TRIBAL EDUCATION
A FINE BALANCE

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In Sanskrit, Dasra means "Enlightened Giving".

Dasra enables non-profit organizations, who change
the lives of marginalized communities, to scale.
We provide organizations with growth capital
and management expertise, maximizing charitable
investments for philanthropists.

Contents

Introduction

Summary

In a country marked by a spaghetti bowl of languages, castes, religions and ideas; cementing indigenous values while embracing modernity, is a progressive phenomenon. Within the context of the education of marginalized communities such as tribals, a fine balance between these two ends of the spectrum is necessary to yield results that have an impact, are sustainable, and underpin a holistic education effort.

Education as a means of advancement of capacity, well-being and opportunity is uncontested, and more so among communities on the periphery. Marked improvements in access and to some extent in quality of primary education in tribal areas have occurred, and stem from government and non-government initiatives. However, the number of out-of-school children continues to be several millions, mainly due to a lack of interest and parental motivation, inability to understand the medium of instruction (i.e. state language), teacher absenteeism and attitude, opportunity cost of time spent in school (particularly for girls), large seasonal migration etc. Low literacy rates in tribal communities continue to indicate a need for overarching support that tackles issues from health to attitudes of non-tribal populations.

Recognizing that the education system is currently designed for the dominant group, there needs to be investment in creating support mechanisms that supplement the assimilation of tribal children into the formal education system.

Dasra has conducted several interviews with tribal communities, site visits to tribal villages and discussions with NGO (non-governmental organization) practitioners. Based on these interactions, there has been a clear indication that education support programs need to build on the strengths of the tribal community, value their culture and history, and at the same time, establish programs which enable, more or less seamless, integration into mainstream education systems.

This balancing act between preserving tribal cultural identity and mainstreaming for economic prosperity can be better achieved through creating stronger community cultural wealth by developing a tribal child as an individual. Educational content must encompass building life skills that can help integration with the mainstream system.

Objectives

Given the unique space occupied by education in the overall development of the tribal community, Dasra undertook a study that allowed culling out key issues facing the sector. The report goes beyond a usual situational analysis to provide recommendations, based on Dasra's own research, evaluation and thoughts that emerged from observations, intensive discussions, brainstorming and NGO visits to tribal districts.

By highlighting challenges as well as best practices, the report can be used as a guide for organizations and donors keen to enter the field of tribal education. It includes brief descriptions of tribal education programs of select organizations, and can help in forming partnerships on the ground, as appropriate. The report should not be viewed as a stand-alone publication, and is meant to serve as a basis for further knowledge sharing and dialogue.

Layout

The study begins with a background and a brief outline of Dasra's approach to addressing the issue of tribal education. A discussion on the history of the tribal community which has deeply impacted their current position in the social ladder ensues, followed by major factors (internal and external) that have resulted in the sub-standard state of education. Appropriate recommendations for tackling each of these key factors are delineated.

The report is peppered with case studies of innovative models and best practice examples that highlight the most effective and scalable education programs. The crux of the analysis – a need to find the fine balance between traditional and modern education programs – provides the finishing touch to the report.

Dasra's Research Process

Assessment of Education in Gujarat	Analyze NGO programs	Knowledge Exchange on Tribal Education	Summary and Conclusions
◤ Detailed education sector mapping based on secondary research, discussions with education experts, NGOs, government, private sector ◤ Field visits to tribal areas in Gujarat ◤ Needs assessment by identifying key gaps	◤ Undertake intensive secondary research to identify comprehensive tribal education programs across the country ◤ Site visits to relevant NGOs in Rajasthan and Karnataka • Identify tribal activities and results • Assess organization's capacity to deliver • Identify and prioritize best practices	◤ Organize knowledge exchange on tribal education for practitioners spanning India ◤ Sharing of regional experiences, learning and best practices around education for tribal communities ◤ Discussion of barriers, program models, frameworks and approaches that have improved learning for tribal children in rural India	◤ Synthesize analysis and provide conclusions

Situation Overview

The marginalized, by definition and logic and irrespective of faith, form or culture are smaller in number than the dominant (or mainstream) social groups. Indian society is marked by age-old tensions between marginalized groups, castes, tribes, and multiple social layers stemming from a spaghetti bowl of linguistic, racial and religious groups. People displaced by factors such as natural disasters, man-made political events (e.g. wars), economic changes, inconsistency in patterns of livelihood support, have continuously added to swelling numbers of these marginalized communities.

The tribal population in India, an estimated 87 million, is marked by intense diversity

Traditionally referred to as *adivasis*, tribes, or tribals, scheduled tribes (STs) constitute about 9% of India's population. Despite diversity in their community history, languages, production practices, and relationships with the non-tribal world, approximately 87 million Indians fall under the *adivasi* population, of which nomadic and denotified communities[1] (DNTs), are at a projected 60 million. Nine States – Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, and West Bengal – together account for more than four-fifths of the total tribal population in India.

Each of the 573 scheduled tribes has their own language, and differs from the one mostly spoken in the State where they reside (Govinda, 2002). Tribals are not a homogenous group. Different tribes, even if living in the same village, maintain exclusive identities. Socialization is generally endogamous and they identify more with people belonging to their tribe rather than to those living in the same village or area.

The current perception of tribals, and their resulting exclusion from mainstream society, can be traced to the pre-Independence period

In pre-colonial times, nomadic communities sustained themselves through livelihood options such as cattle rearing, trade, crafts, carrying items for barter etc. The *adivasis* of India repeatedly rebelled against the British in the Northeast, Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. *Adivasi* rebellion in hills and forest was concurrent with education of the rest of India (Devy, 2008). Branded as "criminals" during the long period of British rule, the land possessed by the "criminal tribes" was alienated. At the time of independence, India started to view the *adivasis* as primitive, and thus out of step with history (Devy, 2008).

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[1] This is a government assigned category for nomadic communities. Some of these communities are also classified as scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and other backward classes (OBC), while others are left out entirely.

> *The history of tribals during the last 60 years is filled with stories of forced displacement, land alienation and increasing marginalization, eruption of violence and the counter-violence by the State. Going by any parameters of development, the tribals always figure at the tail end. The situation of the communities that have been pastoral or nomadic has been even worse.*

> *Ganesh Devy, Founder, Bhasha*

As a result, tribal communities continue to face economic deprivation and lack of access to basic services

Due to the absence of rehabilitation following Independence, tribals are dispersed across the country, and live on the periphery further away from urbanization. As industrialization and urbanization flourish, infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity are not reaching these tribal localities. Reduced accessibility and connection has further deprived tribals from improving their lives. Additionally, *adivasis* who have accepted "facelessness" as the only option for survival often migrate to cities as an attempt to stumble on a job within the mainstream. However, they are often unable to find a place in city slums, due to an entrenched caste hierarchy that is difficult to penetrate.

Realizing the need to improve the overall status of tribals, their education has emerged at the forefront of recent development efforts

As a basic component of human development, the 83rd Amendment to the constitution has made free elementary education a fundamental right of all the citizens of India. Successive governments have attempted to balance the inequity in the education system, particularly for the marginalized groups. Acknowledging that tribals comprise the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect

to education, a host of programs and measures have been initiated since India's Independence. With education viewed as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities, elementary education has been made a priority area in the tribal sub-plans since the 5th Five Year Plan (1974-79). As of March 2001, there were 16 million ST children out of a total child population of about 193 million in the age group of 6-14 years in the country.

> *In the 1980s, with literacy levels in the tribal areas 20% lower than the national average, an ideological shift in government thinking occurred. The realization of the need to mainstream tribal areas was based on the link between lack of education and under-development of tribal areas.*

> *A. M. Tiwari,*
> *Secretary, Tribal Development Affairs, Gujarat*

There have been marked improvements in access, and to some extent in quality of primary education in tribal areas

Education has recently witnessed a rapid transformation, particularly in the areas of access, pedagogic reform and community participation in tribal areas. Emphasis has been on improving access to primary education through schemes of non-formal education (NFE), and attempts to improve quality via training, using local teachers, adapting curriculum and providing locally relevant teaching-learning materials to tribal students.

> *Fundamental changes in how society thinks are essential to enable the marginalized to engage with the mainstream, and thereby improve their survival (and revival) chances after a disaster. In societies where prejudice and bias run deep and there is little public debate on key issues, the need for a profound shift in attitude is critical.*

> *Suchitra Sheth, Setu*

Low literacy rates continue to indicate a need for more holistic support, from health to non-tribal attitudes, thus allowing for delivery of high-quality education

Despite the education initiatives, there is disparity among the states in terms of tribal literacy rates ranging from 82% in Mizoram to 17% in Andhra Pradesh. The ST literacy rate continues to be below the national average of 29.6% (Govinda, 2002), with literacy rates among tribal communities (in particular women) tending to be the lowest[2]. There exist areas in the tribal-dominated districts across India that remains largely unserved by primary education facilities. Tribal children tend to inhabit forests and hard-to-reach areas where dwellings are spread and access to good quality education is more limited. Low enrolment coupled with soaring drop-out rates in primary schools exacerbates the problem, which has its origin in a gamut of inter-related cultural and socio-economic variables. *Adivasis* are associated with a certain stigma and behavior, which can be partially tackled through a change in mindset among non-tribals.

The under-development of the tribal areas further exacerbates issues in delivering quality education:

◣ Good teachers prefer to live in urban/semi urban centres and therefore, need to commute for 4-5 hours per day to reach tribal area schools

◣ Lack of electricity and water results in poor school infrastructure causing dismal sanitary conditions and low ventilation

◣ Long lead times for delivery of teaching materials imply that textbooks and training materials arrive at the schools after the training program, or not at all

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[2] Given their nomadic nature, the literacy rate among DNTs is particularly lower than among SC and STs, malnutrition is more entrenched, and healthcare and education facilities are minimal.
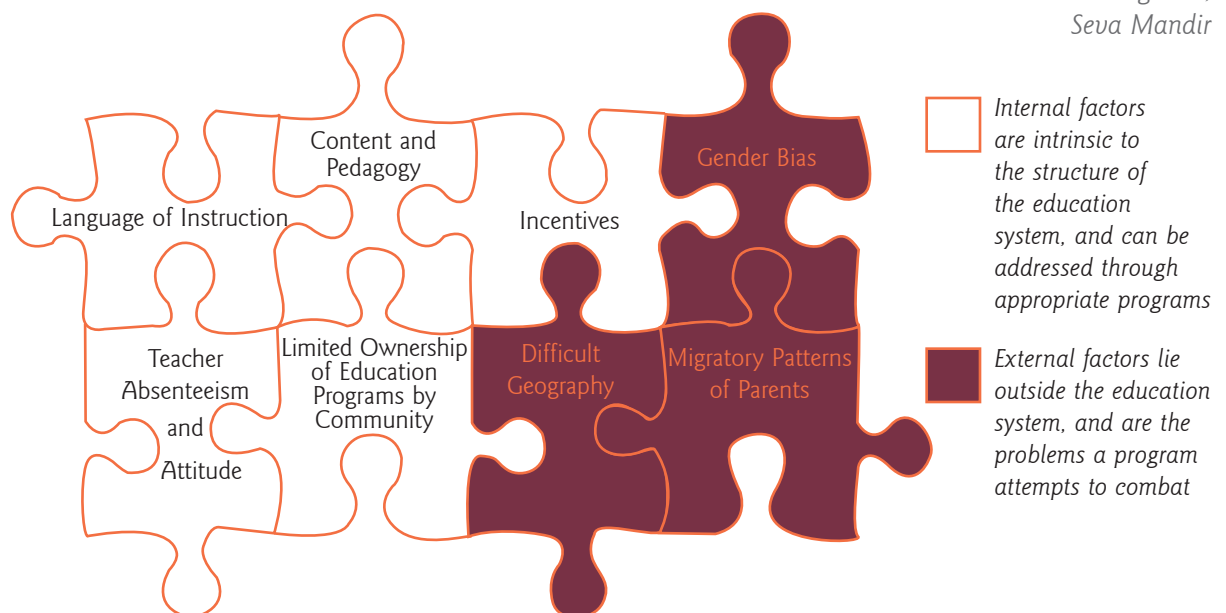
Pieces of the Puzzle

Reasons for Out-of-School Tribal Children

High numbers for tribal out-of-school children (those never enrolled in school or drop-outs) stems from a range of factors

Empirical evidence suggests that tribal children possess the basic cognitive abilities and psychological dispositions for successful participation in schools, and their low achievement levels are attributed to school-related variables as would apply to non-tribal students (Gautam, 2003). Poor performance of tribal students and the below average situation of primary education in tribal areas is driven by inter-related factors. Most children tend to be first generation learners whose education is not reinforced or supported in their home environments. Some of these issues can be addressed through appropriate program design and strategy.

