in different 
states by both Government of India and the respective state governments and succeeded 
in achieving the participation of the community in education activities.

21 http://www.tn.gov.in/schooleducation/ngo.htm
22 Traditional and local play methods to mobilize the community for their greater participation. These 
Kalajathas are generally theme based in the local language for easy understanding by the community for 
their response. 
4.1. The *Lok Jumbish* Project (LJP)

*Lok Jumbish* (LJ), or the people’s movement, was initiated in 1989 to ensure education for all in Rajasthan by the year 2000, through mobilization of the community. The *Lok Jumbish* has made an indelible impression in the primary education landscape of Rajasthan. Significantly, it has also achieved a major breakthrough in welding together government agencies, teachers, NGOs, elected representatives and the people into an interactive group effort to promote universalisation of primary education.

The seven guiding principles of *Lok Jumbish* are:

- A process rather than a product approach;
- Partnerships;
- Decentralized functioning;
- Participatory learning;
- Integration with the mainstream education system;
- Flexibility of management; and
- Creating multiple levels of leadership committed to quality and mission mode.

Special focus has been given to environment building in all training programmes under LJ. This helped in the development of an understanding about issues involved in people's mobilisation, use of different media forms and clarity about the messages to be given to the people.24

4.2. *Shiksha Karmi* Project (SKP)

*Shiksha Karmi* Project (SKP), is a unique innovative primary education project in Rajasthan. It was initiated in 1987 as a collaborative venture between the Government of India, Government of Rajasthan and SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). It seeks to reach out to children in remote rural areas where the formal primary schools are either non-existent or dysfunctional. The project aims at universalisation and qualitative improvement of primary education in the remote and

24 http://www.education.nic.in/eleedu_1.asp
socio-economically backward villages of Rajasthan, with primary focus on girls. Since teacher absenteeism has been found to be a major obstacle in achieving the objective of UEE, the project uses the novel approach of substituting teachers in dysfunctional schools with local youth known as *Shiksha Karmis* who are provided with rigorous training and supervisory support. An important feature of this innovative project is the mobilisation and participation of the community in improving the functioning of primary schools.

The project is known for its open participative style and continuous experimentation to achieve its objectives. The approach, strategies and achievements of the SKP have attracted national and international recognition.25

### 4.3. District Primary Education Project (DPEP)

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) is initiated by Government of India and launched in India in 1994. It is one of the largest education projects of its kind in the world. The Programme aims to achieve the long cherished goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in the country through district-specific planning with emphasis on decentralized management, participatory processes, empowerment and capacity building at all levels.

The programme aims at operationalising the strategies for achieving UEE through district specific planning and disaggregated target setting. It draws upon the accumulated national experience of several state level initiatives that were started earlier. It moves away from the schematic piecemeal approach of the earlier programmes and takes a holistic view of primary education with emphasis on decentralized management, community mobilisation and district specific planning based on contextually and research based inputs.

The basic objectives of DPEP are:

- To provide all children with access to primary education either in the formal system or through the non-formal education (NFE) programme.

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25 [http://www.education.nic.in/eleedu_1.asp](http://www.education.nic.in/eleedu_1.asp)
• To reduce differences in enrolment, dropout rates and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than 5%.
• To reduce overall primary dropout rates for all students to less than 10%.
• To raise average achievement levels by at least 25% over measured base line levels and ensuring achievements of basic literacy and numeracy competencies and a minimum of 40% achievement levels in other competencies by all primary school children.

DPEP has been able to set up project management structures at district, state and national levels, create the environment and capacity for micro planning, take up the challenge of pedagogical innovation, create a responsive institutional base which includes both government and non-government institutions, enhance community participation and strengthen the process of catering to special focus groups such as tribals, scheduled castes, women and other marginalized sections.

It is consistent with the philosophy of decentralisation, plans are prepared at districts through participatory process involving district and sub-district functionaries, teachers, parents and community members. DPEP has a marked focus on sustainability, sustaining the benefits beyond the project period. Equity is a major concern in DPEP. All plans strategies and intervention are tailored to address the specific needs of the disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), minorities, girls and the disabled. The programme stresses on community participation and community ownership.

