CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.1- Foregoing Analysis and Findings

The main objective of the present study was to find the impact of civil society organisations on the delivery of elementary education in Madhya Pradesh through inclusive governance. The hypothesis was that civil society in partnership with the state will be able to improve the elementary education delivery system and also inclusive governance. The study started out by examining the condition of education in India and the efforts by the government towards achieving universal elementary education. It was established that the state acknowledged the poor state of education and opened up to partnering with the civil society organisations to improve the situation. With the help of secondary literature different types of CSOs were studied to understand their way of working and the outcomes of their efforts. It was found that most of the CSOs are playing a complimentary role to the government by stepping in to fill in the gaps left by the state. In the beginning itself the study identified certain research issues and aimed to answer them through primary survey and field data. The review of literature also helped in identifying Madhya Pradesh as a research area, since it has historically lagged behind in education and has only recently achieved steady progress in the field through various reforms and partnerships with civil society organisations.

With this background, the study put forth some objectives to analyse the working of CSOs in elementary education, in partnership with the state and the impact of this partnership. The first objective was to analyse how the policies of the government have shaped elementary education and what is its current status. It was found that though the government has continuously given importance to education in general and elementary education in particular, in most of its five-year plans and even set up independent commissions to review the status of education, and set goals and targets to improve the condition of elementary education, it has lagged behind in the actual implementation of these policies and goals. Over a period of time, this problem grew to such magnitudes that the government was unable to handle it alone and
opened up to the civil society to provide help and inputs to improve the delivery of education.

The second objective of the study was to analyse the nature of civil society intervention and the role it was supposed to play in universalising elementary education. Since the area for primary survey was chosen as M.P, one CSO was identified in the region for carrying out the study. Analysing the working and performance of this CSO it was found that the CSO was partnering with the state on the basis of an MoU signed between the two parties. This document outlined the area of working as well as the roles and responsibilities of the CSO expected by the state. On the basis of the MoU, the CSO charted out its *Shiksha Protsahan Program* where it would be working towards strengthening the delivery of education in the villages along with the community members, parents, teachers and the block level government officials. The CSO employed various mechanisms to not only improve the school and classroom processes but also to increase community awareness and participation along with planned management at the block and cluster level so that all the stakeholders can be involved in decision-making for the improvement of the village school system. The field study brought out that the villages in which the CSO was working showed higher participation and interest of the parents in the working of the school and the monitoring of teachers and students as compared to those where there was no CSO intervention.

The third objective was to evaluate the nature of collaborative work done by the state and CSO and its implications. This objective was addressed by examining in detail the MoU signed by the state and CSO. The document clearly outlined the roles and responsibilities of both the state and civil society for improving the delivery of elementary education. Field level observations and data showed that though the CSO had fulfilled its responsibilities in strengthening the education system in the villages, the state lacked in its commitment to provide basic infrastructure and human resources. Not only that, the state was also unable to hold the teachers accountable for their slack behaviour in class and their overall irresponsible attitude towards the school system in general.

Moving on, the last objective was to suggest measures to improve delivery of elementary education based on the findings of the study. The present research makes a
strong case for involving civil society and CSOs in the delivery of elementary education. Field insights have not only shown exemplary performance by the CSO, but also that the CSO enjoys the confidence and respect of the village communities where it is working. Since the community and parents have seen an improvement in their village school system and in the learning levels of their children, and since they themselves have become aware about the education system in general, they are willing to cooperate with the CSO team members in any endeavour towards improved education delivery.

A brief recap of the objectives and the findings of the study show that the civil society has been able to improve the elementary education delivery system. It has also been able to maintain inclusive governance by involving all the stakeholders in decision making and effective functioning of the education delivery system. The next section aims to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study with the help of the findings.

6.2- Research Questions and Findings

The review of literature had brought forth certain issues regarding state’s inability to provide elementary education and whether an intervention by the civil society will be able to provide better education delivery system. The first research question brought out by the literature was regarding the state’s inability to provide universal elementary education despite various legislations and policies. The next set of questions were about the nature of CSO intervention and the state’s willingness to share its responsibilities with and involve the CSO in delivering education. With the coming in of the CSO it became important to understand and analyse how successful was the state-CSO partnership to bring about an improved education delivery system. Also whether the CSO could be held accountable to the people given that education falls mainly in the purview of the state’s social service domain and how the coming in of the civil society would affect the sovereignty of the state. The following paragraphs provide some answers to these questions brought out from the present study.
6.2.1- Inability of the State to Universalise Elementary Education

The review of literature highlighted the different programmes and policies that the Indian state formulated in order to promote education. As a result of the millennium development goals, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan of the Indian govt. set out to universalise elementary education in the country. Education for the children of 6 to 14 years was made free and compulsory after the Right to Education bill was passed in the Indian parliament in 2009. But even after all these efforts; we have not been able to get close to achieving 100% enrolment, retention or achievement of the students at elementary education level. Hence it becomes imperative to ask why this is so.

