



## Education, Knowledge and Information







## Education, Knowledge and Information

In today's context, education is synonymous with formal education, which involves teaching conducted in a school, based on a State-guided curriculum, imparted by teachers formally employed and trained for the job. The *Jan Rapats* broaden this definition to include not only school education, but all learning, knowledge and information that people acquire over the course of their life.

Knowledge encompasses wisdom (*gyaan*), information (*jaankaari*), and education (*vidya* or *shiksha*). In analysing knowledge, therefore, it is important to explore the local systems of knowledge and education. While knowledge can be explored in all aspects of life, including knowledge systems with respect to livelihoods, health, social, political and economic institutions, customs and traditions, education is important in enhancing human development. Formal education builds capabilities that enable people to avail of opportunities both at home and outside. It is a process that develops self-reliance and self-esteem, so that a person can negotiate the world with skill and understanding.

This chapter explores the various dimensions of the process of education in Chhattisgarh. The first section examines what people mean by education, learning and information. Secondary data related to the status of education and literacy is presented in the next section. This is

followed by a discussion of knowledge domains and transmission processes, as they exist in Chhattisgarh. The perception of the people from the *Jan Rapats* and that of the stakeholders – the parents, the children and the teachers – as well as issues relating to alienation and integration that arise in the context of Chhattisgarh are covered in a separate section. Issues in school education including access, infrastructure requirements, teachers and curriculum precede an analysis of the role of the community. The last section presents suggestions for intervention and conclusions.

### Box 3.1

#### Education, knowledge and information

The three-fold categorisation that the *Jan Rapats* have delineated with reference to education reflects the problem of education. Education should not be restricted to its narrow modern meaning. All learning should be subsumed by education, which has become restricted to being thought of as school education alone. School education is unable to create for itself a larger space, and in effect often eases out all other forms of transmission of knowledge and knowledge itself. Within school education, the quality of education is an important aspect that needs regular scrutiny. While we quantify education by parameters such as literacy, enrolment and achievement, there is little that tracks and monitors the quality of education imparted.

## From the people

In Bastar's traditional society, education is not merely literacy but is seen in a broader context. In the villages, education does not limit itself to a few subjects, but is related to knowledge, information and skill. In the rural areas, it is more important for girls and boys to learn and excel in traditional occupations, household chores and tasks related to their village and society, than to have formal education.



*District Report, Bastar*

Education makes an important contribution to the lives of people by contributing to their holistic development and the development of their personality.

*District Report, Mahasamund*

The *Jan Rapats* differentiate between education, literacy, knowledge and learning. Literacy is associated with reading and writing. Education is associated with school. Literacy or education is not necessary for knowledge. Knowledge can exist in any form, with anyone. Learning obtained in any capacity is useful. The treatment of fever with *neem* leaves, curing a cold with *tulsi* leaves, and using the root of the *ber* tree to cure a stomach-ache, are all examples of knowledge. Even an illiterate person can have this knowledge. How medicine is made out of *neem* leaves, how they are collected, how much should be used, all this is learning. For this, one does not need school education.

*District Report, Raigarh*

From time immemorial, man has some knowledge that comes to him naturally – seeing, listening and smelling. Elders in a family by their behaviour, attitude and social relations impart knowledge. Over time, the role of a teacher has become important and the education he imparts includes reading, writing, religious guidance, knowledge about direction and time and vocational skills to earn a livelihood. Knowledge is now transmitted through the Government functionaries and formal schools. Knowledge is also available from radio, television and newspapers.

*Jan Rapat, Kuthur village,  
Janjgir (Navagadh) block, Janjgir-Champa*

## Education, Learning and Information

The *Jan Rapats* provide an opportunity for people to identify, define and articulate their understanding of traditional and modern education.

The Village Reports list the various types of knowledge and the different methods of imbibing this knowledge. They emphasise that education is closely linked with the way a society lives and works and is often imparted in an informal manner by the family and social institutions. The scope and definition of education is therefore not limited to formal schooling alone, except when referring to provisioning, the quality of teaching or teachers.

Education, then, refers to a continuous process that enlightens, strengthens and empowers people. Transmission of education may be in the form of letters, a skill, a way to live life, the capability to extract natural resources from the forests, to make medicine from herbs, to cultivate land, or learning to read and write. People clearly articulate the sentiment that while there may have been an absence of a formal structure like a 'school' in the past, a number of sources of learning did exist that continue to be present today.

The *Jan Rapats* stress that education needs to be viewed more broadly, so as to include thinking processes, intellectual and analytical enhancement as well as the development of skills. The Reports show that people appreciate the need for children to go to school and the importance of literacy. The role of schools is seen as important, but limited. Schools provide the skills of reading and writing from prescribed textbooks, which may not always be relevant in a particular society.

## Literacy and Education

It is important to examine the status of education as gleaned from secondary sources of information, so as to understand the background in which the *Jan Rapats* have been written. The analysis of the status of education in Chhattisgarh is limited by the availability of data. The data on education is entirely school-based and evaluates parameters relating to skills such as literacy and students' attainments in school education. Here the status of education is evaluated within this framework alone.

Due to the difficult terrain and the social and economic profile of its people, Chhattisgarh has had low literacy levels and limited access to school education. There are regional differences in the level of and access to education.

### Progress in literacy

The last decade has been a period of marked improvement in the literacy rate in Chhattisgarh. From a literacy rate of 42.91 percent in 1991 as against the national average of 54.21 percent, the literacy rate in Chhattisgarh has climbed to 64.7 percent in 2001, and it is at par with the national average of 64.8 percent. Better enrolment, reduced dropout rates, better



access to schools for children and some success in adult literacy programmes have enabled the State of Chhattisgarh to catch up with the national average in just a decade.

### Growth of literacy – inter district comparisons

A comparison of the literacy rate in the last decade shows that Kanker, Rajnandgaon, Surguja, Raigarh, Jashpur and Kabirdham have recorded substantial increases in literacy levels with an increase of at least 25 percentage points. Districts like Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund, Raigarh and Durg, which have relatively high literacy rates, started with better initial situations and continue to have higher literacy rates. This supports the view voiced in many *Jan Rapats* that an area or people that has had access to education earlier continues

Box 3.2

#### Who is literate?

The Census document classifies a person as literate if he/she can read and write. Literacy is assessed by the person's own admission or from the information provided by the person who is questioned during the Census operations.

Literacy as measured by the Census is quite limited and though it is used as an important indicator in education, it is nothing more than the basic ability to read and write. The level of literacy that enables a person to read or write with reasonable skill and comprehension is not measured by this definition.

to have an advantage over areas that are late starters.

Kanker seems to be the only exception. The three districts of Kanker, Bastar and Dantewada (all three were part of district Bastar, prior to 1998) were part of the first phase of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). While Kanker in 2001 has recorded a literacy rate higher than the State average of 64.7 percent, both Dantewada and Bastar have significantly

Table 3.1 **Literacy rate in Chhattisgarh and India 1991 and 2001 (%)**

	Chhattisgarh 1991	India 1991	Chhattisgarh 2001	India 2001
Persons	42.91	54.21	64.70	64.8
Male Literacy	58.07	64.13	77.40	75.3
Female Literacy	27.52	39.29	51.90	53.7
Rural	36.72	44.69	60.48	58.7
Urban	71.37	73.08	80.58	79.9

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table 3.2 **Literacy rate: Chhattisgarh and its districts**

District	Literacy Rate (%)						Difference between male and female literacy rates	Increase between 1991 and 2001 (in percentage points)
	1991			2001				
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females		
Chhattisgarh	42.91	58.07	27.52	64.7	77.4	51.9	25.5	21.79
Kanker	37.71	51.37	24.13	72.9	82.7	63.3	19.4	35.19
Rajnandgaon	48.77	66.01	31.91	77.2	87.2	67.6	19.6	28.43
Surguja	27.34	39.01	15.21	54.8	67.6	41.6	26	27.46
Raigarh	42.96	59.05	26.93	70.2	82.7	57.6	25.1	27.24
Jashpur	38.33	51.02	25.67	63.8	75.2	52.4	22.8	25.47
Kabirdham	29.78	45.42	14.16	55.2	71	39.5	31.5	25.42
Mahasamund	42.85	60.22	25.85	67	81.1	53.3	27.8	24.15
Korea	38.79	51.78	24.53	63.1	75.7	49.7	26	24.31
Bastar	23.06	32.41	13.7	43.9	56.3	31.6	24.7	20.84
Dhamtari	52.84	69.92	36.02	74.9	86.5	63.4	23.1	22.06
Raipur	48.65	65.47	31.56	68.5	82	54.8	27.2	19.85
Janjgir-Champa	47.36	67.41	27.56	65.9	81.8	50.1	31.7	18.54
Bilaspur	45.46	62.43	27.99	63.5	78.4	48.2	30.2	18.04
Korba	45.3	61.52	28.15	61.7	75.9	47	28.9	16.4
Durg	58.7	74.06	42.78	75.6	86.4	64.6	21.8	16.9
Dantewada	16.46	22.87	10.09	30.2	39.8	20.7	19.1	13.74

Source: Census of India, 2001

lower literacy rates at 30.2 percent and 43.9 percent respectively. However, each of these districts recorded a doubling in their literacy rates in the 1991-2001 period. Kanker district has recorded the highest percentage increase in the State.