DPEP has evolved a management structure from the centre right up to the village level with substantial autonomy, high degree of flexibility, and above all, space to experiment with different methods and models. The programme was working towards institutionalization of an appropriate management culture across the primary education system in the country. The management structure of the programme has several levels-national, state, district, block, cluster and village. Decentralization and community participation being core themes of the project, district and sub-district level programme planning and management are carried out by the District Project Committee headed by
the District Collector or the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad. Some of the project districts also have Block Project Implementation Committees. Block Resource Centre lends academic support, as does Cluster Resource Centre at cluster level (group of villages). At village level, there are Village Education Committee (VEC), Mother-Teacher Association (MTA) and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) to oversee implementation of the project.

4.4. *Nali Kali* (Joyful Learning)

The *Nali-Kali* approach to learning began in 1995 with UNICEF assistance when a group of 15 teachers from Heggada Devana Kote (HD Kote), a remote tribal block in Mysore District of Karnataka, visited the rural schools run by the Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh. Inspired by the principles of pedagogy which are entirely based on child-centered, activity-based learning, this group of teachers set into motion the processes for adapting the pedagogy to their own situation in HD Kote. Drawing on their experience of classroom transaction, the teachers concentrated on the following aspects;

- Reviewed the learning competencies
- Broke them into small and manageable learning units,
- Sequenced the learning units into a comprehensive learning ladder,
- Developed activities for each learning unit which facilitated readiness for learning, instruction, reinforcement and evaluation,
- Evolved a more equal and democratic classroom management system which is not based on the child's gender, caste, age or ability, but on the nature of the activity taken up by the child, and
- Developed an evaluation system, which is non-threatening, continuous and comprehensive.

The learning ladder is inclusive of activities, which facilitate art and craftwork, puppet shows, story telling, shadow plays, etc. Each step of the learning ladder is denoted by pictorial symbols - dog for flash cards, giraffe for word games, beetle for song, dancer for action rhymes, etc. which enable the child to independently trace his/her progress in the
subject learning ladder and choose his/her activity for the subject. As the child completes an activity, she/he also plots her/his progress on the progress chart pasted on the wall.

The Nali-Kali approach is unique and precious, because it is entirely primary school teacher created. The original group of 15 teachers has grown over the years. The result is that today there are as many as teachers in Mysore district who have been empowered to function as resource persons. Children learn at their own pace and when one level of competency is mastered they move on to the next. Activity based teaching-learning forms the crux of classroom processes, through the use of a variety of teaching learning aids and materials.  

4.5. Muktangan

Muktangan is a child protection initiative for children living on 7 railway stations in West Bengal. The intervention responds to social, economic and political marginalities of children living on railway stations and working in the railways. The project aims to sustain changes in situations that aim to eliminate abuse, violence and exploitation of such children, and empower them to access their survival and developmental rights as children, gain access to community and state resources as citizens of the nation they live in, and in keeping with the principle of participation, are able to exercise their choices in the process.

Initiated in 2003 by Paragon Charitable Trust (PCT), Muktangan is a pioneering educational programme offering low-cost, high-quality English medium education to the economically disadvantaged sections of society. The Muktangan educational model has transformed the educational scenario of socio-economically challenged communities of Mumbai also by creating a cadre of teachers through training women from this community who earlier had no career prospects, and who are now running pre-schools and a Municipal English Medium Primary School.

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27 http://www.praajak.org/Muktangan.htm
Muktangan differs from other schools in its child-centered ideology, its innovative classroom layout and curriculum, its low student-teacher ratio and its integrated teacher training programme with its reflective practices. Coming from the same community of socio-economic background, there is great affinity and bonding between the teachers and the children. Teachers each having between 6 and 12 children sit in small circles, all sitting at the same level with frequent personal interactions. The teachers view themselves as facilitators and respect fully the child’s inherent desire to learn and the innate capabilities of self-learning. All lessons are planned daily, reviewed and conducted to provide experiential learning to every child.