> 66 *The situation of tribal education is related to the quality of education in general, and not solely to being tribal. Of course being a tribal also means that most of the time they are also poor, they live in areas where the provision of education is very weak, so the situation is not only because they are tribals but because of all these inter-related issues. It is important therefore to view the problem in all its complexity.* 99

*Priyanka Singh, Incharge,
Education and Health Programs,
Seva Mandir*

Content and Pedagogy

Language of Instruction

Gender Bias

Incentives

Teacher Absenteeism and Attitude

Limited Ownership of Education Programs by Community

Difficult Geography

Migratory Patterns of Parents

Internal factors are intrinsic to the structure of the education system, and can be addressed through appropriate programs

External factors lie outside the education system, and are the problems a program attempts to combat

A | Internal Factors

1 | Language of Instruction - State or Tribal language?

With a natural disposition towards the local dialect, a tribal child is generally unfamiliar with the state language

As a child's first exposure to education, there is debate around the language used for instruction and communication. Tribal children have limited contact with the state language, and tend to speak in their own local dialect. Government schools use the state language for teaching and communication, which is most often not familiar to a tribal child at the pre-primary and primary levels. They are thus unable to fully comprehend classroom teaching and activities, read in the state language or understand the texts properly.

Gradually introducing the state language can enhance linguistic capital as well as improve the child's potential in mainstream education systems

The use of the tribal language in the initial years can develop a sense of comfort for the tribal child. It must be the first language and taught as a means of acquiring knowledge of tribal culture, ethnicity, literature and the arts. The child can be exposed to the state language steadily, which is imperative for integration into mainstream schools and society. Assuming that a tribal child receives bi-lingual education, an additional language (e.g. English) can be used in the first two years, solely for oral communication.

Usage of Tribal Language at Pre-Primary and Primary Levels

+ Advantages	- Disadvantages
◣Tribal language instruction makes the process of education and learning easier and more natural ◣By affording a sense of assimilation, such a practice can aid in reducing drop-outs ◣This can also help increase a child's participation in learning processes at school	◣Often, tribals themselves perceive local content and tribal language education as a way to keep the community backward *(See Case Study 1)* ◣Adequate dialogue with tribal communities may be required to gain acceptance of the tribal language as a medium of instruction

" *The medium of instruction cannot only be the local dialect, because of practical constraints. It must however start with that. More importantly, class room transactions must be such that they show respect for the child's language, identity and social background. Instilling this dignity within a child, can be done even in a multilingual setting, and be totally ignored even when the medium of instruction is the tribal language. You also have to account for people's (tribals) own aspirations of learning other languages.* "

Priyanka Singh, Incharge,
Education and Health Programs,
Seva Mandir

Case Study 1: Eklavya's Fight with Multilingualism

Instead of one language, Eklavya encourages multilingualism to enrich conceptualization and skills development

With tribals in Madhya Pradesh comprising 20-25% of India's total tribal population, Eklavya, a Bhopal-based NGO has developed materials for different kinds of learning contexts for tribal children. It has worked both with government and NGOs, and allows children to learn at their own pace. Eklavya's community based out-of-school education support centres or 'Shiksha Protsahan Kendras' (SPKs), provide a child-friendly, flexible learning environment to children for two hours in a day.

The SPK has library books, activity materials and works around the State textbooks, but does not have any separate textbooks. These centres are run with community support and are monitored by them, while volunteers are trained by Eklavya. Issues of interest to the children are explored and incorporated in the content of reading and writing activities. While oral interaction takes place in the tribal language, the medium of literacy activities is Hindi (i.e. the regional language).

Interestingly, the tribal language medium has been viewed as a barrier to integration by select tribes

Despite the belief in the pedagogical soundness of educating in mother tongues at the primary level, the situation in Madhya Pradesh is in sharp contrast. Major tribes (Gonds and Korkus) in this area have demanded that their children do not learn to read in their own language. Local tribal languages are viewed as stymieing their progress and integration into mainstream society. This indicates a need to develop mechanisms that support tribal children and enable them to excel as minorities in a dominant education system.

Source: Noronha (2006)

Dasra's Recommendation

The importance of the tribal language as the foundation of a child in the early years, and the underlying benefits of increasing achievement/learning levels by granting familiarity, cannot be over-emphasized. In a multilingual society geared towards the default state language, reliance on the local tribal dialect *solely* can entrench the differentiation between the tribal and non-tribal community – hindering the process of mainstreaming.
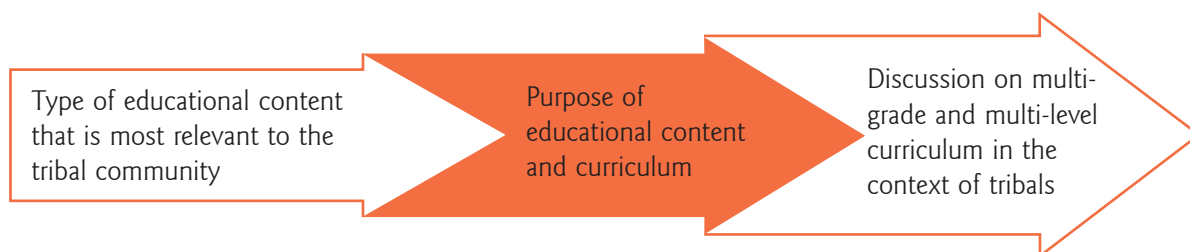
Using the tribal dialect as a medium to transact the state curriculum, particularly for the first few years, and introducing the state language gradually as the child becomes comfortable in the school environment, can yield positive results.

Dedicated Tribal Primary Schools from Classes I - III can provide the needed language and cultural support for transitioning tribal children to mainstream curriculums and schools. Similar to any bi-lingual education, this has the benefits of retaining local roots, and yet, adjusting to a future school environment that beckons integration and advancement.

It has also been proven that a tribal child begins his/her education with no linguistic information and conceptualization, compared to a non-tribal child who has a few familiar concepts and linguistic associations, even at the outset. A pre-school training program for the tribal child can help place the tribal students on an equal footing with the non-tribal. This builds the child's linguistic capital at an early age and the language bridge to the mainstream state language; tribal communities possess strong linguistic capital which needs to be preserved and expanded both inside and outside the education system.

2 | Curriculum Content - Methods and Materials that Allow for Local Adaptation

This section follows the outline provided below:

Type of educational content that is most relevant to the tribal community → Purpose of educational content and curriculum → Discussion on multi-grade and multi-level curriculum in the context of tribals

Type of Educational Content

The king and queen live in a large and beautiful palace. But what is a palace?

In school we were told that Hindus pray in a temple, Muslims in a mosque, and Christians go to church. What about us?

Excerpts of conversations between a tribal child and his/her parents

Educational content should be molded in the "relevant" culture of the community…

Research in child development and pedagogy has indicated that a young child learns concepts better if these are embedded in contexts that are meaningful i.e. contexts that are local and familiar. Under the government program Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), words, terminologies, messages, topics reflected in the syllabus and textbooks are most often alien to tribals, and can reinforce their "differing" identity. The new National Curriculum Framework however recommends a plurality of textbooks, meant to create a theoretical space for local specificity.

…by developing content that embraces the local context, and methods that inject a "fun" element into learning

Language resources of the tribal community can be tapped for this purpose, as has been done by the government in Orissa. Developing primers and dictionaries in the tribal dialect involving content from the local context can help improve the quality of teaching *(See Case Study 2)*. There is also a growing focus on workbooks that supplement the learning process for children in various subjects, and can encourage children to undertake assignments outside the classroom (e.g. conduct science experiments at home with local materials). Other teaching aids to make learning more fun and creative include puppets, model making, singing and drama.

Case Study 2: Bhasha and the Conservation of Tribal Culture, including Curriculum Development

" *We know Gandhi did wonderful deeds and is well respected. But we want to learn about adivasi leaders.* "

Sonal Rathwa,
Tribal Teacher, Bhasha

Established in 1996, Bhasha, meaning "language" or "voice", was started as a Research and Publication Trust by Sahitya Akademi laureate Dr. G.N Devy to promote *adivasi* culture and for *adivasi* self-expression. Bhasha has strived to combine academic research with grassroot level activism to bring about constructive change in the *adivasi* society in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh. Its major areas of work have been conservation and promotion of minority languages, education, healthcare, empowerment of *adivasi* communities in India, development of *adivasi* arts, and policy level interventions in the interest of ecology, human rights and *adivasi* empowerment.

Bhasha's activities and programs related to preserving tribal tradition include:

Adivasi Academy	Publications	Tribal Consortium
◣ Set up for promotion of tribal languages, literature, arts and culture and as an institute of formal education ◣ Undertakes teacher trainings, organizes knowledge exchanges and conferences, offers post-graduate diplomas in areas such as tribal studies ◣ Library has 18,000 titles on tribal society, anthropology, linguistics etc. and a collection of audio-visual material ◣ Museum of Voice (Vaacha) holds a collection of digitized recordings of cultural and artistic expressions of tribal voices, and is the largest resource centre of tribal culture in India	◣ Actively engages in documentation of oral traditions, knowledge systems and cultural forms of *adivasis* in their own languages, providing a platform to *adivasi* writers for intellectual and creative expression ◣ Experience in curriculum development for tribal education (including pictorial glossaries in Gujarati, English, *Adivasi* languages) ◣ Its multi-lingual magazine Dhol, is entirely devoted to *adivasis*, written by them, printed exclusively in tribal dialects and distributed in villages	◣ Initiated work on a project to consolidate holdings of all Tribal Research and Training Institutes (TRTI) museums in digital format to form a National Consortium of Indian Tribal Arts and Culture (NCTAC) ◣ Proposed to hold an exhibition of the digitized material and launch a website dedicated to Tribal Arts ◣ About 8,000 pages have been collected for the Cultural encyclopedia which is a compendium of knowledge for the tribals

Source: Bhasha Website; Dasra Visit and Discussions

Purpose of Educational Content

Curriculum should be culturally sensitive and provide children with economically viable options for life…

In addition to developing culturally sensitive programs of school education that ensure dignity of tribal groups (Mishra, Sinha and Berry, 1996), curriculum should incorporate programs that sustain children in their respective environments instead of forcing them to move out. Such attempts can provide tribal children with culturally meaningful, ecologically valid and viable alternatives, by reinforcing the dignity of their culture and identity.

…with a view that tribals need to be "employable"

Education can include knowledge of agriculture in all its dimensions, skills of various vocations like carpentry, crafts, wood etc. to enable a child to become independent in their own environment. For instance, Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) has self-help groups to help sustain livelihoods for tribals through mural-making, which is now bringing in a monthly income of INR 2,000-4,000 per person for nearly 10-12 people *(See Case Study 3)*.