The literacy rate for women has improved significantly in the last ten years, moving up from 27.52 percent to 51.9 percent. Kanker, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Dhamtari, Raigarh, Raipur, Jashpur and Mahasamund districts have female literacy rates, which are higher than

the national average. However, in Dantewada district, only one in five women is literate and in Bastar district only one in three women is literate.

### Access to primary education

The provision of universal access to primary education has enabled much of this success. The total number of pre-primary and primary schools in the State was 31,086 in 2002-03, with an enrolment of 30,19,092 children. Girls constitute about 47 percent of the total enrolment in schools. The number of teachers in these schools is 73,871 and the average teacher-pupil ratio is 1:45. This average figure does not reflect the extremely high teacher-pupil ratios in some districts. The *Jan Rapats* state that in many villages, one teacher looks after 50 to 70 students and may even teach multiple classes simultaneously. In addition, 2,55,303 children are enrolled in the Education Guarantee Scheme<sup>1</sup> (EGS) schools, which have been set up.

### Improvement in enrolment

The enrolment at the entry level (class I) has improved with respect to the girl child. The total enrolment in 2001-02 was 7,23,180 children, of which 3,23,500 or 44.7 percent were girls. In 2002-03 enrolment increased to 8,20,234 of which 3,85,315 or 47 percent were girls. The increase in the enrolment of girls is higher than the enrolment for boys. The increasing awareness of the need to educate girls is reflected in the *Jan Rapats*.

### Knowledge Domains and Transmission Processes

An elaboration of the various activities and skills that the people have listed in the *Jan Rapats* helps to understand what is considered to be

knowledge. The preparation of commodities, which are relevant in daily life, is closely linked with the knowledge base of the people.

### Household-based work and community life

Household work is mostly performed by women and includes cleaning and hygiene related activities, mud-plastering the walls of the house and decorating the house using local materials. Knowledge related to activities like cooking and food processing, processing milk to make butter or ghee is also resident with women.

The people know where to settle and build their homes. For instance the reports from Newaragaon, Kondagaon, and Bastar say that in the past, people lived in small clusters in the forests to save themselves from tiger and bear attacks. Living in clusters helped to increase security. Similarly, customs of community living, sharing of common resources, preservation and management of common assets such as ponds,

#### From the people

Some examples of traditional knowledge:

- People can tell the time by looking at the moon and the stars, at night.
- During *Kartik Amavasya*, people prepare special medicines and recite special *mantras*.
- People conclude that if ants are seen carrying their eggs from one location to another, there will be rain.
- During the hottest days in summer, if the yellow butterfly stops flying from east to west, then people say there is the possibility of rain.
- If the *Baj* bird flies to the highest point in the sky and cries, it portends rain.
- When the blackberry (*jamun*) ripens, the rainy season is coming to an end.



Village Boki, Gram Panchayat Boki,  
Jashpur Block, Jashpur

<sup>1</sup> Under EGS, schools were opened wherever the parents of 30 or more children applied to the State Government to set up a school.

grazing lands and temples are based on the idea of community living and a recognition of the interdependence between people.

Knowledge of home construction and furniture making is also resident with the people. They have a sense of basic architectural design and know the materials to be used in different activities. The division of houses into separate quarters for activities such as cooking, cleaning, keeping animals and *baadees* (homesteads) are all drawn from the resident expertise of communities. Activities like making tables, chairs, tailoring, soap making are commonly practised within the household.

### **Health-based knowledge**

In the past, traditional practitioners and faith healers such as the *baigas*, *gunias* and *tantriks* were the main providers of health care. While these healing systems included the knowledge and use of herbs for curing diseases, it also encouraged people to believe in the supernatural, mystical and magical powers of *tantriks* and holy persons. Yet, there is a resident knowledge base among the health practitioners who are able to treat scorpion and snake bites among a host of other ailments. In the villages, the local *dais* (midwives) have traditional knowledge of maternity care during pregnancy and childbirth.

The people have simple home remedies for minor illnesses such as colds, coughs, hot flushes or fever due to the *loo* (hot summer winds) in summer, and the treatment of simple cuts and wounds. For instance, the juice extracted from crushed *neem* leaves is considered beneficial for treating fever. In fact, *neem* leaves are used to cure a variety of diseases. *Tulsi* leaves are also considered to possess several medicinal properties, as

are garlic, lemon and onion. There is an entire system devoted to massage and the treatment of aches and pains in different parts of the body. However not all of these practices are beneficial and while all reports describe the kind of knowledge that exists, few reports reflect any debate on this aspect.

### **Livelihood-based knowledge**

#### **Animal husbandry**

Resident knowledge enables people to recognise diseases in animals and cure them. Knowledge about grazing, feeding and milking animals is passed down from one generation to the next. Much of this knowledge resides with women.

#### **Agriculture**

Agriculture draws heavily from the traditional knowledge base. The multitude of agricultural processes and techniques that are practised in the region is the inherited knowledge base of the people. Sowing, estimating the amount of fertiliser required, the right time for ploughing all require knowledge and judgement. Knowledge regarding the suitability of different soil types to different crops is resident with the farmers. For instance, the farmers know that black soil holds water well while red soil has good drainage capacity. Even today, people are able to assess the ground water potential of the land with their traditional knowledge base. Some people have inherited skills for making traditional agricultural implements. The *ghagh bhadris* are highly respected by the villagers folk for their ability to predict the weather, especially rain prediction. Artisan based bamboo work, plate making (*dona pattal*), carpentry, leatherwork, pottery, alcohol brewing are other skills that derive from an inherited knowledge base.



## Economic transactions

Economic exchange is conducted in a system similar to the metric system. In forest villages, economic transactions are still conducted with *kori*<sup>2</sup> (shells) instead of money. Food grain is measured in *khandis*<sup>3</sup>. People have a wide knowledge of forest based products and how to derive a living from these resources while ensuring the sustainability of the forest ecosystem. The role and strength of local knowledge is invaluable and far more relevant in the local context than modern education with regard to natural resources, home based medicines and ecologically sustainable practices. This highlights the need for awarding adequate recognition and respect to traditional information and knowledge systems as well as for dovetailing modern education systems to complement traditional learning. The emphasis on diverse knowledge systems as distinct from the technocratic mainstream paradigm, which is being propagated today, comes out powerfully in the *Jan Rapats*. The *Jan Rapats* emphasise not just the preservation of these knowledge systems but also their further evolution, so that they can be synergised with the changing environment.

## Knowledge holders and access to knowledge

Traditional knowledge holders have access to knowledge due to certain positions like:

- Hierarchy in the social matrix of village society
- Social roles performed by people, as sanctioned by society
- Social institutions that guide them, for

instance, expertise in certain occupations related to a distinct caste group

- Specific knowledge, depending on the community or tribe that they belong to.

Knowledge holders are hierarchically placed in the societal ladder. The head of the village, the rich (who also often have access to education, external systems and a wider perspective) and the elders in the family are not only knowledge holders but are also the main sources of knowledge. The hierarchy of knowledge holders is linked to the knowledge that they can impart. Knowledge that is related to physical skills and with day-to-day existence is rated somewhat lower than knowledge that is more cerebral. Not surprisingly, the knowledge that people hold determines the tasks they perform. For instance the village *dai* (midwife) has knowledge of maternal care, childbirth and reproductive health.

Due to the patriarchal structure of society, women usually possess knowledge related to their assigned gender roles - the care of animals, childcare, housing and hygiene, nursing and tending the sick, cooking and the use of forest produce. Men on the other hand have knowledge relating to land, land types, seeds, soil types, seed adaptability, measuring land areas, and traditional irrigation methods.

Society assigns these roles not only on the basis of gender but also on the basis of caste or community. The knowledge of making products from bamboo, for instance, rests primarily with the *basods*, many of who are trying to switch to other occupations on account of shrinking markets and declining

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<sup>2</sup> One *kori* is equal to Rs.20.

