STUDY HALL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION: CREATING AND SUSTAINING VALUE

By the SHEF Leadership team

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Executive Summary

This report provides a narrative, historical account of the evolution and growth of Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF), describing how the organisation developed solutions to a range of social problems in education and gender equality. It also describes how a growing understanding of the problems themselves evolved. The first section of this report presents a brief account of the various programs initiated by SHEF, also identifying some of the distinguishing features of the organisation including its culture and leadership style. The second section further provides an analytical account of how SHEF scaled its impact, the challenges faced in doing so, the enabling factors and the tipping points at various stages. In doing so, we feel it is important to outline, how SHEF understands scale, i.e., defines what constitutes an increase in impact of any of its initiatives, and what are the various strategies we have used to scale our impact.

The goal of this report is to contribute to the emerging body of research and literature which is attempting to learn about the development and nature of organisations, especially caring, stakeholder responsive organisations. In addition, it hopes to show how social systems and institutions can be deliberately impacted through the work of organisations, foundations and other agents of change.

This report emerges from the collective reflections and deliberations of the entire leadership team of SHEF. The historical memory is provided by the Founder President.

SHEF's Network of Education Initiatives

The SHEF group of schools runs on the following innovations.

- **Focus on Life Outcomes** (in addition to learning outcomes) – where, learning enables all students to recognize themselves as equal persons, worthy of respect. It also equips them with the agency to push through the limitations in their lives.

- **Learning through Critical Dialogues**– where, dialogue is baked into classroom activities and allows students and teachers to learn from each other's lives. Together, they critique the structures of power and exclusion that limit their choices and learn to create strategies to overcome them. This builds a larger social and political consciousness among students.

- **Classrooms as Universe of Care** – where caring itself becomes a vehicle for empowerment and classrooms honour every individual and voice. Here, teachers and students empower each other.

SHEF began its work in 1986 with the goal of providing a high quality education to all children, in the process redefining education to include an empowering education contextualised in the lives of children and focussed on achieving high life outcomes, thereby going beyond the traditional scope and goals of education and its focus on academic skills and a preparation for the labour force. Since 1986 SHEF has created a network of education initiatives which include:

- **Study Hall School, founded in 1986** – Among the earliest progressive schools of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Study Hall School is an English-medium, co-educational school that caters to students from middle class, professional and high-income groups. More than 11,000 students have been educated in Study Hall since its inception in 1986.

- **DOSTI, founded in 2005** – Nestled within Study Hall School, DOSTI is among UP's first and very few schools to integrate children with physical, mental and learning disabilities in the age group of 2-21 years into mainstream education. DOSTI has current student strength of 100.

- **Prerna Girls School, founded in 2003** – A highly subsidised school for girls from extremely marginalized urban communities, with a feminist, rights-based approach. Prerna has been the primary site for the design and development of SHEF's innovations. More than 2800 girls have been educated in Prerna since its founding in 2003. Currently it has an enrolment of 1026 girls.

- **Prerna Boys School, founded in 2009**. Not too long ago, the Prerna Boys School has been launched with current student strength of 150 also based on a feminist qrights-based approach.

- **Vidyasthali, founded in 2005 –** An affordable rural school for girls and boys, Vidyasthali is based in Malihabad, a district adjacent to Lucknow. Known as the mango belt of North India, Malihabad has a high muslim population and clocks very low literacy levels. Almost

half of Vidyasthali's students are girls and all students come from 55 villages, within a radius of 30 kms. More than 1500 students have been educated in Vidyasthali since its inception in 2005. Vidyasthali is emerging as a rural education and community resource centre where children and youth deploy design-thinking to identify local problems, design solutions and then pilot them.

- **Digital Study Hall, founded in 2005.** Digital Study Hall is the main outreach arm of SHEF. It has found simple, cost-effective, easily accessible technology solutions to share the best practices of all SHEF schools with remote rural private and public schools, teacher training institutes, teachers and students across several states in India and abroad. All its content is open source, available free of cost on YouTube. Currently the DSH videos have almost 14 million views; and nearly 100,000 subscribers. They have been shared on the Government National Teacher Platform and are being used by public schools in Rajasthan.

- **Gyan-Setu, founded in 2011 –**Gyan-Setu (or Bridges for Learning) are micro education social ventures. They are small, intimate learning support centers in rural and urban pockets where poverty, gender and caste intersect to stop children from going to school.
Children who are out of school and are at high-risk of harm go through an accelerated learning program at the Gyan-Setus. They are eventually enrolled in formal schools, but are offered continuous supplementary education at the Gyan-Setu to ensure that they stay in school. Run by passionate grassroots educators, Gyan-Setus operate in mango orchards, under city flyovers and in small huts in dense urban slums. With strong webs of community support, a network of 43 Gyan-Setus has enrolled 676 students in formal schools over six years.

- **Aarohini, started in 2011,** has scaled Prerna's critical feminist pedagogy and girls empowerment program to over 100,000 teachers and students across UP and Rajasthan, through teacher training, community outreach campaigns and the creation of digital and print resource materials.

- **Study Hall College, inaugurated in 2016,** The Study Hall College (TSHC) is a high quality undergraduate degree college, affiliated to University of Lucknow. The college strives to extend a spirit of caring and dedication to high standards of academic excellence, creativity and innovation. It is an inclusive place for students of all abilities, from all socio-economic backgrounds, from rural and urban regions, fostering collaboration, creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation. Currently the college is offering Bachelors of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication (BA - JMC), Bachelors in Business Administration (BBA), Bachelors in Commerce (BCom) and Bachelors in Computer Applications (BCA). The college has over 200 students and 12 faculty members including guest faculty from India and outside.

Historical Background and the Origin of the Ideas:

In order to understand the core philosophical ideas that govern a social enterprise, it is important to describe briefly the origin of the ideas and the intellectual ethical concerns that motivated the Founder. The Introductory section attempts to sketch this journey very briefly.

It all started with *Suraksha*[1]

In 1983, I founded *Suraksha*, a women's rights organisation and the first family counselling cell in UP, responding to the murder, dressed up as a suicide, of my cousin. This was the era when India was burning with such cases of murder and suicides of young brides, also referred to as 'dowry-deaths'. *Suraksha* was founded to provide an empowering – safe space where women in distress could reach out for help. My work with *Suraksha*, where I served as the secretary and chief functionary, was beginning of the development of my feminist consciousness and led me into the education space[2].

I began conducting workshops with young girls in schools, trying to raise their consciousness about dowry and gender discrimination. Prompted by a friend, I took the conversation deeper and began to discuss marriage with them – why do we get married? What is the purpose – society's and ours? How does it affect our lives? Why is it almost a 'career' for girls? These were the first critical dialogues I engaged in, which later became central to SHEF's pedagogy. I didn't see this work as 'educational work' at the time, more as an extra-curricular, an add on, and I was grateful to the schools and colleges that allowed me in and gave me the time and space to talk to the girls.

It was around this time that I began to think about education. As I entered schools– I saw that not much had changed since my time in school – 12 years ago. The girls in my workshops, participated eagerly in the discussions, had many questions and engaged whole heartedly. I was prompted to think critically of education in schools, reflecting on my own school education, which though equipped me with reading writing skills and academic information, had done such a poor job of equipping me for my life as a girl in Indian society. It had also not helped me find a language, or a conceptual frame to think of the many existential questions that I was struggling with. *School education is very unrelated to the lives and existential questions and problems of students – it did not teach us how to live.*

First Experiment with Education

I constructed a course in Philosophy for high school students, putting together a set of questions in ethics that I thought would interest students.[3] I proposed to do it voluntarily for the Loreto Convent high school students. The nun in charge found the course interesting and titling it Life Values Course. A couple sessions into the course I realised that it was way above the girls' level

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[1]*Suraksha* translates to 'Safety' in English

[2]*Suraksha* has since supported thousands of women all over UP. It has worked at influencing policies, mobilising community awareness about women's rights and is working closely with SHEF in many of its initiatives. The Family Counselling Center of Suraksha has registered and resolved 2922 cases; help through telephonic conversation has been provided in 2250 cases. Working out of the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) office Suraksha counsellors have resolved 1378 cases related to gender issues like dowry, domestic violence, etc.

[3]By this time, I had finished my Masters in Philosophy (1984).

and didn't interest them. I put a shoe box in the room and asked them to put in it questions and topics that they felt had been left untouched by their school education and ones that they would like to discuss. Instantly the class lit up and became more responsive. They wanted to talk about freedom, responsibility, right and wrong, good and bad, sex, political corruption. The class was a free flowing one with a very dialogic pedagogy. I played the facilitator and asked key questions, drawing upon my knowledge of philosophical theory, lent them theoretical perspectives as well. The girls participated enthusiastically. My goal was to help girls develop a way of thinking critically about important issues concerning their lives, and in developing a voice and a sense of agency and control over their lives, in doing so.

I was constructing the curriculum as I went along, guided by the girls' questions and concerns. Often I felt anxious and afraid, missed having a preconstructed curriculum to follow. I kept going for the whole year, guided by my belief that together my students and I could tackle the questions and find some answers. I consulted my philosophical texts, any other that I could find and gave it my best effort. The girls were very engaged and seemed to find the course useful, relevant and meaningful.

I learnt a great deal from my work with the students. It also deepened my discontent with the quality of education the 'high-quality' schools were providing. I began to explore and look for solutions and answers by talking to all the stake holders. I began to interview students, parents, teachers and school administrators in my children's private school – a catholic girls school, about their view of education as practised in the school. They all expressed a discontent with the heavy emphasis on facts, rote learning and examination stress. They believed that it was all too stressful for the students and teachers. The parents blamed the teachers for not teaching well enough, the teachers blamed the administration for overloading them with too much work and limiting their pedagogical action with an overemphasis on completing syllabi, tests and achievement scores. The administration blamed the school board for being too prescriptive and tying their hands. The students felt completely powerless and oppressed by all of them. It was in my search for better ways of educating children that I visited the Krishnamurti Foundation school at Rajghat and met Ahalya Chari. She was a wonderful woman and educator, a contemporary of J Krishnamurti himself, a proponent of free thinking and a student-centric and student driven, inquiry based pedagogy, steeped in a gentle ethic of care. She suggested that I start a school, reassuring me that I had "all the right questions." I was surprised to learn that you could start a school with questions and that is exactly what I went ahead and did, and Study Hall was born.

The Study Hall School

Founded in 1986, Study Hall School (SHS) was started in response to a *concern* –the quality of education in "high-quality" private schools, and the concern that these schools were short-changing children, by being unresponsive to their needs and purposes. The school was started to find answers to questions like –How can we define "high quality" education? How do you create a child-responsive school, where children and teachers are treated with respect and care, taught with a child-responsive, interactive pedagogy which enables the development of their creativity, critical thinking skills and a social and political consciousness and empowers them with a voice and agency? It was started to make *school education related to the lives and existential questions and problems of students – to teach them how to live.*

Among the earliest progressive schools of Uttar Pradesh (UP), SHS is an English-medium, co-educational school that caters to students from middle class, professional and high income groups. More than 11,000 students have been educated in Study Hall since its inception in 1986.

Study Hall states its educational goal thus: the goal of education is to help children find answers to the question *"Who am I and how am I related to the universe and others in it. "*The SHS charter states *"We believe that all children are unique, powerful, important persons, worthy of our respect. They have a right to enjoy their childhood, which is an important phase in their lives and deserves to be understood respectfully rather than treated simply as a preparation for adulthood."*

"Our aim is that our children emerge as secure individuals, with a sound sense of self worth, a sense that they are equal and a healthy respect for their individuality. We aim to create a child-friendly, secure, caring, welcoming, nurturing, stimulating and collaborative learning environment in our classrooms, to enable our children to develop freely at their own pace, for purposes that they see as their own, as they move towards optimizing their potential without the fear and humiliation of unfair comparisons with their friends. Our goal is to make the school a happy place and not a place where children feel alienated, bored, hurt, persecuted or threatened."

Our current principal Shalini says - *"Study Hall School is designed in a way to give children and teachers free space to grow, be nurtured and supported. It's a low pressure environment that is still growing and always learning. Study Hall believes in creating human beings, children, adults, who think and contribute to society. Children are placed at the center of education and respected to create a caring, supportive environment. . .care and respect for them is at the center of everything. It's about the whole child, not just about academics. There is a sense of family, where everyone is at the same level."*

The school achieves its purpose by integrating the following components in its approach -

- A focus on students' lives and life outcomes,
- Adopting a holistic approach to education rather than one that perceives education exclusively as a preparation for the workforce
- Building critical thinking about social and political issues into the curriculum
- Focus on developing creativity, imagination and life-long learning desire
- Building a caring, respectful, responsive teaching and learning environment

- Fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual support at all levels
- Building a network of supportive relationships between students, teachers and parents
- A supportive, mentoring, consultative style of leadership
- Developing a child-responsive pedagogy in consultation and collaboration with teachers
- Trusting teachers, providing mentoring support and giving them freedom and autonomy in the classroom to experiment and innovate.
- Creating a culture of continuous learning and innovation for teachers and students
- Continuous teacher development
- Sharing and developing the vision in consultation with teachers.

SHS aims to create an environment where everyone – teachers, students and parents feel supported, cared for and respected. They understand that teaching and learning are extremely creative and complex processes, requiring much imagination, continuous thinking, reflection, learning, caring and commitment. Their pedagogy, teaching methodology, curriculum, organizational structure, teacher-student relationship, policies and rules are all designed to actualize the SHS vision of schooling and education, to use it as an instrument of change bringing about individual and social development.

The students in SHS come from middle class homes, where parents are in an upwardly mobile mode. They are fully focussed on their students getting good scores, admissions in good colleges and consequently good careers which will help them get well paying jobs. They lead very insular lives, well protected from the messy social problems around them. The school takes on the task of breaking the social insularity of their students lives and focuses on developing their social and political imagination. SHS calls it issue-based education. The underlying belief is that academic skills alone without any connection to social and political realities are sterile. At SH the standard national curriculum is used to help students connect their academic learning to the social and political issues surrounding their lives. Even though issues like poverty do not directly impact the lives of middle class students, society is severely challenged by it. India has 22% of its population below the poverty line. Even though gender discrimination does not express itself as starkly in middle class communities as it does in poorer communities, it is often even more dangerous because of its subtle all pervasive character. SHS focusses on building a social-political consciousness about issues related to caste, class and gender among its children within its caring nurturing environment.

Evolution of Study Hall School

SHS started with 6 children in January 1986, and by the end of the term there were 25 and the strength has grown steadily, and today we are 2,000 students strong. Over the years, SHS has educated over 11,000 children.

The first few years of SHS were spent in developing a child – centric pedagogy. The curriculum and the pedagogy emerged from daily interactions and consultations with the teachers, who were part of the reflection and creation process. In the years since, Study Hall's pedagogy remained true to its philosophy and the caring approach was kept intact. School's teachers and educators chose to foster collaboration and discourage competition in academics, believing that children should learn for the intrinsic value of learning, rather than being motivated by the idea of winning laurels. This was also due to a general belief that collaboration was a better habit to foster than competitiveness. Teachers were given support and freedom to use their creativity

and research to create their own lesson plans and curriculum. Most of the teachers thrived in this free atmosphere, though some floundered and were sceptical. Staff was supported, mentored and trained continuously. We focussed on helping children gain confidence and develop strong voices. SHS has managed to sustain these methods and the free, caring educational environment in our school till this day. Each year several students move to SHS, because they have failed in other schools, or have been traumatised there by staff and students. They have thrived in SHS, found their lost self-esteem and confidence, made sure academic progress.

Impact

Though SHS faced many sceptical parents and teachers, who have questioned the unconventional approach and pedagogy, and had to work hard to dispel parents' and teachers' doubts, it has been vindicated in its belief – the school has high enrolment, retention and achievement rates and its children have secured admission in all the best colleges and universities in India and abroad. SHS has almost a 100% pass result every year, with a high average score.

SHS's staff attrition rate is one of the lowest in the city. Even though the school is not the highest paying school in the city. Teachers often come to SHS because of its reputation as a caring, safe, low stress work place and, because they believe it is a place with great potential to learn. They stay because of the same reasons.

In the many decades of its operation, SHS has succeeded in growing a strong school leadership and teaching community. The teachers and administrators fully believe in the philosophy, and work hard to sustain it in creative ways. There has been a growing recognition and appreciation of the SH philosophy, pedagogy and culture of care. The school is self-sustaining, and also helps in providing the funds for many of our initiatives aimed at education of poor children. These have been described later in the report.