Muktangan has proven to be an effective and relevant educational model. It impacts holistically the community and the educational development in Mumbai. The education and teacher training provided is completely free with some parents contributing of their own free will and according to their means. All resources needed for the teacher training, the school and the children are provided free. The Muktangan model is also being adopted by other NGOs. Women from these communities undergo Muktangan teacher training and are then starting Muktangan model pre-schools in their respective locations.28


In July 1996, the Government of Madhya Pradesh introduced a new teaching-learning package, Seekhna-Sikhana, in class 1st of all the schools of 16 districts in the state, as the first phase for overhauling its approach to elementary education. Underlying this process is a partnership between the state government and NGOs that has no precedent anywhere in the country, but has the potential of transforming elementary education and making its universalisation an achievable objective.29

5. Community Participation: NGOs’ Experience

In this section experience of various NGOs on community mobilization and their participation is presented. These NGOs are working in community mobilization in

28 http://www.muktanganedu.org/mukwismuktangan.htm
29 http://nird.ap.nic.in/clic/mp-ruralprog.html
primary education, and some of them may not be specifically working in the tribal areas and implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Since the focus in this chapter is to give an understanding on community participation in general, the NGOs experience in community participation would help us to understand it.

NGOs are emerging as important partners in efforts of the governments towards Universalisation of Elementary Education. The participation of NGOs together with community support has helped to improve the physical conditions and environment of elementary schools as well as promotion of education for girls and children belonging to SCs and STs and working children. As of now, nearly 750 NGOs are supplementing the governmental efforts towards UEE by rendering cooperation and resource support to non-formal education with assistance from the government. The following are some of the NGOs working in this direction.

5.1. Pratham

Pratham established in Mumbai in 1994 reaches out to over 2,00,000 underprivileged children in urban slum areas. It seeks to make governance of education more effective through people’s democratic participation and aims at private-public partnership to address issues related to education and find solutions to be put into practice. The objective is to bring every child to school and help them to learn well. The organization is based on a triangular partnership - corporate sector and other funding sources, government and citizens. It covers four target groups of children - pre-school, out of school, in-school and working children. With specific reference to in-school children the organization lends support and provides remedial education from a variety of community and school-based interventions. The balsakhi or community volunteer conducts daily classes and/or runs community based libraries. The remedial education programme provides support for the weaker students of municipal primary school. It has led to children being mainstreamed and learning better.

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Pratham's city-wide initiative to get children enrolled in formal schools started in 1995. In close collaboration with the city's municipal corporation, balwadis were set up in the slum areas to provide pre-school education to children of three to five years of age. This provided Pratham with a large presence in these areas, and the next initiative was to prepare all out-of-school children in order to mainstream them.

Most of Pratham's bridge courses are preceded by a comprehensive survey to assess the total need. In all cases, a local person, mostly young, is identified to teach at the course. This has the advantage that the children and parents are comfortable with the teacher, who is familiar with the surroundings. The teacher regularly contacts the parents and community members to convince them of the need for regular education. Initially, the classes are held in a public place, such as an office or a temple. After a month or two, classes are held in the nearest municipal school. The study hours are now co-terminus with those of the formal school. Throughout the course, a local training and monitoring team from Pratham supports the process, and the municipal schools are expected to help in the testing and admission processes.

An important component of Pratham's programme is the training of teachers throughout the bridge course to help them identify the competencies which the children need to develop for admission into the appropriate class. Teacher-directed activity and activities which the students can perform in groups as well as independently are developed. The teachers review their work and plan the following week's activities at weekly meetings. They have to submit a monthly report to the supervisor on the attendance and achievement of each child.

After the children are enrolled in formal schools, Pratham helps them cope with their new situation. Under a programme known as the Balsakhi, the organisation also helps the school handle the additional enrolment by supplying teachers (called balsakhis), who are from the same community of the children. These teachers, trained at Pratham, are mostly girls who have passed at least Class XII. They work under the supervision of the school's
head teacher. The *balsakhis* help address the problems of teacher absenteeism and student drop-outs.\(^{32}\)

**5.2. Digantar**

The best way to introduce *Digantar* is a journey to the schools - *Digantar Shalas* - on the outskirts of Jaipur city. *Digantar* was the name of a school which started in 1978. They taught a small group of children there for about ten years. Towards late eighties, they registered the organisation called *Digantar Shiksha Evam Khelkud Samiti*. *Digantar* moved to a rural area near Jaipur in 1989 and a school was started there in the newly established campus. This school was part of the Elementary Education Project supported by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Two other schools were started later in neighboring areas under the same project. Intensive work has been done by *Digantar* in all areas of elementary education. They have worked out large parts of the curriculum and are engaged in its continuous evolution.