<sup>3</sup> One *khandi* is equal to 40 kilograms.

### Box 3.3

#### Traditional healing methods

Across the central and northern districts of the State, a locally made paste is applied on bone injuries/fractures and is believed to assist recovery. Allopathic doctors (including those in Government hospitals) often advise and encourage patients to undertake this course of treatment.

In Bastar and in some other areas, there is a local cure for malaria drawn from local traditional medicine (Cinchona) that is very effective.

supply of bamboo. Certain tribes are known to have knowledge on certain issues and they are assigned that status across village societies, for example the *baiga* medicine men from the *baiga* tribe.

Today, many communities who practise traditional handicrafts and skill-based work are relatively deprived. This is because these systems of knowledge have not improved over time, and continue to be practised much as they were in the past. There has been virtually no advancement in the skill levels and work techniques of the people. The dependence of these communities on traditional occupations, which have not kept pace with present demands and trends, has meant that they continue to be disadvantaged.

The declining use of traditional medicine by people has resulted in several traditional practitioners losing their livelihoods. The *baigas* and *gunias* of Chhattisgarh are the main knowledge holders in the field of medicinal plants and are aware of proper processing and fermentation techniques as well as medication procedures. Due to lack of access to information on competing knowledge systems, they have been unable to develop their knowledge, or to analyse and document it systematically. However, their knowledge about different uses of plants is a resident resource and even allopathic practitioners rely on them

for information on the uses of plant extracts and herbs that are found in the forests of Chhattisgarh.

Most traditional medical knowledge systems have strong barriers; knowledge is usually transmitted to a chosen few, and sometimes may even die with the holder. The *Jan Rapats* underscore the value of this ancient knowledge base even as new knowledge is imbibed from outside. They stress that it is important that the *baigas* and *gunias* be given due recognition as knowledge holders and their approach and methods be understood.

#### Relevance of traditional knowledge systems

The *Jan Rapats* emphasise the relevance of traditional knowledge systems and the need to incorporate and draw from these diverse knowledge systems. The following table shows the majority perception on the usefulness of traditional knowledge. If these responses are linked to the people's own perception of the status of education in the different districts, a distinct pattern emerges.

Traditional knowledge systems are considered to be much more useful in districts which have lower education levels than in districts which have a better education level. In most districts traditional knowledge is assessed as useful. The main reason for the emphasis on traditional knowledge systems is the close link that it has with livelihoods, which are largely rural based.

#### Integrating the traditional with the modern

People's knowledge is based on centuries of experience relating to the sustainable use of local resources, common property management and the cultural and economic ethos of society. Traditional knowledge has

## From the people

According to Babulal, who is a labourer, the current generation does not want to be involved in agriculture as a result of education. "Every educated person wants a Government job. Due to unemployment, the educated section is moving towards self-employment. They do not take any interest in agriculture. If this attitude continues in the coming days who will till the land?" he asks. "This will be a big problem. What needs to be done is that along with school education subjects related to agriculture should also be taught so that children develop an interest in agriculture," he says.

Bhanwar Chandrakar, who is a farmer, says that with TV, radio and telephones, which are available today, the general knowledge of the children is

increasing but these also have a bad effect on them. He says, "What is required is that the Government should include subjects that develop a sense of patriotism, respect for elders and social development. Today's students have become useless after getting educated. They have bad habits such as alcoholism, smoking and gambling. They do not want to work but want all the comforts. Not keeping themselves clean, showing no respect to elders, not participating in domestic matters are issues of concern and are a result of English education."

*Anda village, Durg block  
Durg*



## From the people

**Knowledge:** Our village is located inside a forest. Our ancestors did not send their children to school because the school was very far. Not many people received education and they remained illiterate. Earlier there were many forests and we did not move around much. There were no means of transport, there were no radios or newspapers and hence we did not know much about the outside world. Now radios and newspapers are the main medium of news.

**Information:** Earlier due to our limited knowledge, agricultural production was also low. It was just enough for survival. Slowly we tried to increase the production by practising new techniques. Due to increasing population and prices, it is difficult to survive. Our elders say that earlier there were many medicinal plants and herbs in the forests, which were used to treat people and animals. Now due to new kinds of illnesses and the absence of medicinal plants, treatment is not possible and we have to go to the doctor for treatment.

**Education:** In the past, parents did not send their children to school since schools did not exist in every village. Distances were more, the forests were dense and we had to cross rivers and streams to reach other villages which had a school. Not many people were educated. Now the situation has changed and all the children go to school. With our children, we also learn and we find the village in a better state than before.

*Village Karchhi, Block Nagari, Dhamtari*

People who live in a village need to learn agricultural work, animal husbandry, repair work, traditional skills and household tasks apart from the education that they receive in school. They learn these activities from their parents, elders, community, neighbours, and friends. Today people need vocational education, health education and sex education.

*Gullu village, Aarang block, Raipur*



strong elements of sustainability and is largely environment friendly. These elements need to be acknowledged and integrated with the school curriculum. School education must help locate, identify and articulate practices and knowledge that are useful and then leave

it to the people to choose to adopt, reject or replace the same.

Simultaneously, systems that are unscientific, irrational or based on superstition and misconception must be identified, and the people should be convinced that these are harmful and should therefore be denounced. While recognising that traditional knowledge should be preserved, it is important that traditional systems be evaluated correctly. The selection of what is good and what is harmful should be based on full information.

### From the people

What one learns other than literacy is education. Knowledge does not require one to go to school or obtain an education in school. People have traditional knowledge. This is learned from the elders in the family, generation after generation. Earlier the gurus would give or teach us a mantra on *Kartik Purnima* or *Amavasya*. Today, all members of the family including children participate in income-generation activities. Children learn farming activities, grazing activities, woodwork and construction work from their families and neighbours, apart from what they learn in school.



*Portenga village, Jashpurnagar block, Jashpur*

In ancient times, there were few opportunities for education. It was the wealthy who could get an education. One had to travel far to get an education. Today, the situation of education has improved and is better than before.

*Mantoliya village, Bharatpur block, Korea*

Due to the absence of any educational facilities in the village, people were deprived of an education. Some people went out to study. These people were considered important when they returned with an education.

*Devpahari village, Korba block, Korba*

In our village Gidhmudi, people were illiterate and uneducated. There was no provision to teach reading and writing. The people were living a '*janglee jivan*'<sup>4</sup>. Earlier we used to be scared of educated people. Now as the interactions have increased, we are less shy and our educational status has changed.

*Gidhmudi village, Podi Uprada block, Korba*

### Verbal transmission of knowledge

Knowledge that is transmitted verbally is threatened by the idea that the written word is more 'authentic' or scientific and constitutes a greater or superior knowledge source than oral learning. Verbal transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next faces the challenge of loss of knowledge, not because of the transmission method alone, but because of external influences on each successive generation as well. With market forces, competing occupations, and the threat of survival, each generation sifts and chooses to accept only certain parts of the knowledge that is imparted, in a bid to cope with the changing times. What a generation chooses to accept or reject is determined by the influences on that generation. These influences arise from parallel or other more systemic knowledge systems, such as modern education, which erodes old ideas and beliefs and may even create a lack of respect or appreciation for them.

A strong oral tradition exists in areas of applied knowledge such as traditional medicine, the use of herbs and plants, songs for particular occasions, religious and cultural ceremonies as well as in cultural forms like dance, drama and

<sup>4</sup> The people refer to themselves as leading a '*janglee jivan*' (a life of the *jungle*). Such a statement shows that at least some people see their way of life in the past as being '*janglee*' or uncivilised, and reflects the influence of the mainstream thought processes on the people.

story telling. In all these forms, especially in the case of traditional medicine and the use of herbs and plants, the strong tradition of verbal transmission has meant the loss of knowledge, and there is very little that has been documented and recorded. It remains a challenge to try and preserve this invaluable knowledge. It is also important to ensure that it does not lose its range and depth and that it does not remain confined to a few households or people.

### People’s Perceptions regarding Education, Knowledge and Information

The Village *Jan Rapats* compare the status of education in the past with the current situation. Comparisons are based on provisioning, status, condition and access to schools. In the case of knowledge and information, comparisons are made in terms of the relevance of education in the past.<sup>5</sup>

### Changing relevance of knowledge and information

There are different perceptions about knowledge and information. In the past, knowledge and information was much more closely linked to the natural environment, to the immediate social environment and to the needs of local economy. Today, information and knowledge constitute aspects related to the ‘country’ and ‘the world’ and to different streams of technological information.