Challenges

Many times the teachers find the issue-based approach hard and stressful to implement, many of them putting their best foot forward and working at developing creative lesson plans. Due to poor quality of teacher trainings, there's a need to train all new comers continuously. The teachers engage in several workshops to discuss the issues amongst themselves before they implement it in their classrooms. They are however not yet working at developing this into a curriculum. SHEF is hoping to have a teacher resource guide by the end of the year, so that it can share this with a wider audience.

The increasingly competitive, individualistic and commercial culture prevalent in society is antithetical to SHS's philosophy and ideals. The society demands a highly career-oriented education. The school often faces parents' resistance to a collaborative, less competitive, issue based perception of education. This demands a continuous engagement with parents and other educators to change existing perceptions of education.

Scaling Study Hall School

Impact of SHS and dissemination of its methods has been a gradual progression, as more and more parents are convinced of our methods our philosophy and our ethic of care. The school

has achieved greater recognition and is now one of the most reputed schools in the city and country. Student and parents now recognize the value of holistic education. SHS alumni, placed in the finest colleges all over India, bring us greater recognition.

Study Hall School's philosophy and pedaogy has been adapted in many of SHEF's newer programs that grew out of the needs of students of SHS. Study Hall teachers mentor *Gyan-Setu* and *Vidyasthali* teachers and are engaged in training teachers in government schools in UP, Rajasthan and Delhi. SHS's leader participates in several state level and national forums to contribute to educational policy; actively educating others at national and international conferences about SHEF's pedagogical model, its ethic of care, and its issue-based education. An effort is underway to scale this effort further, as we are in the process of creating a knowledge hub.

The learnings and innovations of SHS have been instrumental in starting the following initiatives:

DOSTI

Nestled within Study Hall School, DOSTI, founded in 2005, is among UP's first and very few schools to integrate children with physical, mental and learning disabilities in the age group of 2-21 years into mainstream education. DOSTI has current student strength of 100.

DOSTI is an integrated program for children with special needs. Its aim is to help CWSN (Children With Special Needs) to learn according to their pace, realize their best potential and become independent, functional, employed according to their ability, and successfully integrated into the society. The program focuses on a holistic, well-rounded approach to the child's development, providing a caring environment, and low student-teacher ratio (5:1) so that the focus can be on the needs of the child. In addition to academics DOSTI organizes medical camps, awareness campaigns, mother/caregiver training program, job placement for the child according to ability, and home based programs. DOSTI has a high degree of parent involvement and maintains strong communication with parents, helping them to accept their children and learn how best to support them. Additionally there are on-going teacher training workshops and a vocational unit for students to develop additional skills. DOSTI uses the SHS campus and infrastructure and works at a greater degree of integration with the Study Hall student body.

DOSTI attempts to scale deep by having continuous awareness campaigns and conducting several workshops with teachers in other schools to help raise awareness about CWSN and the need for early detection and intervention. The DOSTI team conducts several parent training programs DOSTI also conducts awareness campaigns to change the perception of CWSN from a deficit view to one of respect and equality.

Evolution of DOSTI

Prior to DOSTI's inception, many students with special needs were being referred to Study Hall School because of its reputation for being a caring school welcoming of all children. The students were taken in and helped to the best extent possible without formal special educators. After a few years, as the numbers increased a formal program was designed to more specifically meet their needs in an integrated set up. In 2005, an experienced and qualified special educator,

Surabhi Kapur was identified and recruited to set up a special needs division in Study Hall School with an integrated education program. The program began with 5 or 6 children and 2 teachers. There are now 100 students, ages 2-21 years, with various mental and physical disabilities, being taken care of 25 staff members.

Impact

Enrolment has grown, with parents travelling long distances and relocating from other cities to join the program. A long distance part time program has also been developed to help parents and children remotely. In 2017, DOSTI celebrated its first convocation to congratulate and honor CWSN graduating from grade 10 through the flexible NIOS exam.

Challenges

The biggest challenge is finding financial and human resources for the intensive work that is required. The student-teacher ratio is an expensive 5:1 and DOSTI is unable to charge an appropriately high fee. Moreover, there are several children, whose parents cannot afford even the reasonable fees charged. There is a continuous search for sponsors to help subsidize the cost for them. Secondly, since DOSTI shares the SHS building, there is a severe shortage of space for all the activities that students need to be able to flower fully. Furthermore many parents are in denial and take many hours of counselling over weeks and months to accept that their child needs special help. Though many parents are fully involved with their children and extremely co-operative, there are many who are not. To achieve the best results the DOSTI team works at engaging parents through workshops and counselling sessions on an ongoing basis.

Future Goals

- Continue awareness campaigns

- Implement a parent training program with certificates

- Increase vocational activity and increase staff to accommodate the same

- Establish a training center for special educators

- Use video technology to reach out to more CWSN.

- Open a short term courses for adults with special needs

- An effort is underway to develop shareable digital teaching material for CWSN.

- DOSTI aims to increased our delivery options to include vocational training for its children and help with placement for them, and is also trying to figure out how we might develop programs for adults with special needs, guided by the belief that they need a social place and a sense of a meaningful routine in their lives.

Center for Learning

In the ongoing endeavour to be responsive to students diverse learning needs, Study Hall Center for Learning (CFL) is a program specially designed to help students through NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) to provide sustainable and inclusive learning with universal and

flexible access to quality school education and skill development from middle school to senior secondary level. CFL is a grade 6-12 program that aims to bridge the gap between students' learning needs and our mainstream education systems.

CFL was designed to provide flexibility and freedom to students so that they might complete their education according to their own strengths, weaknesses, and interests. It provides a space to those who don't respond best under the traditional method and provides them a nurturing environment. It customizes education to needs of each child.

Over the years, Study Hall School teachers found that there are children who do not fit in the normal (traditional) academic set up because of their different learning needs and propensities. There are many children who can't cope with traditional education system, whether due to health problems, learning difficulties, or with strengths different from what the mainstream education system demands or expects of them. They might have other more dominant non-cognitive interests like sports or art for example. They are unable to cope with the standard national board curriculum, which has very little curricular space or time for subjects of their interest like sports or art. Such children feel lost, alienated and fail consistently in mainstream classes. They are often absent, suffer from low self-esteem, low self-confidence and display what are often seen as 'behavioral problems'.

The typical school and traditional education system does not allow for or cater to different learning styles, multiple intelligences, or non-cognitive/'non-academic' interests. The traditional widely practiced education system in India and elsewhere expects all children to have the same skill set and respond in the same way and perform to highly uniform standards. Parents develop the same mind set and have similar expectations of their children. There is no space allowed for multiple intelligences. As a result many students fall through the cracks and develop a sense of passive failure. They do not believe they can succeed and then don't. Parents further feed the problem by refusing to accept that their child has other needs not respected or catered to by the traditional system. They want their children to be like 'all' children - a part of the 'mainstream.'

CFL's vision is to recognize the multiple intelligences and multiple learning needs and styles of children, do away with a forced standardization in the name of 'equality' in education and to respect the unique journey of each and every child. As SHEF's vision is to provide quality education for all, we have adapted our teaching and learning curricula, pedagogy and spaces to meet the diverse needs of each child in order to achieve this.

CFL is unique in nature as is doesn't adhere to the traditional education system. As such there is no standard curriculum. It provides a space for multiple intelligences and learning styles and needs and seeks to create an environment that encourages and allows for all these multiple to flourish. Class sizes are small, with no more than 15 students in each. In addition, being NIOS, certified which is a distant self-learning program, allows students more freedom and flexibility. Teachers tailor their teaching activities and expectations of each child according to her ability and equal importance is given to each child's unique strengths. There is acceptance and recognition of each child's uniqueness, and we teachers customize the curriculum for each child, also helping each one succeed, gain a sense of being successful and eventually helping them develop a life plan.

Children undergo a noticeable change once they are enrolled at CFL, both behaviorally and academically. They emerge as confident, happy, successful persons and students. Their grades improve dramatically as they lose their sense of passive failure and begin to taste and expect success from themselves. Upon graduating they have gone on to good colleges of their choice, much like students from the 'mainstream' system.

Evolution of CFL

Like all SHEF's ventures, CFL has also emerged from humble, informal beginnings with many false starts before it took its present form.

Teachers faced the challenge of having at least 2-3 children in every class who simply could not keep up with the others, despite their best efforts. "They simply won't learn!" It was often not clear whether they couldn't or didn't want to learn. Several efforts at remedial teaching were made, many of them still in play, and some children did respond to these. But there were the hardened many who simply could not cope.

Taking recourse to the NIOS board for the older students, especially those who were facing the class 12 exit exam, SHS tried to offer it on the main SH campus, putting children in a separate section, taught by the same teachers. These children participated in all the school extracurricular activities but inhabited a separate classroom. But this led to the emergence of a hiatus between the CBSE students and the NIOS students, with the former looking down upon the latter. The NIOS students developed a belligerent resistance and we had several discipline issues. It also became difficult to give them the dedicated staff and time given the busy schedules of the teachers and the limitations of space.

CFL was started in 2013, by renting a building close by and for children from classes 6-12, ages 12-18 years. Currently there are 102 students, being taught by a dedicated staff of 10 teachers. It is a varied population consisting of those who were not thriving in traditional system, including children who have a preference for arts, sports, non-academic interests, students with different learning styles, and some with learning disabilities as well. The students come from SH and from other schools as well.

CFL's main aim became to restore the lost esteem of their students, who feel like the rejects of the education system, by respecting them in every way. Every opportunity and platform was provided so that students could showcase their talents and build their confidence – like art exhibitions, plays and sports events and a convocation for all our registered students annually, which gives them a huge morale boost. CFL staff engages with their parents regularly, to help them respect the special abilities of their children more and applaud the progress they make.

Challenges

Parental acceptance of their children being the toughest one, taking persistent effort to surmount. Parents have a very difficult time resisting family and peer pressure to keep their children on the 'normal/standard/mainstream' educational path. It helps that CFL is a part of SHEF, so they can claim that she/he belongs in SH. Eventually, many counselling sessions later, they are convinced of the value of the alternate pathway for their children, as they see their children grow in self-esteem, confidence and achievement.

CFL's main challenge is also a shortage of space. The program is running at full capacity with 100 children and cannot serve the many others who would like to avail of their services, which are unique in the city and possibly the state. The low student-teacher ratio poses an economic challenge, which we keep juggling. CFL is considering online options to help children in distant regions as well as partnerships with other organisations similarly inclined.

SHEF is confronted with the dilemma of its inability to provide these services in a more integrated setting – i.e., why are there different spaces for 'different' children? Why can't differences be dealt with in one space, as that might be a more egalitarian approach? So far SHEF has found having separate spaces to be a better option in practice. It costs more money, time and trouble, but it works better to have a dedicated space and staff for children with special abilities and special educational needs. It results much larger overheads, with rental for another building, as the main building overflows with students, and additional costs of admin and support staff. However, there has been greater success with this approach. Students value their special space greatly, feel safer and more at home there. As such this seems to be a more equitable way of dealing with differences than an integrated approach. Children thrive more and eventually many of them go to the same colleges as the kids in SH. It seems to level the playing field.

Milestones and Future Directions

- Children with disabilities are able to clear 12th.

- Change in students' attitudes and outlooks, performance.

- Pivotal change in attitudes of parents and previous teachers.

- NIOS accredited - 2015

In the last year, the head, Pratima was instrumental in registering CFL as a NIOS center, which authorizes us to register students from distant districts as well. We are required to give them 30 contact classes and 30 practical classes along with facilitating their exam registrations. Pratima and her team go much further than that and provide a more intense hand-holding to all the students registered with them. Currently CFL has 71 external students and the number is growing each day.

In future, we hope to -

- Implementation of CFL type centers everywhere, integrated into mainstream education, in all schools

- Forming partnerships for greater expansion

- Breaking social construct in minds of students and parents

Scaling our Pedagogy: Nursery and Primary Teacher Training Program

Over the years, SHS has acquired a reputation of developing excellent teachers and our teachers are very sought after in the education space. Several of our teachers have moved on to become

Prinicpals of other schools, thus taking our pedagogy and philosophy to other locations. Over the years we realized that there is a lack of quality teachers and good teachers training programs, as we had to train all the teachers we recruited in our methods and philosophy of care. We decided to start a formal pre-service teacher training program. In order to scale our pedagogy and philosophy, SHEF began its own Nursery and Primary Teacher Training Programme, started in the year 2015. We leveraged the experience of SHS's teachers who are well-versed in activity based and care centered learning as instructors and mentors and developed a program that was based on an apprenticeship model, such that teachers spent at least 60% of their time in classrooms, under master teachers and were encouraged to take an integrated perspective of theory and practice. Currently 5 batches of student–teachers, 77 students in all, have been graduated and 95% have been placed. We intend to formalise our teacher training further and begin a University accredited 4 year innovative high quality teacher training degree program by 2023, under the umbrella of the Study Hall College, described later in the report.

Reaching Out to Rural Children: *Vidyasthali*

Vidyasthali[4] Kanar High school (VKHS) is a co-educational, dual medium school situated in Malihabad, 32 kilometers away from Lucknow. It was established in 2005 by SHEF, with the goal of providing affordable yet high quality education to rural children. The school runs pre-school to class 12 classes and is affiliated to the UP State board. A dedicated staff of 25 full-time and 5 part-time teachers provides quality education to 483 students in science, arts and the commerce stream. The school has an inclusive approach and has a diverse student body in terms of class and caste. The mission of the school is to provide a caring, nurturing learning environment to students, to maintain high academic standards, develop critical thinking, and an innovative, entrepreneurial, solution oriented approach. Our aim is to help students to aspire for strong professional careers and to equip them for these, but more significantly to enable them and inspire them to contribute meaningfully to the development of their own villages as well. Instead of using their education to migrate to cities for better personal opportunities, we tried to inspire them to use their education for the development of their own rural communities too. Vidyasthali is emerging as a rural education and community resource centre where children and youth deploy design-thinking to identify local problems, design solutions and then pilot them.

The school was started in response to the problem of lack of quality education in rural settings. On every educational indicator, rural India scores much lower than its urban counterparts. There is an accompanying starker gender disparity in education compounded by issues such as child marriage and absence of girls' agency. In addition, there are differences in educational and self-growth avenues available to different children on the basis of caste.

Vidyasthali is equipped with high quality facilities, and well-trained teachers, most of who travel from Lucknow ever day. The curriculum is activity based and interactive, enriched with sports, drama, dance and music. The teachers ensure that individual attention is given to each child a in a nurturing, caring environment. Academic learning is rooted practically in real life rural

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[4] Meaning '*Place of Learning*.'

contexts, as students are encouraged to think critically and creatively about the social and physical problems of their regions with the aim of finding effective solutions. The school is equipped with computers, projectors and the Internet. Multimedia is effectively used in teaching all the subjects. All attempts are made to provide students with much needed exposure by way of travel to urban cities in India and participation in international exchange programs. One of our students, qualified for a year-long scholarship to a high school in the United States of America, where she acquitted herself with honours. Several international students have visited the school in internship programs. Interaction with them adds to our students' exposure and develops in them a cosmopolitan understanding of the world. Understanding the financial constraints of rural populations, we have kept our fees very affordable, subsidizing them by almost 60%. An average monthly fee of Rs. 900 is charged with scholarships for students, particularly girls who are unable to afford even that. 30% of the students are recipients of scholarships and freeships.

The school integrates following key-features in order to achieve its purpose and reform rural education -

- Well integrated, holistic, learning and life outcome approach

- Adapted to rural context, child-responsive learning through an interactive, enquiry based, critical pedagogy

- Developing students' social and political consciousness and preparing them to become agents of change in their communities

- Critical dialogues on gender, child marriage, caste, equality.