The question of primary education occupies a contentious space in our society. A large number of children never enter school and there are many who drop out after having joined a school. Efforts of ‘alternative schools’ generate a lot of interest on account of the quality of their teaching and the kind of freedom they allow for children. These schools often remain islands of excellence though, without a deeper interaction with the community around or with the educational concerns of the whole society.

While rooted in the experience of an alternative school, *Digantar* has made a distinctive contribution to educational practice and debate in the country. *Digantar* is known for its deep engagement with the philosophical issues of learning while working with children from deprived communities. An intensive dialogue on the nature of education with these communities is an essential part of their programme. Indeed, the schools they run would not have been possible or effective without substantial support and contributions from the community itself.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{33}\) [http://www.icrindia.org/?page_id=62](http://www.icrindia.org/?page_id=62)
5.3. Agragamee

Agragamee has been fighting for the cause of human rights of tribal communities for the last 20 years in the tribal districts of Orissa. Several issues of survival and subsistence of tribal peoples were addressed through the active and constructive collaboration of the state and Agragamee. Thus, bonded labourers were released from their enslavement, and rehabilitated through very forward looking government schemes.

Agragamee’s programmes of primary education helped to educate tribal children, and engendered the first generation of literates in several tribal people. Gradually, tribals became confident, and aware that they also had rights as human beings, and began to address issues more crucial and radical, and Agragamee’s efforts became a movement in the tribal areas, gaining wide recognition and acclaim for the outstanding support it had provided for these repressed and marginalized communities.34

5.4. M. V. Foundation

This organisation, which started its work nearly two decades ago in Andhra Pradesh, first freed children from their jobs and got them admitted to formal schools. As the teachers could not handle over-age children and the children had difficulty fitting into the formal school system, the organisation set up a residential camp to prepare children of nine years and above for formal education. Bridge courses were devised to help the children achieve competency levels appropriate to their age. After the course, they were enrolled in formal schools in classes appropriate for their age.

These residential camps, which are of 4 to 12 months' duration, not only prevent the children from returning to work, but also help them to believe that school education is possible for them.

The first phase of the course, which lasts for 15 days, is aimed at creating an interest in education. This is done through games, songs, story-telling and other creative activities. In this crucial phase, one teacher takes charge of 15 children. In the second phase, the

34 http://www.indiangos.com/donation/agragamee.htm
children are regrouped age-wise and are introduced to numbers and the alphabet. There are no prescribed books and methods, and the teachers evolve their own methods and activities. A significant feature of this course is the active participation of the children in developing the curriculum and teaching-learning material, as well as in evaluating their own performance. Reading is encouraged (the camps have libraries), and so is writing, which helps in developing the child's creative abilities and skills of self-expression. Weekly evaluations of the children's progress are done.

In the third phase, the children are prepared for formal school and the admission test. They are grouped class-wise and formal textbooks are used. The children sit for the Class-V examination and are then enrolled in formal schools. A crucial and elaborate preparatory process precedes the bridge course. A core team of activists, mostly young people who have completed school, is identified in each village and is trained to work with the children, their parents, the community and the formal schools. These volunteers conduct a survey to identify out-of-school children, then establish regular contact with the children to build a rapport with them. This is followed by a three-day camp, at which the children are encouraged to leave work and to study. The volunteers intervene with the parents to allow their children to join the camp, after which enrolment takes place. Again, the children are involved along with the teachers in various organisational aspects of the camp.

