

## Case study — Naandi

A bright sunny day in July and Kamal is all smiles. His parents have admitted him in the private school in Gandhi Nagar village, about 16 kilometres from Sheopur town, Madhya Pradesh. For months, Kamal had been clamouring to study in this private school, because he felt it was far better than the broken down, one-room government primary school in his village.

His father, Ramkishan, cultivates his own small plot of land, and also works as wage labourer. Despite his financial constraints, he has managed to pay the fees - after all, Kamal's happiness is supreme. However, within a few weeks of going to school, Kamal was visibly unhappy. The teachers in his new school were aggressive, and would often hit the children if they were unable to answer questions. A petrified Kamal could barely concentrate on his studies, fearing his turn when the rod would strike.



Soon thereafter, Kamal came across the *Maje ka Kendra* at the village primary school - one of the several Academic Support Centres run by **Naandi Foundation**, under its quality education initiative "Ensuring Children Learn". The school children actually went to school an hour or more early to attend this Kendra.

"How can that be? Nothing happens in this school, it is so boring," wondered Kamal initially. He waited for the *Baal Mitra* to begin class, and was rooted to the spot as different activities unfurled. The children

were in small groups, they could talk to each other, there were many colourful storybooks to read, there was enough blackboard space along the walls for all children to do sums and draw pictures. Besides, there were colourful charts on the wall, with pictures of birds, animals, and fruits – some of which he could recognise and many that he had never seen before.

That night, during dinner, Kamal announced that he wanted to join the government primary school again, recounting his happy experiences of the day. That was almost a year ago. Today, Kamal is a bright-eyed enthusiastic student in the government primary school, and spares no opportunity to demonstrate his ability to read and write.

He topped the class in the Maths quiz at the annual function in his school. "Sir taught me how to read and write," reveals Kamal pointing excitedly at the *Baal Mitra*. In late 2007, one of the stories Kamal had written at the *Maje ka Kendra* was chosen for publication. Now, Kamal is now not only the best student in his class, he is also the author of a published book titled *Fasal*.

In 2005, **Naandi Foundation** and the Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP) entered into a MoU to launch a quality education initiative in primary schools of Sheopur district. The programme was jointly conceived by the Department of Education, GoMP, and constituted multiple components to effect quality improvement.

Shortly thereafter, the Trust began its support to the **Naandi Foundation** to further strengthen this initiative. 'Ensuring Children Learn' is a district level educational intervention for enhancing the quality of



education in 220 elementary government schools in three blocks of Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh through developing an interface with the district administration and the community.

Key components include direct academic support to children by *Baal Mitras*, inputs to teachers, community involvement in education, periodic assessment of children, and focused support to the girl child.

In order to ensure that elementary education is meaningful and enjoyable to children, the Trust has made focused attempts towards effecting systemic reforms through collaborative projects with other organisations within Madhya Pradesh, including **Samavesh** and **Sir Albert Howard Memorial Trust (SAHMET)**, working on the goal of improving the quality of education within underserved pockets of the state. The Trust hopes that such unstinting efforts would create sites for field level demonstration that can inspire action and insights on the larger canvas of elementary education.