### The popular context of education

In the past, the realm of each individual’s knowledge was related to his or her local environment. Due to poor roads and transportation networks, under-developed telecommunications and the virtual absence of media, new ideas and knowledge could not reach the villages. Today, the knowledge domain of an individual in the village has widened beyond the scope of the village to the

#### From the people

In ancient times, people were not so educated. At that time, people would see the sun and tell the time. They would break leaves from a tree and only when new leaves came, would they know that it was time for rain. While people were not literate, they had traditional knowledge.

*Jabla village, Jashpurnagar block, Jashpur*

Knowledge and information about the country and the world is gained through newspapers, radio and TV. The opening of a school in the village has increased the level of education in the village. We are now getting education.

*Kandora village, Bhanora block, Jashpur*

Today, even the elders are becoming aware of education being imparted through schools. People send their children to study. They are

slowly beginning to understand the importance of education. They even send their children outside to study. While the elders are not themselves educated, they are encouraging their children to study.



*Chuladar village, Sonhat block, Korea*

Today people’s knowledge is extensive. Along with information about the village, they also have information about events that have occurred at the State, national and international level. In many villages, listening to the radio, watching television and reading newspapers and magazines have helped to extend the sphere of knowledge of people. Today, most people in the village are educated.

*District Report, Rajnandgaon*

<sup>5</sup> The idea of yesterday and today varies between villages and may refer to the immediate past or even a long time ago. It captures the time dimension over which change has occurred.

national and even the international level. With the improvement in infrastructure, attitudes have changed and many more children have started going to school. With the coming of radio, television and computers, there is strong demand for education today.

### School education

The beginning of school education is not very clearly reflected in the *Jan Rapats*, but most reports trace it back to five or six decades. They mention that the introduction of school education has led to significant changes in the villages. Most villages feel that in the last few years, the spread of school education has increased and basic pedagogy and access have changed, providing greater equity and ease of access.

The Reports mention that, earlier education was restricted to the rich, the ruling and the priestly classes, while today education is available to all classes and provides an opportunity for people to develop themselves. The need to prioritise access to education for those groups and people who were denied access to education in the past has been reinforced in all the District Reports. For instance, the Bilaspur District Report clearly states that the underprivileged sections of society continue to be educationally

disadvantaged even today. The Raigarh District Report also specifically mentions that the villages where educational institutions were set up quite early continue to have high levels of literacy. However, forest villages, villages with high migration, remote villages, and villages with predominantly disadvantaged communities continue to have low levels of literacy.

Many of the *Jan Rapats* refer, in particular, to the provisioning and quality of teaching at the district level. Schooling, access to schools, poor infrastructure, quality of teaching and shortcomings in the curriculum are some of the issues that are discussed in the reports. In the light of the fundamental right to education, the *Jan Rapats* clearly demand the right to be educated, for various reasons including growth in employment and social status. There is adequate knowledge and awareness of the State's role in the provisioning of education for the people.

The usefulness of the modern education system and the values it promotes is another issue that is discussed extensively during the *Jan Rapat* exercises.

Most reports feel that school education has alienated the youth from agriculture and created an aversion for land-based work. While about 57.7 percent of the Village Reports state that modern education is useful or moderately useful in daily life, a significant percentage (45 percent) of the Village Reports state that modern education is not useful in daily life. Yet, people want their children to be educated because they feel that education will assist them in the future. Only 29 percent of the Reports expect education to lead to employment.

Table 3.3 **Modern education in daily life**  
(percentage of Village Reports selected for perception analysis<sup>6</sup>)

Region	Useful	Moderately useful	Not useful
Northern region	25	32	43
Central plains	17	41	41.9
Southern region	19	40	50.1
State	20	37.7	45

Source: Village *Jan Rapats*, Part III

<sup>6</sup> These figures (and those in the other tables in this chapter) refer to the perception analysis conducted with data relating to the 2869 villages, which were identified as a representative sample.

Table 3.4 **Expectations from modern education**  
(percentage of Village Reports selected for perception analysis)

Region	Employment	Assistance in Development	Increase in Literacy	Focus on Women Education	Helps in Getting Resources	Ability of self - employment	Computer Education
Northern region	32	51	23	9	16	4	5
Central plains	45	34	51	14	23	25	7
Southern region	11	41	44	5	5.5	9	2
State	29	42	39	9	14.8	12.7	4.7

Source: Village *Jan Rapats*, Part III

The demand for service-based occupations has increased. There is considerable disquiet amongst many villagers over this aspect. An important suggestion that emerges from the discussions is that the school curriculum should include aspects related to agriculture and land based activities. This will have two advantages, giving agriculture the same status as the other subjects of the curriculum and giving children learnings that they can use in their everyday lives.

School based education is unable to strengthen and promote an appreciation of the local culture, livelihoods and customs and many individuals find themselves alienated from their own culture.

### **Differences in perception**

An analysis of the *Jan Rapats* shows that people's perception of education (including knowledge and awareness) differs according to the income group that they belong to. The extract from the Akhara *Jan Rapat* illustrates this point succinctly. According to the Akhara report, traditional medicine is considered useful among the economically less well off groups while the richer sections are of the opinion that only illiterate people believe in these knowledge systems. The middle class believes that this knowledge is a desirable feature but for the poor this knowledge base is crucial as it helps them to find solutions to problems within their

environment and makes them self sufficient in treating minor illnesses.

Thus, knowledge systems help to cope with the requirements of everyday life. It can be seen that what constitutes knowledge and utility is very much a function of the social, economic and geographic realities within which people live.

Different knowledge and skill systems are claimed by different groups of people, differentiated by economic criteria. While the better off sections speak of technical knowledge, the not so well to do sections talk of skill based and traditional knowledge. Interestingly, these distinctions are more apparent among men. Women, especially among the economically weaker sections, feel traditional knowledge is very useful for every day life. The *Jan Rapats* do not contain any specific discussions of issues related to education of girls or of any special emphasis on educating the girl child. There is however some discussion on the education of children. Women from the less well off sections in the village speak of education as being necessary to keep pace with the world outside, where everyone is getting educated, reflecting the fear of further marginalisation. Across Village Reports, it is seen that education is considered to be a tool that empowers and the access to education is regarded as a means that can transform the social and economic status of people.

Table 3.5 Different perceptions of people regarding knowledge, information and education

	Economically well off and dominant men's group	Economically well off and dominant women's group	Middle income men's group	Middle income women's group	Poor or marginalised men's group	Poor or marginalised women's group
Knowledge <i>Gyaan</i>	We have certain basic technical knowledge of electrical fittings, and the repair of hand pumps. In agriculture, we know the seeds that will give the best yields. This knowledge is resident with us.	Earlier people were illiterate and they did not have any knowledge base. At that time, if people were ill they would go to traditional health practitioners ( <i>neem hakims</i> ) for treatment and get themselves cured.	We have knowledge of some home remedies such as curing fever with <i>neem</i> leaves and curing toothaches, rashes, and diseases of the mouth with <i>tulis</i> /leaves. We do not have any modern knowledge but continue with our traditional knowledge base. This is so except in agriculture, where we try to follow what is happening in the modern world.	Thieves cannot steal knowledge nor can it be divided. It is through our knowledge that we run our everyday life. Our knowledge enables us to teach our children and we are able to make useful things for the house such as <i>papads</i> . We help in sorting seeds, stitching and knitting. It is through knowledge that people become aware of their responsibilities.	We have knowledge of certain domestic work, agriculture and labour.	We have knowledge of useful things for the house such as roof-tile making, broom making, preparation of home remedies such as <i>neem</i> and <i>tulsi</i> preparations for minor illnesses.
Information <i>Jaankaari</i>	For high yielding seeds, we are aware of the relevant fertilizers. We have the technical knowledge related to agricultural development.	Today people's awareness is slowly increasing. Earlier the farmer would use manual labour on the field, but today he uses tractors for ploughing. Earlier he would use organic fertilizers ( <i>gobar khad</i> ) but today he uses chemical fertilisers.	Besides agricultural work we are also aware of construction of buildings, making of agricultural implements and furniture.	The kind of awareness that people have today was absent in our elders. Due to this awareness, there are several opportunities that have opened up, and our farmers are able to earn much more in comparison to the past. The resources and facilities have increased; as a result people are able to earn more.	We know how to make tiles for the roof, broom making, mat making etc.	We know about domestically useful activities such as making pickles and <i>vadis</i> , home remedies and the like.

(Contd.)