- Caring, safe environment

- Scholarships awarded to those with extreme need

- Strong community relationships

Evolution of Vidyasthali

Vidyasthali grew out of my (the founder's) engagement with a young woman who I had mentored during my association with an orphanage in the late 80s. She wanted to do something for the children and so rounded up 30 children between the ages of 3-8 from neighbouring homes. I provided her with simple teaching learning materials – slates, chalk, books, pencils, erasers, a rolling board, some alpahabet and number charts. She worked hard with them for an hour each day and the children made progress. The numbers grew. I helped them to build a 2 room structure in her family's plot right across from her home. A modest honorarium was paid to her and her sister-in-law who took on the role of teachers and administrators. All school supplies were provided by SHS, and the school ran informally for the next 16 years, growing to a primary school with 150 boys and girls. It was a caring school, though it followed a simple traditional pedagogy. In 2004, SHEF formally adopted this small initiative and using the surplus resources from SH we decided to turn the small informal school into a formal k-12 school. The goal was to have a low cost high quality school in an area where there were none.

We constructed a building with 9 rooms, called it Vidyasthali and began in 2005, with 84 children. We kept the fee affordable, charging Rs.150 per month. At this time we were charging around Rs.3000 per month at SH. We offered the existing students a subsidised fee of Rs.50 per month. SHS staff trained the teachers continuously, and slowly our efforts bore fruit.

Pratima recalls, "*When Vidyasthali was first established, the concept of studies and education was not really there in the students and their families. Their idea of school was copy, take dictations. We changed the focus to learning and applying concepts in a broader sense. We also taught them how to study and prepare for exams.*"

The pedagogy in Vidyasthali was much more traditional than the one practised at SH for several reasons. Firstly parents needed convincing that their children were not simply 'playing' in school. Their idea of school was very conventional and they refused to send their children to a school where there were so many activities. Unless children were in the class with their noses buried in their text books, notebooks filled with writing copied diligently from the board, frequent tests with marks so that they could see that their children were progressing, the parents did not think their children were receiving a high quality education. So we moved slowly, changing one thing at a time, building in several activities gradually. Additionally we addressed the social issues of child marriage, gender, caste, and poverty through critical dialogues in an effort to sensitize both boys and girls to these issues. We hoped they would learn to think and question the prevailing customs rather than taking things at face value, and work at fighting these social evils by taking this knowledge back to their families and communities, thereby widening the impact. For example: We asked all our older children (grade 6 onwards) to survey their villages and find out how many girls were out of school, had never been schooled or had dropped out. They came back with names of over 150 girls. We asked them to then undertake an enrolment drive, persuade and facilitate the enrolment of girls to local schools. Vidyasthali offered to enrol girls who were married or for some reason could not leave their homes in the NIOS program, with weekly contact classes at Vidyasthali. This was a successful program and is ongoing. Students engage in such local development activities routinely.

We currently have 483 children, 25 full-time and 5 part-time qualified teachers. Vidyasthali is now in a 24 room building in a 2 acre plot of land, with playgrounds, science and computer labs, projectors, sports equipment, dance, drama and sports teachers. More than 1500 students have been educated in Vidyasthali since its inception in 2005.

Our students have graduated with good results and are pursuing college degrees in the arts, sciences, law, engineering, medicine and computer studies. Along with their studies, students take up one social problem from their region each year. They have worked at improving a local government primary school, raising awareness against Child Marriage for girls, against gender based violence and campaigned for girls' education in their villages. They have formed a students group called *Pravartak[5]*, which engages in activities aimed at social change in their communities.

Pratima, the founder principal says, "*Changes in the attitudes of the students and their parents have been evident with time. Children engage in the learning process as they are hungry for knowledge and education. Language skills have improved as they are now comprehending and speaking English. Upon graduation they are admitted to good colleges, some receiving scholarships*

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[5] Meaning 'Harbinger of Change.'

to study abroad for a period of time. Their confidence has increased and they are more participative in co-curricular activities. Parents are also now recognizing the importance of these activities, such as dance, music, theatre and art, in their children's education. Parents are now also recognizing and respecting the school's systems that have been put in place. Almost half the current students are girls."

Challenges and Future

- We realised exactly how challenging rural contexts can be. We had overestimated the purchasing capacity of rural populations and were unable to increase our fees sufficiently to match our growing expenses. Apart from the ever increasing salary bills and variable expenses needed to ensure quality, we have to keep upgrading our infrastructure which is also expensive. In 2011, we were fortunate to find a funding partner who has helped us deal with the growing expenses at VKHS. It is our goal to make it self-sustaining, though we can only do this by increasing our fee considerably, which would exclude a large number of our students. Already we are sorry that we are not catering to the poorest of the poor, despite the fact that 30% of our student population is on some fee reduction plan or the other. We continue to think of creative ways to make VKHS self-sustaining.

- We have not been successful in finding local teachers who we believed could fit the quality required by us. They have the paper qualifications without the knowledge to back these. Parents also do not trust local teachers and have more faith in city teachers. As such, we still have to transport majority of our teachers from the city. This is an enormous cost to us. We hope to solve this by beginning a teacher training course in our school very shortly. Fortunately, some of our alumni are returning to join us.

- The distance from SH proves to be a deterrent to more support from SH, largely because of the transportation cost. We are trying to deploy technology to bridge this distance in a cost effective manner.

- Introducing new pedagogies and gaining parents acceptance for these continues to be a challenge, though we are increasingly receiving more support.

- Breaking down gender barriers and stereotypes is much harder in rural settings. We are just about bridging the gender gap in enrolment, but boys and girls are still hesitant to work together and parents are still hesitant to send their daughters to a co-ed school.

- We are struggling to build a culture of entrepreneurship in our students. Parents main aspiration is still that their children secure government jobs in the city. However we have built up a growing value of our brand of education in the region and students are beginning to develop a sense of pride in their own communities, with a corresponding feeling of community activism.

Future Goals

One of our main future goal for VKHS is to make it a community hub for the 55 villages we serve. We would like to leverage our links to these communities through our students and help to extend our services there too, using technology and other outreach activities. We would like to introduce several shorter vocational courses for young adults as per their needs. Currently they

have expressed an interest in Agriculture and Business. It will be important to tap local communities for personnel and increase our workforce accordingly. We would like also to partner with other education social entrepreneurs to increase our outreach and to share our knowledge and help them establish other affordable schools like VKHS.

The school continues to grow as we learn more. We believe that 'quality education' must enable students to become agents of transformation in their personal lives as well as in their social worlds and we have been working at this for a decade now. We hope our alumni will join us in our endeavour, carry the work forward and make Vidyasthali a hub of excellence in the region. SHEF's goal is also to expand the team of people thinking actively about VKHS and the enormous potential that still lies untapped.

Prerna Girls School

Prerna[6] Girls School, founded in 2003, is a highly subsidised K-12 school for girls from extremely poor urban communities, that uses feminist, rights based approach towards education.[7] Prerna was started by SHEF as an afternoon program, leveraging Study Hall School's physical infrastructure – its building and equipment, for girls from low income families, in the neighbourhood. It was started with the simple objective of providing poor girls an access to education. By providing good quality affordable education to girls, SHEF hoped to do something about the neglect and low value given to girls and their education and break the circle of women's disempowerment.

Prerna was started with 30 girls in the year 2003 and by the end of the first year the enrolment had increased to 80 girls. The school fee was set at a token Rs.10. While number of girls enrolled in the school grew, the attendance continued to be erratic. We decided to take a closer look at their lives and learnt that there were several challenges that they faced in their homes and families and that making education affordable and accessible was not enough to solve the problem of girls' education. We began talking to them about their lives and engaged in 'Critical Dialogues' with the girls to empower them to resist systemic gender discrimination and inequality that kept them from living as an equal person.

We shifted our focus from the girls learning to the girls lives and defined our educational task as that of making their lives better. We learnt also that we needed to work alongside our students to fight all the problems that the gendered conditions of their lives threw up. Critical dialogues became an integral part of the school curriculum from then on. The teachers were trained to learn about their students lives and to keep them center stage when they worked with their students in the classroom, to keep their gendered lives in mind and to enable them to overcome the challenges these posed. In doing this we also realised that it was important to build strong relationships with the parents, to work at getting them to value their daughters as autonomous equal persons and to make them our allies and partners in the endeavour to educate their daughters. We put in place a web of enabling supports, which were critical in ensuring that our students not only came to school but also stayed, completed and learnt that they were equal persons worthy of respect.

We defined our educational goal thus:

"to empower its students and raise their feminist consciousness and to help them emerge as emancipated women with a perception of themselves as equal persons having the right to equal participation in society, and to be equipped with the appropriate social, emotional, conceptual,

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[6] *'Prerna'* means *'inspiration.'*

[7]For more on Prerna please see Urvashi Sahni, "From Learning Outcomes to Life Outcomes: What Can You Do and Who Can You Be? A Case Study in Girls' Education in India," Working Paper (Center for Universal Education at Brookings, November 2012); Urvashi Sahni, Reaching for the Sky: Empowering Girls through Education (Brookings Institution Press, 2017).

and academic skills to live a life of their own choosing."

Prerna achieves its educational goals by integrating following features in order to redefine girls' education -

- Creating a caring, respectful, responsive teaching learning environment and a web of enabling supports and supportive relationships
- A holistic integrated focus on life and learning outcomes and every support to achieve these
- Convenient timings for girls, especially for those who are working
- Token, nominal fee
- Flexible student-friendly assessments – NIOS board
- Critical feminist pedagogy
- Continous community engagement
- Collaboration with local child protection agencies
- Scholarships for school studies, and higher education

Prerna has been the primary site for the design and development of SHEF's innovations. More than 2800 girls have been educated in Prerna since its founding in 2003. Prerna has scaled its outreach steadily and currently has an enrolment of 1026 girls. Not simply that – our learning out comes and life outcomes are impressive. Between 2014 and 2016, for all grades from pre-school to grade 12, Prerna recorded an average attrition rate of 8.14 percent while the national dropout rate for girls, as recorded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, from grades 1 to 10 was 46.7 percent in 2014.[8] The average transition rate from grade 5 to 6 for the period 2014 - 2016 has been 90.44 percent; from grade 8 to 10 the rate was 90.11 percent; and from grade 10 to 12, 95.03 percent. Our completion rate from grade 8 to 12 is 87 percent.

Over 52 percent of Prerna graduates are employed, most part-time and some full-time, while studying simultaneously for their higher education degrees. They have progressed from working as housemaids to better-paid, higher-status jobs, working as teachers or teacher assistants, managers in sales and marketing of goods and services, others are in manufacturing and distribution in food and clothing sectors, technology sector and administrative jobs. All are earning monthly salaries ranging from 4,000 to 25,000 rupees ($60 to $300). Only 15.65 percent of the Prerna alumnae are married—all of them after age 18 or older. Prerna graduates' average age at marriage is 21.5 years.

After 15 years of continuous work Prerna is now seeing the lasting changes in the mindsets of our children and the community. We have succeeded in changing patriarchal mindsets of children through our critical feminist pedagogy. There has been a shift in parents' perceptions achieved through continuous community awareness meetings reflected in the greater involvement of fathers, reduced numbers of child marriages, higher willingness to send daughters for higher education programs, reduction of child labour for younger daughters, promotion of girls education in their own neighbourhoods by parents. Prerna also worked at changing mindsets of larger community through campaigns and community action taken by

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[8]Ministry of Human Resource Development, Educational Statistics at a Glance (New Delhi: Government of India, 2014), p. 8.

Prerna's student and alumni group called *Veerangna*[9]. We have managed to stop many forced child marriages by counselling parents. Prerna engages in continued mentoring of alumni and helps its children in breaking the cycle of poverty, by training for better jobs, by providing apprenticeship and part-time jobs to students and full time jobs to fresh Prerna graduates within SHEF.

As far as community and parents are concerned, we now face considerably less challenges in growth due to changing mindsets of the community and due to growing trust and faith in school.

Challenges:

One of the major hurdles now in Prerna's expansion is funding. SHEF has the infrastructural capacity to grow Prerna. We can easily house another 600 girls here, but lack the funding to do so. SHEF is searching actively for sustainable funding solutions.

Expansion of Prerna's educational approach to other girls' schools faces many roadblocks, some of them have been listed below and then taken up in detail later in the section on Aarohini, where we have succeeded in taking Prerna's empowerment pedagogy to scale.

a)an instrumental view of girls' education b) a purely learning outcome based, academic skills perception of education c) Gender equality understood in terms of gender parity c)Tokenstic apolitical progams on gender in government schools, d) limited or non-existent government budget for gender training of teachers.

Scaling Prerna

Despite these challenges we have succeeded in scaling some of the key innovations of Prerna in a variety of ways.

- We have been able to inspire several other schools in the city to leverage their infrastructure and resources to begin afternoon programs like Prerna and are supporting them with our experience and knowledge
- The documentation of Prerna's vision and feminist, life outcome based approach and pedagogical practices in the form of the book – Reaching for the Sky, has drawn a great deal of attention from Government and individuals, which is enabling Prerna to scale its ideas across to other geographical locations.
- Through our program Aarohini, Prerna's critical feminist pedagogy has been scaled out to over 1000 schools in UP and Rajasthan and is an ongoing effort. This is described in a later section.
- Prerna students continue to scale deep with their campaigns and community efforts for girls' right to education and a full human functioning.
- Prerna's feminist approach to gender equality has led SHEF to establish Prerna Boys School which is described in the next section.

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[9]Meaning *'Brave Woman.'*

Prerna Boys School

In July 2009 SHEF started a parallel Prerna boys school, also in the afternoon, starting with a primary school and expanding it to high school in 2015. This initiative was taken in response to the Prerna girls parents concern for a quality education for their boys too.

The School was established in July 2009 as a primary school – Pre-K to grade 5 – which we expanded to high school in 2015. The classes are conducted in the afternoon and the student population consists of working-class boys from low-income families, many of whom work in the morning. This initiative was taken in response to the demand of the parents of the Prerna Girls School for a quality education for their boys.[10]

We were also motivated by the belief that in order to achieve a gender-just society, boys and girls both must receive an education that teaches them to critically examine the construction of gender in patriarchal societies. This meant that boys, too, must learn to fight, resist and end sexist oppression in the same way as girls should. Boys must also learn how to deconstruct a patriarchal conception of masculinity and reconstruct an egalitarian one in its place.

With these motivations, Prerna Boys School was founded not only to provide boys with a quality education, but one *with a strong critical feminist perspective*. Along the lines of our girls' school, we adopted the following educational goals for the boys' school as well.[11] The boys must:

- Learn to read, write, and successfully complete the government-mandated syllabus up to class 12

- Develop a sense of agency and of control over their lives, aspirations for a future for themselves, and the confidence and skills to realize it

- Learn to recognize girls and themselves as equal persons

- Develop a critical understanding of patriarchal social and political structures that frame their lives

- Develop a critical feminist consciousness.

Currently Prerna Boys School has 150 students (90 primary and 60 secondary) being cared for by 7 teachers. These numbers have been kept low by design, as we have prioritised the deployment of our limited resources for the benefit of girls. Teachers are given a similar continuous mentoring and training which takes the form of ongoing workshops and critical dialogues around care, masculinity, poverty, patriarchy, social structures and gender equality. SHEF is currently in the process of developing a curriculum on boys' education aimed at helping boys understand and resist gender inequality, patriarchy, and patriarchal notions of masculinity, in our attempt to redefine boys' education.

DiDi's

In response to the economic needs of some of the mothers of Prerna's students, a sister organization was established with the dual goal of empowering the mothers and their daughters

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[10]For a detailed discussion of Prerna's vision and pedagogical practices see- Sahni, Reaching for the Sky.
[11]See Epilogue. Sahni, Reaching for the Sky.

economically and emotionally. Called DiDi's[12], it is a social enterprise providing services and employment, while also making a profit to support the educational mission of Prerna. In addition, DiDi's provides the midday meal free to Prerna students and also uniforms at a small cost. So the business provides livelihoods to the mothers while helping educate their daughters. DiDi's was started with an aim of breaking the cycle of poverty and disempowerment of women and provide a working environment where women feel respected and cared for.

DiDi's began with the management of the Study Hall School cafeteria by two mothers, managed by our teacher-turned-entrepreneur in the year 2008. It has grown since, employing 65 women, and has become a leading caterer for corporate offices and individuals. It also tailors the uniforms for all the SHEF schools and two other schools. It employs mothers of our most destitute girls and other women from the community who need employment. In addition, it provides employment and training to girls who graduate from Prerna.

DiDi's achieves it mission by providing respectful dignified work to Prerna's mothers in a women owned-women run enterprise, by imparting skills, and thus ensuring sustainable livelihood and economic independence. It gives them a job and income security, and often takes care of the financial needs by implementing small loans. DiDi's aims to provide a caring multi-generational work environment to empower the mothers of the Prerna's community.

