

Nurturing communities through mainstreaming primary education: Tata Steel approach under CSR in mining areas

Tata Steel has always remained steadfast on the ethos of value creation for all stakeholders, which for the Company has timeless relevance. Tata Steel also strongly believes that education is a basic human right, vital to personal and societal development and well-being.

Education forms an important marker of human development and is one of the human development indices being used to assess the impact of interventions. Through its focused interventions in education, Tata Steel emphasizes to improve quality of education, particularly rural education as well as promotion of female education that would contribute to millennium development goals.

Introduction

Tata Steel's vision strikes a balance between economic value as well as ecological and societal value by aspiring to be "a global benchmark in value creation and corporate citizenship". It guides the Company in its race to excel in all areas of sustainability.

In the initial years, Tata Steel's CSR interventions were more as a 'provider' to society where the community was given support for its overall needs, both for sustenance and development. Gradually, the shift in approach led to Tata Steel being an 'enabler' focusing on building community capacity through training programmes; focusing on providing technical support rather than giving aid. At present, CSR interventions of Tata Steel focus on 'sustainable development' to enhance the quality of life of people.

The Company supports and propagates the principles of the United Nations Global Compact as a Founder Member, is a signatory to the World Steel Sustainability Charter and supports the affirmative action programme of the Confederation of Indian Industry.

Tata Steel's approach to business has evolved from the concept that the wealth created must be continuously returned to society. The responsibility of combining the three elements of society – social, environmental, and economic –

is of utmost importance to the way of life at Tata Steel. Today, Tata Steel's CSR activities in India encompass the Company's steel works, iron ore mines and collieries, reaching out to the city of Jamshedpur, its peri-urban areas and over 800 villages in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Community involvement is a characteristic of all Tata Steel Group companies around the world. It can take the form of financial support, provision of materials and the involvement of time, skills and enthusiasm of employees. The Group contributes to a very wide range of social, cultural, educational, sporting, charitable and emergency assistance programmes.

The Company works in partnership with the government, national and international development organisations, local NGOs and the community to ensure sustainable development. The Corporate Services Division delivers these responsibilities through several institutionalized bodies:

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS)
2. Tribal Cultural Society (TCS)
3. Tata Steel Family Initiatives Foundation (TSFIF)
4. Tata Steel Skill Development Society (TSSDS)

In 2012-13, to assess the effectiveness of its social initiatives, HDI assessment was completed for 230 villages. The Corporate Social Responsibility Advisory Council was also created with the objective that this apex body along with the results of the measurement of HDI will enable the Group to direct its social initiatives better and allocate resources more efficiently.

Primary education

The fourth goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to achieve quality education, more specifically, to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life long learning opportunities for all".

Major progress has been made for education access, specifically at the primary school level, for both boys and girls. However, access does not always mean quality of education, or completion of primary school. Currently, 103

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million youth worldwide still lack basic literacy skills; and more than 60 per cent of them are women.

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Our initiatives in education, designed to address the lack of quality education, comprise a gamut of interventions for different age-groups, as illustrated below (Fig.1):

Key achievements in education

- ♦ Mid-day meal programme, run in partnership with Government of Jharkhand and ISKCON Food Relief Foundation, is supplying mid-day meals to nearly 50,000