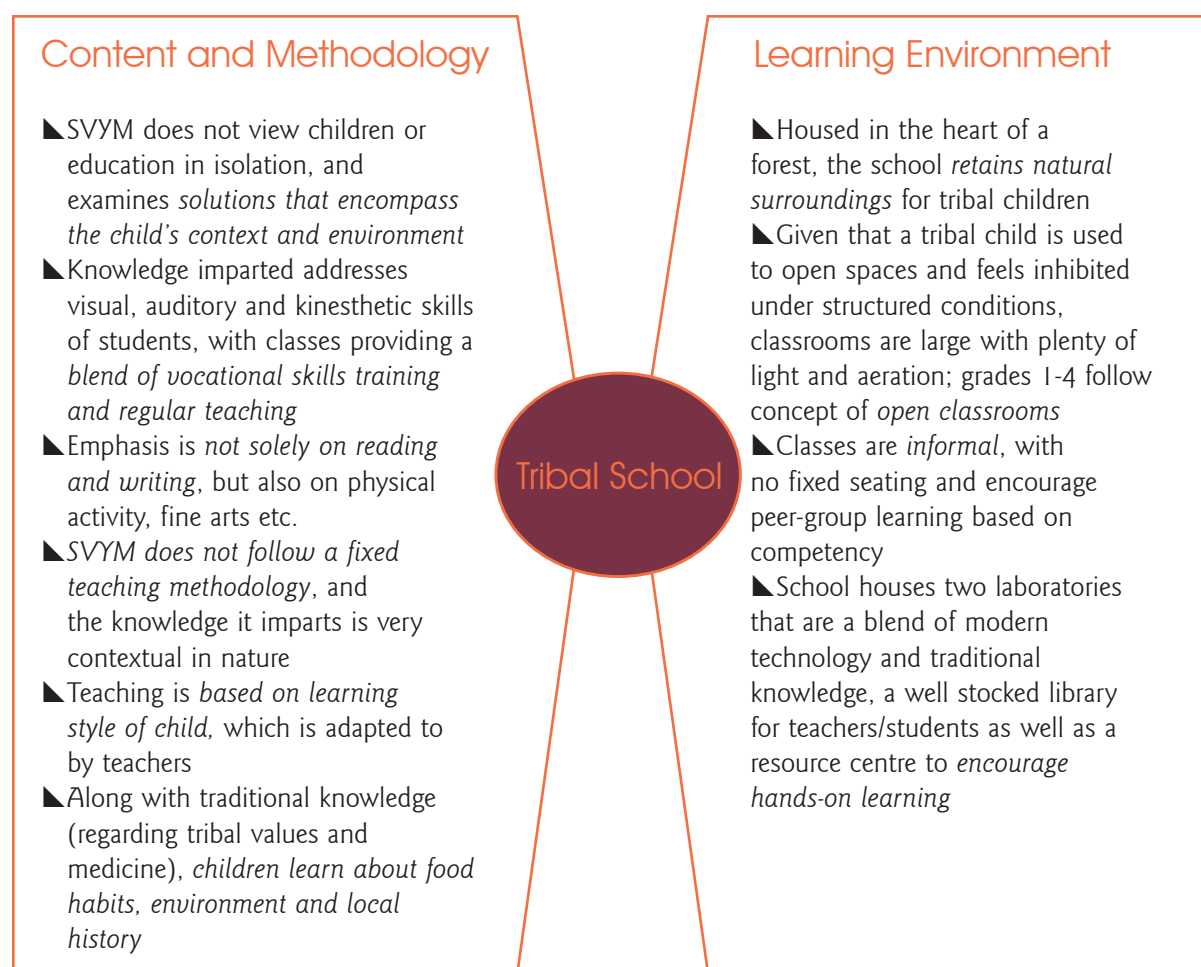66 *How can we create job opportunities in villages? Can this be achieved via the medium of education?* 99

Manish Rathwa,
Tribal Teacher, Bhasha

Case Study 3: SVYM's Education Model is Rooted in the Tribal Context and Culture

" *Education in its true sense should extend beyond mere literacy. The focus would be on providing literacy along with the creation of an environment in which the child's innate potential flowers out. Education, apart from increasing the awareness levels should also focus on imparting values, skills and the ability to think independently.* "

Dr. Balasubramaniam,
President, SVYM

SVYM provides high quality, basic education that is contextually relevant and culturally appropriate to children in the 2-16 years age group, with a special focus on the girl child. SVYM has projects in all districts of Karnataka, in Wyanad district of Kerala and training sites in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The Viveka Tribal Centre for Learning (VTCL) is a semi-residential school, based in Mysore district of Karnataka that aims to bring benefits of basic education to 450 children (primarily first generation learners) from surrounding tribal colonies. The school is affiliated with the State education department and has thus adopted Kannada as the medium of instruction.

Content and Methodology

- SVYM does not view children or education in isolation, and examines *solutions that encompass the child's context and environment*
- Knowledge imparted addresses visual, auditory and kinesthetic skills of students, with classes providing a *blend of vocational skills training and regular teaching*
- Emphasis is *not solely on reading and writing,* but also on physical activity, fine arts etc.
- *SVYM does not follow a fixed teaching methodology,* and the knowledge it imparts is very contextual in nature
- Teaching is *based on learning style of child,* which is adapted to by teachers
- Along with traditional knowledge (regarding tribal values and medicine), *children learn about food habits, environment and local history*

Tribal School

Learning Environment

- Housed in the heart of a forest, the school *retains natural surroundings* for tribal children
- Given that a tribal child is used to open spaces and feels inhibited under structured conditions, classrooms are large with plenty of light and aeration; grades 1-4 follow concept of *open classrooms*
- Classes are *informal,* with no fixed seating and encourage peer-group learning based on competency
- School houses two laboratories that are a blend of modern technology and traditional knowledge, a well stocked library for teachers/students as well as a resource centre to *encourage hands-on learning*

Source: Dasra Site Visit and Interviews; SVYM Annual Reports; SVYM Website

Examples of Select Initiatives

➤ *Andhra Pradesh* has created *bilingual dictionaries*, as well as developed *literature* in the form of songs, stories, fact books on environment, history, festivals, charts, games, self-learning cards etc. which are used in selected schools of tribal-rich districts (National Tribal Commission, 2008).

➤ *Orissa* has provided *tribal primers* to 163,000 tribal children, supported by picture dictionary, teacher's handbook, conversational chart, self-learning materials for teachers, and language training module for non-tribal teachers (Educational Resource Unit, 2006).

➤ *Supplementary TLM* (teacher-learning materials) for tribal children has been developed in Jhabua district of *Madhya Pradesh* using local cultural form i.e. folk tales, songs, proverbs, riddles.

➤ *Gujarat* has developed *dictionaries* in Dangi and Bhili dialects, and *local work glossaries* in *adivasi* dialects for schools in class I-IV in Banaskantha and Dang districts. (National Tribal Commission, 2008).

> 66 *A program of schooling, which does not pay attention to the ecological, cultural and psychological characteristics of tribal children is highly unlikely to make any significant impact. The educational system of the dominant non-tribal population is of very limited value in the tribal cultural milieu because it does not match with the lifestyle of individuals and the needs of the tribal community.* 99
>
> *Janshala,*
> *Community Based Education Program*

Multi-grade Multi-level Curriculum

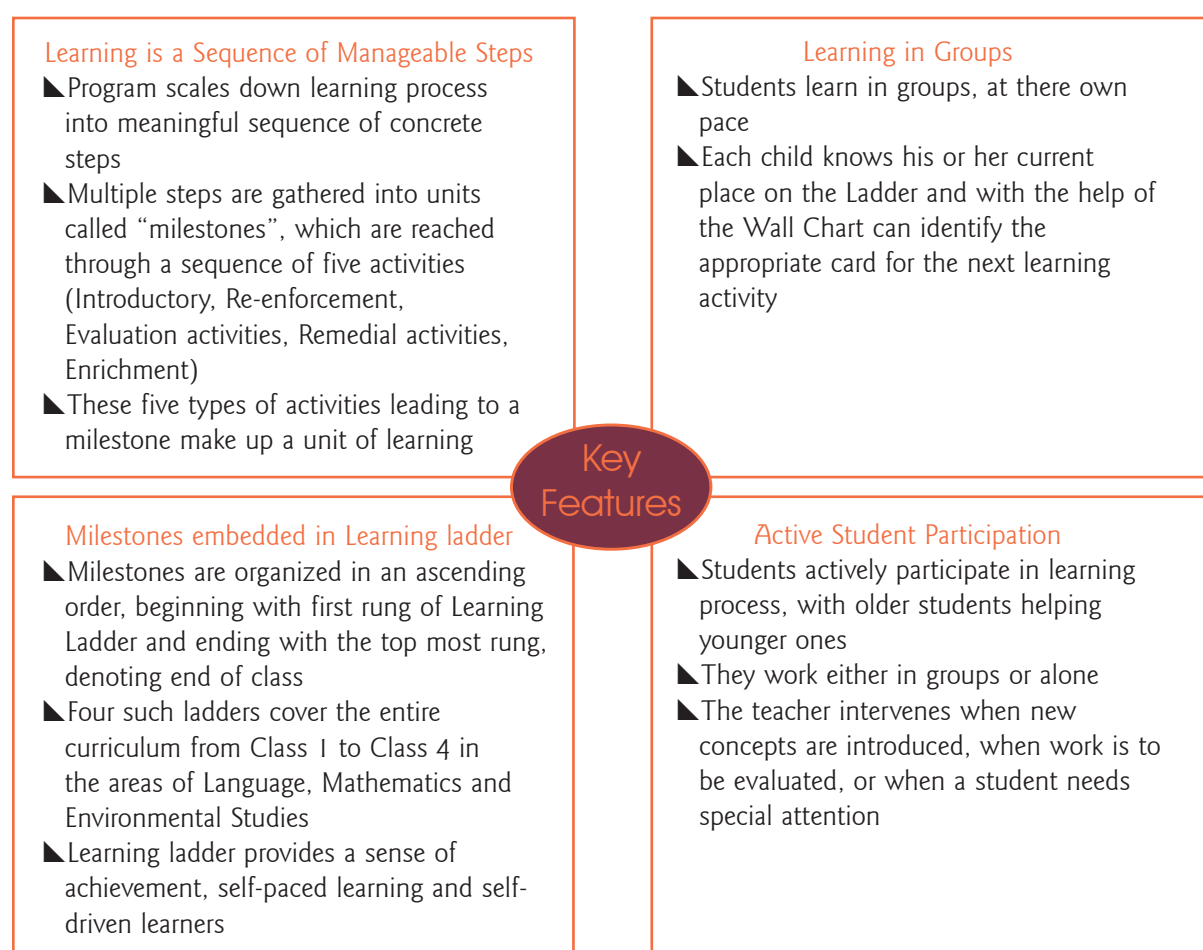Most often, enrolment drives lead to a large number of children being enrolled in class I of the formal school, irrespective of age and abilities. Approximately 80% of rural schools are multi-grade as a result. Children that are drawn into a class often exhibit different learning levels, which need to be addressed via appropriate teaching methodologies. An excellent example is outlined below *(See Cast Study 4)*.

Case Study 4: RIVER's Program – "Child is in the driver's seat"

The Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources (RIVER) has been running single teacher satellite primary schools in 16 surrounding villages in the vicinity of Rishi Valley (Andhra Pradesh) for over 20 years. Trained village youth transact RIVER's community based curriculum through multi-grade multi-level pedagogy using innovative textual materials named "School in a Box". Over the years, RIVER has collaborated with several states and educational organizations in contextual educational planning, teacher training, material development and multi-grade pedagogy.

The RIVER model aims to increase peer-to-peer learning via dynamic grouping methods. It replaces a syllabus-centered, textbook-oriented, teacher-directed, mono-grade approach with one that meets multiple learning needs of the child. With a focus on learning, and not teaching, such a methodology can also help monitor effectiveness of teachers, feedback on TLM, and compare achievements across schools.

