

Rajasthan Education Initiative

Partnership Description

The Rajasthan Education Initiative (REI) is a new venture aimed at engaging global and local partners from the private sector, foundations and NGOs in innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships to support education in the State of Rajasthan. The Government of Rajasthan has created the REI with the support of the World Economic Forum, the Confederation of Indian Industry, and GeSCI – the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative. Through this Partnership Document, the four “core partners” agree upon the vision and objectives for the Rajasthan Education Initiative, note some possible projects that could be supported or built upon through multi-stakeholder partnerships, and identify possible governance and management structures for the Initiative.

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Rajasthan is the largest State in the Indian Union. With 10% of the landmass of the country and 5% of its population, it presents huge challenges in terms of development and socio-economic growth. Two-thirds of the State is desert with severe water shortages and other attendant disadvantages. The feudal history of the State combined with its natural geographical singularities, render Government developmental programmes difficult to implement, monitor and evaluate. Nevertheless, in the recent past, strenuous efforts have been made to lift the State above restraining factors. New oil finds in the State have also generated much optimism.

Given these natural disadvantages, the State fully realizes that the prospects of all-round development can be improved only if care is taken to develop available human resources. In the past, Rajasthan as a State has authored educational models that have ushered in sweeping changes through innovation and public participation. The now internationally acknowledged Shiksha Karmi Project and the Lok Jumbish Project helped to generate interest in education in far flung areas of the State by utilizing local talent and motivating children to attend schools. The doubling of literacy rates in the State in the last decade is a clear indication of the impact that these measures have had on the population at large. Education in the State received new impetus with the World Bank assisted District Primary Education Projects in 19 Districts, and of course, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education For All) since 2002. In the recent past, determined efforts have been made to provide access to schools for all children, to fill up vacancies of teachers and

to provide free textbooks. The hot cooked mid-day meals programme for all primary school children has also ensured higher levels of enrollment and retention.

The State Government realizes that much ground still remains to be covered and that enlisting the support of all the relevant stakeholders including the private sector, civil society and other voluntary organizations in critical areas of education will yield results that can be effectively demonstrated and that can help inspire similar activities within the traditional education sector. This realization has led the State's government and its partners to think deeply and about how to optimise all available resources, and bring new resources to bear, to support achieving the desired goals.

The present Rajasthan Education Initiative arises from this thinking. Specifically, the REI emerged from discussions held by the Chief Minister of Rajasthan with business, political and NGO leaders in the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting held at Davos in January 2005. Based on the lessons learnt from the Jordan Education Initiative, Rajasthan has evolved for the REI its own definition of public-private partnership in the field of education, involving not only technological interventions in schools, but also socially relevant initiatives to help in the holistic development of the child.

The REI will have a unique position within the education sector positioning Rajasthan. Under the over arching vision of the Millennium Development Goals, and the specific thrust of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the REI will position itself as an outstanding example of public-private partnership which will have the energy and capacity to transform education and bring about a long-term beneficial impact on the development of the human resources of the State.

VISION STATEMENT

The Rajasthan Education Initiative will serve as an umbrella under which innovative multi stakeholder partnerships are catalyzed by engaging the global and local private sector, foundations and charitable organisations and other grass roots level NGOs in support of Rajasthan's education objectives.

The main education objectives identified for Rajasthan by its Government are:

- Access – 100% enrollment in primary education by 2010, 100% enrollment in secondary education by 2020
- Retention – increase numbers finishing primary school to 100% by 2010 and for secondary to considerable higher levels.
- Girls' Education – increase access and retention of girls in primary to near 100% levels and in secondary to levels that will enable them lead productive lives with employment opportunities.
- Learning Achievement – increase quality of learning, especially in areas of Maths, Science and English.
- Empowering for a Global Knowledge Economy – expanding curriculum to provide ICT skills to secondary school students and to enable formation of human capital for the economy.