Women who are illiterate and unskilled can find work either in the unorganised domestic sector or as daily labour at construction sites. They are exploited in both places, paid very little and find neither safety nor dignity at work. DiDi's hopes to uphold women's right to dignity at the workplace and to empower them by raising their aspirations, giving them agency and voice, so that they might construct better lives for themselves as persons and as mothers and wives both.

DiDi's continues to grow in its mission, is scaling its enterprises by partnering with the corporate sector. Currently two of our Prerna graduates are in senior positions of management. They are being groomed into their leadership roles and we are very hopeful that in the near future, DiDis will be lead and managed entirely by Prerna alumna so that it becomes a social enterprise for Prerna, of Prerna and by Prerna.

Research and Dissemination: *Papers and Book (I am still working on this section)*

In 2017, Reaching for the Sky: Empowering Girls through Education, a book authored by me was published by Brookings Institute, USA. The book is a longitudinal study that documents Prerna's philosophy, methods, outcomes, in detail, to enable scaling to diverse contexts. The book is part of an effort of scaling across our work. It is a way to inspire others to take up the pedagogy we use.

I have also written several papers and journal articles[13] about Prerna's feminist pedagogy and use of theatre in the classrooms to ......inspire others/think with others....

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[12]*'Didi'* means 'elder sister.'

[13]Urvashi Sahni, "From Learning Outcomes to Life Outcomes: What Can You Do and Who Can You Be? A Case Study in Girls' Education in India," Working Paper (Center for Universal Education at Brookings, November 2012); Sahni, "Children appropriating literacy: Empowerment pedagogy from young children's

Aarohini

In February 2012, one of the UNICEF Lucknow officer, who was incharge of gender related activities, saw some of the videos of critical dialogue classes at Prerna and learnt more about the focussed empowerment classes at the school. She became interested in exploring if these critical dialogues could be turned into a curriculum and shared with some girls' schools they were working with. SHEF was thus invited by UNICEF Lucknow, to share our empowerment curriculum and pedagogy with 38 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas[14](KGBVs) in 3 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

An empowerment toolkit, distilled from the good practices of our several years experience[15] was developed by the SHEF team along with a scale up plan. The program was named *Aarohini*, which translates in English to mean – Girl/Woman on the ascendant, or Girl Rising. The program was implemented in 38 schools by conducting teacher trainings in 3 phases and sharing the empowerment toolkit, impacting over 3500 adolescent girls.

Given the success of our program, SHEF entered the 2nd phase of our scale up activity, partnering with UNICEF again, and scaled the program to 52 additional schools. In 2016 we entered the 3rd phase and scaled it independently to the remaining 646 KGBVs in UP, in partnership with the Government of UP. Our scale up activity is still in process and will conclude in 2018.

Aarohini has accelerated the replication of SHEF's feminist pedagogy and critical dialogue in 1070 schools (746 KGBVs and 22 Ashram Type Schools in U.P; 200 KGBVs and 40 Solar Night Schools in Rajasthan; 12 Primary, 4 Upper Primary Government Schools and 3 SHEF Schools in Lucknow; 43 Upper Primary Government Schools in Sitapur) training over 3300 teachers. The impact of this program has been shared in the Impact Section. Through a partnership with UNICEF and the UP government, SHEF has successfully designed and delivered trainings and workshops for KGBV teachers to adopt and replicate its gender empowerment model in their schools.

To scale the empowerment curriculum and pedagogy of Prerna, Aarohini operates by integrating the following components:

- A two-day teacher training workshop on feminist pedagogy for KGBV Headmistress and wardens. This is followed up by an additional two day training on community mobilization

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perspective," Negotiating critical literacies in classrooms (2001); Sahni, "Classrooms as radical spaces of possibilities," Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance (2001);
[14]Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) are government residential schools in educationally-underserved areas for girls from very low-income, lower caste groups. Mostly located in very remote areas, the schools are often under-staffed. Teachers are ill-equipped to play the role of warden, family and care providers to the girls. They come with a limited understanding of their roles and the limited educational goal of achieving completion of 8th grade.
[15]For more details of the scaling process and impact of this program, see A third party Process Evaluation Report – "Classrooms of Empowerment, The Prerna-SHEF intervention in KGBVs" by START Up!, a company based out of Delhi and offers incubation, impact acceleration and management consulting services to social ventures.

for KGBV teachers.

- A Teacher Handbook with detailed grade-wise curriculum.
- A set of DVDs with recordings of the Critical Dialogue sessions.
- A training resource kit with posters and reading materials for teachers.
- On-site and long distance coaching and support for KGBV teachers, as they start to integrate feminist pedagogy in their residential schools.
- Creating a local support network of allied institutions forthe partner KGBVs – i.e. the local police, child protection services , NGOs, women's organization, Suraksha.
- Support in planning and managing annual campaigns and events around the year on gender empowering education.
- Building an active peer community of teacher change makers through whatsapp groups.
- Follow up and refresher workshops with teachers.

How do we know that we have succeeded in scaling out -

In 2014, an external evaluation of SHEF's Aarohini program revealed significant impact among all stakeholders (KGBV teachers, students and parents) on the three components of SHEF: - Universe of Care, Critical Dialogue and Feminist Pedagogy. It was on the basis of this evidence that UNICEF and the government of UP gave SHEF the green signal to scale its training from 38 KGBVs to 763 KGBVs.

In 2017, a second evaluation across 18 control and 18 experiment KGBV schools in remote districts of UP has again yielded significantly higher outcomes of knowledge, skills and agency on teachers impacted by the Arohini training, compared to those that have not been exposed to Arohini.

Poonam's story below is one example of how the Aarohini trainings have directly impacted KGBV students:

"Poonam, a young Dalit girl was pulled out of school at the age of five. Her father had no faith in education. After his death, Poonam was sent to a KGBV where she was introduced to Critical Dialogue sessions by teachers who had been trained by SHEF. Poonam found a purpose for her life. Despite topping her class at the KGBV, she had to leave school and return home after the completion of class 8 (KGBVs in UP function only at the middle-school level). Poonam found herself back in the spiral of poverty and discrimination. She appealed to her teachers, who in turn appealed to SHEF for a Fellowship. A small fellowship of INR 5000 came through. This propelled Poonam to enroll in Prerna. Today, Poonam is pursuing her bachelors program in the Lucknow University. She is also a micro education entrepreneur, having set up one of the 43 Gyan Setus or learning accelerators for drop out and at-risk children. She continues to conduct critical dialogue sessions with her friends and others in the community."

Swati Tripathi, the director of the program and her team have this to say about Aarohini's impact:

"teachers receive a training that first enables them to recognize and confront patriarchy and gender in their own lives, then teaches them to address the issues with the girls using activities such as drama and critical dialogues."

"What makes Aarohini unique as compared to other programs of its kind is its direct focus on empowering girls and their life outcomes. It's approach is directed at getting to the root of the problem by giving the teachers and girls a political understanding of patriarchy and changing mindsets, whereas other programs simply look at treating symptoms, certain behaviors that are a result of a patriarchal mindset. Other programs also tend to ignore teachers, and address the students directly, while Aarohini views the teachers themselves as agents of change. Aarohini also gives policy recommendations to the government based on its work done in KGBVs. It encourages the girls to engage their communities as well through campaigns and awareness marches, and involves community and faith leaders as advocates of girls' rights. Currently we have facilitated 14,107 girls from KGBVs to access government scholarships to continue their studies upon completing class 8. Our scholarship program had the intended impact and we were able to help girls to access existing government sources which they were unaware of."

"The first level of Aarohini's impact can be widely seen across varied groups. First, there is a noticeable change in teachers' attitudes and mentality after the training. On the political level, Aarohini has been able to influence the discussion of education and what is quality education... On the ground, it has connected child protection agencies to schools, addressed cases of in girls' lives that have come up during critical dialogues, and stopped child marriages in various communities, which generally has the effect of getting them to think twice before doing it again."

SHEF has also extended our program to Rajasthan in collaboration with UNICEF, the Government of Rajasthan and other NGOs. Currently, Prerna's ideas and delivery innovations are being scaled to over a 1000 schools, with the hope of impacting 100,000 adolescent girls. This scaling up was possible because of SHEF's steady funding partner – MONA Foundation, and then later funding support through Brookings. Funding is vital, because Government is not willing to fund initiatives like Aarohini – operating from a traditional perspective, they do not feel it is integral to education. UP had no budget for gender last year. There also has been a growing interest in the SHEF's girls' empowerment work because of the visibility provided by Brookings. Therefore, it is important to have patrons and supporters. SHEF is now trying to scale the program to all 47000 upper primary schools but such an undertaking is not possible with our present resources. Therefore, an effort is underway to try to find ways of including it in the Governments training budget and programs.

Scaling Deep: India's Daughters Campaign

The campaign has its origin in the work of the Prerna students to mobilize their own communities. They formed a group called Veerangana in 2011 under the aegis of which they conducted critical dialogues with women from their community about child marriage, domestic violence and girls' right to education and her own life. They also conducted a signature campaign where they convinced several men and women in their community to sign a pledge against domestic violence. As part of their activities we organized a street march, where teachers and students carried banners, made slogans which we recited loudly as a group during our march and students performed a street play on paternal alcoholism and the resulting violence at home. It was very empowering for our students and also generated a lot of interest in the community. This campaign gave rise to the India's Daughters Campaign, which has been conducted for 8 years annually since then, with a growing coverage.

The Aarohini Initiative organizes yearly India's Daughters Campaigns (IDC) that focus on a gender empowerment issue with the goal of raising awareness in the community about gender discrimination. The past campaigns have had focus such as "India's Daughters - Unwanted, unequal, and unsafe," "Child Marriage is Girl Slavery," and "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save our daughters, Educate our daughters)."

The campaigns follow the same format as the one conducted by *Veerangana*, with direct participation in the classrooms of all our partner schools; artwork, stories, and poetry; community engagement and dialogues with parents; signature campaign in the community and a protest march. The campaign is also conducted online, where student and teacher letters, stories, poems and messages are posted along with people from other organizations.[16] Over the years the campaign has grown exponentially. In its inception year 2012, the IDC managed to reach out to over 10,000 community members and 3100 students.

In the eighth and latest edition of the campaign, SHEF was able to cover 11,60,000 community members and 2,32,000 students, and aimed at collaborating with government representatives, civil society, faith leaders and nonprofits in Uttar Pradesh (India) to put forward a united front against child marriage.

Table 1: Growth of the India's Daughters Campaign 2012-2019

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Students	3,100	6,700	11,500	21,600	52,600	78,210	2,32,000
Schools	6	51	105	216	526	750	2,320
Awareness marches	1	43	114	132	510	750	1,729
Web Entries	50	250	546	2,828	4,946	7,640	9411
Government Officials	0	42	80	200	500	1,000	8,645
Community Outreach*	10,000	20,500	50,000	1,08,000	2,63,000	3,91,050	11,60,000

Scaling Up

As part of advocacy against child marriage and the India's Daughter Campaign, SHEF leaders held separate meetings with the Deputy chief minister, the Goverrnor and Women and Child Welfare Minister of Uttar Pradesh. A memorandum with specific recommendations was also presented to them. The Deputy Chief Minister, Governor and Women and Child Welfare Minister pledged their support and forwarded the memorandum to the concerned departments for appropriate action.

More recently, SHEF was able to include a recommendation in the Strategic plan of action for Girls education prepared by UNICEF at the behest of the Ministry of Human Resource

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[16]The school wise detail of campaign is available on the campaign website: www.digitalstudyhall.in/idc2017

Development to include a critical dialogue program on gender in the official curriculum. *"Include Critical Dialogue as a pedagogy in curriculum (on gender norms, mindsets and social structures for both boys and girls)"*. SHEF's recommendation to use parent teacher meetings to raise awareness about girls' rights in general and more specifically for education, and that gender training be made mandatory for all administrative officials in the Education department at all levels, and gender education be included in pre-service and inservice training was also included.

The main challenge we face is exactly the problem we are trying to solve. i.e., the deep rooted patriarchal mindsets in a strongly traditional patriarchal social structure. We discuss this in greater detail in the Scaling up section of this report.

Future goals

We are currently working hard to extend our program to other states and the 46000 upper primary schools in UP. The scale of this is overwhelming and could prove to be a challenge, requiring us to think creatively about other models and finding a way of using technology to support our expansion.

We are also working at a policy level at a national level, and in the states of UP and Rajasthan to include the Aarohini model in their pre-service and in-service trainings. We have already developed and submitted a policy brief with recommendations for policy and implementation to the Secretary of Elementary education in New Delhi and will be submitting it at the state level in UP and Rajasthan very soon.[17]

Our next goal is to develop a model for training teachers in sensitizing boys, following the pedagogy we use in our boys school. We are in the process of finalising our curriculum and will be launching some pilot trainings in order to finalise and formalise our training module.

The founder of SHEF received the Schwab Jubilant-Bhartia Foundation Social Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2017, for SHEF's work in this direction. It was heartenening to see that subversive work like SHEF's was recognised as important and socially needed. The award was given in recognition of the deep impact rather than impact in terms of numbers alone. According to the jury – this work could be a game changer for girls and women specifically and for transforming society at large.

Digital Study Hall: Using Technology to Scale Best Teaching Practices

SHEF began experiments with educational technology, with an aim of providing a simple, cost-effective, easily accessible solution to the problem of providing high quality education to all children, especially those in remote underserved and under resourced areas in 2000. After several small but useful experiments in partnership with NIIT and the Government of UP, we began formally in 2005 partnered by a professor from Princeton University, Randy Wang. Our goal was to use simple video technology to share pedagogical resources and expertise from schools that have good teachers to schools that are not so fortunate. In the year 2005, we

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[17] Urvashi Sahni, Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment Education in Post-Primary Schools in India: An Evidence-Based Brief for Policy (Brookings Institution Press, 2017).

started a video production process. The target recipients of these videos were under resourced classrooms in affordable private schools and government schools in remote rural areas.

In the Indian education system, there is a lack of quality teachers, insufficient presence of subject specific teachers, and a lack of training for teachers. There is also no professional development for working teachers. Teachers often lack subject background, knowledge and understanding for effective teaching. They are often placed in remote locations with no support in a largely dysfunctional system. Given the scale of the problem, the traditional methods are inadequate to solve the problem. Using technology creatively seemed to be the only way forward.

DSH's videos provide this support and development in an effort to build the capacity of less-skilled teachers, thereby improving the quality of the education provided to the children they teach. DSH's vision is to fill the gap in the Indian education system of lack of quality teachers, therefore quality education by providing on-site, on-job training using video lessons.

DSH enables teachers' and children's access to good educational practices by:

- By identifying model teachers, recording their best practices, and sharing them free of cost.
- Open source - Compared to other organizations of its kind, DSH is unique in that all of the videos produced are available for free to the general public, both online and by request. Since its inception, the focus has been to design and use the delivery mechanisms relying on open source platforms such as YouTube.
- DSH's videos are live videos of the whole class, including the students and their responses. They are intended for the teacher and focus on what good pedagogy looks like in real settings and what an active, engaging classroom should look like. In the current system, there is a large gap between the theory taught in education programs and practical implementation in the classroom, which DSH seeks to bridge with its videos. It also has highly diverse video library in terms of content.
- DSH has also started recorded best teacher training practices and hopes to collate our best practices to supplement our teacher training modules.

Over the years the viewership of DSH's video has grown and expanded to include a varied audience. Currently the DSH videos have 13,958,896 (as of Jan 30, 2020) views. DSH has over 91,000 subsribers on YouTube and content has also been distributed offline to 50 schools (academic content) and 736 KGBVs (critical dialogue and gender awareness based content).

In our program, technology was never the focus or kept at the forefront – teachers and students were the central focus and technology was perceived as instrumental and incidental to the purpose. We devised a simple model. We videoed our best teachers in a live classroom and put it on a DVD format. We devised a mediation pedagogy, which involved mediation by a live teacher, who emulated the activities in the video live with her class, in order to achieve active engagement of the students with the videos. This had 2 effects. It not only filled in the knowledge gaps of the teacher, it also helped to train her in new pedagogies, which became habitual after some weeks of mediation practice.

When we had started, we installed a TV in a remote rural classroom and showed it to the children there. Our innovation, did not depend on internet, because we were aware of the sparse penetration of internet in rural areas in UP at the time. Though we have shifted from TV

to computer, and have taken our repository to online channels, our focus remains to expand our coverage by continuing to explore diverse channels of delivery.