Learning is a Sequence of Manageable Steps
- Program scales down learning process into meaningful sequence of concrete steps
- Multiple steps are gathered into units called "milestones", which are reached through a sequence of five activities (Introductory, Re-enforcement, Evaluation activities, Remedial activities, Enrichment)
- These five types of activities leading to a milestone make up a unit of learning

Learning in Groups
- Students learn in groups, at there own pace
- Each child knows his or her current place on the Ladder and with the help of the Wall Chart can identify the appropriate card for the next learning activity

Key Features

Milestones embedded in Learning ladder
- Milestones are organized in an ascending order, beginning with first rung of Learning Ladder and ending with the top most rung, denoting end of class
- Four such ladders cover the entire curriculum from Class 1 to Class 4 in the areas of Language, Mathematics and Environmental Studies
- Learning ladder provides a sense of achievement, self-paced learning and self-driven learners

Active Student Participation
- Students actively participate in learning process, with older students helping younger ones
- They work either in groups or alone
- The teacher intervenes when new concepts are introduced, when work is to be evaluated, or when a student needs special attention

Source: Educational Resource Unit (2006); Dasra Analysis

Examples of Select Initiatives

▲In a similar vein, under its Alternative Elementary Education Program, *Digantar* runs four schools catering to 600 children in a rural neighborhood on the outskirts of Jaipur (Rajasthan). The pedagogy followed in these schools is radically different from mainstream schools, and focuses on learning with understanding, self-learning, cooperation with co-learners and freedom of pace of learning. Recognizing that children have different paces of learning, schools are organized into groups that are multi-level and multi-age in composition, and activities are planned for each learner according to their level. Continuous and comprehensive evaluation rules out year-end examinations and grades.

▲*Gyan Shala*, a multi-district and multi-state NGO providing elementary education to out-of-school children in Ahmedabad slums, aims to generate a class environment and processes that are pleasant to children, free from threat, and conducive to activity-based learning. It assists students in employing the following learning approaches:

> ▲Learning as storing knowledge (memorizing, becoming a knowledge bank)
>
> ▲Learning as knowing the program/ process to find solutions (procedural)
>
> ▲Learning as concept formation (constructive)

Gyan Shala is designed to create a class environment that supports activity-oriented learning, is sensitive to children's needs, and rich in learning material that enables children to use their inherent capacity to learn. Organizational processes have been established to generate high quality curricular decisions, learning material, and curricular practices in the classrooms. Gyan Shala benchmarks the quality in its classes with national curriculum norms and actual curriculum attainments in the countries that lead the tables of international comparative school performance.

Dasra's Recommendation

As a young child, learning concepts and messages grounded in a familiar background simplify adjustment to the discipline surrounding a formal school environment. Tribals, similar to other indigenous communities, have their own culture, socio-economic and governance system. Sensitivity to tribal culture and life, recognition of the cognitive strengths of tribal children, and appreciation of their personality qualities is necessary for a holistic effort addressing their education.

Although mainstreaming through education alone is a difficult task, reorganizing the curriculum, content and the teaching-learning methods to reflect and draw on their environment and knowledge base, must be undertaken to develop the response of tribal groups and increase participation. In addition to the prescribed state curriculum, effective support learning materials that are contextualized for tribal children such as textbooks/ glossaries in local dialects, and tribal folklore are a more lasting way of educating the children in the mainstream education system. NGOs need to help tribal communities develop this support material by first identifying and documenting their cultural wealth. Sharing and building tribal cultural wealth that currently exists in their communities is essential to transforming education and empowering tribals to utilize these assets, and bring this knowledge to the classroom.

Value-based education that develops social, moral and spiritual values through group activities, sports, games, social work etc. needs more emphasis for more rounded development of the tribal child. Regular subject teaching must be supplemented with imparting career guidance, tribal/non-tribal mentoring, exposure visits to mainstream institutions and speaking sessions by local heroes.

3 | Teacher Training and Pedagogy

66 We should be asked what we want to be, and not what we ought to be. 99

Jitendra Vasava,
Tribal Teacher, Bhasha

Teacher absenteeism continues to be a major issue in tribal areas due to long commutes and low motivation levels

Teacher absenteeism in tribal areas is high as teachers most often live in cities. Children are taught using a city syllabus, which is less applicable to tribal areas, leaving children in a state of confusion. At the same time, teachers, when they are present, are often unclear about the teaching methodology, and do not offer flexibility and freedom to students.

A teacher (whether tribal or not) has to be empowered in both content and methodology

Children are taught by teachers who may or may not be from the tribal community. The presence of tribal teachers, especially from the same community, has shown and improved school participation of tribal children, as these teachers understand and respect the culture with greater sensitivity. Assuming that tribal teachers are a more natural fit, many states have appointed community teachers or para teachers. However, cases have indicated that special training – on both course materials as well as appropriate conduct with tribal students has to be undertaken – even if the teacher has tribal origins.

Non-attendance of 36% was recorded at Seva Mandir's NFEs, despite employing *adivasi* teachers; attributable to low expectations on part of the community

SVYM's experiment with purely tribal teachers was not completely successful; tribals were not able to transact the right skills beyond Grade 2 and 3

Why is there a need for attitudinal training of teachers?

In a discussion of the status of primary education in tribal areas of Orissa, the following reactions from teachers were noted – which are widely applicable across the country (Mishra, 2007).

Tribal children are docile.
Non-tribal children are good in Mathematics.
Tribal language is not the language of power.
Tribal language is not spoken or used by others.
Tribal language is parochial, and not recognized.
Spoken language is limited to the community.
There is no grammar in the spoken language.
Tribal language is inferior to the regional language.
Tribal girls are slow in comprehension compared to boys.

Teachers' behavior towards tribal children, warrants the need for attitudinal training

Training and capacity building has to be undertaken on a sustained basis to ensure continued motivation on the part of teachers

Studies suggest that teacher motivation contributes more to the teaching-learning process than teacher competence. There is a need to evolve a sensitive model of tribal education rooted in the psychological strengths of tribal children. For maximum effectiveness, teacher training has to be an ongoing process, and not a one-time effort. In addition to training, capacity building of teachers on academic competence and pedagogy is needed.

Key Elements of Teacher Training and Pedagogy

----------------------------*Action*-------------------------------> --------*Impact*----->

	Action	Impact
Training on Material Use	◤ Orientation on local tribal dialects and use of local material for TLM; development of resource training manuals to assist in classroom teaching ◤ Tribal primers can be supported by picture dictionary, teacher's handbook, conversational chart and self learning materials for teachers ◤ Training in the use of interactive, child-centric and gender-sensitive methods of teaching in multi-grade classrooms	*Increase efficacy of teaching methods and learning*
Changes in Perception of Teachers about Tribal Children	◤ Sensitization to cultural and behavioral strengths of tribal children ◤ Emphasis on attitudinal training of teachers ◤ Increase motivation levels so teachers can generate interest among tribal children towards education by attempting to link contents of curriculum with existing realities of tribal communities	*Promote sense of competence, self efficacy, and positive self image among tribal children*
Participatory Method of Teaching	◤ Instead of a teachers monologue, encourage students to ask questions, learn through projects/ tours, involve students to complete activities prescribed in the syllabus ◤ Follow up on a student's performance with remedial classes, and adopt a process of continuous evaluation (as required) ◤ Emphasize holistic education developing social, moral and spiritual values (respect, honesty, discipline, cleanliness etc.)	*Increase motivation and interest levels of children; enable children to explore creativity and hone managerial/ organizational skills*

Select Examples of Teacher Training Initiatives

◤*Bodh*, a Jaipur-based NGO running primary schools for deprived children in rural and urban areas, undertakes capacity building workshops on a monthly basis. Bodh also organizes a 26-day long annual capacity building workshop, where teachers meet to discuss the year's progress, key issues and chart out work plans for the upcoming academic year.

◤*SVYM* started the Viveka Teachers Training & Research Centre with the idea of developing model teachers, and creating a research facility to face challenges in the field of education. A semi-residential college offering the Diploma in Education (D.Ed.) course of Government of Karnataka was also started in 2006, catering to 100 students. The course, which is open to students who have passed Class 12 examinations, runs for two years, and the first batch will graduate in October 2008.

◤*RIVER* provides hands-on training, on the job support and monitoring, training programs and materials (teachers manuals, trainers modules, films) etc.

◤*SSA* provides central funds for ongoing in-service training of teachers; however there is little information on program quality and impact of training programs.

◤The Education and Technology Services Division of *IL&FS* implemented a teacher training program in 454 tribal schools (ashramshalas) with over 60,000 children in Gujarat. Initiated since 2008, each school requires a minimum of 12 visits per academic session.

◤*Gyan Shala* emphasizes extensive and concurrent teacher training and support that includes 10-15 day training during bi-annual vacations, monthly one-day refreshers, and weekly demonstration/supervision visits by a senior-teacher/ supervisors.

Development of appropriate curriculum is a futile exercise in the absence of appropriate training in the use of materials
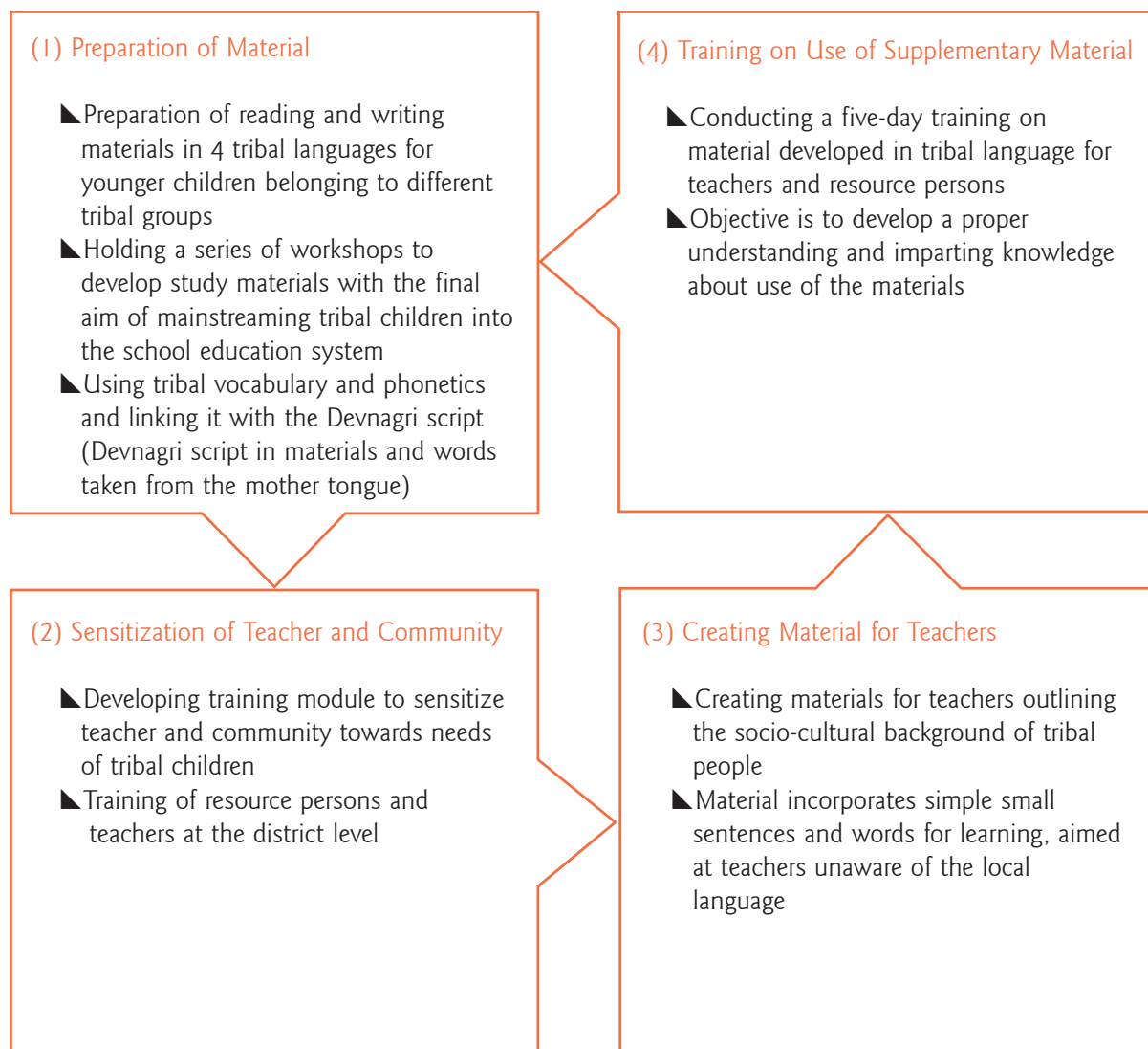
Research has shown that it is important to train the teachers in the use of dictionaries, flash cards and innovative teacher learning material. Assam was the first State to prepare teacher training modules and separate teaching learning materials for the Bodo tribal language in 1995. Through the DPEP (District Primary Education Program) and SSA, Orissa has adopted measures to improve the quality of education in select tribal districts in the state, including developing primers for Classes 1 and 2, following rigorous teacher training programs. It has trained 350 master trainers on pedagogic issues in the tribal context from selected tribal blocks (Mishra, 2007). On similar lines, Jharkhand undertook a project to ensure that the materials created are utilized effectively *(See Case Study 5)*.