The present study found that one of the reasons was the gap between policy formulation and implementation at the ground level. There were a number of issues in the field which were hindering universalisation of elementary education. Even though the government wants to increase the number of children enrolled in the schools, there is still a lack of teachers and even in schools where the teachers are present, they are irregular. It was also found that in the govt. schools, the teachers did not make use of the innovative and activity-based methods that were taught to them during the annual training sessions, to teach in class. Teacher irregularity along with official non-academic work highly cuts down the teaching time and eventually leads to compromise in quality of teaching. Over a period of time, the students also lose interest in the class and what is being taught, and become irregular. Over a period of time, even the parents get complacent and do not object to the child being irregular in school and eventually dropping out. An important reason for this slack in schools was found to be the lack of education management at the block level which further percolated to the cluster and village levels.

In order to address these discrepancies, the govt. of Madhya Pradesh opened its doors to civil society organisations and in some cases partnered with it to improve the delivery of education. Through an MoU, the state and CSO came together to improve the delivery of education. The basic feature of the MoU was that the state was to provide all the basic infrastructural facilities and human resources, whereas the CSO was to improve the quality of education in the schools. However, it was found that the state was still lacking in fulfilling its obligations outlined in the MoU. For
example- according to the MoU, the state mechanism was supposed to ensure appropriate number of teachers in all the schools according to the norms of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. But the ground level reality showed that the state has been unable to do so. Due to the geographical terrain and remoteness of the region (of the sampled villages), hardly any of the teachers were willing to take up jobs in these interior villages. Even if teachers were arbitrarily assigned to these schools, they would immediately apply for a transfer to a village near their place of residence or would not go to the school at all. The shortage of teachers affected not only quality of education but even basic education delivery and academic achievement of the students. In some cases it was quoted that in schools with two or more teachers, the teachers would take turns in coming to school.

Also teacher irregularity was one of the most oft quoted reasons for lack of student achievement. The PTA and community members complained of teacher irregularity in almost all of the sampled schools. In some cases, the PTA had even complained to the panchayat and BRC authorities but hardly any action was taken against the teacher. Most often the teacher would intimidate the parents and threaten them by accusing them of interfering in the school matters and the parents would then be scared to complain about the teacher. The state mechanism has been unable to provide a solution to this and PTA is not empowered enough to take action against the teachers.

Annual teacher training sessions were also held at the district and regional levels, to assist teachers in solving the doubts and problems they faced during teaching in class. CSO personnel qualified in teaching the activity-based methods of teaching-learning were brought in to be a part of these training sessions to teach the teachers from all the schools across the district. These methods were developed by the CSO over a period of time and showed a marked improvement in the reading and learning skills of the students in the schools it was implemented in. As a result of the positive response of students, the M.P state education board re-invented its syllabus in 2009 and introduced a new package on the lines of ABL (activity-based learning) in some parts of the state.\(^{43}\) Initially the teachers were rigid in their attitude and did not

\(^{43}\) As mentioned in the previous chapters, these activity-based learning techniques were implemented as the suggested method of teaching in the targeted blocks of Khategaon and Khirkiya, where the CSO was partnering with the state.
take to the ABL techniques easily. Eventually they opened up to the ABL methods and gave a positive response to the training by the CSO. However, at the ground level it was found that not many teachers were using these techniques and kits in class and continued to teach in the traditional way. The reasons given for this were that the teachers were under a lot of pressure to improve the results in a very short period of time by using these methods in class. Since they were also overburdened with non-academic work, there was hardly any time for them to experiment and teach through the new techniques. Even the teachers who used ABL techniques sometimes, acknowledged that more attention was given to the higher classes (standard IV and V) while teaching in groups, while the other students (of standard II and III) are only ‘kept busy’ with some work.