<p>Education <i>Shiksha</i></p>	<p>Earlier because there was no school in the village our children remained illiterate. However, today because there is a school we send our children to school. There is a large pupil population and a shortage of rooms in the school today. There is a need for a playground and extra curricular activities in the school.</p>	<p>Our elders could not go to school. However, today every village has a school and thus most people are becoming literate and educated. We too send our children to school for education.</p>	<p>We are small farmers and our children help us with agricultural activities. But after understanding the importance of education we have been sending our children to school. There is a need for more rooms, playgrounds, and extra curricular activities in the school. Our children can help us in developmental activities in the future.</p>	<p>Education is an important step towards the development of society. Through education, the ills in society can be removed. In comparison to the past there has been a lot of development in education. In order to ensure that the common people are educated the Government has conducted literacy campaigns and opened schools in every village. In order to move ahead in life it is extremely important that our children are educated. In the future our children should know something about our country. We have a school in the village where children go to study.</p>	<p>Earlier we seldom realised the importance of education for our children. Due to our low standard of living our children often remained illiterate. Now after a school has opened in the village, we send our children to school. We need more help from the Government to assist us in educating our children. There is also a need for a playground in the school.</p>	<p>Earlier we did not give much importance to education. Today, we are sending our children to school. The children do get books but due to a shortage of space children do not get place to sit in the school, and they end up not going to school. More rooms, a playground and extra curricular activities are needed in the school.</p>
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## From the people

An example of how different people delimit knowledge, information and education



*Jan Rapat, Akhara village, Gram Panchayat Kharsia*

## Perceptions of stakeholders regarding education

While recognising that parents, children and teachers play different roles with regard to education, the *Jan Rapats* recognise that education is a collective responsibility of all concerned.

### Parents

The role of parents is to ensure that the child's basic requirements of food, clothing and shelter are provided for. They must also create conditions that enable their children to attend school regularly. For most parents, it is important to send children to school so that they can read, write and do arithmetic, which helps to maintain accounts. For daughters too, education is considered important, since parents feel that it is important to prepare them well before they go to their in-laws. Education is often seen as an added qualification for marriage for the girl child and for imparting certain useful skills. Parents who cannot read or write reiterate that their parents were their *gurus* or teachers and that it is from them that they learnt about life.

Besides the learning that children acquire in school, they are taught farming, how to feed the animals and social customs and traditions by their parents and grandparents.

### Children

Children, both boys and girls, have to sometimes fight with their parents, for their

right to education especially when money is scarce or when there is a need for extra hands at work. Often parents do not give any priority to education and children drop out of school. Children who receive full parental support in their education are far more motivated than those who do not.

For some children, going to school itself means breaking barriers. There are no specific reasons offered by the children as to why they want to study. Some do say that they would like to pursue a degree and go out of the village to work. For others it is important to study but they do not necessarily have a stated ambition. For some children, the fear of failure keeps them away from school. In fact this is one of the main reasons for children dropping out of school.

Discussions with girls in high school reveal that access to education for them is determined only in part by their gender. The economic class, caste and background also has a strong bearing on girls education. The economic status of the community determines the perception of the need for education of girls and the challenges they face. However some girls do manage to forge ahead and chalk out new paths for themselves.

Schooling helps girls become independent and gives them some freedom of movement, albeit in a limited area. Girls say that they like coming to school because of the exposure they get to the outside world and school gives them a chance to move out of the village. Girl children are usually oriented and trained from a very young age to prepare themselves for marriage and household activities. Even though they do go to school, few think of careers in the future. Many girls are married at an early age and move to another home. Sometimes girls are withdrawn from school while they are

in Class IV or V and married off. Early marriage is one of the main reasons for the high drop out rates among girls. This is more prevalent among families with first generation literates, where greater priority is given to housework and agricultural work than to education.

### Teachers

Teachers feel that the teaching community was more respected in the past than it is today. Teachers had the liberty go to homes in the village and bring children to school. Today, very little importance is given to the teacher. There is a need for mobilising support for education in the community so that more parents send their children to school and understand its importance. According to the teachers, most parents send their children to school to learn simple arithmetic, so as to help them with their accounts.

The main reason cited by the teachers for children not coming to school is financial constraints. The teachers say that many parents are preoccupied with livelihood concerns. They do not force their children to attend school and the slightest inconvenience caused to regular life by sending children to school makes them withdraw their children from school. Children often miss school because they need to help their parents in the fields or to take care of the animals. Irregular attendance is a major problem, especially during the peak agricultural season. Typically, the children lag behind in class and are unable to cope with studies. They soon lose the motivation to carry on with their studies.

The teachers need better facilities and opportunities for training and learning new methods of teaching. Usually only a few teachers get a chance to attend training sessions and they in turn share their learning with the rest of

the group. Teacher trainings are generally held twice a year but few teachers get an opportunity to attend these programmes.

### Education: Alienation and the need for integration

The *Jan Rapats* highlight how traditional knowledge is useful in conducting activities related to the lives and livelihoods of people, even in the present context. The current education system appears to have devalued other knowledge systems and created an imbalance in the existing structure. There is some reflection on modern school based education and the need for its integration into people's lives, indicating its alienation from everyday life. This is in contrast to the earlier knowledge and education in the community, which was contextual.

Education in the past included all activities and knowledge domains necessary for daily life, including culture, religion and practices. The teachers were community elders, parents and family members - the knowledge holders of society. Education mainly comprised occupational knowledge, traditional customs

#### From the people

People of earlier times were also scientists.

*Uraon tribe discussion, Sagibhavan village, Kasbil block, Jashpur*



Along with education, recognition of local knowledge is what will lead us ahead.

*Kesaiguda village, Bhopalpatnam block, Dantewada*

Some people are trying to explain the utility of traditional knowledge. They consider it rigid and try to undermine its importance. They are trying to collect modern knowledge and make their lives successful.

*Buchihardi village, Akaltara block, Janjgir-Champa*



and values, hygiene and childcare, cooking, animal husbandry, house construction and maintenance, preventive and curative medicine (in case of Chhattisgarh this means the use of herbs and home remedies), repairs, construction of agricultural implements and handicrafts. This knowledge was used directly for daily living and sustenance.

With the increased integration of the knowledge domains of societies as well as the influence of external technical knowledge, information and knowledge have become empowering tools to cope with the competitive world. With the growth in the industrial and service sectors, there has been some absorption of labour, but employment is dependent on the level of education and skills within the labour force.

Both school education and entrepreneurial and technical courses have opened up livelihood options for people who are moving out of their traditional occupations and geographical locations. While education plays an effective role in equipping people so that they have more options, it has not been able to increase the opportunities for providing livelihoods, locally.

The increase in the geographical locations with which trade and commerce is carried out, the increased mobility of labour, better transport facilities are factors responsible for several changes that have happened in some of the villages of Chhattisgarh. The slow growth of agriculture has meant that there is a need for technical education and technical knowledge, which is not available within the local society.

Today, even traditional learning is getting more partitioned, rigid and formalised. There is some integration at the practical level, where home knowledge is absorbing elements of modern school based education. In fact, school education often acts as the bridge by which local societies are made aware of the external world. Yet, modern education has not been able to integrate itself with people's existing knowledge domains or their specific needs.

The Village *Jan Rapats* report that education has led to a new classification in villages and there exists a new divide between the illiterate and literate, between the uneducated and the educated. There are two sections in society; the elite group, which is literate and the comparatively disadvantaged group which is largely illiterate. Some *Jan Rapats* report that parents send their children to school because they fear social ostracisation.

The expectation that education is a means to get gainful employment is also creating problems. There are a large number of 'educated unemployed' youth who do not want to pursue the same occupations as their parents. For many rural young people education has not widened opportunities but has led to disillusionment and frustration. School based education as well as information and exposure to the outside world through television and magazines has led to a growing gap between parents and children.

## From the people

In Bastar, efforts for the popularisation of school education began in the twentieth century. In 1908, in order to make Bastar educated, the then *Diwan* of the State, Panda Baijnath, passed a decree. It stated that every child in every village must go to school and if the parents did not send their children to school, they would be punished with whiplashes and the children would be hung upside-down from trees. At around the same time, the forests were declared to be outside the reach of the people and the *Begar* policy (work for no payment) was also initiated. Many writers and historians labelled the teachers of that time,

who were from outside the State, as dictators. The behaviour of the teachers filled the people of Bastar with fear and they worried about what would happen to their children.

Discussions were held in the *Jati Panchayats* (Caste *Panchayats*) and the people voiced their concerns. In the interest of protecting their society and culture, they decided to oppose the modern education that was being propagated. This was the beginning of the *Bhumkaal* Revolution of 1910.