Case Study 5: Creating and Utilizing Tribal Material in Jharkhand

❝ *Now that the curriculum is more child-centred, there is a requirement for onsite teacher training, for more support for teachers.* ❞

Trainer,
SSA Scheme

There are 29 schedule tribes and 8 primitive tribes in the state of Jharkhand, each tribe boasting their own social customs, language and dialect. In order to bridge the language gap between teachers and students, the project aimed to bring tribal children into the mainstream educational scenario by making them learn the Hindi language as a medium of instruction.

(1) Preparation of Material

- Preparation of reading and writing materials in 4 tribal languages for younger children belonging to different tribal groups
- Holding a series of workshops to develop study materials with the final aim of mainstreaming tribal children into the school education system
- Using tribal vocabulary and phonetics and linking it with the Devnagri script (Devnagri script in materials and words taken from the mother tongue)

(4) Training on Use of Supplementary Material

- Conducting a five-day training on material developed in tribal language for teachers and resource persons
- Objective is to develop a proper understanding and imparting knowledge about use of the materials

(2) Sensitization of Teacher and Community

- Developing training module to sensitize teacher and community towards needs of tribal children
- Training of resource persons and teachers at the district level

(3) Creating Material for Teachers

- Creating materials for teachers outlining the socio-cultural background of tribal people
- Material incorporates simple small sentences and words for learning, aimed at teachers unaware of the local language

Source: Jharkhand Education Project Council Website

Dasra's Recommendation

Although effective learning for a child rests on the methodology of teaching and the relevance of the content/ curriculum, a teacher is the glue holding these pieces together. A teacher is looked upon as the role model for a child, particularly in the early years, and can often play the part of a surrogate parent. A child's self image, sense of competence, and self-efficacy can be enhanced – or broken – by a teacher's behavior in the class environment.

Teachers, both tribal and non-tribal, need to be provided with attitudinal training while dealing with tribal children, as well as guidance on both the use of educational materials and participatory teaching methods. Monetary (higher pay, free transportation etc.) and non-monetary (training, state recognized tribal teaching awards etc.) incentives need to be offered to teachers that are working in tribal areas. Although creating teacher motivation is difficult, high motivation levels are necessary to generate interest among tribal children towards education by attempting to link contents of curriculum with existing realities of tribal communities.

4 | Community Participation and Ownership

Community involvement should be central to supporting tribal education…

Ownership by the community is one of the most complex issues. Often, despite homogeneity, communities are marked by fragmentation and power structures, thereby complicating institutional design. Achieving significant scale and impact in the tribal areas is often problematic, and can only be achieved through strong community involvement and improving the culture for education.

…with the community driving the development process

In order to engage communities fully in the education process as collaborative partners, they have to experience "meaningful education." Emphasis should not be merely on imparting education to enrolled children, but also bringing about a real social change in the community *(See Case Study 6)*. A sense of community ownership of schools and teacher empowerment can lead to improvement in other indicators such as enrolment, retention, equality of opportunity and learning levels. New and comprehensive ways of engaging communities have to be explored constantly, keeping in mind the changing needs of the community.

Key Elements for Effective Community Participation

Obtain Buy-in from Local Stakeholders
◣ Gain trust of locals, learn from, and educate them, and build capacity of local tribal youths and community leaders
◣ Use tools such as advocacy and awareness campaigns
◣ RIVER organizes a metric mela where children are able to check height, weight etc.
◣ In Assam and Gujarat, tribal fairs/ festive occasions are used to discuss primary education issues
◣ Although time intensive, such support is critical for the success of a program based in the community

Assure Community Participation
◣ In Bodh's conception, a community's involvement is expected to grow as interaction between and amongst the participants of an educational process (children, teacher, parents, community members and program organizers) becomes more intense
◣ In creating an NFE, local community can be involved in a participatory planning exercise, or in construction of the centres
◣ Orissa encouraged community participation in sourcing language materials for tribal primers
◣ Assam involved community in documentation of local folklore, history, traditional medicine etc.

Instill Sense of Accountability and Ownership among Children and Parents
◣ Seva Mandir involves parents by collecting a monthly fee of INR 5, thus increasing their stake in the child's education
◣ In a project called Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan, community members took charge of identifying and enrolling out-of-school children, and also of recruiting a local educated person to conduct classes

Empower Communities
◣ Communities should be empowered to demand appropriate and quality education services from the government
◣ SVYM emphasizes a self-reliant and empowered community through a multi-pronged strategy encompassing self employment and entrepreneurship, creation of rural infrastructure, integrated tribal development, linkages with panchayats, mobilizing youth, and self help groups

Source: UNESCO (2002); Dasra Site Visits; Dasra Analysis

Case Study 6: Bhasha's Tribal Model of development

Bhasha has established a model of sustainable development…

Bhasha is a people's organization providing a voice to the *adivasis*, primarily managed by the *adivasis*, seeking to combine knowledge and experience, research and action, nature and culture, and rights with responsibilities. From the bottom up, the organization is completely community driven (84% staff are *adivasi*) and takes a holistic approach to working with *adivasi* communities. Bhasha has consistently emphasized decision-making by tribals themselves, without imposing its own views. This is done to empower the tribals, develop confidence levels, and overcome the age-old stigma associated with the community.

…and empowerment of tribal communities…

The trainees of the Adivsasi Academy have established Gram Vikas Kendras or Development Services Centres (DSC) in tribal villages as a nucleus for village development. Each DSC undertakes development work in 40-50 surrounding villages. Presently there are 30 DSCs in Vadodara District, Panchmahals District, Sabar Kantha District, Narmada District, Jhabua, Surat District and in Madhya Pradesh. The DSCs cover 985 villages (65,000 families) and jointly run 2,100 micro credit self help groups, 97 water bank collectives, 125 food grain banks with 7,000 members, 91 non-formal education centres with 2,200 *adivasi* children, organic agriculture with 565 *adivasi* women, 152 gobar banks, legal aid to 600 migrant *adivasi* laborers, rural healthcare system providing medical facilities to 15,000 patients in a 50 km radius.

…bolstered by a strong relationship with the community grounded on trust.

Implicit in its work is the objective of creating a model for advancing the needs of the tribal communities that is designed to tackle their special needs. In applying experience and lessons learned in the field, Bhasha continues to refine a set of best practices that are widely applicable. Given its deep-seated links with the community, Bhasha has a core competency in recruiting and training teachers from the tribal community.

Source: Dasra Site Visit and Interviews; Bhasha Website

Dasra's Recommendation

Although not a new idea in the strict sense, education, and its derived value have to be duly recognized by the community. Although Dasra's interviews with tribal parents pointed to their complete support for education and high aspirations for their children's future, there needs to be a larger community involvement that participates in the education effort.

For the community to be involved in the education process, youth tribal educators and tribal teachers from the community can act as agents of change. Every education effort must take steps to assure community buy-in, active engagement, and most importantly, trust. They can also serve as role models and work together inside and outside the classroom. At the same time, the local tribal community must be empowered, as partners, with a sense of true ownership of the initiative. With changing needs, new ways of eliciting participation from communities have to be devised.

NGOs need to create platforms that can influence mainstream education systems into institutionalizing better support mechanisms for tribal children to thrive in schools where they are the minority group. This can include strong linkages between the tribal communities and the mainstream schools, and providing support that creates self confidence and identity.

5 | Incentives – To Give or Not to Give?

Given that a significant section of the tribal population continues to live in abject poverty and struggles to feed, clothe and educate their children, the issue of incentives to increase school attendance has been debated over time. Incentives – whether individual or to the school – may be necessary and useful in some situations (especially for first generation learners) but are not sufficient in themselves to enhance children's access to quality education (Ramachandran, V. et. al., 2007).

Many NGOs provide individual incentives in the form of free food…

Conforming to the philosophy "Come for Slate, and not Plate", SVYM provides nutritious meals to all students that begin with an egg in the morning, a mid-day meal and milk in the evenings to fulfill the daily requirement of 1,800 Kcal. Several other education programs run by NGOs across the country provide free meals, which can raise enrollment and help retention, while providing much needed nutrition to poor children. However it is important to ensure that education, and not free meals is the motivation.

…as well as health services to ensure a more integrated approach to development

Given the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS (due to absence of structured marriage), sickle cell (one-third of all tribals in Gujarat suffer from sickle cell, reducing average life expectancy to 50 years) and other ailments; provision of health services should be done to the maximum extent possible. Other incentives can include a quarterly health check up, health services to women of nearby slums and giving them preventive, curative and referral services.

Some NGOs prefer direct incentives to schools or the community

Since 2002, NGOs in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have withdrawn individual incentives and focused on school based and community level activities, teacher support and training, providing additional teachers, activating and motivating the statutory school committees and on remedial education (Ramachandran, V. et. al., 2007). They work closely with the local education department officials and school teachers to ensure the proper functioning of the school and regular provision of the mid day meal. In addition, they support children's learning through remedial education classes, school/village library, pre-school education and children's clubs/Bal Panchayats. Some of them also provide scholarships to enable children to go beyond the elementary stage.

Dasra's Recommendation

Undoubtedly, a child's ability to learn and grasp is driven by his/her health and nutrition levels. Particularly in tribal areas, health and nutrition indicators are lower than national levels. Although provision of meals/ health services can provide a fillip to an education effort, this should not happen at the expense of the provision of well-rounded education. Since such incentives likely do not have a life of perpetuity, these should only supplement the objectives of a quality education initiative, and not influence, to a dramatic extent, a child's motivation to study. Even if funded separately, both monetary and non-monetary incentives should be integrated in the overall programme delivery.

B | External Factors

1 | Gender Bias

Although external to the education system, gender disparity is an important issue that needs to be tackled via appropriate programs. Tribal girls have a higher tendency to drop-out and a lower tendency to enroll in school.

The Inexcusable Absence of Girls: Gender Disparity in Education
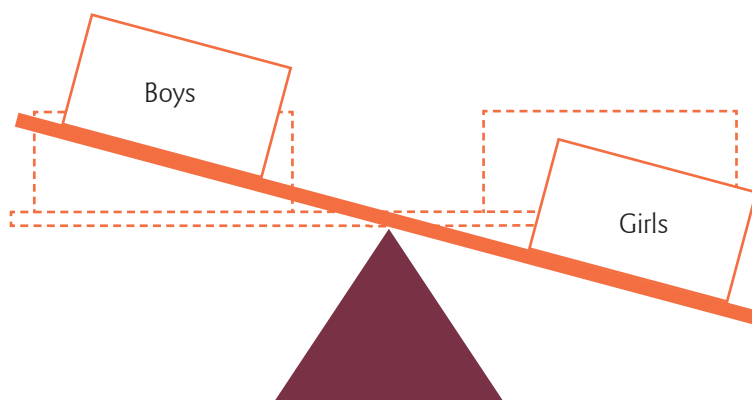
Gender imbalance is entrenched at all levels of education, placing tribal girls at a disadvantage in terms of their overall advancement

Among the tribal community, tribal girls form the most neglected group, and are least likely to be educated. An estimated 37% of girls aged 7–14 belonging to the lowest castes or tribes do not attend school, compared with 26% of majority girls of the same age (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007). Tribal girls account for only 18% of the total girls enrolled at school, and their dropout rate is 67%. Additionally, school attendance for tribal girls is 9 percentage points below that of tribal boys.