Irregularity and lack of teachers, along with traditional methods of rote learning, resulted in the students losing interest in studying and attending schools. Moreover, a lot of students in the sampled villages were first-generation learners, who did not get any motivation to study at home and the parents also looked upon the school and teachers only to educate the children. Literature points to a number of reasons for irregular attendance of students and dropouts in school such as gender stereotypical roles of sibling care and household chores for girls and helping in agricultural activities and cattle grazing for boys, along with economic compulsions of the family such as opportunity cost of education. Similar reasons were cited during discussion with teachers, parents and community members as well. Bringing back the irregular and dropout students into mainstream education was an area where a lot of efforts were made by the community members, PTA, and the CSO personnel. Though the efforts by the aforementioned groups have been quite successful in bringing the children back to school, have not been able to ensure their retention. Individual success stories of bringing the students into the mainstream have been highlighted in the previous chapters but no long-term solution has been found to prevent students from dropping out or to ensure that all students remain in class for the whole duration of their elementary education.

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the absence of block-level management of education was also responsible for the mismanagement of education at the village level. The block resource centres of both the sampled blocks were facing
issues of being understaffed and overworked for a long period of time. As a result, they were only managing to attend to the administrative works of the centre and were unable to provide any academic support and input to the teachers through the *jan-shikshaks*. Moreover the said blocks were also faced with the constraint of lack of teachers and were barely able to attach one teacher to each school. Since the *jan-shikshaks* or cluster coordinators were chosen from among the teachers within a cluster, they were asked to continue teaching in schools instead of attending to the role of *jan-shikshak*. This was an impediment for the management of education because the *jan-shikshaks* were supposed to be the link between the BRC and the village schools. They were to provide academic inputs to teachers and solve any practical problems they encountered while teaching in class. Regular visits by the *jan-shikshaks* were also an indirect method of monitoring the working of the school and teachers which could not happen due to lack of staff in schools. All the above factors pose serious implications for universalising education since teachers are the most important link between the students and education. Any lacuna on the part of teachers is sure to compromise imparting of education in the school.

6.2.2- The Nature of CSO Intervention

Given the above mentioned problems in the schools, the M.P govt. decided to partner with CSOs for improvement. The second question that the present research attempted to answer was about the nature of CSO intervention in elementary education. In the first chapter it was emphasized that the state has increasingly allowed the civil society interventions in service delivery. Though it was a welcome change for the neo-liberal state which was to act more as a facilitator than a provider, it was also seen as chance to give-off its responsibility to the civil society instead of the state itself fulfilling it. The MoU drafted between the CSO and the M.P govt showed the CSO as complimentary to the state. The state would provide the infrastructure and human resources, and the CSO was to enhance the quality of teaching-learning in class. In the MoU, the state only kept administrative responsibilities for itself and entrusted the CSO to provide elementary education to the selected schools along with strengthening the block-level management of education as well. However, the field experience showed that the state was willing to act only as a facilitator, and it was the CSO that was actually providing the education.
As outlined in the MoU, the CSO was accountable to the state by submitting regular reports of its activities and outcomes to the state education board and also holding evaluation exercises by external agencies for the CSO performance. But there is was no way in which the CSO could question the non-fulfilment of state’s responsibilities. Moreover, if the CSO failed to fulfil its responsibility, the govt could terminate the MoU and in future the CSO would then be unable to work with the govt. This was because it was the state which had created a space for the civil society to operate and if the latter did not function well, the state had the power to detach itself from the partnership.

6.2.3- Impact of State- CSO Partnership

Analysing the complimentary role of the CSO to the state, it also becomes important to understand the impact of this partnership towards improving education delivery. The CSO aimed at strengthening the delivery process of education by improving the school and classroom processes and also strengthening the management of education at the block level. For this purpose, the CSO drafted its Shiksha Protsahan Program which was then implemented in 50 schools in two blocks of M.P where the CSO was partnering with the state govt. However, the CSO had to face certain constraints due to the govt not fulfilling its expected role in the MoU. Lack of teachers severely affected the working of the balmitras in schools since the govt teachers would treat them as additional teachers and give them the responsibility of handling the whole school and would go on leave themselves. However, the CSO has made an impact in certain classroom processes such as using ABL techniques to teach in class and getting the students interested in learning. Though not all govt. school teachers are using these techniques, even though they have been trained, the students who have been taught by these techniques have shown a positive response towards learning. The community members and even govt teachers acknowledge that the attendance in the balmitras’ class remains very high and students enjoy the activities which are being taught to them. The govt school teachers also noticed an improved response rate of the students in asking questions and interacting in class, when they had been taught by the ABL techniques since these techniques gave the freedom to students to learn at their own pace and learn step-by-step.
The state-CSO partnership also had a positive impact on increasing the community participation in issues of school importance along with training the PTAs and panchayat members. The CSO had been working very hard in this area in all its target villages and has been able to achieve success in a lot of cases. The CSO partners with the govt. in training the PTAs and the panchayat members in the villages. After the official training sessions are over, the CSO personnel continue their interaction with the parents and community members encouraging them to participate in the PTA meetings and gram sabhas and to raise issues for improving education in the village school. Field level data and observations showed that the PTAs in schools where the CSO was working raised issues of dropout and out-of-school children and discussed about solutions to bring them back into the mainstream. Some of these PTAs had also been active in evaluating the performance of the teachers in school and had reported cases to the panchayats demanding accountability from the teachers regarding their negligent behaviour and irregularity. Examples of the PTAs active participation evaluating the performance of the teachers in school and reporting cases to the panchayat demanding accountability from the teachers regarding their negligent behaviour and irregularity were also cited during field work. Continuous interactions with the CSO personnel gave the community members awareness about govt procedures and policies and how they could approach the official authorities to solve issues faced by the school. However, in the control schools where the CSO was not partnering with the state, the parents and PTA members hardly attended any of the meetings or raised issues. When asked about the condition of the school and their satisfaction with the performance of teachers, the parents appeared disinterested and unaware about it. The PTA members were also unaware of their responsibilities and duties towards the school and some of the members had even forgotten that they received training from the govt. In this regard the CSO has been very active in its interactions with the community members and the PTAs.