*District Report, Bastar*

## People's Perception regarding School Education - Status, Enrolment and Access

School education is the single most important aspect of education. Many village *Jan Rapats* and District *Jan Rapats* discuss issues of provisioning, infrastructure, curriculum, and the quality of teaching in schools. The *Jan Rapats* articulate that it is the State, which is responsible for providing basic education for all. The general perception is that school education has improved. The access to schools, the number of schools and the number of teachers has increased. More villages have primary schools and most also have accessible middle schools. The Reports also point out several shortcomings in the school system and list some recommendations, which can make school education more useful and functional.

### Status of school education

Regarding the status of education today, only 19.7 percent (5.1 percent plus 14.6 percent) of the Village Reports state that the status of education is very good or good. Less than half of the Village Reports classify it as being satisfactory, while 34.7 percent (21.4

percent plus 13.3 percent) of the Reports say that education is unable to fulfil their expectations or is unsatisfactory. (See Table 3.6). In the central plains region, 35 percent of the Village Reports classify education as being unsatisfactory.

The resources for education are perceived to be satisfactory by about 48.8 percent of the Village Reports, while roughly 20 percent (11.4 percent



Table 3.6 **Status of education**  
(percentage of Village Reports selected  
for perception analysis)

Region	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unable to fulfill expectations	Not Satisfactory
Northern region	5	17.3	45.2	25.5	7
Central plains	6.3	7.2	39.5	12	35
Southern region	4	19.3	45	26.7	5
State	5.1	14.6	43.2	21.4	13.3

Source: Village *Jan Rapats*, Part III

plus 8.4 percent) of the villages say that the resources cannot fulfil their expectations or are inadequate. The percentage of Village Reports that classify the resources as being very good or good is substantially higher (31.1 percent; 7.5 percent plus 23.6 percent) than those that categorise the status of education as being very good or good 19.7 percent (5.1 percent plus 14.6 percent). This reflects that the problem is not one of resources alone.

A closer examination of the status of education shows that different districts and areas perceive

Table 3.7 **Status of resources of education**  
(percentage of Village Reports selected  
for perception analysis)

Region	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unable to fulfill expectations	Not Satisfactory
Northern region	6.2	20	54.3	8	11
Central plains	9	15.3	59	9.4	7
Southern region	7.3	35.6	33.2	16.9	7.1
State	7.5	23.6	48.8	11.4	8.4

Source: Village *Jan Rapats*, Part III

education very differently. We examine the status in the three broad regions.

### Northern Chhattisgarh

Surguja district in northern Chhattisgarh has one of the lowest literacy levels in the State, 54.8 percent compared to the State average of 64.7 percent (2001). On the other hand Jashpur, Raigarh and Korea districts have literacy rates of 63.8 percent, 70.2 percent and 63.1 percent respectively, which are equal to or higher than the State average. In Surguja, the people appreciate the available educational facilities and are optimistic about the future<sup>7</sup>. In Jashpur, Raigarh and Korea, the status of school education is considered inadequate.

In spite of high literacy rates, there are specific reasons why 45.2 percent of the Village Reports in northern Chhattisgarh, rate the level of education to be only satisfactory. (See Table 3.6)

- In Raigarh, the literacy levels are extremely low in certain remote villages, villages with high migration rates, forest villages and villages where disadvantaged communities predominate.
- Education for girls continues to be limited in Korea district. The Korea District Report states that although girls are registered as enrolled, most girls between the age of 6 and 14 years do not go to school.
- The Jashpur Report highlights the fact that education levels are low because even though infrastructure is available, it is not being used optimally. Poor attendance of students and irregular attendance of

<sup>7</sup> This may be because the people of the more literate districts are able to assess their requirements far more critically than others. Another reason for this difference in perception may be that the educational initiatives in Surguja are more recent than in the other districts, and reflect the optimism that people feel about the new initiatives in education.

teachers, small rooms and insufficient space are some of the factors responsible for the low education status.

In contrast, the Surguja District Report highlights the following aspects:

- Education has brought about a wider domain of knowledge and led to the introduction of technical knowledge.
- There is an improvement in the knowledge base due to the influence of television and radio in everyday life.
- The setting up of several Government and non-government educational institutions at the village level has meant that a lot of non-traditional knowledge is imparted.
- There is change in the attitude regarding education for girls.
- Today, even those who are not so well off or work as labourers have access to educational facilities.
- However in remote villages, due to lack of roads and transport facilities, children are unable to move on to secondary education.

### Central plains

The central plains consist of the industrial belt of Chhattisgarh - the districts of Rajnandgaon, Kabirdham, Bilaspur, Mahasamund, Dhamtari, Raipur, Korba, Durg and Janjgir-Champa, which have a mixed population. Most of these districts have literacy rates that are close to the State average. Rajnandgaon and Durg have the highest literacy rates in this belt.

The main points regarding the status of education in these districts are:

### From the people



Now our children study in the village itself. They do not have to go far. Even girls go to school. Some children even go to college. Some of the educated people have become peons, gram sevaks and teachers in the village. Today, primary education is available in the village itself (both in villages located far from the main road as well as in those located near the main road).

*Village Jagdishpur, Surguja*

With the coming of education to the villages, there has been a change in the environment in the villages. There is more awareness among the people, there is less discrimination and people have become less superstitious. In village Salihabhata, people feel that there has been an increase in awareness due to education and they have been able to free themselves from practices such as child marriage, dowry and child labour. Besides this, scientific thought has become more popular and there has been an improvement in the standard of living.

*District Report, Korba*

- Only two out of five District Reports rate the educational facilities as satisfactory. The spread of education has led to a change in the attitude of the people, and a perceptible difference in societal values.
- The District Reports mention that infrastructure facilities are inadequate and are not able to keep up with the current enrolment rates.
- Education for girls is being encouraged and there is greater awareness and interest in their education.
- There are primary schools in every village, except in those villages where the population is small and the number of school going

children is less than the stipulated pupil population.

- There is a demand for more middle and secondary level schools.

### Southern Chhattisgarh

The southern part of Chhattisgarh, which is hilly and heavily forested, and has a high tribal population, consists of the districts of Bastar, Dantewada and Kanker. The perception of the people about the status of education is different in each of the three districts.

- The Village Reports of Dantewada rate the status of education as good. On the other

hand, in Bastar, the majority of the Reports rate it as satisfactory, while in Kanker district it is considered inadequate.

- Literacy rates in Dantewada are the lowest in the State, while Kanker records a literacy rate of 73.31 percent, far above the State average. However, in spite of the high literacy rates in Kanker district, remote villages still do not have access to education. The main reason for this is the inaccessibility of these villages as a result of natural barriers such as rivers and the hilly terrain.
- Other reasons given for the uninspiring performance of the education sector are the non-functionality of schools, the lack of continuity in educational provisioning after primary school, distance to school, irregularity and shortage of teachers and the need for a greater relevance of education to everyday life.

#### From the people

Traditionally, women have been trained in household chores and home based industries and livelihoods. In Bastar, life is largely dependent on natural resources and women are adept at forest-based activities. Economic activities related to forests and animal husbandry is the responsibility of women. As a result traditional knowledge of household tasks, the rearing of children, care of other family members, folk arts, all rests with women. Their association with modern education is less than it should be, as they are not seen as people who are going to take up jobs. It is also believed that if girls are sent to school, they will only get bookish knowledge and this will alienate them from their everyday tasks. Modern education is not considered useful for girls and traditional knowledge is imparted to them in the house.

However in the last few years there has been some change and people who have not received formal education are labelled 'illiterate and ignorant' and this is considered to be insulting, by the villagers. This is why many villagers feel that at least one person in the family must receive higher education.



*District Report, Bastar*

In districts that have seen the initial impact of the programme for universal elementary education (UEE), the outlook is positive. Districts like Dantewada and Surguja, which had very low literacy levels in the past, are clearly impressed by the recent gains that they have made. Districts that are in transition take a far more critical look at education. They show a marked change in the attitude to women's education, a desire for modern and technical knowledge and the need to keep pace with the outside world where knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes are constantly changing. In districts with high literacy rates, the focus is on quality of teaching, updated and local context in curriculum, inadequate infrastructure and lack of access to education in certain pockets. Thus the mere provisioning of schools, infrastructure and facilities is not enough. There is much that needs to be done.



## Issues in enrolment

Education is perceived as being directly linked with development. It is regarded as a means to better opportunities in the future and it is this belief that encourages parents to send their children to school. While there has been a growth in the enrolment of children in school, especially that of girls, there is also a high drop out rate. High enrolment does not necessarily translate into regular attendance. The retention rate in the higher classes is low.