Tribal communities are more likely to educate boys than girls due to social and economic factors – exacerbating this inequity

In many tribal communities, parents give minimal importance to girls education due to economic and social limitations, send them to school only intermittently, or keep the girls sheltered from the outside world. Most frequently, girls, apart from taking part in agricultural activities and collection of forest products are engaged in sibling care. They are often forcibly pulled out from schools, and become child laborers, never to return to education. For example, tribal girls constitute majority of the migrant child labor (primarily tribal girls) working in cotton fields (Rajasekaran, 2008).

Both government and non-government initiatives are attempting to readdress this disparity by providing life-oriented and gender sensitive education

Government schemes such as NPEFL (Education for Girls at Elementary Level) and KGBV (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya) are aimed at improving quality of education (in terms of enrolment and retention) in tribal rich areas where girls' education needs attention. A total of 2,180 KGBVs (residential schools for older girls) have been sanctioned in India, out of which 457 KGBVs are located in ST concentrated blocks. Another SSA intervention encompasses Aanganwadis and Balwadis (or crèches) in each school in tribal areas to relieve girls from sibling care responsibilities.

Some NGOs run motivational/preparatory centres that are residential in nature and provide a stop-gap for girls looking to attend longer duration residential camps. The Kedi Residential High School for Tribal Girls in Valsad district (Gujarat) provides vocational training (making soap, detergent, candle sticks, bamboo work, embroidery, stitching, clay-modeling etc.) and life-skills programs to enhance confidence of the girls.

Parents' concern for their daughters' safety may mean that nearby community schools and informal alternative schools attract and retain girls more easily than formal schools located at a distance. In Rajasthan, community schools that employed paraprofessional teachers, allowed the community to select and supervise teachers, and hired part-time workers to escort girls to school, had higher enrollment, attendance, and test scores than public schools.
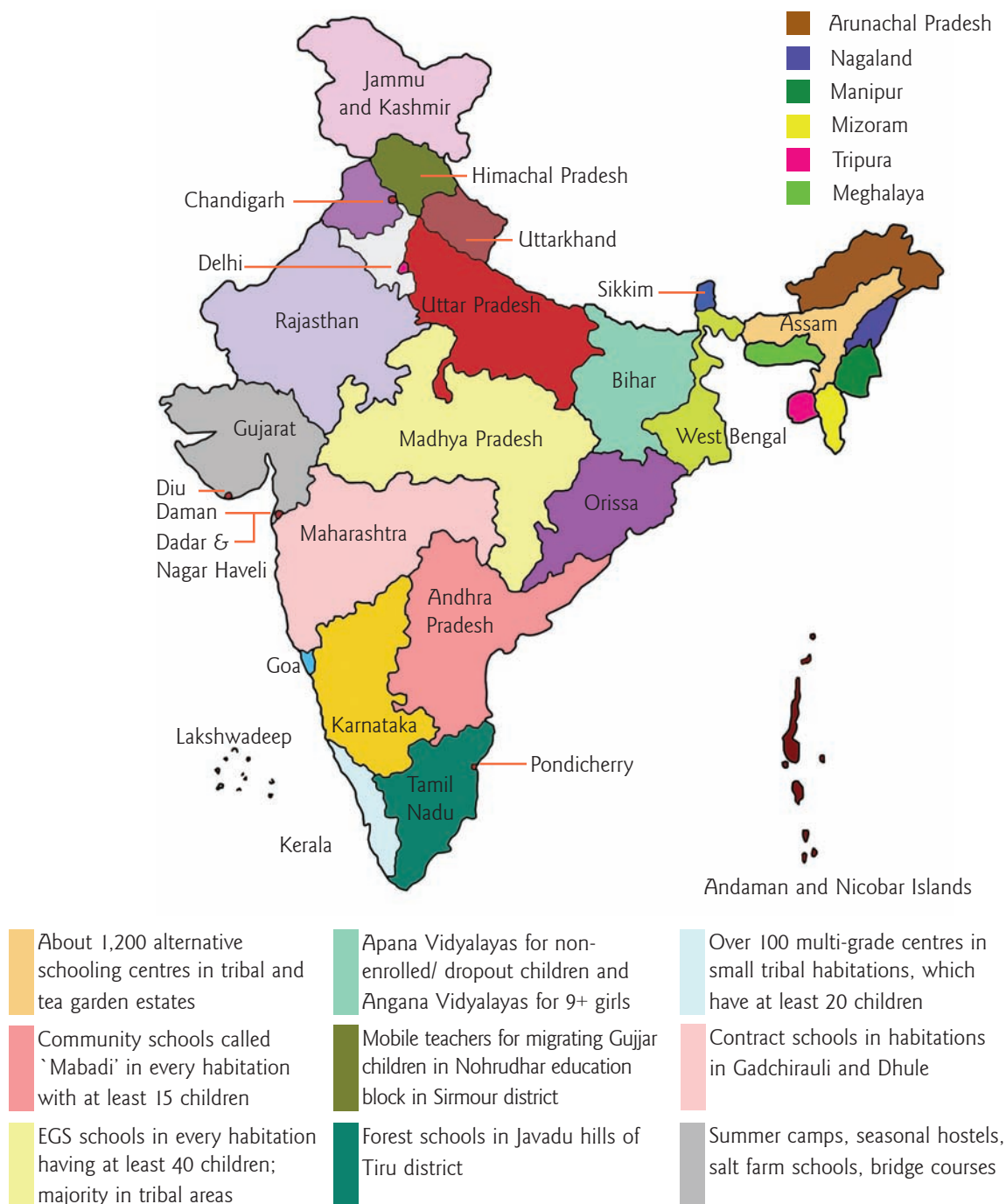
Dasra's Recommendation

Real empowerment of the tribal girl child is only possible through education. Low levels of educational attainment coupled with familial and social neglect has inhibited their growth potential. Strengthening of basic literacy and educational services (formal and non-formal) for the tribal girl child as well as orientation towards education through outreach activities is important.

General education and awareness programs addressing the special development needs of the girl child (hygiene and safety), along with mobilization campaigns are needed to add fillip to the effort. This can be coupled with encouraging and facilitating for the involvement of community and NGOs in developing institutional mechanisms for tribal girls' education. Incentives for households to send girls to school, conditional cash transfers, scholarships and stipends, can be incorporated to generate motivation among tribal girls and their families about the value of girls' education.

Given the lack of structured marriage among tribals, and the early age for sexual interaction, healthcare needs of tribal girls become important. Educational initiatives can use gender-sensitive methods of teaching, and include discussions on sex education, information on reproduction, health, nutrition etc. Often, with the use of young women to tutor children who are lagging behind, largest achievement gains tend to be recorded for the most economically disadvantaged children. Training of female teachers and exploring the benefits of single-sex classrooms is a good way of partially readdressing the imbalance.

Accessibility and Migration

Physical access to schooling in tribal areas is often difficult given unfavorable geographic conditions, sparse population, remoteness of the tribal village, or migratory patterns of tribals. States have adopted targeted interventions to address these issues in purely tribal or tribal-dominated habitations *(see map below)*. Apart from setting up of alternative schools (also known as non-formal education centres) for remote habitations, the alternative schooling strategies under SSA have catered to out-of-school children in tribal areas and pockets.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

About 1,200 alternative schooling centres in tribal and tea garden estates	Apana Vidyalayas for non-enrolled/ dropout children and Angana Vidyalayas for 9+ girls	Over 100 multi-grade centres in small tribal habitations, which have at least 20 children
Community schools called `Mabadi' in every habitation with at least 15 children	Mobile teachers for migrating Gujjar children in Nohrudhar education block in Sirmour district	Contract schools in habitations in Gadchirauli and Dhule
EGS schools in every habitation having at least 40 children; majority in tribal areas	Forest schools in Javadu hills of Tiru district	Summer camps, seasonal hostels, salt farm schools, bridge courses

Source: Sarva Shikha Abhiyan (2002)

2 | Access – Non-Formal Education in the Tribal Context

This section follows the outline provided below:

Need for non-formal education (NFE) → Success factors for NFE centres → Achieving the objective of mainstreaming

Need for non-formal education

NFEs target out-of-school children in far flung areas…

In tribal areas, there is reliance on non-formal education which is perceived to be more useful than formal education, particularly to reach out to the hardest-to-reach group of children in remote areas. NFEs therefore target children who are drop-outs from the formal system of education because of economic and cultural compulsions, or who have stayed out of the system, again for socio-economic reasons, or because they do not find primary schooling attractive or meaningful. A significant proportion of such out-of-school children are in areas where schooling facilities are available, and did not join the school system or left school before completing their schooling.
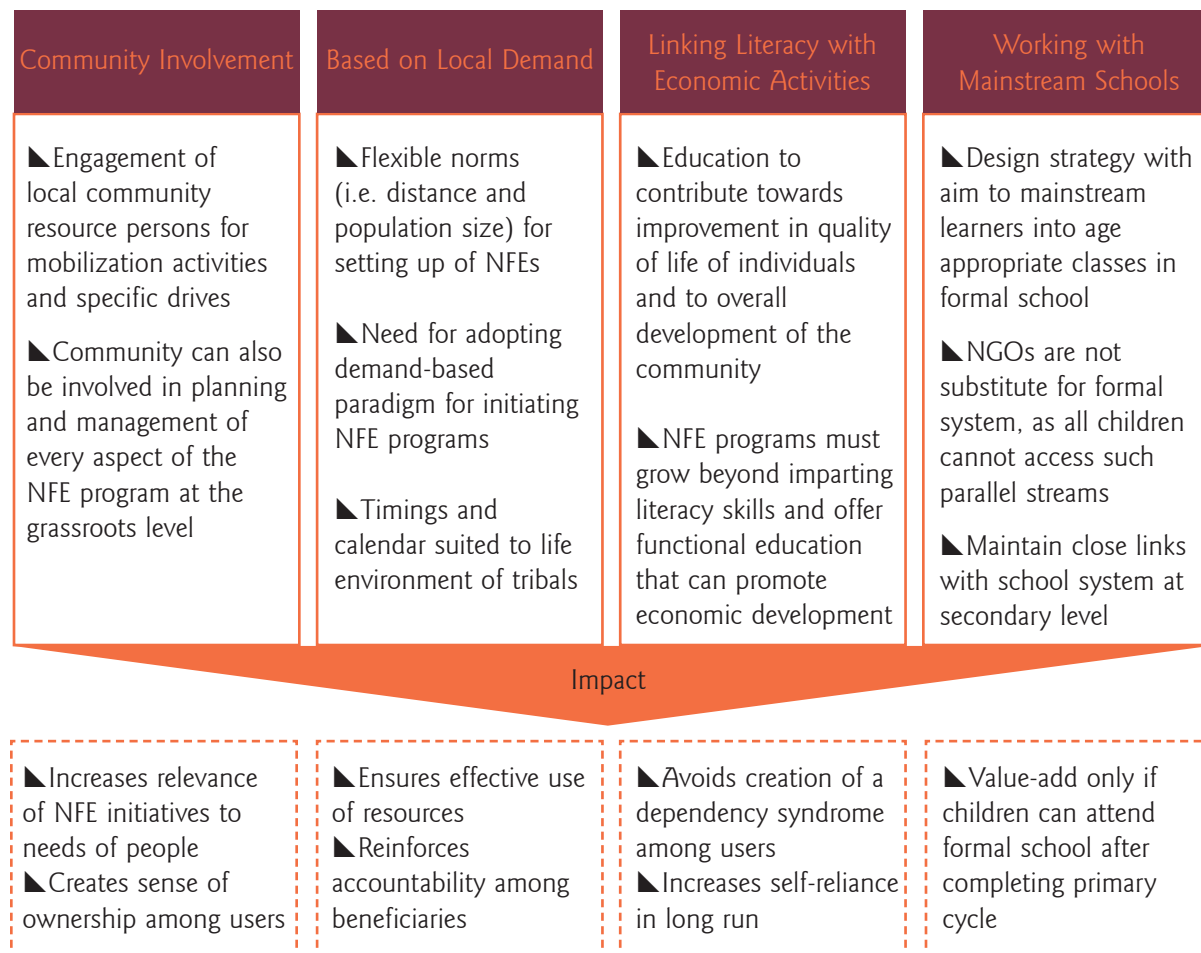
…with an approach anchored in flexibility, allowing them to join and cope with demands of the formal school system

This non-formal method provides room for innovations and injects flexibility to a rigid system in terms of organization, teaching method, content, target group of learners and evaluation procedures (Nair, 2007). It encompasses a strategy that develops competency levels of children as per their age through a condensed curriculum, in a short

duration, at their own pace *(See Case Study 7)*. NFEs enable learners to bridge the gap between them and their peers who have been attending school. The basic premise is non-permanence, and an NFE should cease to exist once the children are settled in a formal school.