Scale of DSH's outreach –

Since our inception, over 2000 video lessons have been produced by DSH over the course of the last 15 years, the content repository has grown expansive. Starting from distributing video lessons to 11 schools, DSH's YouTube channel (DSHonline) now has over 13,958,896 views, enabled by our success in migrating our entire library to YouTube with time. Currently we have over 2000 videos in all the subjects, for grade levels from 1 – 12, in Hindi, English, Marathi, Bengali, and Nepali. Given the exponential increase in internet penetration in India, we now have a rapidly growing viewship on our channel, currently over 13 million viewers many of who send us complimentary feedback[18] -

- *"You all are doing very good work."* - Ali ShairFaizi
- *"The video was very helpful. Keep making videos like this. Thank you so much."* – Raja K Vikash
- *"Very nice and interesting. Good initiative by your channel...keep it up."* - NAYARA MUSIC
- *"Very nice Ma'am.... please make videos like this for grade 6 to 12. This will be very beneficial for UPSC exam also. You are teaching the basics so nicely. Good job Ma'am."* – Swati Rokde

In 2009, we were able to influence all the District Institutes of Education and Training(DIET), Government bodies entrusted with pre-service and in-service training of teachers for Public schools, in UP to use our videos to train their pre-service students. The teacher training in these institutes was highly theoretical, as most of the faculty had little or no practical teaching experience. The logic underlying our proposal was simple: the best way to learn how to teach well is to watch good teachers at work. Since it is not possible to take all the students to good teachers' classrooms, we brought the classrooms of good teachers virtually to the students. We trained the professors to use them, by getting their students to watch and analyse the teaching in the videos on all pedagogical parameters and to enable them to integrate theory with practice. The students were very grateful for our practical approach and for giving them some experience of good live teaching, even though it was virtual. In 2012, we were able to impact 3500 faculty and 14000 student-teachers through this intervention, by working with 71 DIETs.

We continue to expand our content base and our usage. DSH is one of the primary contributors on the MHRD's National Teacher platform called DIKSHA and the video lessons are being embedded in the UP school books with help of QR code technology. DSH has uploaded 990 videos on the platform and has provided all of our content to the Government of Rajasthan, for use in its schools.

DSH has now started with creating the video lessons for the CBSE board curriculum to help teachers who have not taught nor received their education in English.

In 2016 – DSH scaled its idea across to another organisation in Rajasthan, BODH, who is the main teacher training partner of the Rajasthan Government. We trained them in the use of video technology in their extensive teacher training programs and this has helped standardise their quality and achieve greater impact.

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[18]The comments on the videos were in Hindi and have been translated for present purpose.

This scaling of SHEF's best practices to under-resourced schools and remotely located teachers and students has been possible due to many factors, such as:

- Access to SHEF's teachers, infrastructure and eco-system
- Free video distribution platforms like YouTube, Shaladarpan and Diksha
- Increase in the internet penetration across the country
- Lack of the Government interest in innovations for education

Challenges:

Because of the fact that the content is widely available to the general public, it is difficult to track the impact and change they are effecting in the classroom. However, based on YouTube feedback, people find videos very useful and helpful. We are able to directly observe change in schools that we do have contact with, such as some small private schools and the KGBVs through the Aarohini, the program scaling SHEF's girls' empowerment program. As a result of the growing viewership, every day we are able to have bigger outreach and a bigger impact. Our effort continues to expand and diversify our user and our content base. We have already included plays, stories, critical dialogues on gender, videos for special educators and teacher training videos in our repository.

The use of technology and open-source platforms implies that DSH is operating in spaces where we have little or no control. Most of the schools where we want to reach are places lacking appropriate infrastructure, and often even no electricity. Technology based solution can only go so far in infrastructure challenged environments.

We would like to find a technology partner to further refine our offering, given the rapid progress in technology since our inception. We have experimented with Tablets, a voice-messaging system and are now using simple tele-monitoring and social media like Whatsapp to build networks. Without compromising our reach, we would like to improve our solutions.

SHEF would like to engage more grassroots teachers in content building. Currently SHEF teachers and schools provide 100% of the content. We would also like to have more partners and hubs in different states producing content in different languages.

Gyan-Setu: Taking School to Children Who Cannot Come to School

 Gyan-Setu[19] comprises of Community Education Centres in low-income communities and migrant labor colonies for out-of- school children who are unable to attend Prerna Girls and Boys School. Apart from providing education to children who cannot come to school, Gyan-Setu provides a site to build an awareness of the value of education, and prepares and transitions children to formal public schools. In the last five years, Gyan-Setu centers have evolved to act as hubs of community transformation. By working with mothers, Gyan-setu centers aim to increase women's awareness of their rights, their children's (particularly their daughters) right to education . An issue-based approach is taken to sensitise the women about issues relevant to

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[19]Gyan-Setu translates to 'Bridge of Learning' in English

them, and support is extended in cases of domestic violence, abuse, substance abuse, child marriage, etc. in collaboration with *Suraksha*.

India has close to 20 million children who are out-of-school, with Uttar Pradesh having 1.6 million.[20] Many of our centers are run in the heavily concentrated urban informal (often termed illegal) settlements called '*bastis*'.[21] For example, one of our urban centers, Gyansetu Gomti Nagar Railway Station, is run in the basti or 'slum' area on railway land. It is inhabited by approximately 1000 to 1200 people living in 150 to 200 *jhuggis*[22]. Most of the residents are labourers on daily wages and have migrated from nearby districts. Average family size is 5 to 6. Mothers work as maids and children stay home and take care of their younger siblings. Gyansetus were designed to meet the educational needs of children in similar such contexts.

<u>Evolution</u>, <u>Growth and Scale of Gyan-Setu</u>

Set up in the year 2011 with 2 centers, the progam was formalized in year 2012 with 6 centers with the goal of trying to understand how to optimise the video based training system. Field surveys were undertaken to find places where there were several children out of school. A local teacher was found with a high school education being a minimum qualification, a learning space identified and equipped. SHEF staff trained the teachers, who went to the neighbourhood and recruited the children, identified the ideal time convenient for the children to attend and began her classes for 2 hours everyday. The goal was to prepare the children sufficiently academically and to motivate and facilitate them to enrol in local public schools

We realised very early that given the extreme challenges faced by the children who attended our centers, a community based holistic approach, like the one we use in Prerna was required. Therefore, we not only trained our teachers to adopt this way of looking at the children, we also enlisted the support of the counsellors from Suraksha, who worked with the communities in a targeted manner. In addition, we have collaborated with government and civil society child protection services working in the local area for the purpose. The teachers were trained by SHEF's pedagogy head, one of our oldest and most experienced teachers at SH, who took charge of the project. She not only trained them in the SHEF pedagogy, she mentored them caringly on site.

Currently, SHEF runs 29 Gyansetu centers and 14 Gyansetu ECD (Early Childhood Development) centers across Lucknow, Sitapur, Barabanki, Pratapghar, Faizabad and Unnao within a distance of 250 Kms from its head-office. Teachers are recruited with a minimum qualification of 12th pass. We only hire local people who have some recognition and influence in the community. We first scope the area and find likely candidates who are educated and interested in teaching. Post recruitment the teachers are trained intensively for 7 days at SHEF

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[20] Kiran Bhatty, Radhika Saraf and Vrinda Gupta, Out of School Children in India: Some insights on what we know and what we don't (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research, 2017); Quoted in IANS, "UNESCO: 47 million youth in India drop out of school by 10th standard," *Firstpost,* August 17, 2016 (http://www.firstpost.com/india/unesco-47-million-youth-in-india-drop-out-of-school-by-10th-standard-2961334.html).
[21]*Basti* is an auto-constructed neighborhood in Indian cities usually inhabited by the poor. This Hindi word is used even in English in contra-distinction to the 'slum'.
[22] A house usually made of mud and sheets of iron, located in a very poor area of a city.

before they are deployed at the center, after which they are trained on an ongoing b0asis every month at SH. These centers cater to over 1600 children at any point in time. Gyan-Setu classes are held 6 days a week for two hours. They use temporary huts and other such community spaces to run the classes. Gyan-Setu teachers are trained in a child responsive, interactive, activity and arts based curriculum and pedagogy contextualised in children's lives.[23]

Mother's meetings are held every week at every center. During these meetings, the GyanSetu teacher, accompanied by counselors from *Suraksha[24]*, talk to the mothers regarding issues such as domestic violence, alcoholism, and health and hygiene. If and when cases of domestic violence, dowry, substance abuse, etc., are reported, counselors intervene, and if need be the local police is also called in. Mothers are sensitised about the remedies and measures that can be taken when faced with issues like domestic violence and substance abuse. The focus of the mothers' meetings is on empowering the women and making them aware of their rights.

The roots of Gyan-setu have deepened within community in the last two years as there has been a clear change in the way parents view and value education is evidenced by the high transition rates that have been achieved. In the last six months, we have transitioned 26 children to the formal schools (who keep coming to the centers because of the quality of education and environment). Since the program began, out of the 3382 children enrolled, 676 children in total have been transitioned to formal schools. Additionally, positive changes have been made in the children's environments by our ability to identify and respond to approximately 130 cases of violence, abuse, etc. Many of the students who transition continue to attend the centers because they find the activities attractive and because they feel they learn better here. We have corroborated this by tracking their learning outcomes in their schools and find them improved. Ketaki, grandmother of one of our children told us - *"No school here has a teacher who puts as much effort or takes as much interest in teaching as Poonam [NEC teacher] does. No child here [in center] gets annoyed or agitated. They come quickly here and are reluctant to go to any other school. To come here, they get ready themselves and leave for classes on their own."*

Challenges: There are several challenges that come in the process of 'taking schools to children'

- Though the children take enthusiastically to the activity based approach, parents take some convincing that their children are not 'just playing". Some of them object, saying -"We can't take their time away from work, if all they will do here is play." Parents need a great deal of convincing about the value of education for their children, especially where the children are working.

- Serious problems like drug addiction and domestic violence have to be tackled by our teachers and counsellors.

- Community's probems (like domestic violence, extreme poverty, child labour, drug abuse, migration): Most of our centers are in the poorest slums, which are very dirty/unhygienic

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[23] The GyanSetu curriculum opens with welcoming the lives of the children as a whole, it welcomes their routines, their families and their challenges. The teachers identify the vulnerabilities in the lives of the children for both personal and vocational lives. Each center works with the community to transform the community to be a safer place for the children. The curriculum then grades the students on four different levels and put them through a paced arts based curriculum. Once a child has attained age appropriate academic skills they are transitioned to a formal school close to the community.

[24] An anti dowry and family counseling center, founded by Dr. Sahni in 1980s

places and it is difficult to find a clean, healthy environment for the children to learn. In some cases we have had to construct our own temporary structures, which is expensive and also not a sustainable option. We are negotiating with the government to find a viable alternative, perhaps using public school buildings in the afternoon might be one such option if one can be found close enough for the children to walk to.

- Multi grade teaching and assessment continues to pose a challenge.

- Finding local teachers who are committed and sincere is very difficult. We are willing to train them on the job to make up for their lack of skills, but building a mission mode does not work in all of them. Some of them, come only because they have no other job and this seems like an easy enough way to make some money.

- We have tried to use tablets with material loaded on them, to support teachers in their teaching, but we feel the lack of a technology partner to help us do this better.

<u>The Vision for Future</u>

We find the program a very cost-effective, community based option for helping to transition out-of-school children into public schools along with providing tutoring support. They also serve to show that children from challenging environments and extreme poverty need to a holistic approach, one which looks at their lives as a whole and attempts to address the challenges that prevent them from attending or staying and learning in school.

DSH, our digital innovation center, is working at creating and perfecting an online attendance and test-score management system. Anand, the director of DSH stated – *"We realized that children dropping out of school was a huge issue, not only because these children are no longer in school, but also because there is no system to track and register the fact that they have dropped out. Though they are no longer attending, on paper they are still registered. GyanSetu aims to address the issue of how to plug this gap."*

"The online attendance system has been refined and altered according to the ever changing dynamics of the Gyan-Setu centers. Currently functional at all the centers, the attendance system has helped the Gyan-Setu team to keep track of each and every student. For instance, if the Gyan-Setu team spots that certain students have an attendance pattern, then the teacher of that specific center is alerted and urged to find out why this is happening. The aim of this activity is to achieve a better understanding of the challenges that our children face in order to help them further. Coupled with this, the online test score management system has been instrumental in keeping track of the academic progress of the children."

We also hope to collaborate with public schools and share our learning with them, in the hope of influencing their approach to education and children. It has a huge potential to scale and we are working with the government at UP to look for ways in which we can scale our learnings here.

The Study Hall College: Moving into Higher Education

Established in 2016, The Study Hall College (TSHC) is a high quality undergraduate degree college, affiliated to University of Lucknow. We hope to extend the same spirit of caring, holistic

life outcome approach, critical social and political pedagogy and dedication to achieving high standards of a educational excellence, creativity and innovation. Like the rest of our foundation, the Study Hall College is an inclusive place for students of all abilities, from all socio-economic backgrounds, from rural and urban regions, fostering collaboration, creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation. This initiative was taken in response to a concern for the shortage of high quality higher education institutions in UP and India generally. There is a growing awareness of this problem in the political rhetoric as well as the educational domain.[25]

Situated on the periphery of Lucknow in a semi-rural area, the college is surrounded by lush green farmland. Envisioned as a transformative place for higher education of teachers and students, the Study Hall College is an inclusive place, with students from diverse caste and class backgrounds. Utpal, the director of college, says – *"Because there are students from different parts of society together in one class, it provides fertile ground for critical thinking and learning to respect one another".* He describes the vision of the College – *"The vision of The Study Hall College is to be a caring, institution of academic excellence, one that develops social and emotional intelligence, so that students understand their world and society, are able to be critical thinkers and competent participants in a democratic society. We want them to be responsible, caring adults and dynamic changemakers."*

Still in its nascent years, the college is currently offering Bachelors of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication (BA - JMC), Bachelors in Business Administration (BBA), Bachelors in Commerce (BCom) and Bachelors in Computer Applications (BCA). The college has over 200 students and 12 faculty members including guest faculty from India and outside.

About 90% of the children are from families that earn less than 7 dollars a day out of which about 25% families earn less than 3 dollars a day. Students from low-income families have been awarded a need based scholarship by the Study Hall Educational Foundation. 95% of the children have been given a partial or full fee waiver. 12 children from BA-JMC have been given a full fee waiver. This was done after an on-site survey conducted by the college administration found that these children came from the poorest of the poor families and would be forced to drop out if a fee waiver was not put in place.

The pedagogy in the college is interactive, activity based and responsive to students lived contexts. Drama, group discussions, debates and panel discussions form an integral part of teaching at the Study Hall College. In our effort to build a social and political consciousness in our students, critical dialogues on caste, gender, religion and politics are conducted regularly, integrated with their course work and contextualised in their own lived experiences. Students are led to reflect on their own challenges critically and to find solutions to these collectively. These dialogues have enabled us to stop two child/forced marriages because girls approached the teachers for help.

The SHEF leadership team mentors and trains our college faculty on an ongoing basis in our pedagogical methods, specifically the critical pedagogy and our ethic of care. This comes as a refreshing change for them, as they are accustomed to the traditional impersonal lecture method of teaching used in the previous colleges they have taught in.

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[25] "What ails higher education in India?" *Livemint,* December 19, 2017 (http://www.livemint.com/Politics/GzyF9RAYHD17cpostVi5KP/What-ails-higher-education-in-India.html).

Our Prerna and SHS alumni find the college a welcome extension of the pedagogy and learning environment experienced by them in school, but for students who come from other schools this is almost a revolutionary change. The students have begun to develop a voice and are learning to express their opinions freely. They engage enthusiastically with their studies and seem to be full of curiosity. Teachers say the change is clearly visible and quite remarkable. During an experience sharing session one student remarked about her classmate, *"Akhilesh who has also been my classmate in school barely spoke a word and never smiled but now I see a drastic change in him. In 6 months, he has started interacting with fellow students and is eager to paricipate in public speaking opportunities also".*

Future Directions

1. Establishing a high quality teacher training program: There is a great dearth of good teacher training colleges and institutes in UP specifically and India more generally. Recognising the importance of this and wanting to scale the pedagogical practices we have developed at SHEF through a high quality pre-service teacher training program, we made humble beginnings with a SHEF certified Primary and Nursery Teacher Training course in the city in 2015 as mentioned earlier. We are applying for accreditation to start a 4 year Bachelors degree program and hope to have a University affiliated program up and running by 2019 at the latest. We plan to enrich it with courses on drama and education, technology in education, critical pedagogy, leadership education amongst others.