Inadequate facilities is one of the main factors that hinder the enrolment of children. While efforts to increase the number of schools and locate a school in every habitation as well as to provide adequate school infrastructure have been underway for many years now, infrastructure is still inadequate. The lack of resources, buildings, rooms and teachers has also adversely affected the quality of education imparted.

## Girls' enrolment

The gender role for girls as defined by traditional society often persuades parents to assume that the education of girls is an unnecessary investment. Girls are usually made to stay home to look after the household needs of the family, which they continue to do after they grow up and get married. There are no specific issues that have been highlighted in the Reports with respect to the education of girls, although it has been mentioned that even if girls are officially enrolled in school, they do not attend school.

Field visits and discussions with middle school girls reveal the challenges faced by them when they go to school. Financial constraint is a major factor that prevents girls from attending school. Though all children face the threat of not being sent to school when their parents are not economically well off, girls find it even more difficult because of their prescribed gender role.

Besides social issues, another reason for poor attendance of girls in school is the concern for safety. Some Reports articulate the need for *ashram shalas* (hostels) for girls, if the school is situated outside the village. Girls who live in remote areas, specifically villages where no school exists, face more problems because of the distance they have to travel.

However, the attitude with regard to education of girls is changing. In Raigarh, for example more and more girls are enrolled in schools and the reasons for this are agricultural prosperity, better availability of educational institutions as well as a general improvement in transport infrastructure, due to increased investment in roads. The *Soochna Shakti Yojana*, which offers computer literacy for girls, has been mentioned in some District Reports. Villages located near urban conglomerations and situated on major roads are keen to impart computer literacy to their girls, whereas remote, backward and poor villages are still looking for basic education.

## Out-of-school children

A few District *Jan Rapats* discuss the issue of drop-outs, or 'out-of-school' children and the problems associated with sending children to school.

In most of Chhattisgarh, children are regarded as an important economic asset for families. While education is perceived as having the potential to enhance livelihoods it is also seen as a threat that keeps hands away from work and makes children unwilling to work in traditional occupations. The *Jan Rapats* also mention that parents find it difficult to retain children in school, because school hours often coincide with working hours. Since school education does not appear to provide any major benefit in everyday life, children are often withdrawn to support their families. The children

## From the people

People have become more aware about education and their interest in education has increased. The desire for knowledge, information and higher education has also increased.



*District Report, Rajnandgaon*

The people feel that education, up to high school, should be available in every village.

*District Report, Raipur*

With regard to education, people's expectations are not limited to the improvement and extension of educational resources but also include the qualitative aspects of education. They ask for resources as well as a change in the methodology of education.

*District Report, Kabirdham*

themselves are vulnerable to dropping out, and the education system is not sensitive to the psychological requirements of these children, or even to their learning needs. The challenge lies in helping these children to continue with their education and to make education relevant to their lives.

Field visits and discussions with school going children reveal that the fear of failure is another reason for dropping out. Villages with high migration tend to have high drop out rates. Families that move in search of alternate livelihood during the 'off' season, work on a contract basis and there are no fixed places of migration. Children from such families usually do not manage to complete even primary school.

Notwithstanding the high drop out rates, it is apparent that most people view education positively and do try and send their children to school.

The *Jan Rapats* highlight the perceived advantages of school education as well as the problems associated with it. While people feel that the immediate needs of children and society are not addressed in the kind of education that is being provided, they recognise the critical role that education is likely to play in the future. The education system dissuades children and parents from regular attendance and long years of schooling. On the other hand, the critical role that education plays in literacy, in the development of self esteem and capacity building are all well accepted.

## Issues of access

Access to education remains an issue in many districts despite the recent initiatives in literacy and universalisation of education. In districts like Raigarh, Kanker and Jashpur, in spite of prevailing literacy rates above the State average, issues of access persist. Even today education levels are low in, villages inhabited by certain communities, in remote villages, in villages with high migration and in forest villages. Remotely located or sparsely populated villages face challenges regarding the continuity of education, even if they have sufficient access to primary education. Some of the smaller and remoter villages have been serviced with schools under the formal Government school system and it is important that the achievement of such schools in ensuring universal reach of primary education is extended to universal elementary education.

In other districts like Surguja, Dantewada and Kabirdham, which have the lowest literacy rates in their respective regions, there is a demand for *ashram* schools for children from the more remote villages as well as for children belonging to disadvantaged sections. In the absence of such facilities many children are

## From the people

In far off villages there are education guarantee schools that have been set up, which cover small hamlets or *padas*. Almost all other villages, besides these, have primary schools. In some large villages, there are separate schools for girls.

*District Report, Korea*

In every revenue village in the district, there is a provision for a primary school. There is no primary school in habitations where the number of children is less than the required number (40 children and 25 children in tribal habitations). In these areas, hostels and residential schools have been provided.

*District Report, Bilaspur*

According to the villagers the poor condition of the buildings, lack of buildings and teachers are some of the reasons for the level of education being lower than expected.

*District Report, Jashpur*

The present situation of women's education is very poor. The knowledge that they get from the elders at home is not relevant or useful today, as things are changing. Technology is also changing and everyday something new comes up. Earlier people used to say give newborn babies water, now they say do not give them water for at least four to five months.

*District Report, Bastar*

According to the Korva children who study in boarding schools, it is very difficult to stay at home and study. The prevalence of alcoholism in many families and the difficulties of living in the hills make it impossible for them to study. In the hostel, they get social, educational and economic protection. The people of Suvarpara in Batauli feel that people who have an education can access have jobs in the Government and will be able to serve the Government.

*District Report, Surguja*



not able continue with their education at the secondary level.

In districts like Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund and Durg, there is a primary school in every village. There is a need to make secondary and higher level education more accessible. These Reports point out that there is no provisioning for disabled children and state that special schools and facilities are required for them. Computer education, technical knowledge, information technology and Internet facilities that are available in the cities and towns also need to be made available in the villages.

Another phenomenon that is now becoming evident is the mushrooming of private schools all over Chhattisgarh. Though these schools are more prominent in urban areas and in very large villages, they have certainly made some difference to access and provide an option for

## From the people

People of the village go to both private and Government schools to study. In Government schools, the lack of teachers and the involvement of teachers in other tasks affect the standard of education. Hence parents prefer sending their children to private schools.

*Salora village, Katghora block, Korba*

There is a primary school in the village, which is run regularly. However the teacher present does not teach the children properly. There are two teachers for 110 children. While one teacher is busy with meetings and administrative work, the other teacher is busy monitoring the five classes in the school. He does not get any time to teach. There is a need for more teachers and specifically women teachers in the village.

*Village Karhiyakhar  
Baikunthpur block, Korea*



parents. The perception is that private schools provide better education and give greater care. Very little information is available in the *Jan Rapats* on private schools.

### **Infrastructure and curriculum**

One of the main challenges in provisioning infrastructure is to keep pace with the growing pupil population. The facilities in many primary schools are not up to the mark and the available infrastructure is under stress. New buildings are required and the existing buildings have to be up graded and expanded.

### **Teachers**

Though the overall teacher pupil ratio in most districts conforms to the norm of 1:40, the situation in many schools within the districts is very different. Many schools have 50 to 100 children with just one teacher. Such situations make it impossible to provide quality education. Other problems such as teacher absenteeism, low competence of teachers, teachers who do not reside in the village and improper appointment of teachers have been mentioned in many of the *Jan Rapats*.

In remote areas especially in the tribal areas, requests have been made to keep teachers away from other duties. The Durg *Jan Rapat* states that the quality of teaching is poor because teachers are busy with other work. In Korea, schools do not open and close on time and there is also the added problem of teacher absenteeism. In many villages, parents say that even though the children have been going to school regularly they do not seem to have learnt much.

There is an increasing demand for residential teachers to combat the current problem of teacher absenteeism and people point out that wherever the EGS teacher is a local

person, the level of absenteeism is negligible. Teachers who belong to the village are accountable to the community and take their responsibilities more seriously. In almost all the reports there is a demand for resident teachers, reflecting the need to foster a closer relationship between the teachers and the community.

### **Curriculum**

#### **Need to introduce relevant subjects and use local**

**specific examples:** In the debate between traditional knowledge systems and modern education system, there is now an emerging consensus on the need for the two systems to complement each other. The demand for introduction of agriculture based education in the middle school helps to provide a local context to the syllabus being taught in schools. The Kanker Report, for example, suggests that subjects like animal husbandry, agriculture, and poultry farming techniques should be included in the curriculum. Subjects that are relevant for the children should be introduced and the traditional knowledge base should be incorporated into the current curriculum. Teaching should be practical based and less pedantic.