Success Factors for an NFE

Community Involvement	Based on Local Demand	Linking Literacy with Economic Activities	Working with Mainstream Schools
◣ Engagement of local community resource persons for mobilization activities and specific drives ◣ Community can also be involved in planning and management of every aspect of the NFE program at the grassroots level	◣ Flexible norms (i.e. distance and population size) for setting up of NFEs ◣ Need for adopting demand-based paradigm for initiating NFE programs ◣ Timings and calendar suited to life environment of tribals	◣ Education to contribute towards improvement in quality of life of individuals and to overall development of the community ◣ NFE programs must grow beyond imparting literacy skills and offer functional education that can promote economic development	◣ Design strategy with aim to mainstream learners into age appropriate classes in formal school ◣ NGOs are not substitute for formal system, as all children cannot access such parallel streams ◣ Maintain close links with school system at secondary level

Impact

◣ Increases relevance of NFE initiatives to needs of people ◣ Creates sense of ownership among users	◣ Ensures effective use of resources ◣ Reinforces accountability among beneficiaries	◣ Avoids creation of a dependency syndrome among users ◣ Increases self-reliance in long run	◣ Value-add only if children can attend formal school after completing primary cycle

Objective of an NFE - Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming a child into the formal school system is a mammoth task, mainly due to different learning environments. For example, SVYM noted that tribal children do not favor paragraph writing, which may pose to be problematic at the time of mainstreaming. Bhasha's NFEs also suffer from a similar predicament. There were complaints that weak fundamentals at the primary/upper primary level implied that majority of children failed or dropped out. Most village based interventions – whether in the form of an NFE or camp-based accelerated learning programs – rarely go beyond Class IV or V. The scope following graduation is even more dismal, due to lack of adequate training in science, math and exposure to computers.

Case Study 7: Seva Mandir's NFEs reach out-of-school children from poor tribal families

In 2007, Seva Mandir (SM) reached out to over 4,500 children, majority of whom are from the most deprived sections of society

Seva Mandir's education program works closely with the rural community to increase the children's reach to quality education, while enhancing SM's own understanding of implementation on a large scale. Seva Mandir runs approximately 200 NFE centres, catering to children (6-14 years) from tribal families in 583 villages of Rajasthan. More than a third of the children in this bracket are out-of-school and drop-out rates (particularly for girls) are very high. Access to education is limited because it is locally unavailable, due to domestic and economic pressures or has traditionally not been accorded value.

SM trains and builds capacity of NFE teachers who are drawn from the community

Due to the rough terrain in the Udaipur area, each NFE (typically run in rooms donated by villagers) tends to have one teacher, drawn from the particular locality. There is a mix of tribal and non-tribal teachers. SM involves local communities in the management of NFEs and trains local instructors in basic numeric, literacy skills and conversational English. SM conducts an in-house training program focused on the NFE curriculum, classroom activities and facilitation skills. SM invests in teachers' capacity in terms of actual competence and process for teaching. Standardized tests are conducted on an annual basis to evaluate performance of students. SM also runs a residential learning camp to reach out to those children who are not able to regularly attend a school or an NFE. Such camps are held three times a year for 2 months at a time, and reach about 200 children. Good habits, creative activities and visits to city/zoo/library are also undertaken. Through its education activities, SM aims to (a) enable children to read and write independently, with comprehension; (b) enable marginalized tribal communities to experience alternative and meaningful education; (c) empower communities to demand quality education from the government.

Source: Dasra Site Visit; Seva Mandir Website; Seva Mandir Annual Report

Case Study 8: Pratham's Balsakshi Program – Life after Mainstreaming

A child mainstreamed into the formal school system faces new realities and adjustment in terms of peer group, content, pedagogy, and most importantly, integration with non-tribal community.

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

Source: Jhingran (2000)

Dasra's Recommendation

Non-formal centres, particularly in remote tribal areas, provide an excellent opportunity to provide value-based education. Given their transitory nature, NFEs have the advantage of being more flexible, innovative and adaptable to the learning style of a child. For NFEs to complement and not supplement the formal school system, care has to be taken to ensure deep links with mainstream schools.

Although a child has to be tutored with a backdrop of local knowledge/ content, adjustment to a mainstream school environment is often difficult. Community based parateachers at the NFE can be such a link and support tribal children attending mainstream schools. There is a need to build appropriate support programs that enable a tribal child to succeed in mainstream schools. Assimilation with the non-tribal community is a key success factor for mainstreaming.

3 | Migration – Seasonal Schools and Hostels[3]

Children of migrant workers are deprived of the basic child right – an opportunity for development

Seasonal migration has become a reality in many parts of the country, caused by relentless drought and environmental degradation, and is particularly common in several tribal areas. It has been observed that migrant populations (comprising mainly the landless poor, who have hardly any other assets, skills or education) are overwhelmingly from tribal communities. As a result, education of migrant children in tribal areas becomes a huge hurdle, as a large number of poor rural families are forced to migrate out of their villages for several months every year in search of work, merely to survive. Children tend to accompany their parents, drop out of school and are forced into hard labor at work sites. For example, an estimated 100,000 children in the age group of 9 to 15 years from South Rajasthan migrate from Rajasthan to the cotton fields in Gujarat (Kothai, 2007).

[3] Dasra considers migratory patterns of tribals as crucial in painting the true picture of tribal education. This discussion only provides an overall understanding, due to Dasra's limited interactions in the migrant-prone tribal districts across India. This issue requires a deeper dive, which can be undertaken by Dasra, as required.

Facilities like seasonal hostels help retain children in villages when parents migrate…

There are many districts with significant tribal population, which migrate with children in search of work. Seasonal hostels are targeted at children of migrants to allow children with the choice not to migrate with their parents and continue schooling in the village. Other program initiatives include setting up of short-term residential programs for children of migrants, provision of more focused incentives like stationery, writing material, uniforms etc, setting up of residential schools or strengthening of existing Ashramshalas *(See Case Study 9)*, provision of mobile teachers and seasonal camps for mobile communities.

…and are being run by several organizations in migrant-prone tribal areas

Some organizations provide support for the children to link back to their home schools when the migration season is over. For example, there are seasonal schools run by Gujarat-based Ganatar for children of salt pan workers in Kutchh and children working in the sugarcane areas of Navsari, Dangs and Surat. An NGO called Janarth runs Shakhar Shalas (sugar schools) for children of migrant laborers who work for the sugar factories in Maharashtra. Setu provides educational services to children of salt pan workers *(See Case Study 10)*

Case Study 9: Ashram Schools - Mechanism for Attracting and Retaining Students

Ashram schools are residential schools for tribal children from a cluster of habitations. Based on the Gandhian philosophy of self-reliance, these were first experimented by Thakkar Bapa, a Gandhian in Panchamahal district of Gujarat in the pre-independence days. Ashram schools were found effective as (i) it was not feasible to open full fledged schools in very small and scattered habitations (ii) it created congenial atmosphere for teaching learning as it is assumed that the tribal households do not have such an environment and (iii) it helped to develop the total personality of the child and impart vocational skills to improve employment opportunities.

There are residential Ashram schools for tribal children in many states including Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh. Ashram schools generally provide admission to children from habitations at least 6-8 kms away from the school. The curriculum of Ashram schools includes agriculture, other life skills as well as general subjects. In addition to the provision of free food, clothing and boarding, many parents in Jharkhand, Orissa and Gujarat prefer Ashram schools as they did not obstruct with the child's education when parents migrated.

In Gujarat, ashramshalas cater to tribal children in classes 1-7. However these schools suffer from the expected problems such as lack of qualified teachers, low learning levels, inadequate study materials (particularly for science), children absenteeism due to low motivation – leading to poor quality of education. Infrastructure and facilities vary among the ashramshalas, and often determine enrollment. While the minimum number of students is 120, the well-equipped ashramshalas (i.e. with separate rooms for boys and girls, vegetable gardens, water tanks, storage rooms, sufficient toilet facilities), tend to over subscribed, often allowing up to 200 students.

Source: Jha and Jhingran (2002); Dasra Site Visits

Case Study 10: Setu Runs Seasonal Hostels to Empower Marginalized Tribals

Setu (Centre for Social Knowledge and Action) has expertise in working with local communities, who are often the most marginalized sections of Gujarati society. Established primarily as a human-rights based organization, Setu has recently expanded its work to focus on education, as a means for empowering disenfranchised groups. Setu provides educational facilities for the children of migrant workers working in salt pans, charcoal manufacture, roof tile factories and brick kilns in Jamnagar and Rajkot districts.

Currently, Setu is running 43 hostels in 30 villages covering 1,474 children. Additionally, Setu has established coaching classes for children to improve their reading and writing skills, reaching almost 1,978 children. In Jamnagar and Rajkot, it has set up 46 children's activity centres at 46 work sites of brick and tile manufacturing workers, in order to provide educational activities to 1,394 children who accompany their parents to work. The organization is also working to strengthen schools in the home villages so children are motivated to not migrate. They are keen on expanding their curriculum for children of fishermen, where literacy is limited by the lack of learning materials in the relevant dialects.

Dasra's Recommendation

Migration as a social and economic phenomenon is difficult to control. Taking migration as necessary for survival, innovative education support programs need to address the transitory nature of the families. Seasonal hostels as well as residential schools can help retain students back in the village, and ensure an interruption-free education. This can often be problematic as parents do not want to leave their children behind; residential schools weaken the child's familial capital. However, mobile education support such as mobile teachers or education training for migrant mothers can supplement education efforts during migratory periods. Also, collaborating with government schools or setting up a temporary non-formal education centre at the migratory destination is an innovative option. An education initiative in migrant-prone areas must provide a compelling reason for children not to migrate with their parents.

Piecing it Together

Based on Dasra's research there seems to emerge two varying schools of thought related to improving tribal education.
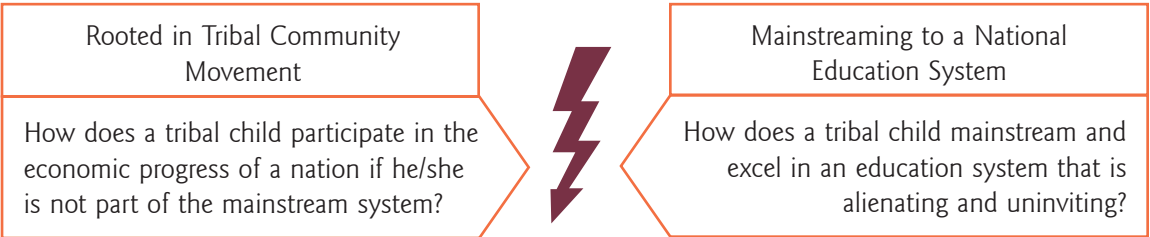
The first concept became evident when Dasra met with NGOs rooted in the tribal community movement. These education programs were focused on developing an indigenous education system as an island rich with tribal culture and traditions – while maintaining a distance or near isolation from mainstream society. This involved education solely in local dialects, instilling a stronger sense of "tribal identity", and preserving tribal culture, livelihoods and history. Such a culturally relevant education system is based on the premise that there is a need to protect tribals from rapid industrial-like change, since transitioning from the traditional to the modern can be destructive for communities in the long run.