The partnership also helped increase interaction of the BRC and CRC personnel with the CSO. This interaction was initiated by the CSO to strengthen the block level education management. Though the CSO was unable to make an immediate impact on the working of the BRC during its initial phase, over a period of time, it increased its contact base with the BRC and CRC officials and would interact with them on a regular basis. Suggestions of the BRC officials were taken into
account for the teacher training programs and special demonstrations of activity-based teaching learning kits and methods were held for the jan-shikshaks and teachers. The CSO’s training modules and practical explanations had gained much attention from the BRC members and they promised active collaboration with the team and the jan-shikshak program. The CSO team members would regularly share field insights with the BRC officials about school processes and performance and the officials would seek their help to improve the school functioning. However, it was later noticed that though the BRC provided support in organizing bridge courses in the village, they did not plan effectively to make the teachers and PTA members more active in the schools’ activities and field areas. Hence the support that the CSO needed from the BRC was hardly ever provided, but the CSO was regularly summoned to provide help in various activities of the BRC.

6.2.4- Accountability of Civil Society to the People

Since the state has carved a space for the civil society to exist and operate, the latter becomes accountable to the state in terms of fulfilling the assigned roles and responsibilities. In a similar manner, the civil society also becomes accountable and responsible to the people that it is serving or working for. During the FGDs with parents and community members it was observed that they were very satisfied with the work being done by the CSO. They acknowledged that the CSO was filling in for the govt and making its presence felt in areas that the govt. was unable to operate. However, the anxiety of the community members was what would happen to the schools if the CSO was not working in their village anymore. Once the project duration was over, was there any mechanism to ensure that the positive impact of the CSO would continue in that area. Since the state was not entirely involved in carrying out the education delivery, could the community members still gain the benefit of the CSOs intervention even after its departure?

In the case of the present study, the CSO team members had worked with and within the village resources by forming community groups, youth groups, women groups, and also training literate youth from the village to teach in their own village schools. Many of the young boys and girls from the villages, who initially started working as resource persons with this CSO, had moved on to become anganwadi teachers and govt. school teachers. The interactions with parents, PTA and
community members show that they are much more aware of their rights after being in constant contact with the CSO team members and the training provided by them. This process of training the local people and enhancing their capabilities and increasing their awareness is an attempt that will be able to sustain the positive results brought by the CSO for a much longer duration of time, even after the CSO has finished its project duration. The CSO thus has impacted not only the immediate working of the school system but has also put in place proper mechanisms to ensure the continuity of their efforts in the community members are motivated enough to carry it on.

6.2.5- Willingness and Justification of State to Share its Responsibility with CSO

It has been stated that the CSO was playing a complimentary role to the state since the latter was unable to fulfil its commitments towards universalising education. Duties and responsibilities highlighted in the MoU and the field level observations show that the state is still struggling to put the appropriate mechanisms in place for the proper functioning and management of education. Right from providing appropriate number of teachers in every school, to monitoring their functioning with the help of the BRC and providing academic support to the teachers through the BRC, the govt has seemingly lagged behind in this. However, the responsibility of strengthening the delivery process of education and enhancing community participation in the process has been fulfilled by the CSO by putting in place various mechanisms through its SPP program. It impacted the classroom processes and school functioning by providing one resource person in every school and village, these resource persons being punctual and regular in class, by setting examples of using ABL techniques to teach the students, interacting with the community members regularly and encouraging parents to take part in the PTA meetings and gram sabhas to solve issues related to the school etc.