Teachers not only stay with the children throughout the duration of the camp, but help settle them into the formal school or hostel as well. In the follow-up to the camp, they counsel the students, besides helping the school ensure regular attendance. Shorter non-residential bridge courses are also organised, often in coordination with the formal school, for children who are six to eight years old. These children are later enrolled in Class-I or II. The bridge courses have resulted in increased enrolment, which the formal schools are unable to cope with. The M. V. Foundation has provided support with volunteer teachers from the community. These teachers work under the guidance of the school's head teacher.35

5.5. CINI (Child in Need Institute)-Asha

CINI-Asha the urban unit of CINI is working with the mission to improve the quality of life of the urban disadvantaged population and protect the rights of the child through education, health and social mobilisation in the urban slums since 1989 in the eastern and central parts of Kolkata. CINI-Asha working since 1989 intensively to ensure elementary education for slum children in these areas realised the need to work on health issues of this vulnerable population to achieve a holistic improvement in the lives of the slum dwellers.\(^\text{36}\)

CINI-Asha initially started with a two-hour non-formal course for 'urban deprived children', but found that these children were denied admission into formal schools and their academic achievement was unsatisfactory. Moreover, over-age children were uncomfortable in class I with younger children. Therefore, CINI-Asha developed a bridge course with residential camps to enable the child to cover at an accelerated pace the curriculum of the classes he would have normally passed.

The organisation builds a rapport with the ward councillors and local key persons. Group discussions and surveys were conducted to identify the out-of-school children, the reasons for their being out-of-school, the community's views on educating children, and so on. The children, parents, community members and others are sensitised on the issue, and youth clubs are mobilised to work for the cause. Community volunteers are trained to teach in the shorter bridge courses.

An informal test is taken to assess the ability level of children of nine and above before they join the bridge course. The course is meant for drop-outs, children who have never been to school and those who know just a bit.

The first phase of one month focuses on games, story-telling, dance, music and so on, to build an interest and ensure regular participation. For the next one month, the children are regrouped age-wise and efforts are made to bring all the children in a group up to the same level. There were 25 children under each teacher, who has to give them individual

\(^{36}\) http://www.hsprodindia.nic.in/files/PROD110/Background%20to%20CINIASHA.doc
attention. A variety of TLM, like name cards and action-word cards, are used, and words and number concepts are introduced. Self-study and peer tutoring are part of the programme at this stage. In the third phase, the formal school syllabus and textbooks are introduced.

Regular evaluation, both formal and informal, is done. The formal test prepares the learners for the admission test. On completion of the bridge course, they are admitted to the appropriate class in a formal school. CINI-Asha's coaching centres continue to give them coaching after they have joined school and their supervisors make regular visits to ensure regular attendance.

CINI-Asha's strong linkage with the formal school system has been vital to its success. Local government-aided schools and Municipal Corporation schools are identified and a good rapport is built with the education officer and the teachers of these schools. Detailed lists of the children are prepared and given to the teachers and the relevant authorities. Meetings are held with them, as well as with the parents and community members. Teachers from the nearest formal school are requested to visit the bridge course.

CINI-Asha has succeeded in not only enhancing enrolment but increasing retention too. The organisation and the community members support the formal school by making contributions for books, teaching material, etc.37

5.6. Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA)

CREDA, an NGO, has been working successfully in eliminating child labour from the carpet industry, since 1982, in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. When the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) was started in Mirzapur-Bhadohi, CREDA undertook the responsibility of running "special schools", which were aimed at withdrawing child workers from the carpet looms, provide a primary level education at an accelerated pace and finally mainstream them into the formal education system.

CREDA has evolved an integrated approach for eradicating child labour. It worked out a strategy wherein all the stake-holders of the carpet industry were mobilised. Face-to-face discussions were organised with parents (who wanted their children to earn, thereby supplementing the family income) and efforts were made to educate them about legal provisions against child labour and ill-effects of sending children to work, and parents were given assurances of protection by the state administrative machinery, in case the loom owners threatened them for withdrawing their children from work, as well. Parents were influenced by the interest created by CREDA in favour of education and against exploitation of children for petty economic gains and agreed that children should not be deprived from education. Activists of CREDA visited every family and pleaded that children should be sent to school and not to work on the looms. Adult-weavers were involved to campaign silently against child-weavers as this would lead to the unemployment of able-bodied adults. Loom owners were familiarised with legal prohibitions against employing children in carpet weaving and the extent of penalties in hiring children.

Village level meetings were organised to involve the village community to collectively stand up against child labour and send the children to school. Other than this, the CREDA team also met child labourers and made them aware of the ill-effects on their health and the legal provisions made for their education. Support for CREDA increased further as the NCLP (National Child Labour Project) scheme provided monetary incentives as "stipends" to the children who attended the "special school"; this took care of the immediate financial concern of the parents.