#### **Need to ensure rural-urban parity in education:**

Education has created a stratification in society between physical labour and white-collar jobs. Livelihoods such as agriculture and animal husbandry are not given due respect. Educated youth look for Government jobs after completing school education. They do not respect their traditional occupations, and do not want to go back to doing physical work and prefer being part of the 'educated unemployed'.

Many of the District Reports express the desire for computer facilities and training to be provided in schools so that the children from the villages

are at par with the urban children. The demand for computer education is more vocal in large and well-connected villages. There is also a demand for the inclusion of English language in the curriculum.

**Long term initiatives in school education:** Although there is a primary school in most villages, it is important to ensure that children do not stop at the primary level but complete their school education. There is thus a strong demand for secondary and high schools from all villages. Secondary schools and high schools can change the perception of parents and children towards education as they see their wards gaining knowledge and skills that re-emphasise the benefits of schooling.

## Role of the Community

There are varying ideas on the role of community in education. People in some villages are ready to assist in improving education and schools while in other villages people feel that the *Panchayat Samitis*, the elected representatives in the village and the Government should ensure education for all. They feel that the community can only be partially responsible for activities like maintenance of schools and that the elected

representatives and the Government should play a more active role. In some villages, the community has offered community support and voluntary labour for new educational initiatives. Some *Jan Rapats* suggest that the community should have the authority to plan and implement educational initiatives. The areas where the community can play a supportive role as recommended in the *Jan Rapats* are:

### Community mobilisation

Raising awareness about the benefits of education and mobilising people to send their children to school are areas where the community can play an important role. Motivating educated young people to teach in the rural schools is another service that the community can provide. Twenty one percent of the Village Reports list awareness generation as an area where the community can contribute positively, while 19 percent of the Village Reports list mobilisation of the community so that they send children to school. Another 21.7 percent of the Reports mention that the community can help in the management of schools.

### Voluntary services

Nearly half of the Village Reports report that the community is willing to provide voluntary

Table 3.8 **Role of villages in improving education**  
(percentage of Village Reports selected for perception analysis)

Region	Responsibility of awareness generation	Labour contribution	Donation of land	Assistance to Government	<i>Gram Sabha</i> will take lead role	Teacher appointments	Sending children to school	Management
Northern region	37	44	7	24	9	14	18	52
Central plains	15	38	1	6	5	14	35	9
Southern region	11	60	2	22	1	27	4	4
State	21	47.3	3.3	17.3	5	18.3	19	21.7

Source: Village *Jan Rapats*, Part III

labour for the maintenance and construction of school buildings.

### **Role of local Government bodies**

The role of the *Panchayat Samitis* in monitoring the development and in ensuring proper provisioning of education, needs to be better defined. They should also be responsible for spreading awareness about education and for providing facilities for teachers to stay in the villages where the schools are located.

### **Community contributions and donations**

Some *Jan Rapats* discuss the issue of raising funds for education. The Surguja *Jan Rapat* states that the community is willing to contribute 25 percent of the total cost of conducting training programmes related to employment. People are also ready to provide accommodation and help with arrangements for teachers and trainers who come from outside. In some villages, people have offered land for setting up schools. The Rajnandgaon report has stated that people are happy to donate their old books to a book corpus, which can then be distributed to the new batches of students. This recycling programme has not yet taken off in most schools.

These Reports show that the community sees itself as a facilitator. The community is reluctant to take any major initiative with regard to education because education is seen as a professional field involving expertise, knowledge and training. Therefore while the *Jan Rapats* discuss the role of the community, they also reflect some of the limitations. Apart from the economic constraints, the absence of trained professionals and the lack of adequate capacities in other related areas mean that the government is seen as the main provider of educational facilities.

## **Conclusions and Suggestions for Intervention**

The *Jan Rapats* show that the districts with comparatively low literacy rates are, on the whole, satisfied with the progress of education in the State. The guarantee by the State to provide education to every child between the age of 6 and 14 has been welcomed by these districts. Districts with very high literacy rates and districts that have made significant progress in recent years have considerably different demands ranging from the quality of teaching, curriculum development to better infrastructure. Providing education to the deprived, remote and backward areas still remains a problem. Pockets and areas where education has not reached in the past continue to suffer and reflect the imbalance in the educational initiatives even in districts where literacy rates are high.

The Reports point out that in some areas, even though adequate infrastructure has been provided, it is not being used optimally. In many cases physical infrastructure requires considerable investment for expansion or maintenance.

There is a widespread demand for improving and increasing school infrastructure, classrooms, playgrounds, drinking water facilities and toilets. Some village schools lack proper buildings and in most schools the existing infrastructure needs repair, further expansion and improvement. Many of the schools require more rooms and more space with the huge spurt in the number of students. While the physical infrastructure needs looking into, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, learner needs and the assessment and performance of students also require attention.

Other issues that have been highlighted are the continuity in education, maintaining urban rural parity, teaching of English, regularity and discipline in schools and the need to introduce contextual learning and subjects of relevance. The role of the community in creating awareness, mobilisation and as a general facilitator has also been emphasised.

There is a demand for technical and vocational institutions rather than regular schools. The issue of livelihoods and its link to education is an important issue. It is a challenge for educationists to provide the synergies required to make education such that it incorporates elements of local knowledge and modern education.

The strategic framework for education that emerges from the *Jan Rapats* is outlined as:

- Education must ensure the application of knowledge to everyday life and provide wider opportunities to people. The *Jan Rapats* emphasise repeatedly that education is not linked with the lives of people in the villages, that it does not reflect their life style and is therefore alien to their home environment. This makes the absorption of education tedious for children and is viewed by parents as being irrelevant. Changing

this requires considerable work in a range of areas including curriculum and pedagogy as well as the tools and techniques of teaching.

- Curriculum development is essential and the development of textbooks using stories and references that are local and contextual to the area are needed. These may even be district or region specific. While the State has adopted the CBSE curriculum, efforts have to be directed towards education that is relevant. At the primary level, education should be even more rooted in the local milieu.
- To ensure quality in education, the Government will need to build expertise in the State and this requires centres of learning staffed by sensitive and quality resource persons. Governmental and non-governmental agencies must be mobilised to identify such people, both within the State and from outside.
- The Village *Jan Rapats* state that currently the resident systems of knowledge are not given the recognition they deserve and these systems are fast disappearing. This traditional knowledge needs to be incorporated into the curriculum. This

Table 3.9 **Suggestions for improving the resources for education**  
(percentage of Village Reports selected for the perception analysis)

Region	Building construction	Repair and maintenance of buildings	More teachers	Better educational facilities	Teacher should stay in the village	Free education
Northern region	24	31	43	41	22	49
Central plains	56	28	41	45	43	65
Southern region	26	7	24	38	5.8	54
State	35	22	36	41	23.6	56

Source: Village *Jan Rapats*, Part III

will help children to use local knowledge together with modern systems. This process will also begin the process of codification and documentation of traditional systems of knowledge.

- The infrastructure needs of schools have to be met, including the upgrading of facilities and the proper maintenance of buildings. Forty one percent of the Village Reports suggest better educational facilities. In addition, the provision of facilities like drinking water, separate toilets for girls and boys, playgrounds and basic teaching equipment require attention.
- There is an urgent need to ensure that adequate number of teachers are present in every school so that they teach and attend school regularly and the required pupil teacher ratio is maintained. Around 36 percent of the Village Reports ask that the number of teachers be increased, 23 percent of the Reports insist that teachers should stay in the villages.
- *Gram Panchayats* need to play a more decisive role and the *Panchayats* must focus on how they can galvanise popular demand for better infrastructure in schools by utilising community initiatives. The existing school level committees need to be strengthened and communities need to get more involved in the management and maintenance of schools.
- It is important to look at technical and vocational educational courses. Courses linked to livelihood needs, technical knowledge and information in agriculture as well as manufacturing are required. An overhaul of the vocational education system in the State is required. Many new skills have already been added to the vocational institutions. There is an urgent need to make existing and new skill based training technically up to date, to build up a trained work force.
- As the State nears the goal of universal primary education, the villages need middle level schools for their children. The access to and availability of middle schools is still restricted in many villages and children are often unable to continue with school. More than half of the Village Reports suggest that education be made free.
- Schools must look after the special needs of girl students, especially adolescents. This requires looking at the physical and emotional development of girls and dealing with issues that are specific to them.
- Increased participation by the community in managing schools will have a constructive effect on the teaching - learning process. In spite of legal and administrative provisions, the role of the community is limited. A community that is more pro-active will be able to ensure that future generations can benefit from the advancements that are being made today.