2. We hope to continue to add degree courses according to local, state and national level needs, as we grow. We will use a critical pedagogy to teach all our courses, taking a holistic life outcome approach, focussed on developing citizens and leaders with a strong social and political consciousness.

3. We are also experimenting with creative uses of technology to launch on-line courses for students living in remote regions, who want to pursue higher education. There is a huge demand for this.

Challenges: We see huge potential in our college and are all working hard at its growth – working with challenges of limited resources, a corrupt university bureaucracy, a severe locational disadvantage, as we were only able to afford a plot at some distance from the city. Furthermore, this being our first effort in the higher education space, we are also working hard to build our credibility and reputation. We are once again facing the challenge of having to persuade people to believe in our expanded vision of education and our pedagogical methods.

SHEF-HCL Uday Project

SHEF partnered with HCL Foundation for implementing their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) programme in October 2018. HCL Foundation has signed a MoU with the Lucknow district administration to improve 21 government schools with a total strength of over 9800 students. SHEF was entrusted with improving the Minimum Learning Levels (MLLs) through teacher training and continuous academic support.

On entering the project, we realized that the allotted schools had almost no teachers. The student-teacher ratio was 143:1 with 3 schools having no teachers and seven with just one teacher. Therefore we recruited our own teachers and trained them to teach in these schools

using SHEF's refined pedagogy. Currently we have 33 of our teachers present in 16 government schools (12 primary and 4 upper primary) in Lucknow with over 2400 children.

Study Hall School - Kanpur Road Branch

The latest venture of SHEF is a new branch of Study Hall School that aims to provide quality education to children from lower-middle class families, with a 25% quota for children from lower SES, who will be fully subsidised. A portion of the campus of Study Hall College has been set aside to house this new branch. We have started this branch as a pre-primary school with 10 children and 2 teachers but our plan is to scale it to grade 8 by 2021 and eventually to grade 12 in the coming years.

SHEF's Lifetime Impact

Over three decades, SHEF has trained over 24,000 teachers and impacted more than 1 million children, a vast majority of whom are girls from disadvantaged communities.

We detail these outcome numbers below:

SHEF has directly impacted 5,62,000 children through its network of schools and educational outreach initiatives.
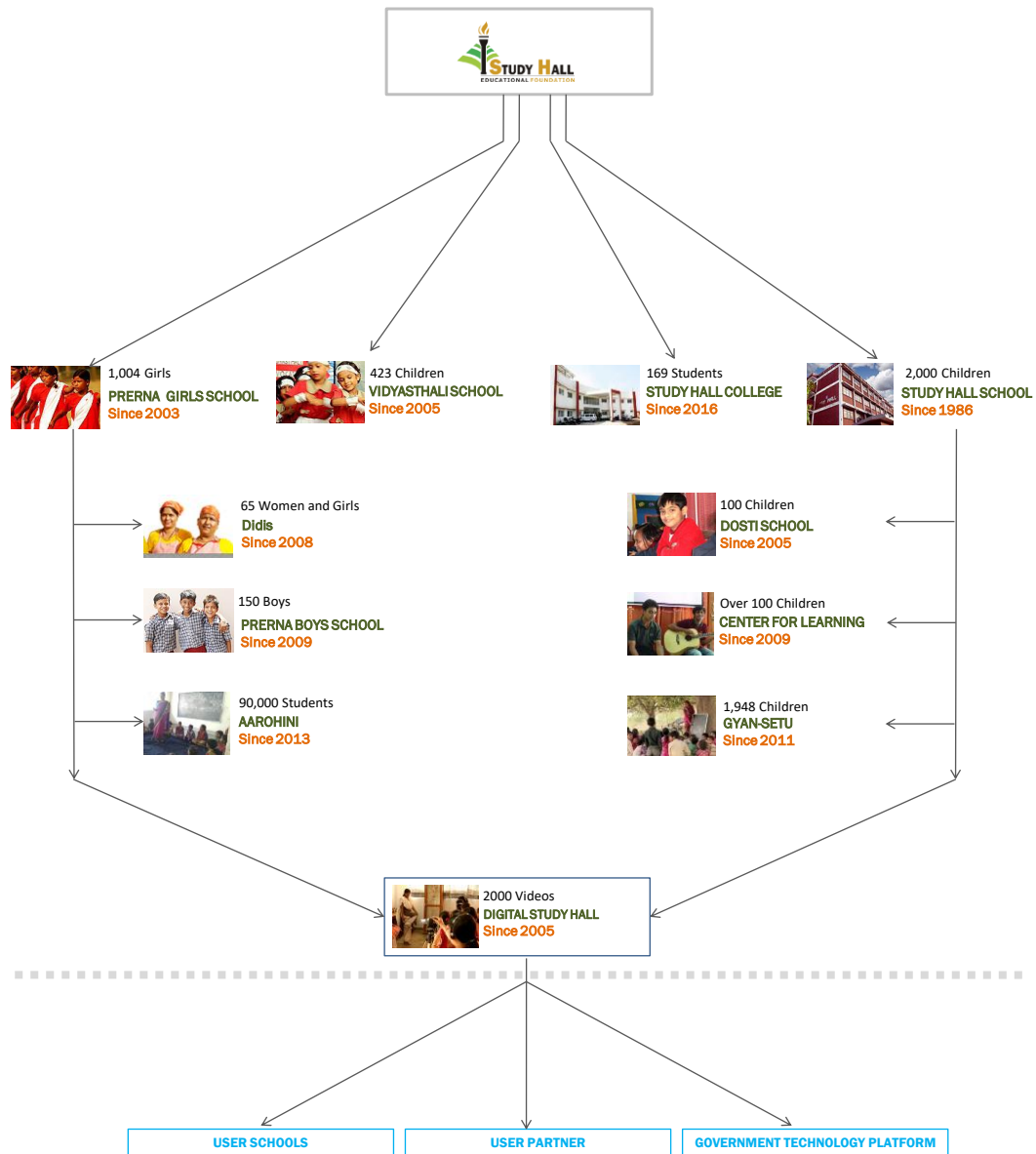
Through government partnerships, Aarohini has trained 3,301 teachers across Rajasthan and UP in feminist pedagogy and Critical Dialogue. Critical Dialogues are now being lived across 1070 schools (746 KGBVs and 22 Ashram Type Schools in U.P; 200 KGBVs and 40 Solar Night Schools in Rajasthan; 12 Primary, 4 Upper Primary Government Schools and 3 SHEF Schools in Lucknow; 43 Upper Primary Government Schools in Sitapur). All these schools service the most vulnerable segments of mostly rural children.

In collaboration with the UP government's District Institute and Education Training (DIET) program, SHEF trained 14,000 teachers in interactive, art and story-based classroom sessions for the K-8 curriculum (part of SHEF's Universe of Care program). 11,000 of these, on a conservative estimate, have deployed SHEF's classroom methodologies to 330,000 students.

An additional partnership with UNICEF led SHEF to train 7000 teachers in running interactive and democratic classrooms. While direct intervention has pushed the SHEF model into the government system, digital technology has enabled SHEF to galvanize the pull factor for teachers. The Digital Study Hall YouTube channel is a comprehensive portal of 1412 videos that capture SHEF's best practices. It has 91,000 subscribers with nearly 14 million views from countries like USA, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and UAE. Its inclusion in the National Teachers Platform expands its reach to potentially all government teachers of India.

Through the India's Daughters Campaign, 232,000 children from 2320 schools have reached out to over 20 million community members in the past 7 years.

STUDY HALL
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

1,004 Girls
PRERNA GIRLS SCHOOL
Since 2003

423 Children
VIDYASTHALI SCHOOL
Since 2005

169 Students
STUDY HALL COLLEGE
Since 2016

2,000 Children
STUDY HALL SCHOOL
Since 1986

65 Women and Girls
Didis
Since 2008

100 Children
DOSTI SCHOOL
Since 2005

150 Boys
PRERNA BOYS SCHOOL
Since 2009

Over 100 Children
CENTER FOR LEARNING
Since 2009

90,000 Students
AAROHINI
Since 2013

1,948 Children
GYAN-SETU
Since 2011

2000 Videos
DIGITAL STUDY HALL
Since 2005

USER SCHOOLS

USER PARTNER

GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM

SHEF's Leadership Structure, Style, and Culture

The SHEF network of educational initiatives engages 400 men and women, who are lead by a team of 14 men and women. Each program, school and initiative having its own dedicated leader/s and the Foundation is headed by a Chief Executive Officer and governed by the Board of Directors, the president of which is also the CEO.[26]

Over the last 3 decades SHEF has evolved a unique leadership style, which is consultative, supportive, mentoring, coaching, dialogic, collaborative, democratic and invitational. It is based on trust, autonomy and founded on an ethic of care. The organizational leadership has worked deliberately and persistently at developing a strong team of leaders, based on the belief that leadership is the cornerstone of any organizations success and growth. None of the leaders are professional leaders, i.e., have any management training or professional qualification. They have all *learnt* to be leaders at SHEF, through trial and error, by engaging in dialogue with each other, by sharing competencies with each other, from the people they lead, from the task before them and through supportive mentorship. 80% of the leaders have emerged from within SHEF – they were teachers or young interns. SHEF is a learning organization and the leaders see themselves as learning and evolving continuously. They feel free to learn, to experiment and fail.

The leaders are in charge of their own programs, schools and units, but interact frequently with each other and with the CEO, both formally during monthly meetings and informally almost on a daily basis, over the phone or in person, where possible. They feel free to share resources and competencies, borrowing and lending them as the need arises. They support each other in all the organisation's ventures in a collaborative spirit. While the CEO has the final veto power, she takes all decisions in consultation with the team leads, continuously mentors the leaders, supporting them with her experience and resources. Every year the team goes for a leadership retreat, where they speak specifically about leadership in an academic, personal way at a conceptual and spiritual level. All the leaders value this experience and say that it is an immensely valuable experience.

Being a Leader in SHEF

To be a leader in SHEF means to have faith and trust in those that we lead; giving them the autonomy and the freedom to experiment and to fail; it means having unfaltering faith in the organisation's mission and philosophy; a moral obligation towards their work and towards others in the organisation; to value the collective growth as much if not more than individual growth; it is to make decisions always in consultation with our teams; to know how to operate under resource constraints and still not compromise quality and to know that all of this is not easy and requires patience and persistent effort. [27]

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[26] I am the President of the Foundation as well as the Chief Executive Officer, Study Hall school is led by the Principal, Shalini Sinha, the Vice Principal Meenakshi Bahadur, the Junior School headmistress, Bani Malhotra and Prep School Headmistress, Shashi Mehta. DOSTI is lead by special educator, Surabhi Kapur; Prerna is lead by Principal, Rakhee Panjwani; Vidyasthali is lead by Principal, Anusha Sharma; Prerna Boys and CFL are led by Pratima Srivastava; Digital Study Hall and its programs Aarohini and Gyan Setu are led by Anand Chitravanshi and Siddharth Shukla and the College is led by Utpal Misra; DiDis is led by Veena Anand.

[27] This has emerged from interviews with all the leaders.

The following themes emerged from discussions with the leaders regarding how they became the leaders they are and their own description of the leadership culture of the organization:

1. Trust and Faith is a Good Policy

The leaders express a certain gratitude about the trust and faith that was placed in them, which supported the development of their leadership skills. This prompts them to show similar faith in the people they are leading. They seem to have a humble, grateful kind of confidence, as opposed to a complacent confidence, such that it seems to express their belief that they have *become* good leaders, and they remember that they were not always good, that they were given opportunities beyond their skill set, and that made them better, and they say this drives their own personal leadership. They value the "understanding", "accommodating" environment at SHEF, saying that the trust given to them inspires them to give their best, lends them courage to face challenges and helps them grow.

As Shalini said *"The trust that was imposed on me knowing very well that I did not come with that much experience. It made me sit-up and decide that there was no way I could let that trust be broken!"*

Siddharth echoes a similar sentiment, saying *"Professionally I had never been entrusted with a leadership role before I came to SHEF. The faith shown in me by the organizations leadership, to include me as part of the core leadership spurred me to go from 'Job Mode' to 'Mission Mode'. Inclusive and immersive learning has followed ever since. I have been groomed into caring for everyone at my workplace as one of my own. Care and personal attention have become central to my own style of leadership."*

2. Importance of the Collective

They seem to understand the importance of growing together, and how it is better than growing and learning alone – that as a whole, SHEF is more valuable than just the sum of its parts. They don't feel that they are competing with each other, rather they learn from each other, lean on each other and lend each other their competencies and strengths and draw strength and inspiration from each other. They use the same principles in their own leadership style where they work alongside their teams, help, mentor and coach their teams, believing, as Shashi said, that "*if I could help my team members to excel they grew and along with them I too grew.* Rakhee says that *"we believe that we do not have people working under us, we have people working with us."*

3. Freedom and Autonomy

They know that SHEF is a learning organization and feel that they have the freedom and autonomy to experiment, without fear of failure or judgement. They say this makes them more effective, and innovative, because they are not afraid of making mistakes and see those as opportunities to learn. "*free to experiment and fail at times, there is a safety net"; complete freedom to experiment with ideas and apply new knowledge and skills.* They do not feel policed or judged with the "eyes of any Big Boss always prying to find my mistakes." This experience drives their own leadership of their teams, which is supportive, non-policing mentorship and

coaching style monitoring, with the freedom to learn, to experiment and fail. They work at coaching their teams regularly, making room for inexperience and mistakes.

As Shashi said

"I grew because I was lucky to be given complete freedom to experiment with ideas and apply new knowledge and skills. This certainly enhanced my confidence and sense of achievement. The empowerment with authority to take decisions went a long way . I gave my team ample opportunities to grow and to harness their full potential and to create better teaching methodologies and practices, by aligning the school practices with the overall values and goals of the institution. At the same time, I was able to identify my own areas of improvement and evolving into a better being. "

4. Consultative, Caring, Empowering leadership

It is clear to the leaders that their job is to help, enable, support, nurture and build capability. They focus on building capability by recognising the existing strengths and unique interests of their team members, by guiding and mentoring them based on their special needs and responding to the ways in which they want to be helped; supporting them by following their cues on what kind of advice or support they need; to respond to their team members as persons with unique personalities, lives with compulsions and constraints and to factor those in while they lead their team. They work at achieving consensually arrived at decisions and solutions. They are convinced of the success of this approach because it is what has worked with them. This is how they learnt to be good leaders. They feel that they have been helped by their leader to explore their own potential, to enhance their own hidden skills and talents. They have been empowered because of the nurturing support they received. As Anand says: *"The idea of being a caring leader was alien. All the hierarchies that I had been a part of before working with SHEF were places that do not nurture and lead people, they were workshops of elimination and exclusion. The idea of growth at these places focused on pointing out flaws and expecting everyone to overcome them on their own. The principal understanding of how this was a bad practice was always obvious but somehow the alternative felt impractical. SHEF proved that it is not an impractical system and it is one that can build a force of will power within and shape people into committed team members. This is one of the key reasons for SHEF's growth and success."*

5. Feeling morally bound

The leaders all display an unfaltering faith in the authenticity and honesty of SHEF's work and outcomes; and demonstrate a deep commitment and trust in SHEF's mission and philosophy, owning its vision and goals completely. They believe that SHEF is *"a place full of possibilities for people that seek to do meaningful work."* They feel *morally bound* to support and work for SHEF's mission.

Siddharth said *"Before SHEF, growing professionally was perhaps my only goal but this organization has instilled a sense of service in me and now the ends no longer drive the means. I now very strongly believe that everything else follows honest, well intentioned good work".*

6. Patience and allowing time

SHEF leaders are not in a hurry to achieve results, not in a bad sense but in a good sense. Good because that eliminates watered down, simplistic definitions of what constitutes an achievement – if you are in hurry to be successful, you probably have easily achievable definition of success. They know that patience is key, it takes time to build something worthwhile. This can be frustrating sometimes, because everyone likes instant gratification. So while they celebrate small wins, they are patient about long term outcomes. This attitude leads them to exercise patience with their teams as well, allowing others to take the time to learn and perform.