OBJECTIVES

The REI will focus on improving the delivery of educational services, and in particular on promoting equitable access, enrolment and retention of children in schools, reducing gender disparities, promoting skill development and enhancing learning levels. The REI will seek to bring a new educational paradigm to the State, based on the following strategies:

- Evolving innovative and locally appropriate models of PPPs with a high potential for being scaled up, for improving educational outcomes
- Adopting and adapting best practices from both the public and private sector while ensuring community participation
- Deploying new technologies, particularly ICTs, for modernizing educational service delivery, skill development and quality learning
- Creating systems for enabling greater community participation in the State's educational programme
- Enhancing the flow of resources into the educational sector in Rajasthan by structuring suitable projects and creating incentives for increased participation of different stakeholders
- Focus efforts on serving underprivileged communities in urban and rural areas as well as on the girl children and children with special needs
- Demonstrating the success of such public-private partnership interventions, by evaluating its impact on students with reference to the overall objectives of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
- Disseminating the outcomes and learnings from the REI for replication in other parts of the State, other states in India as well as in other developing countries

The overall objective of the REI will be to demonstrate robust, sustainable and scalable models, approaches, tools and methodologies that can significantly impact educational outcomes and transform the educational scenario of the State.

ROLES OF THE CORE PARTNERS

The State Government and the three other core partners, namely, the World Economic Forum, the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative and the Confederation of Indian Industries are committed to the achievement of the objectives of the Initiative and determined to work together for demonstrating the success of this public-partnership model in the field of the Education in the State.

These three core partners will facilitate and assist the State Government in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the individual projects within the REI and evaluate the success of each of them so as to learn lessons from the experience. Efforts shall also be undertaken to encourage the participation of more stakeholders willing to take part in this model of public-private partnership. The core partners will also assist the State Government of Rajasthan to explore the possibilities for scaling up the individual pilot projects presently under execution once their success has been demonstrated, so that a wider canvas with a greater number of schools and students can be benefited with the power of ICT intervention in education and the other related projects involving social responsibility programmes. It is our joint endeavour to work together to transform education in Rajasthan.

Government of Rajasthan:

As leader and driver of the Rajasthan Education Initiative, the Government of the State shall:

1. Drive the programme and bring substantial public funding into REI
2. Ensure that efforts within the REI are aligned with broader objectives of the State and ensure smooth collaboration in such efforts
3. Undertake efforts to scale up successful PPPs catalysed under the REI and to bring them within the SSA and other government supported programs.

Confederation of Indian Industry:

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the growth of industry in India, partnering industry and government alike through advisory and consultative processes. It is a non-government, not-for-

profit organization which endeavours to catalyse change by working with government on policy issues, while providing a platform for sectoral consensus building and networking. CII will:

1. Endeavour to garner resources and skills for the REI in mobilizing its membership especially amongst Rajasthan's small and medium scale enterprises ensuring the creation of local capabilities and capacities in making the REI sustainable.

GeSCI – the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative:

The Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI), founded by the UN ICT Task Force, has the mission to improve education, empower communities and accelerate socio-economic development, this supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through the wide-spread deployment of ICT in schools. Its approach is to catalyse, support and collaborate with national/regional initiatives in the design and implementation of end-to-end systems for attaining desired educational objectives and developmental goals. GeSCI will support the REI in several ways:

1. Facilitate the strategic planning and implementation for REI and assist the Government of Rajasthan in structuring the Initiative for ensuring optimal value
2. Support the setting up of the REI project management office
3. Provide access to the services of its own specialist personnel and other experts from partner organisations of GeSCI, in key areas such as technology options, content and monitoring & evaluation
4. Leverage its knowledge capabilities and its network of global partners to ensure that international best practices are applied in the REI
5. Deploy a full-time Facilitator in Rajasthan to deliver or enable delivery of the above services, and provide advice and support to the Government of Rajasthan on the REI and on ICTs in Education generally.

World Economic Forum:

The World Economic Forum is an independent international organisation committed to improving the state of the world by engaging leaders in partnerships to shape the global, regional and industry agenda. It is a non-for-profit foundation and is tied to no political, partisan or national interests. The World Economic Forum will:

1. Bring its unique capabilities in catalyzing private public partnerships by engaging its global membership and providing expert support in the management of PPPs

Common Roles:

Together, the core partners will utilize their particular talents and core competencies to engage the private sector in the REI and synergise corporate and other energies into the specific projects identified for implementation as well as for new projects. Furthermore, they will take common responsibility for the overall oversight and evaluation of the Initiative, through governance structures along lines such as those outlined below.