The contrasting opinion that emerged mainly from discussions with government officials and the private sector, is one of mainstreaming to a "national education system", under which common schooling is practiced, and development of modern languages occurs. This concept of mainstreaming is actually meant to abolish all forms of marginalization. In fact, many education experts agree that this can only be done through a format of modernization because traditional resistance of education that exists in tribal communities tends to disappear with the adoption of new technology, industrial development or improved farm productivity. Furthermore, economists have proven that increased remuneration related to modernization is meant to improve social mobility. Thus, the mainstream education system actually benefits the nation's development rather than only benefiting the dominant group.

These two opinions described above have often caused polarization in the effort to improve the status of tribal education when in reality the solution lies somewhere inbetween. Although an education program rich in cultural tradition of tribals creates the apt context for the community, it grossly ignores the mainstream system that is necessary for tribal advancement and integration. Education programs that enable a tribal child to succeed in mainstream schools are essential since majority of the education system is currently designed for the dominant group. At the same time, although a purely modern education system can help inch closer to the government goal of "assimilation", it fails to recognize the nuances of the tribal community. Reliance on the national education system alone can increase the risk of tribal culture being replaced by dominant culture.

Varying Educational Strategies

Rooted in Tribal Community Movement	Mainstreaming to a National Education System
How does a tribal child participate in the economic progress of a nation if he/she is not part of the mainstream system?	How does a tribal child mainstream and excel in an education system that is alienating and uninviting?

How do programs preserve the rich culture, tradition and community wealth while providing access to opportunities of economic prosperity associated with mainstreaming?
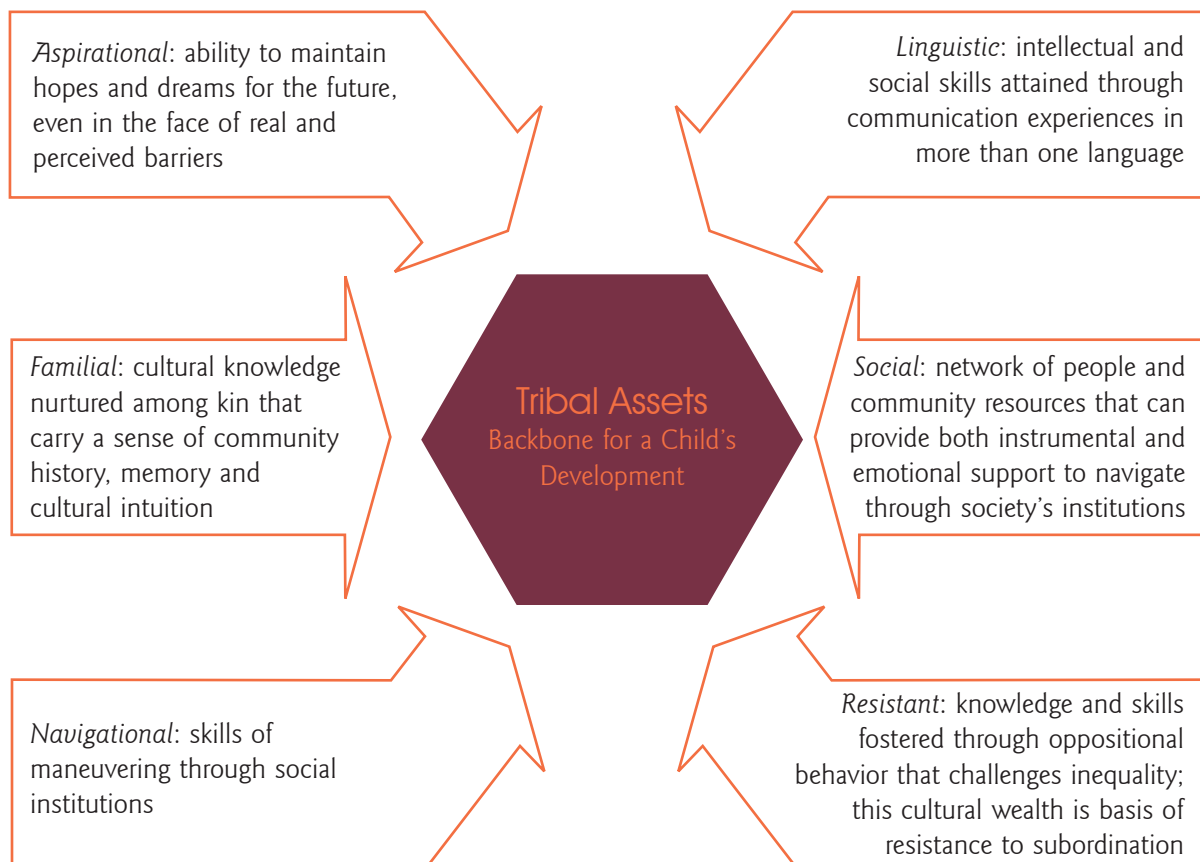
Protection of Tribal Communities	Modernization into Mainstream Society
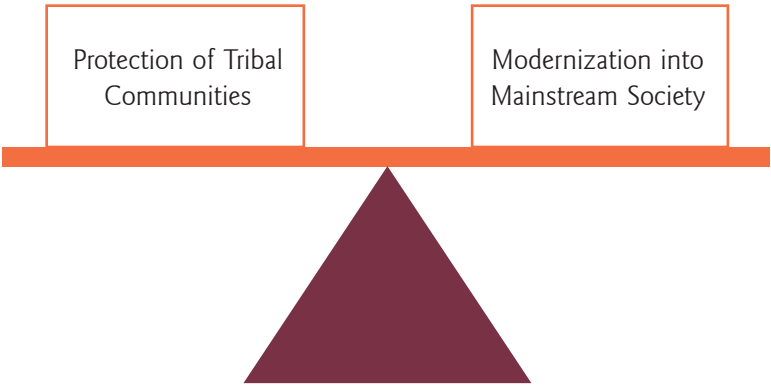
Based on Dasra's assessment of the tribal child's situation, an intervention in education can yield the desired results if it plays on the strengths of the tribal child's community, values their culture and history, and at the same time, builds programs that enable him/her, more or less seamless integration into mainstream education systems. Dasra suggests that stronger community wealth can be achieved by developing a tribal child's aspirational, linguistic familial, social, navigational and resistant capital.

Although these assets are inherent in tribal communities, they need to be further enhanced through education that incorporates life skills development programs focused on strengthening the individual, rather than exclusively protecting the community assets.

Below is a definition of each of the 6 capital factors[4]:

[4] All definitions and explanations of cultural wealth factors are based on a critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, by Tara J Yosso; the communities highlighted in the article are African Americans and Hispanics, Dasra has applied this framework to the tribals.

Enhancing Tribal Capital through Development of Life Skills

Aspirational: ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers

Linguistic: intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language

Familial: cultural knowledge nurtured among kin that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition

Tribal Assets
Backbone for a Child's Development

Social: network of people and community resources that can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions

Navigational: skills of maneuvering through social institutions

Resistant: knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality; this cultural wealth is basis of resistance to subordination

ASSET 1: *Aspirational capital*

During Dasra's interviews with tribal parents, it was evident that many still have high aspirations for their children's future, despite extreme levels of poverty and discrimination. These stories exhibit a mismatch between the tribal parents' current occupation and the importance they continue to place on their child's education. Fostering aspiration is the first step towards achieving social mobility.

Aspirational focused programs include parent meetings, career counseling for secondary students, exposure visits to companies, highlighting local heroes in school curriculum.

ASSET 2: *Linguistic capital*

This is based on the fact that tribal children come to school with knowledge of multiple languages and communication skills where they engage in storytelling. Such capital harnesses skills like memorizing, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume rhythm and rhyme. Linguistic capital also refers to communication via visual art, music or poetry. Tribal linguistic capital is extremely high and can be further developed for ways of increasing vocabulary, metalinguistic awareness, teaching and tutoring skills.

Linguistic focused programs include storytelling in curriculum, learning English as a spoken language, promotion of creative arts in the classroom/non-formal education centres.

ASSET 3: *Familial capital*

This form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a broad understanding of kinship. From this connection tribals maintain healthy relationships with their communities where isolation is minimized and a bond is created as they identify with each other's problems.

Familial focused programs include parent-teacher associations and interactions, involving elders in storytelling of history/culture, training tribal parateachers for educational support

ASSET 4: *Social capital*

The success of a tribal and how they work the system needs to be shared as a resource to others; this creates value in the social network. In fact, tribals can overcome adversity in their daily lives by uniting with supportive social networks.

Social focused programs include creation of tribal student associations in mainstream schools, scholarship and mentoring programs, employing young tribal leaders as agents of change.

ASSET 5: *Navigational capital*

Although this may be regarded as more of an individual agency working within institutional constraints, it also can leverage social networks for what becomes community navigation through schools, job market, health care and the judicial system. For example, tribals should be well aware of which government schemes help them specifically such as quotas, scholarships etc. and use this to their advantage.

Navigational focused programs include career exhibitions, exposure visits, speakers from mainstream institutions, networking opportunities, accessible database of government schemes.

ASSET 6: *Resistant capital*

Passing this on from one tribal generation to the next is essential e.g. tribal parents can encourage their children to embrace behavior and attitude that challenges the status quo. These children often become youth who learn to be oppositional with their body, mind and spirit in the face of human rights violations and discrimination. Building this capital opposes the self-defeating and conformist behavior often exhibited by oppressed groups such as tribals.

Resistant focused programs include examples of inspirational local heroes that have overcome barriers and achieved success, meetings with parents, coaching of mothers.

In summary, investment in building community cultural wealth (aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational and resistant capital) can provide a solid foundation that leverages these assets and develops stronger individual potential for the tribal community. Educational content must encompass building these life skills in order to help a tribal child to integrate better with the mainstream system, and come closer to achieving the fine balance between the two educational strategies.

Conclusion
The Balancing Act

Education is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their well being.

In the context of tribal education, finding a balance between preserving tribal cultural identity and mainstreaming for economic prosperity means building education programs that ensure a tribal child's success in mainstream schools. Recognizing that the education system is currently designed for the dominant group, there needs to be investment in creating support mechanisms that supplement the integration of tribal children into the formal education system.

The support within the education system includes:

◣ Using both tribal and state languages during the pre-primary and primary levels

◣ Creating supplemental tribal relevant learning materials

◣ Introducing monetary/non-monetary incentives for teachers in tribal areas

◣ Addressing the health and nutritional needs of tribal children

◣ Improving community participation by training tribal teachers and youth as peer educators

◣ Establishing and strengthening transitional education centres which focus on mainstreaming tribal children

◣ Creating seasonal hostels and residential schools for children of migratory parents

◣ Training female teachers for single sex classrooms

These support mechanisms listed above address some of the issues facing tribal children inside the classroom. However, based on the analysis of the eight reasons and descriptions of case studies as best practices, it is evident that there needs to be more philanthropic investment in building community cultural wealth (aspirational, linguistic familial, social, navigational and resistant capital) outside the classroom too. This would provide a solid foundation that leverages these assets and develops stronger individual potential that can transcend the barriers experienced by tribals in mainstream society.

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dasra catalyst for social change

In Sanskrit, Dasra means "Enlightened Giving".

Dasra enables non-profit organizations, who change the lives of marginalized communities, to scale. We provide organizations with growth capital and management expertise, maximizing charitable investments for philanthropists.