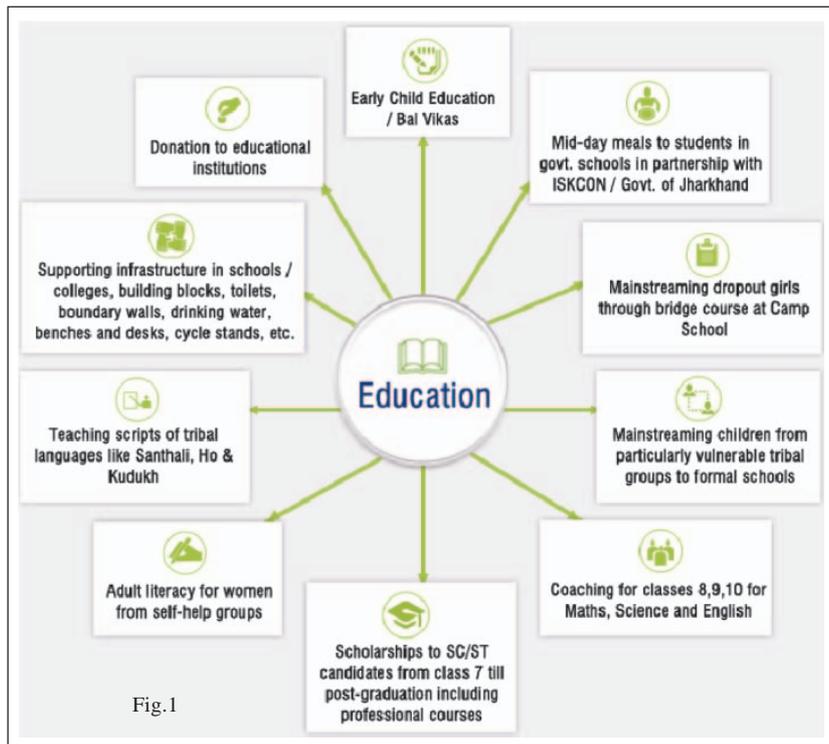


Fig.1

students across 387 government schools in East Singhbhum and Seraikela-Kharsawandistricts.

- ♦ With the objective to enhance the educational interests of the school drop-out girls residing in core tribal villages of East Singhbhum and West Singhbhum districts of Jharkhand, Tata Steel, in collaboration with Jharkhand Education Project, is running Camp School programme in two schools – one at Piplain Jamshedpur block in East Singhbhum district and the other in Noamundi Block of West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. Girls in the 9-14 years age-group, who have never been enrolled in any school or are school drop-outs, are brought at the centre, where they undergo a nine month bridge course. As a result of the intervention, being run since 2005-06, so far nearly 1500 drop-out girls have been mainstreamed into formal education.
- ♦ Coaching programme for classes 8, 9 and 10 aims to prepare students for class 10 examination. The primary aim of the programme is to strengthen the basic concepts of the students, guide them and improve their performance in subjects like English, Mathematics and Science. In FY 2013-14, more than 10,000 students of classes 8, 9 and 10, were provided pre-matric coaching.
- ♦ With an aim to provide literacy to rural women, Tata Steel, through its Adult Literacy Programme has provided literacy to more than 30,000 women. Being implemented since 2009, the programme has also helped build the self-esteem of illiterate rural women by successfully learning to write and read.
- ♦ The Sabars and Birhors (identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) are economically backward communities, who depend on forest produce to eke out a living. Since 2012, Tata Steel is running Project Aakanksha for the development of children from these communities by facilitating their education in residential schools and taking care of all the expenses. In FY 2013-14, 197 children have been enrolled into different residential schools in Jharkhand.



Fig.2

- ◆ Recently, Tata Steel in association with Tata Interactive Systems (TIS) has introduced Tata ClassEdge, an interactive learning and teaching solution in few schools near Jamshedpur. It is a holistic class room solution that not only makes the teaching process interactive by using visual means but also enables teachers to create question papers and analyse student performance.

Camp school programme, Noamundi

OVERALL PROJECT GOAL: “MAINSTREAMING GIRLS WHO HAVE DROPPED OUT OF FORMAL EDUCATION”

In recent decades India has made significant progress on access to schooling and enrollment rates in primary education but drop out rates and low levels of learning remain challenges for the state and central government. Primary school enrollment in India has been a success story, largely due to various programmes and drives to increase enrolment even in remote areas. With enrollment reaching at least 96 per cent since 2009, and girls making up 56 per cent of new students between 2007 and 2013, it is clear that many problems of access to schooling have been addressed by giving priority on infrastructure improvements. Despite these improvements, keeping children in school through graduation is still an issue and drop out rates continue to be high. Nationally 29 per cent of children drop out before completing five years of primary school, and 43 per cent before finishing upper primary school.

Through focused interventions in education in its operational areas in Jharkhand, Tata Steel aims at not only addressing the educational needs of different age and gender groups by increasing access to education but also improve quality of education.

Camp School is one such initiative which aims to mainstream girls who have dropped out of formal education by introducing them to an eleven month residential school education programme. The Ore, Mines & Quarries Division of Tata Steel runs one Camp Schools at Noamundi in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. In the last ten years, more than 1,900 drop-out girls have been mainstreamed into formal education through the efforts of Tata Steel in Jamshedpur and Noamundi.

CAMP SCHOOL PROGRAMME: CASE STUDY FROM BRICK KILN TO SCHOOL

From loading bricks onto trucks to getting enrolled in a school and exhibiting her sporting skills, Jyotini has indeed made a positive start (Fig.3). She owes this new beginning to a TSRDS-run camp school in Noamundi. Jyotini Go (13), a native of West Singhbhum’s Lakhansai village, is a bundle of energy. Swiftness comes to her naturally – even in normal conversations. As talks turn towards her favourite topic – sports, she becomes very excited and her speech becomes very fast. Her hand gestures and foot movements become bolder. The sixth-grader, who is regularly selected for

district-level school tournaments, worked in a brick kiln a few years back.