CREDA also played an intermediary role between the people and the government so that the benefits from the government development schemes were evenly distributed among the targeted and deserving people and not monopolised by a few influential people. Consequently, many loom owners who resented the villagers working for CREDA, were unable to do anything about it because CREDA had built up credibility in the community.

The special schools run by CREDA, with the objective of integrating the withdrawn child workers into the educational mainstream, has some interesting features. For one thing, the
teachers were extremely motivated and the teaching methods were interesting. Extra curricular activities like sports and cultural pursuits attracted the children, and the midday meals and stipend of Rs. 100/- per month were additional incentives. The discipline inculcated in the students by the school teachers is impressive; the day begins and ends with prayers and songs. CREDA’s management provides opportunities for the all round growth of students. By rotation, each student gets an opportunity to lead the group. Time is allotted for games such as football, volleyball, kabaddi etc. One important activity of the special school is to encourage students to express themselves through paintings. Attendance was to the tune of 90 per cent or more. Although CREDA didn’t provide bags and uniforms, all the students provided themselves with uniforms and school bags from the stipend given to them.

Most of the students enrolled in the special schools are first generation learners, who need special encouragement to continue their education, especially to pursue studies in the higher classes after graduating from the special schools. Though many girls do not work on the looms, they do work in ‘off loom’ activities related to carpet manufacturing and CREDA has made efforts not only to get girls into its own schools, but has also motivated parents to put their girls into regular government school. CREDA claims that as a result of its efforts in the area, child labour in the carpet industry has been successfully eliminated in more than 25 villages, i.e. no child in these villages can be found working in the carpet industry.\(^\text{38}\)

### 5.7. Society for All Round Development (SARD)

SARD is a registered voluntary organization established in 1996 that has undertaken several programmes for the development of backward communities and regions in Rajasthan. Its perception of community participation is based on the firm conviction that no organization can achieve its objectives for social development in the true sense without the active cooperation of the community. No positive change can occur without the community feeling of the need for it. The community’s active involvement is also necessary for making it competent enough to sustain the changes occasioned by the

\[^{38}\text{Shamshad Khan, An Integrated Approach has been evolved for Withdrawing Child Workers from the Carpet Looms, ttp://www.un.org.in/JANSHALA/mayjun99/creda.htm}\]
intervention. Secondly, the child is not an isolated individual. She is an integral part of her environment and community. Therefore it is essential for any institution working for the education and welfare of children to acquaint itself with the lifestyle of the community. The community’s behaviors and beliefs should be addressed with sensitivity and be reflected in the educational practices of the institution. While positive behavioral responses can be built upon, conflicting behaviors can be changed and resolved through participatory processes over a period of time.

Community participation and empowerment are integral rather than incidental components of the education intervention initiated by SARD. Consequently, SARD promoted active community involvement at every stage of the programme like in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

SARD started its work in situations that were characterized by religious fundamentalism and conservative thinking. With the belief in the potential of its community, SARD provided a platform for thinking about and sharing educational and community needs and later worked seriously towards building the capacities of the community. Although there were ups and downs in the degree of community participation, overall it was a journey of mutual sharing, development, enrichment and empowerment both for SARD and the community.

Education, especially primary education, evolved as a chief focus area for SARD’s intervention as the school attainment and literacy rates for the population in the project area were extremely low, particularly for school going girls (6-14 years). SARD initiated its intervention by establishing balwadis (pre-school centres) and non-formal education centres in order to increase the exposure of children, girls in particular, to primary education in the year 1999. To ensure the success of these centres, SARD created a child-friendly learning environment by adopting a child-centered pedagogical approach and took care to ensure the age and cultural appropriateness of the teaching materials. Furthermore, SARD made every effort to identify and respond to community concerns and values regarding the learning environment.
By including the panchayat members as important stakeholders, SARD has succeeded in bringing educational issues to the forefront of the panchayat samiti agenda. Panchayat members were continuously encouraged to participate in SARD meetings and training events. SARD members observed that the female panchayat members never attended any panchayat meetings. Instead, their husbands invariably took up their role. This made SARD realize the importance of motivating the female panchayat representatives to directly address the issue of girl’s education.