"I have learnt how to allow time in order to bring about a change"….."learnt to be democratic. Though it is time consuming"

Funding SHEF and Sustainability

SHEF is a champion of frugal innovation. Working in some of the poorest districts of India has convinced us that models that leverage and build upon existing local resources have the best chance to sustain. Thus, all the schools and initiatives of SHEF work as an interdependent units of an eco-system, leveraging infrastructure, intellectual resources and building leadership from its internal pipeline.

Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF) follows a cross – subsidization model of funding. We charge those who can pay so that we can fund those who can't. Study Hall, DOSTI, CFL and NTT programs are self-sustaining, though 8% of the students receive need-based scholarships. SHEF seeds innovations from its internal resources, establish proof of concept, and then steps out to raise funds from external sources. The surplus from SH was used to seed all our other initiatives except for Digital Study Hall, which was begun with funds brought in by Prof. Randy Wang. Prerna, Vidyasthali, Gyan Setu, Aarohini and the college all need heavy subsidies. SHEF subsidises all these programs. For this SHEF uses the surplus funds from SH along with grants from institutional and individual donors. 65% comes from SH surplus and 35% comes from donors. It is SHEF's continuous effort to optimise its resources, to be frugal and cost-conscious and to become as self-sufficient as possible. DiDi's offers a part of its surplus to subisdise the mid-day meal at Prerna and it is hoped that it will be able to support Prerna completely in the future.

SHEF has built and maintained relationships with a network of individual Indian donors and their foundations such as Mona Foundation, KewalRamani Foundation, Malhotra WeikField Foundation and Bhavishya Group. The international foundations that support SHEF include MacArthur Foundation, Brookings Institution, Echidna Giving, Rockefeller Foundation, United States Department of State and UNICEF Uttar Pradesh.

The top three funders of SHEF include:

Mona Foundation	45% of the annual grants
KewalRamani Foundation	13% of the annual grants
United States Department of Education	11% of the annual grants

STUDY HALL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION – FLOW OF FUNDS

2000 Children
STUDY HALL SCHOOL
Since 1986

FUNDING PARTNERS AND DONORS

SURPLUS FROM STUDY HALL SCHOOL

INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

65%

35%

1948 Children
GYAN-SETU
Since 2011

90000 Students
AAROHINI
Since 2013

2000 Videos
DIGITAL STUDY HALL
Since 2005

1004 Girls | 150 Boys
PRERNA SCHOOL
Girls Since 2003 | Boys Since 2009

423 Children
VIDYASTHALI SCHOOL
Since 2005

169 Students
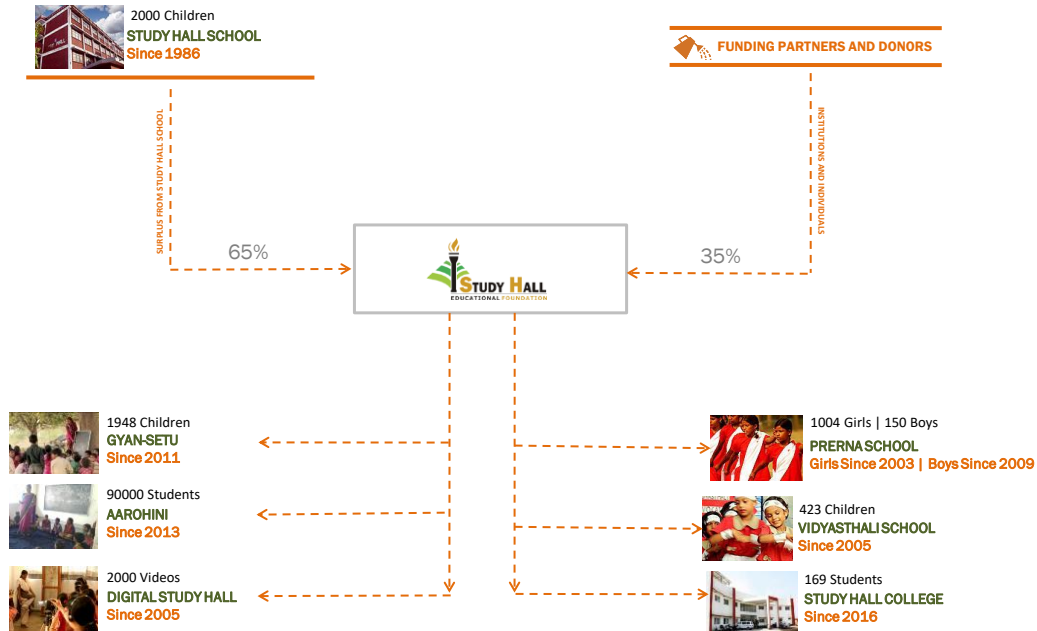**STUDY HALL COLLEGE**
Since 2016

Figure a: Study Hall Educational Foundation's main source of income is from Study Hall School surplus plus and institutional and individual donors. 65% of the funds are generated from the Study Hall School surplus and 35% funds are donated by external donors. Study Hall School, DOSTI, Center for Learning, Nursery Teacher Training are self-sustaining. Study Hall Educational Foundation forwards these funds to sustain Prerna, Vidyasthali, Digital Study Hall, Aarohini, Gyan Setu, Study Hall College.

Scaling SHEF: Challenges, Enablers and Lessons

This section presents an analysis of the ways in which SHEF has scaled along with the challenges faced while doing so and the various factors that served as enablers. The previous section gave a description of how the organization grew horizontally, over its history of 34 years, developing a diverse set of offerings along the way. This section addresses the issue of scale and shows how SHEF has scaled up, out, across and deep.

There are a number of terms used to describe scale in the literature on scaling. In this report, we have used the following terms and definitions to capture the various ways of increasing impact of a program.

Scaling across - which happens when people create something locally and inspire others who carry the idea home and develop it in their own unique way. Deborah Frieze, defines it to mean – "releasing knowledge, practices and resources and allowing them to circulate freely so that others may adapt them to their local environment."

Scale Out - "impacting greater numbers"- involves replicating and disseminating successful innovations in different communities with the hope of spreading the same results to more people.

Scale Up -"impacting laws and policy" – changing institutions, policy and law, to change the rules of the game.

Scale Deep -"impacting cultural roots" – changing relationships, cultural values and beliefs, "hearts and minds".[28]

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[28]Darcy Riddell and Michele–Lee Moore, Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Advancing Systemic Social Innovation and the Learning Processes to Support it (J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and Tamarack Institute, 2015).

Scaling Study Hall Educational Foundation

	Scaling Out	Scaling Up	Scaling Deep	Scaling Across
Study Hall School	Increased enrollment	Influencing educational policy	Changing existing perceptions of education	Dosti, CFL, Vidyasthali, College, NPTT
Prerna	Increased enrollment	Influencing educational policy	Changing patriarchal mindsets, preventing child marriage, breaking poverty cycle	Prerna Boys, Aarohini, Reaching for the Sky, projects and papers
DOSTI	Increased enrollment, Early Intervention Program, Home-based Program		Generating awareness and deeper understanding of disabilities and special education	
Vidyasthali	Increased enrollment, especially girls	Influencing educational policy	Increasing awareness of patriarchy, and caste and religion divides; changing mindsets; developing rural entrepreneurship	
Digital Study Hall - Video Lessons	YouTube, DIETs, Diksha platform, Shala Darpan, linking videos to UP board textbooks		Spreading quality teaching methods in academic and feminist pedagogy	Bodh, government of Rajasthan
GyanSetu	Expansion of centers across the city		Community awareness of education and community issues	
Aarohini	946 KGBVs across UP and Rajasthan	Influencing policy	Changing patriarchal mindsets, generating community awareness, India's Daughters Campaign	Girls empowerment curriculum; boys' curriculum (under development)

Scaling out = Impacting greater numbers *Scaling up = Impacting laws and policy*
Scaling deep = Impacting cultural roots *Scaling across = Model replicated and adapted by others in local environment*

Scaling the SHEF model

According to Brookings "Millions Learning" report(2016), which analyses the problem of scaling solutions to educational problems, there are 2 main ways of scaling: 1. Idea adoption: spreading new approaches across an education eco-system, and 2. Delivery innovation: the development of new ways to deliver education. SHEF has tried to scale in both ways. They have worked to scale their holistic, life-outcome, social and political critical pedagogy approach to education and to gender equality across geographies in India, and they have worked to scale out their delivery innovations to other schools and teachers. One may argue that to replicate SHEF, the entire eco-system of Study Hall School (with its well-equipped building), plus the mid-day meal supplied by Didi's, must be replicated. But contrarily, we believe that SHEF's education and especially empowerment model can be embedded in any learning eco-system.

The table below gives a brief snapshot of how we have tried to scale our innovations across, out, up and deep.

Our greatest effort at scale has been expended in trying to scale our rights based empowerment approach to girls education. In trying to scale our critical feminist pedagogy, SHEF's strategy for scale has largely taken the form of building teacher change makers who become the first adopters, champions and practitioners of gender empowerment education in their own schools.

SHEF has taken a three-pronged approach for training change-making teachers:

- Rigorous and systematic teacher training in every unit of SHEF.
- A teacher training – cum mentorship program with teachers of Kasturba Gandhi Ballika Vidyalaya (KGBV) across two states.
- A digital platform for teacher training through the use of videos.

The three routes have been detailed below:

Rigorous and systematic teacher training in every unit of SHEF – Teachers practicing Feminist Pedagogy, Critical Dialogues and the Universe of Care principles, have to be more than teachers. They become mother, mentor, counselor, advocate and educator to their students. Teachers are trained to deliver this combination of roles via regular workshops, critical dialogues and training videos that model the same pedagogy.

SHEF also coaches teachers to build a clear feminist perspective, to recognize and call out their unearned class privilege and to be aware of the distance that their identity can create between them and their students. Teachers are taught that to build democratic classrooms, they need to shed either their deficiency approach ('the poor are deficient') or the charitable approach ('I am a do-gooder')- two typical responses that middle-class professionals display while working with the poor. The boundary-breaking role of the arts (a learning tool in SHEF's classrooms) catalyzes teachers to collaborate more with students and reduce the power hierarchy in classrooms.

Through constant discussions, feedback loops and their own critical dialogue sessions teachers gradually learn to view the students as ends in themselves and to see the world from their lens. They apply their pedagogy based on the daily circumstances of the students' lives. By way of

reciprocity, teachers are trained to use examples from their own lives to facilitate critical dialogue sessions.

Since all SHEF teachers have wrestled with patriarchal systems, they find this training cathartic. In every way then, teacher training at SHEF boils down to teachers and students empowering each other – a critical component of the Universe of Care.

For eg:

Aarohini – A Teacher Training Program with KGBVs– Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) are government residential schools in educationally-underserved areas for girls from very low-income, lower caste groups. Mostly located in very remote areas, the schools are often under-staffed. Teachers are ill-equipped to play the role of warden, family and care providers to the girls.

A Digital Platform for Teacher Training – SHEF views technology as an enabler for cost-effective replication. With an in-house film crew (led by Prerna alumni) the Digital Study Hall or DSH is the 'viralizing' arm of SHEF. It produces classroom content based on SHEF's best practices and converts them into films for teacher practitioners in remote rural schools or in inaccessible urban pockets. More than 1412 videos have been hosted on the DSH YouTube channel and distributed on flash drives where connectivity is a challenge. DSH is recipient of Tech Laureate Award of the Tech Museum of Innovations.

Challenges of Scaling:

1. "Scale" was not the problem we were addressing when we began. Our aim was not to provide 'basic' education to as many children as possible but to redefine 'quality 'education.

We started our work in 1986 as a private for-profit lab school. While our numbers grew rapidly, we were focussed for many years on developing our pedagogy and building our infrastructure. It took all of our time and energy.

Furthermore, being a woman in the time I was born in, and being raised in the strong patriarchal family where gender roles were clearly defined, I was not raised to think beyond my role in the domestic domain. I don't think I believed myself capable of 'scale'. Besides that, numbers never seduced me - neither in terms of money or people. I like thinking expansively, in terms of universals and I like diving deep into problems and getting at the root of them. Organisations take on the personality of their founders and leaders, suffering and benefitting both from their personal histories, struggles, circumstances, their predispositions and predilections. SHEF, like me, was focussed on solving the problems of education and in trying to redefine education. I don't always think of scaling up to large numbers. According to the Brookings, Millions learning study, people who scale rapidly are the ones who begin with the idea of scaling. We didn't begin with the idea of scaling to large numbers, but focussed on digging deep. We stayed wedded to the problem, in a localised, specific way, trying to get at the root of the problem and find solutions for the children we worked with in our specific context, by working hard to understand their deprivations and needs and responding to them. We were not thinking globally, or even nationally.

My own understanding of education and my own goal as an educator kept expanding and growing larger and more inclusive, as I moved to working with rural children and with girls. I was drawn into projects that worked at scale, like the UNICEF project, but personally I was daunted by the scale, and withdrew when I found the scale too large to manage for meaningful impact.

We concentrated on finding and developing leaders, sharing our vision as it evolved so that our leaders took ownership of the vision and mission of the organization. All this takes time. SHEF has been treading lightly and carefully and it has taken over 30 years for SHEF to grow state wide. SHEF first dug in deep before growing wide.

It was a conscious decision to keep SHEF relatively small, rather than rushing to open new schools and branches all over. We kept the focus on quality and effectively bringing about a transformation within SHEF's own population, rather than expanding to larger numbers.

2. Diversification

The other reason for not achieving scale in terms of replication and numbers is our diversification. We have scaled – horizontally and laterally rather than vertically. Because of our holistic approach, we have scaled our work across different groups of children through our different programs. We don't do just one thing! Providing quality education is our work – but we have designed different education programs for different groups and that has taken time and effort. We learnt that we could not simply make one model and scale out, replicating it at various places. We used the SH pedagogy everywhere, but we had to adapt, improve and contextualise it for the CWSN children at DOSTI and CFL, for the girls from low income families at Prerna, and for rural children at VKHS. All this took time, each one becoming an action-research project of its own kind.

3. Patience with results:

We are also not expecting quick results which can lend themselves to easy measurement. We have taken the de-ontological approach and care more about the process than the product. We have cared about evaluating our process continuously and closely rather than evaluating results and outcomes, i.e., – we care more about doing what it takes, seeing how it works and moving on to the next challenge. As such we have not undertaken any RCT kinds of measurement in our work.   Given our life outcomes approach which embraces a complex holistic perspective of education, we are not convinced that a complex undertaking like education, with so many variables, lends itself to a measurement technique like RCT.

At Prerna for eg. we took several years working at developing our pedagogy and though we meet the standard criteria of retention, completion, achievement and transition we still have no quantitative measure of our critical feminist pedagogy as a cause of our students' empowerment, except for their life outcomes. We think of that as a long term assessment of our pedagogy.

4. Complexity of our approach is a challenge

Our approach to education is complex for horizontal scaling. Even after 3 decades, parents question our interactive, activity based, child-responsive pedagogy and wonder whether and what their children are learning. Parents generally believe that education should be firmly and exclusively pointed towards preparing children for livelihoods, with very little value placed on non-academic activities. This is true even for our middle class urban parents. In our rural school and our community based learning centers, it takes continous effort to convince parents of the value of our approach. In rural communities and low income urban communities it has taken persistent effort to raise awareness of the value of education for their daughters.

4. Hard to convince institutions/structures/governments/groups of people

This has been an even greater challenge for scaling Prerna's critical feminist pedagogy out to other geographical locations. The main challenge we face is exactly the problem we are trying to solve. i.e., the deep rooted patriarchal mindsets in a strongly traditional patriarchal social structure. Government officials are equally steeped in this and despite all the rhetoric of women's equality and empowerment, the "Betipadhao, Betibachao" programs launched by the Government, there is very little understanding of, or the desire and intention to address patriarchy as the root cause of the problem. There is an underlying belief that girls education and gender equality can be achieved without any major tampering with patriarchal norms. Hence the focus is only on enrolment and completion and when quality is addressed – it refers only to academic quality. Intrinsically, girls are still being valued primarily for their reproductive, sexual and domestic labour. So we are up against a mountain of discrimination which has been built and maintained through centuries and is well supported by time honoured traditions, religion, political and social structures. Going against this is not an easy task and will take time. We are aware of this and are willing to continue working at it, without any easy measureable gain in the short term. We are in it for the long haul and are working in all directions – on the ground, with individual schools like Prerna, with larger numbers of public schools like the KGBVs, with communities through the teachers, mobilizing public opinion through campaigns like the IDC, trying to influence policy by participating in state level and national level policy level meetings and forums, participating in every possible forum at the district, state, national and international level, to spread the word.