“I was born in a brick kiln where my parents worked,” shares Jyotini, who was completely unlettered before joining the camp school in 2012-13. “Like them, my life, too, would have been



Fig.3

limited to those stifling confines. But destiny willed otherwise. I ended up coming to the camp school.”

And the change was palpable. From a life full of abuses, struggles and hardships, she moved to a life full of love, care and affection. “Backbreaking brick loads were replaced by easy-to-carry shoulder bags. Instead of starting my day with handia (poor man’s liquor), I now have a glassful of milk. I do not go to bed on an empty stomach anymore, which was quite common in the past,” recalls Jyotini, now a class VI student at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV).

Post-admission, Jyotini was given special attention by the camp school teachers as she had never been to school. “Our main challenge was readying a completely illiterate girl for formal education. So, apart from books and class room teaching, we incorporated a lot of interactive study materials to fastrack the learning process,” says Sambari Pareya, Warden, Noamundi Camp School. For her all-round development, the teachers encouraged her to play sports and participate in extra-curricular activities. It all paid off. Jyotini is now a confident girl who wants to continue with her sporting activities. She is also pretty confident about her career choice, ‘someone big’ in police services. Great going Jyotini!

Thousand schools project, Odisha

OVERALL PROJECT GOAL: “MAKING SCHOOLS RTE COMPLIANT IN SELECTED TRIBAL DISTRICTS OF ODISHA OF THE PROJECT AREA”

Thousand Schools Project is one of the core programmes of TS-CS under the banner of Tata Steel – CSR. The inception of programme at the ground level was in Sept. 2014 covering 6 blocks of Odisha namely Danagadi and Sukinda in Jajpur district, Harichandanpur and Joda in Keonjhar district, Koira and Kutra in Sundargarh district. The programme is being implemented by ASPIRE, an NGO of the national repute. It covers about 1100 schools, 2478 habitations of 115 GPs and 2 municipal corporations – Joda and Barbil each. It has 3 core objectives and intends to achieve the same in given time frame. The following 3 distinct objectives have been spelled out to meet overall goal of the project (Fig.4).

1. Improve access to education: Ensuring no child remains out of school through direct enrollment and through NRBC



Fig.3

and RBCoperation.

Major enablers:

School enrollment drive – School enrolment drive is held to ensure all children of 6-8 years age group are enrolled in the school.

Residential bridge course – It addresses the learning gap of never enrolled and drop out from school children age group from 11-14 years. It provides 6 to 12 months of course to bridge the learning gap and mainstreams the said children. It addresses the longer period of learning deficit.

Non-residential bridge course – It addresses the shorter period of learning deficit and mainstreams the children of same condition applicable to RBC.

2. Improve quality of education (enhance learning level): Demonstration of LEPs, government teacher training and education resource centers.

Major enablers:

Learning Enrichment Programme (LEP): Almost 90% children in grades 3-5 are barely literate. They are unable to comprehend grade 2 texts and do basic mathematical operations. This basic learning deficit results in inability of children to get connected with the class room transactions and gradually lead to their dropping out from the schools itself. LEP is one of the core activities of the 1000 schools programme to bridge this deficit and arrest wastage. It also helps government teachers to realize that the fault lies in the archaic teaching learning practices followed in our schools and not with the children. Also that the desired change in the TL processes is doable and it does not require extra-ordinary efforts. LEP is divided into two levels – L1 and L2. L1 covers curricular competencies of grades I-II and L2 covers those of grades III-V. Each is a 20-week (two hours a day) programme. Main focus is on language and math. After 10 weeks a mid-line is conducted, which tells us progress over baseline, and what mid-course adjustments are required to reach the final goal. At the end of the programme, an end line is conducted.

Strategically we plan to have one to two LEP classes in each GP, and use them as a demo for other schools of the GP. As we build a buy-in, we will support all schools of the GP with training and TLM, and encourage them to adopt LEP practices. We also plan to convert one school in every 10 into an Education Resource Centre (ERC) that

will anchor continuous academic improvement in all schools.