SARD has constituted Parent–Teacher Committees (PTCs) to solicit the participation of mothers and motivate the parents of drop out children to re-enroll their children in schools. Additionally, PTCs provide support by mobilizing resources within the community to construct and repair schools.

PTCs are village level committees that comprise 10-12 mothers per village. Parents, mostly mothers, are encouraged as they are generally more concerned about the education of their wards and do not have sufficient opportunities for self-development in a male dominated society. Thus, their participation in the educational process was considered crucial.39

6. Community Participation and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

The above discussion that was attempted for elaborating community participation in primary education in India gives the overall understanding on it. The various education programmes that were implemented across in India during 1980s and 1990s like the Lok Jumbish Project (LJP) and Shikhsa Karmi Project (SKP) in Rajasthan, District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in most of the states, Nali Kali programme in Karnataka, Muktangan in West Bengal, Seekhana-Sikhana approach in Madhya Pradesh and also Bihar Education Project made tremendous impact on primary education with the active involvement of community members. Most of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Pratham in Mumbai, Digantar in Rajasthan, Agragamee in Orissa, M. V. Foundation (MVF) in Andhra Pradesh, CINI-Asha in West Bengal, Social Welfare Research Centre (SWRC) in many parts of India, Centre for Rural Education and

39 http://www.reachindia.org/resources/Articles_documents/community_participation.htm
Development Action (CREDA) in Mirzapur and Society for All Round Development (SARD) in Rajasthan worked with community in the area of primary education and achieved progressive results. Even though most of the above mentioned primary education programmes were not implemented in the tribal areas, it gives us an idea in understanding the role of community participation in education related activities.

It is in this context we see that, the success of an integrated programme like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan can be ensured if and only if there is an active participation of the community. The main objective of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is to strengthen community participation in elementary education with the ultimate aim of community ownership in fulfilling the objectives of UEE. The main tasks of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are to enable the persons in the community, who still believe that issues related to access, enrolment, retention and quality education depend largely on government machineries and teachers, for realizing the actual situation and to motivate them for performing their specific tasks to reach the social target through SSA.

The SSA envisages cooperation between teachers, parents and PRIs as well as accountability and transparency across the educational system. It has a community based monitoring system. This calls for community ownership of school and interventions through the adoption of a decentralized approach. The SSA envisages that the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) correlates school level data with community-based information from micro planning and surveys. Besides this every school is encouraged to share all the information with the community.

To facilitate participation and partnership with grassroots level groups and people, academic support-structures have been established at the block, cluster and village level in the form of Block Resource Centers (BRCs) Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs) and Village Education Committees (VECs). These resource centers provide a feasible and practical modality for involving teachers in the process of quality improvement based on periodic pupil assessment. Regular school visits by CRCCs and onsite support to improve classroom processes have contributed significantly in the effective functioning of schools and curriculum transaction that ultimately leads to better performance by students.
Micro level planning is an important component in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to identify the educational needs of all the households at village level. Micro level planning is a planning at the lowest level of development. It brings the planning process to the grassroots level to tackle specific problems at the micro region. Development of local resources and provision of infrastructure facilities receives due attention during the process of micro level planning, along with local tradition, history, values and practices.

The main reasons for undertaking micro level planning are: (a) to give specific attention to the needs of the targeted groups, (b) programmes are geared more towards the specific needs of the area, (c) To decentralize the planning process and (d) To establish a closer partnership with the people by the planners.

7. Summing up

The discussion made in this chapter on community participation is to bring an overall understanding on what exactly community participation means in education. An attempt is made by giving some of the experiences of various primary education programmes implemented by government and non-governmental organizations with community involvement and their participation in the county. The attempt revealed that community participation in school related activities made a tremendous change in primary education. Because of this fact, the planners have given high priority to the community level planning and their participation in the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education.

The researcher, in his attempt, made a study to see the involvement and ownership of the community on primary education during the first phase of the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in tribal areas. The facts and data related to community participation in education activities during the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme are collected in Rampachodavaram agency area in East Godavari district and presented in Chapter-6.