However, we still see the inability of the state in fulfilling its own commitments and responsibilities, while the CSOs are doing a lot of work in the said field. The state is employing different agencies to carry out its own role; but at the same time it is not willing to give a larger responsibility and control to the CSO in the education sector. An important characteristic of the CSO which was raised in the literature review was that the CSOs are only working in a specific sector, a specific
geographical location, for a specified period of time. Hence, they are able to put in all their resources towards fulfilling that particular goal. But the state has to continue working for equal benefit to all irrespective of sector, location and time period. We also need to acknowledge that the state is a continuous machinery. It was working in these sectors even before the CSOs came in, and will continue working long after the CSOs have left. Therefore the state can share its responsibility with the CSOs and get their help wherever it is unable to perform satisfactorily, but it cannot let go of its responsibility entirely.

6.3- Theoretical Implications of State-Civil Society Partnership

In the context of the present study, some advantages and disadvantages of CSOs come to light. The positive side of CSO working is that they work directly at the grassroots level and along with the beneficiaries of education such as teachers, students, parents, community members etc. The state may not be able to give attention to all the groups at all times, but since the CSO focuses on a specified geographical area or issue, it is able to concentrate all its resources and time towards improving that sector. Hence, the CSO can give appropriate attention to the immediate as well as long term issues faced by the people who they are working with. Secondly, the CSO is able to impact education from the block level, right down to the village level. According to its present program, the CSO has the advantage of being a partner in the whole system. It works with the BRC and CRC to improve the overall management of the schools; it works with the panchayats to improve the administration of the schools and solve issues regarding the school system; and it works within the school teaching the students and helping the govt teachers to use new and innovative methods of teaching. Thirdly, due to its education delivery program, the CSO is also able to work with parents and community members and involve them into the process of school system improvement. Thus the CSO is able to make a difference to all levels of education delivery and involve all beneficiaries towards improving the education system.

However there are certain disadvantages of the CSO working as well. The present study highlighted that the CSO is unable to exercise direct control over the govt. teachers to improve their regularity and performance. The CSO cannot officially hold the teachers responsible to itself and hence works with the parents and PTA
members to bring about a change in the teachers’ working. Another aspect is that the CSO has to work within the framework of the MoU that it has with the state. Under no circumstance can it supersede the official agreement with the govt. because the MoU outlines the boundaries within which the CSO is allowed to exist and work. The third disadvantage that the CSO faces is that it has to work while maintaining a balance between the government structures of the BRC, CRC and teachers, and also the community organisations of PTA and panchayats. The main aim that the CSO has to work towards is improving the elementary education delivery without accusing any group of slack behaviour and/or without inherently favouring the other group.

Considering both positive and negative aspects of the CSO’s working, we can conclude that in the present scenario, neither the state nor the civil society is able to deliver education on its own. The magnitude of the task is such that neither of them can handle it independently. That is why a partnership between the two becomes ideal where both can exist together and work together. In this partnership, the state has to have a more authoritative role than the civil society and under no condition can the state allow the civil society to overpower itself. This is because the state has carved a space for the civil society to exist and operate. Though the civil society might work independently of the state, it cannot replace the state nor take over its responsibilities completely.

Another implication of the state-civil society partnership is regarding the sovereignty of the state. If civil society is getting to be a permanent feature, will it eventually acquire enough credibility to operate on its own and without the state? And if that happens, what will happen to state sovereignty? The responsibility of providing social services such as health and education cannot be left to the civil society alone. It is the state that is obligated to take care of the downtrodden and the disadvantaged sections and if it loses its sovereignty to the civil society then these vulnerable groups will suffer the most. While it is important to acknowledge the contributions of civil society and all its advantages, at the same time the demand for the state to fulfil its commitments should not be given up by the citizens; nor should the state look to the civil society as an option to dump all its responsibilities to. The state can learn from the civil society and improve its working and service delivery mechanisms; it can even increase the scope/reach of the civil society’s activities; but neither should the
civil society be allowed to overpower the state, nor should the state lose focus of its overall responsibility and commitment to the citizens. The present study has elaborated that civil society has much to offer to the state in terms of expertise and rigorous efforts which bring positive outcomes. If the state continues to lag behind in fulfilling its responsibilities or is unable to do so due to various reasons, civil society will continue to be present in such areas. A positive approach by the state can be to acknowledge the efforts by civil society and allow it to share the state’s burden without the latter losing its sovereignty and authority.