The long term sustainability of LEP depends on our being able to introduce improved teaching practices in primary classes, especially in grades 1 and 2, the

foundational grades, which remains highly neglected, and where the deficit actually originates. In that sense, the methods and materials adopted in LEP are a demonstration, and the hope is that in the two years since inception of the programme that we plan to be in a school, we would have sufficiently influenced the teachers to adopt the same, thus altering the way transaction takes place in primary classes.

Training of government teachers and establishment of Education Resource Centres (ERC) would be carried out in FY-2017-18. This would enable good practices to trickle down in the system more deeply and widely.

School library – School libraries have been set up in all schools of the six blocks in the project area. Carefully selected books have been supplied to the libraries to develop reading habits in children; strengthen their reading skills and exposing them to new realities. This also works for them as window to the world.

3. Improve school governance: increase participation of community (parents/smc/PRIs in school management

Major enablers:

Training of School Management Committee (SMCs) – The programme activity revolves around the community. There would be bigger participation of the community in school through SMCs. Training on RTE and preparation and implementation of the School Development Plans is being imparted to them.

Training of parents and PRIs – Training on RTE and Child Right is being imparted to them.

Youth conventions: Youth also made aware of RTE and Child Right issues to meet objectives of ‘to improve access’ and ‘to improve governance’ at village and school level.

Meeting with SHG women – Existing SHG platforms are also used to develop capacity of the community on RTE and child right issues.

RESIDENTIAL BRIDGE COURSE: CASE STUDY OF Ms. ASHAMATI

It was a hot summer day when Ashamati Munda came to stay at the residential bridge course centre in Joda being run by Tata Steel through a partner organisation called ASPIRE, a Delhi-based NGO, since April 2016. A class 5th drop-out, the 13-year-old girl had no idea that the centre was going to fill not only her education deficit but also her love and fun deficit resulted after her parents and elder brother passed away, leaving her all alone.

Asha's family's ordeal began when her father, who was working with a mining company in Jharkhand district, suddenly fell ill and died of some disease when she was only two years old about a decade back. Hers was an ideal family with a father, a mother and an elder brother. Today she cannot remember the happy days of her life when her father was working in Noamundi and they were living in a company quarter with all facilities of comfort. But after the unforeseen tragedy struck to the family, her mother shifted both the kids from Noamundi to Banspani in Joda, their ancestral place. They started a new life there with the savings of her father but that did not last long and her mother found it difficult to provide for the kids. On the other hand, her elder brother, who was in his teen, was getting spoiled because of bad friends and started drinking. Every day he demanded money from his mother for spending on liquor and his friends. Angry exchanges between her mother and brother became a daily scene in their house. Her mother, who was finding it very difficult to manage the family, was also not in good health and one day succumbed to her illness. The fallout was that Asha couldn't continue her study and dropped school at class 5th. She started going to the forest along with other girls for collecting fire wood and waited for hours in the line at the PDS (public distribution system) counter for rice and kerosene. Habit of drinking deteriorated his brother's health and one day he also died of tuberculosis. She was all alone at the age of 11. To make her life worse, some neighbours started taunting her by linked with her brother's friends who used to visit her. She cried every night and was unsure of her future.

In the meantime, a centre was set up in Joda by Tata Steel with an intention to mainstream the drop-out and never-

enrolled girl children through residential bridge course under its ambitious thousands schools project. A community mobiliser of the project knew Asha before and realized that the bridge course would be suitable for her. So he got her enrolled for the course at the centre. Asha who always wanted to study was happy about this accidental change in her distressed life. At the RBC centre she met other girls who were like her and had similar painful past. They took no time to seal friendship. The younger ones called her Asha didi (elder sister). She along with 72 other girls were taken care by six female employees at the centre.

Six months of rigorous bridge course and her dedication towards study rekindled confidence in her for studying in class 8th in a government school. In October 2016, she was admitted in Joda Valley Girls' High School. She still lives in the RBC centre but will shift to the government hostel as soon as it starts.

She says, "Perhaps God compensated me for the wrong he did to my life. That's why I reached the RBC centre. I got things back that I had lost i.e. education, love and fun. I have no better closed ones in this world except the girls and didis at the RBC centre. Wearing uniform and re-entering a school was a wonderful moment for me. I love computers although I have not touched one yet. In my school there is a computer class room. I am eagerly waiting for my turn to learn computer skills. My dream is to get a job and work on computer one day. I know how alone I am and how indispensable a job is for me. My goal is to get a job after study."

The project is not only bridging and mainstreaming the dropout and never-enrolled girl children through residential bridge course but also bringing new ray of hope for future among the life of many girls like Ashamati.

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