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The REI envisages an integrated strategy revolving around two work-streams:

- Using technological interventions for effective delivery of educational instructions; and
- Creating an enabling environment in which effective learning can take place, including care and concern of disadvantaged students.

In these two areas, the following ongoing initiatives have been identified.

New technology interventions:

The following ICT interventions are in the process of implementation in the State:

- Project GRACE (Girls of Rajasthan and Computer Education) – Under the ICT@Schools programme of the Government of India for 100 senior secondary girls' schools of educationally backward blocks of the State. Partnerships can be evolved for support especially for connectivity and power in remote areas and maintenance
- District Computer Training Centres – In each of the 32 District headquarters where about 30-40 computers are available. Support can be invited for developing sustainable business models for funding these centers and for connectivity
- School Computer Education Programme – About 3600 secondary and senior secondary have been covered under this model on BOT basis and support is sought for extension of the programme after expiry of the BOT contract and for learning materials that will increase impact of computers deployed as also for connectivity.

- Computer-Aided Learning Programme (CALP) – Involving about 380 schools where the programme is presently being implemented through assistance of the Azim Premji Foundation. Support is invited for expanding the programme beyond the current schools.
- EDUSAT – About 100 locations including Teacher Training Institutions are being made operational by the Indian Space Research Organisation. Support for creating content to utilize Edusat effectively and expanding number of locations with access is desirable.
- Teacher Training Technology Academies – Partnership with world-class ICT companies for effective skill upgradation for teachers is already in place and can be expanded to cover all the teachers in the State.
- Departmental Computerisation – All field level offices down to block level to be computerized. Support is required for data management and connectivity solutions and for making sure that the ICTs installed are used effectively.

Other potential ICT interventions could be:

- Deploying and using ICTs in primary schools – Especially to promote retention.
- Mobile ICT Labs – To promote retention in primary schools in remote areas, and minimize the digital divide that could arise between centrally located and remote schools.
- Distance Learning for Teachers – Increasing quality of teachers as a significant way of improving learning achievements.

Non-ICT interventions to enhance enabling environment and provide social empowerment:

The REI takes pride in asserting that apart from technology interventions, there shall be a clear focus on other aspects of schooling involving social responsibility commitments to help the underprivileged and deprived children gain access to the unlimited advantages of education sometimes taken for granted by other children placed in more advantageous positions in life. This human concern for the welfare of such children is perhaps the single most distinguishing feature of the REI.

Some of the suggested programmes include:

- Learning Skills Development – Whereas access has been provided to a large extent and the question of teacher recruitment has been substantially addressed, the real issue is now of learning skills and competencies of the child. Effective competency development programmes with verifiable standards have to be put in place, especially in far flung areas of the

State. This problem is, in fact, more acute in areas of the State inhabited by disadvantaged societies and also among some sections of the socially backward population. The MoU already in place with the Azim Premji Foundation is a good example to emulate as also the MoU with the Hole in the Wall Education Ltd., a subsidiary of NIIT.

- Adoption of Schools – Adoption of schools for both capital cost by way of construction and recurring cost for management has been proposed by the Education Department. A MoU model to cater to the individual adoption pattern of potential donors has already been put in place. There is much scope for the corporate sector to accept this programme
- Scholarships for Indigent Children – Many foundations and charitable organizations are coming forward to provide stipend for indigent, but bright, children to pursue their studies. The examples set by the Akshaya Patra Foundation and the Foundation for Excellence are noteworthy. Again, this is an area for wide-scale replication.
- Mid-day Meals Programme – Improving the quality of the mid-day meals offered to enhance nutrition and to attract more children to come to school for the meals. There is a viability gap between current levels of provisioning by the Government of India and the State Government towards this programme and the actual requirement of a quality meal with adequate calorific value. This gap is now being made good by some selected foundations such as Akshaya Patra and is certainly adaptable in a big way in all the primary schools in the State.
- Children with Special Needs – Although there is a funding within the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for this purpose, there is much that is desired to be done. The numbers of voluntary organizations working in this sector are required to be enhanced with corporate assistance. The State Government has announced scholarships for all girl children with disabilities in classes IX to XII. There is unlimited potential to take this programme further. It is not out of place to mention here the MoUs signed with Bodh Shikshan Sansthan for deprived slum children. In the same vein, the MoU with the international foundation Educate Girls Globally (EGG) for enrolment and retention of girls in schools is also a noteworthy beginning.
- Health and Sanitation – Within the overall framework of the Total Sanitation Campaign, an ambitious programme has been taken up for providing over 40,000 schools with water and sanitation facilities within the next three years with the active involvement of the State Public Health Engineering Department and the UNICEF.

Cross-cutting issues:

- Teacher Training – It is an undisputed fact that the only real way to improve quality of education in schools is to have well-qualified and motivated teachers with periodic training for skill upgradation. Such training programmes should equip them

to be competent to accept technological changes in teaching methodology and also improvement in pedagogical competencies. The teacher training programmes that will be initiated with the MoUs now in place with ICT leaders such as Microsoft, Intel and Cisco will serve as models for all training programme in the State. It has also been observed that there is adequate funding for such programme within the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and this can be skillfully clubbed with the expertise available with the ICT companies.

- Curriculum – Along with the increasing deployment of ICT in schools, the need for introduction of Computer-Aided Learning Programme has become apparent. There is an on-going debate on the kind and quality of e-curriculum that is required for adoption in schools. The curriculum has to be tailored to the specific needs of the educational system of the State while enabling children to understand concepts and important basic instructional inputs that will have a long-lasting impact on the mental growth of the student. There are adequate and large numbers of such software available in the market and a judicious decision will have to be taken while examining the issues related to curriculum.
- Infrastructure – It is realized that there are again funds available for creation of infrastructure for schools in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which is for education up to the level of elementary, although there is a constraint of funds in the secondary and senior secondary stage of education. The involvement of the corporate sector for such requirements can be examined under the REI along with the resources of the State Government.

GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

The governance and management of the Rajasthan Education Initiative must adhere to three central principles:

- Accord the leading role to the Government of Rajasthan, recognising its primacy in setting objectives for education on behalf of its people, the leadership and enterprise already displayed by its political leadership and bureaucracy, and the public finance that has already been dedicated to the REI.
- Ensure independence of the fundamental governance of REI from partners involved in individual projects that are catalysed by and operate under the REI.
- Be responsive to, and seek out, appropriate inputs from all partners involved in REI projects, so that REI governance and management is able to optimize the environment for those projects and maximise their chances of success.

While specific details of governance and management remain to be finalised by the State Government and the other core partners, the Rajasthan Education Initiative will have governing bodies to supervise the REI and a Programme Management Office to oversee implementation.

The Programme Management Office will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the REI with responsibility for recruiting partners, filtering proposals for projects, oversight of implementation of projects and for helping resolve issues, managing relationships with partners, evaluation of project impact at the end of project period, dissemination of findings and enabling scaling up where appropriate. The structure of the Office should be lean and small to ensure efficiency with appropriate delegation of powers and authority at different levels. It may consist of Programme Director, Programme Coordinator, and Programme Officers – appointed by the Government of Rajasthan. Experts may be hired, or tapped from outside partners, to advise on education, ICTs, PPP frameworks, and monitoring & evaluation. GeSCI’s Facilitator will act as an advisor to the REI Programme Director and Programme Coordinator.

Each approved project should put in place appropriate management structures to ensure delivery, which will be the responsibility of the private sector or other partners involved. The Government of Rajasthan recognises that it will need to appoint project liaisons for each specific project launched under REI, in addition to its responsibility for assigning staff to the PMO. Furthermore, the Government will need to allocate the time and energies of people at district and school levels to work on, and ensure coordination between, projects at local levels and the private sector playing an effective role.

FUNDING

In addition to the budgetary resources of the Government of Rajasthan, funds from the Government of India, and financial contributions from private sector partners, other sources of funding for the REI and its projects could include donor funding, community funding through Panchayats, and institutional finance including loans, among others.

EVALUATION OF THE REI

The REI shall develop a suitable evaluation framework, which will reflect the stated vision and roles for the initiative and measure impact on key issues of Rajasthan's Education System. The evaluation will assist in adjusting implementation strategies as the initiative progresses.

* * *

C.K. Mathew,
Principal Secretary, Education
Government of Rajasthan

Peter Torreele,
Managing Director,
World Economic Forum

Stephen Nolan,
Executive Director,
Global e-Schools & Communities Initiative

N. Srinivasan,
Director General,
Confederation of Indian Industry