The Government and administration continues to take a very narrow and decontextualised, isolated vision of education, the role of teachers and schools. This results in a lack of willingness to support operations that do not directly connect to the academic curriculum. Girls education is still perceived in terms of gender parity – enrolment and completion of school education. Learning outcomes are still seen in isolation of life outcomes.It is a challenge to persuade Government to accept our approach as a legitimate educational and pedagogical approach, and not merely as an optional add-on. As such we are facing challenges in convincing them of the value of scaling these methods and this particular kind of pedagogy to other schools and institutions

The complexity of our offering is definitely a challenge as far as scaling up to numbers is concerned. But I think Education if it is to be truly transformative must be holistic and have a strong social and political focus, which is very complex. We don't believe in simplifying things so that they can be scaled, rather we believe in finding creative ways of scaling complex things.

For eg: we can scale parts of a complex thing, like we have done with Aarohini. However even that – is not simple, its outcomes not easily measureable and also takes time. It's not as simple as turning our program into a kit and handing it over to someone. We have to be closely involved to make sure we also transfer the spirit and philosophy underlying the pedagogy.

5. Inhospitable Ecosystem:

We have been ahead of our times and in many ways pioneers in UP, in terms of our progressive pedagogical methods at SH, DOSTI and Prerna. This is true of our use of technology in DSH as well, as such there was no hospitable ecosystem or windows of opportunity, for our programs to scale. When we began our experiments with technology, in the first project with Sugata Mitra, there was almost no internet penetration in rural UP and limited penetration in urban cities as well. Public infrastructure, in terms of power was also a challenge. Technology as a solution for the problems of public education was still in a nascent stage, and there was less acceptance of technology by teachers.

6. Location

Being in UP, has posed its own challenges!! UP has a large rural population, an economy that is largely agrarian, a strong feudal culture, and ranks low on the scale of economic and human development. As such it is harder to do things here than in most places, given the bureaucratic and corrupt work culture. Government apathy has been a major challenge. Education or girls empowerment has not been a high priority for the UP Government which is not easy to work with and a major hurdle in scaling our work in the public school system.

There is also a great paucity of talent as most people move to larger cities in other states, for better career prospects. As such building our team has been a challenge.

Secondly, if we had been in Delhi or Mumbai or Bangalore, we would have enjoyed much more visibility and support. There is much more money in these cities, larger number of corporations, industries and donors. We are left out of a circle of influence, because of our inability to participate in several high level national meetings – which happen in Delhi and Mumbai.

7. Funds/Resources

Another major challenge, even for horizontal scaling of the organization has been our effort to be self-sufficient and sustainable. It took us over a decade to make SH self-sufficient and consumed all our energies and resources. Except for DSH, we seeded all our new ideas with the surplus money from SH, which was funded from our own resources. We only began seeking outside help once we were sure of our offering. Being frugal has been an enabler and a restraining factor. We have worked hard with limited resources and haven't been able to get more resources because of this. We have had no money to hire a full-time fund raiser, liason officer, set up an office in Delhi and so have not been able to raise more money or drum up more visibility and support.

Furthermore as a result of the factors outlined above i.e., the complexity of our offering, a lack of a hospitable eco system, locational disadvantage, funding has been a challenge. We have also not been very aggressive about looking for large scale funding. Many organisations begin applying for awards and funding very early in their work. We have been too nervous about asking for funding for something unless we have worked through our program fully. We worked at our critical pedagogy at Prerna for 6 years before we began scaling. The organization has not been broad based enough as I have been the major thought leader, fund raiser and researcher for several years. This has resulted in limited capacity and not enough diversity of approach. SHEF does not have strong institutional or corporate backing. We are a fairly small organisation without powerful connections. We are working at building a broader base now.

Scaling a Caring Organisation

As described in the first section, SHEFis based on an ethic of care which is the bedrock of its educational philosophy, its pedagogy, and its programs and operations. Making care an organizational habit, a part of its DNA has taken several years and is an ongoing effort. We are nervous about scaling our offerings without scaling the underlying ethic of care and this poses its own inhibiting challenges.

This has been stated well by Andre and Pache "As they focus their attention on mobilizing the resources required to go to scale, Social Entreprenuers run the risk of caring about resource providers (customers, donors, partners, etc) more than about beneficiaries. A likely shift from care for beneficiaries to care for resource providers might corrupt and subvert the raison d'etre of SE's and their social ventures... also resource dependence may lead social entrepreneurs to prioritize the funders' demands for systemic change rather than individual level change, thereby losing contact with their beneficiaries."

This has been one of our concerns and the reason for our cautious approach to scale. While we believe systemic change is important and is the eventual goal, we know it is slow and takes time. Individual change must happen first and pave the way for systemic change.

We have also been careful about choosing our funding and program partners, to ensure that their vision is aligned with ours.

Andre and Pache also point out that scaling requires the setting up of standardized processes and systems to optimize efficient delivery at scale and this might "strain the caring process which care ethics places at the heart of the care giving enterprise. A standardized process designed to satisfy a majority of needs, is likely to be incompatible with an approach promoting personal and embodied attention given to each situation." This has been a major consideration for us. We have resisted simplifying and reducing the complexity of our services in order to satisfy the demands of standardization and measurement and this poses a problem as we try to scale.

Scaling out to large numbers often subverts the attention from social impact to outcomes. This has been an ongoing challenge. In our work with Prerna, for eg: How do we measure our students empowerment? And how do we establish a causal relationship with our critical dialogues, drama etc. We know it happens and work at it in a de-ontological way, with the faith

that good things lead to good outcomes eventually, but funding agencies and governments demand specific, measured impact. We can provide anecdotal evidence, also long term evidence in terms of life outcomes, which is difficult to do at scale, as we can't really trace large numbers of girls and boys longitudinally to provide this evidence. So this is a great and ongoing struggle – especially because we are trying to scale deep. And how do you measure caringness?

Another point that Andre and Pache make resonates with us. "Since they are not considered "impact", these caring dispositions are not assessed. They may end up being neglected due to their "inconspicuous" nature despite the fact that they are necessary conditions for the emergence of social impact." This is so true. We struggle with this at SH too – our USP is that we are a caring organisation, and it is because of that that we are good. But when learning outcomes are the only focus, the underlying caring culture which is the reason for the success of our programs is often underestimated. At Prerna – if not for the caring culture in our school, our critical pedagogy would only take us so far. This is also true of our work with Prerna boys, with CFL, DOSTI, GyanSetu and now the College. The personal embodied caring, connectedness and the relationships of empathy, respect and trust that the teachers build with the students are a large part of our success. It is what sets us apart from other organisations and what students value – parents a little less, though the discerning ones do. So how do you measure that? In my view in any organisation or institution that deals with people, the caring culture of the organisation should form a critical part of its' quality and impact appraisal and this is often not the case. We have been wary of going to scale and shifting our focus to numbers, outcomes and measurements from our contextual focus on students' lives and life outcomes. We are struggling to find a way of scaling without losing the ethical integrity of our organization.

However, it is important to point out how we are dealing with the challenge: In scaling up our empowerment program from Prerna to the KGBVs through Aarohini, we have actually scaled up our method of helping teachers become more caring persons by helping them expand their roles to include caring. So we have actually scaled 'care'. Even within SHEF, it is because caring is such a key ethical core value for SHEF, that it has diverisfied its operations and impacted many people, and it has done this by scaling its 'caring'. Caring is part of the disposition of our organisation. Care is an important part of SHEF's work and key to its success. Prerna cannot succeed in its goal if it is not a caring institution; nor can any of its other programs. We began because we cared about women and children, and we grew because we cared and taught others to care. So care has been an important driver of the scale and also an important part of what we have scaled.

According to Andre and Pache, "the development of organizational care within social enterprises will allow these enterprises to cope with resource mobilization, process optimization, and social impact assessment, without neglecting their core caring goals and caring processes."

We have been cultivating this capacity for care in all the members of our organization and in the leadership team, consciously and deliberately right for our inception. Most of our leaders have risen from the ranks, are trained on an ongoing basis and have imbibed the caring spirit. They care passionately about SHEF and its mission. They know that the ethic of care that pervades SHEF is a KEY component of who we are and the driver of our success. This will ensure SHEF's sustainability and avoid mission drift, in the process of scale.

Enablers to Scale

Personal Resources of Founder: Since we began the school in my house with personal money, our start up initial investment was very low, giving us the freedom to experiment without the pressure of fund raising and demands of funders. It gave us staying power. Funds from family and friendly supporters gave us stability. Creative fund-raising policies helped us put up the building, along with the subsidized land we got from the Government.

Optimisation of Resources: We optimised our resources, such that the building and surplus funds from SH enabled us to set up Prerna, DOSTI and Vidyasthali, again without seeking donor funding.

Commitment to Care: We responded to needs that we identified in diverse groups of children and optimised our resources – economic, intellectual and human to reach out to them, by developing specialised pedagogies for them.

Important Connections: My connection with Berkeley has helped us get global visibility – i.e., Randy Wang – which led to DSH. He brought the initial money and then we got funding from MSR and later from Mona. Without that we could not have achieved the scale we have for sharing our pedagogical practices, digitally.

Institutional Support and Expanded Visibility: Being awarded the Echidna Scholarship at Brookings was a major breakthrough. It enabled me to think of my work in global contexts and expanded my imagination and idea of scale. Further it enabled me to take SHEF's ideas and voice to many global audiences by providing opportunities to participate in several global forums. Perhaps the biggest single enabling support provided by Brookings was the impetus and intellectual support to document our work at Prerna in the form of a book, which has received a lot of attention. We are in the process of scaling the Prerna model to a few other locations. All this expanded SHEF's visibility exponentially and helped us gain more funding support. I would count it as one of the major tipping points in SHEF's growth.

Being Noticed by Key People: It is because people noticed our work that we began scaling out – Deepa Das, the gender officer from UNICEF saw our critical dialogues and suggested that we turn it into a curriculum and kit and asked us to scale it to 38 schools in 3 districts. This successful pilot enabled us to scale to another 5 districts and then we did the rest independently. But the initial support came from UNICEF. Furthermore – she was transferred to the Delhi office and invited me to several national level workshops where I had the opportunity to present Prerna's critical feminist pedagogy.

Personal Engagements of the Founder: My work with SHEF, with the UNICEF teacher training project put me in touch with Government officials like Vrinda, who moved to high places in Delhi and invited me to national level workshops – like the National Evaluation of KGBVs, so SHEF was able to contribute at a policy level.

Similarly my work with SHEF and mutual friends who told her about our work, led the CM of Rajasthan to invite me to be a member of her advisory group. I was able to work at an extraordinary scale because of this., scaling learnings from SHEF across the state's public

education system, to effect millions of children. Even though my involvement was personal, I was able to scale all our learnings from SHEF in Rajasthan.

It has also revalidated my belief that real scale can only be affected by working with government and we have been inspired to try and influence the UP Government to engage in similar school reform.

The domino effect continued as my work with Rajasthan gave me national visibility. This has helped me open doors for SHEF. Eg: Anil Saroop – secretary of Education GOI, heard about me in Rajasthan and invited me to present our work with technology in education. We did this and now all our videos are on the Government's National Teacher Platform.

I engaged closely with the Boston Consulting Group, who is working with the government of Rajasthan, and they have invited us to help them with their work in 3 other states.

Supportive Funding Partners:

DSH has been supported for the last several years by MONA Foundation, who have funded our research and development activities, along with the operational costs of our programs. We were very fortunate to find a long term donor who understood the complexity and long term nature of our work and has supported us patiently without demanding instant results, expensive RCT measurements. They have behaved like partners in our enterprise and their support has been invaluable.

Similarly, Echidna Giving has been very supportive. They are not long term partners in the same way as Mona has been, but ever since my residency at Brookings, they have been extremely supportive in taking our voice to a larger audience and supporting our particular message.

Finding the donor partner for VKHS was a turning point in the development of our rural venture. Again, this donor acts like a partner, is in it for the long haul and trusts our honesty and integrity. So we are able to function without constant policing from our donors in both cases. The donors are happy to support our ventures, without demanding that we do things their way. They recognise us as experts in the area.

Growing Windows of Opportunity: The eco-system has evolved and technology solutions for solving problems of public education are becoming an increasing focus of national attention right now. Internet penetration has grown and public infrastructure has improved. This has enabled us to scale SHEF's techonology offerings

Girls education is also a receiving growing attention globally and nationally, as such it provides us a window of opportunity to scale our work with Prerna.

Recognition: The Asoka Fellowship and the more recent Schwab Social Entrpreneurship of the Year, award have been game changers. The national level attention we have received is helping me take SHEF's approach to education, to girls education and gender equality all over the country and will hopefully lead to greater support – financial and institutional. Increasingly people are displaying an interest in our critical feminist pedagogy.

Organisational Leadership Team: I have worked hard, tirelessly and persistently at developing a team of very strong, committed and caring leaders who take ownership over SHEF's mission and who are now working hard at scaling our work. This also ensures that our ethic of care is kept intact as we scale. We have a greater pool of expertise now, all grounded experts who have learnt because of their experience on the ground.

At a Tipping Point

SHEF is at a tipping point right now:

- There is a large team of strong leaders in place
- We have gained a wealth of knowledge on the ground about what works and have developed processes and systems that we know work
- We have begun documenting our knowledge
- We have gained experience in working at some scale in all directions – up, out, across and deep
- We also have achieved a fair amount of national and international visibility – thanks to Brookings, SEOY award etc, so that we are in a position to grow strategically and attract funding and other partners to do so.
- We have achieved a certain amount of credibility and influence, so that people are beginning to listen.

This positions us well to go for maximum impact. SHEF has worked patiently and carefully for over 3 decades now. We have been cautious not to spread ourselves too thin, to maintain our core beliefs and ethic of care and to keep the quality of the impact front and centre while scaling. We have *scaled out* to thousands of schools, teachers, students and teacher educators; scaled up through our ongoing work with state and national governments and our global engagements; *scaled across*, by having models that can inspire others in different contexts to adapt them for their own use, but most importantly we have *scaled deep* through our persistent effort to change hearts and minds, cultural values and beliefs through our programs, through our writing, our campaigns, our community mobilization; and *scaled up* our efforts at policy change, our attempts to influence key actors.

We have shared our ideas with other organizations and we have achieved diversification of our offerings.

As the founder of the organization, I believe that SHEF's main contribution lies in scaling across and scaling deep. SHEF has demonstrated its ability to patiently dig deep, looking for the root causes of social problems and finding solutions for those in collaboration with those impacted by the issues, to engage in action research in collaboration with the beneficiaries, to develop cost effective, flexible, easily adaptable, grounded solutions which keep teachers at the fore – build their capacity and provide enablers; to continuously innovate and to offer all its knowledge on open platforms, to the Government and to other organizations. While SHEF has scaled out and up as well, and continues to look for windows of opportunity to do so, I believe that its character and disposition is more aligned with scaling deep.

Learnings for Others

SHEF has learnt the following lessons in its journey so far, which it can offer to others:

1. SHEF is a caring organisation. It is important to build a caring organisation. An Ethic of Care should be the bedrock of any socially driven organisation, actually of any organisation. It should form part of the deep structure of values and organising principles and apply equally to all the team members, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. This ethic of care should be guarded zealously especially while going to scale.

2. SHEF has worked hard at developing a consultative, dialogic, collaborative, democratic and invitational, supportive mentorship leadership style, which is based on trust, the necessity and the freedom to learn, experiment and fail and founded on an ethic of care. This is what will sustain the organisation, keep the mission intact beyond its association with the founder. It is key to the success and growth of any organisation. It WORKS!!

3. SHEF has invested in the ongoing professional development of its team members, sharing its mission continuously and endeavouring to bring everyone into a mission mode as opposed to a 'job' mode. This is key to the growth of any organisation.

4. SHEF is a learning organisation, which is why it is continuously innovative. All organisations working to solve problems of education must be learning organisations before they become teaching organisations.

5. SHEF is a self-reflexive organisation. We contiuously evaluate our methods, processes and programs, collecting data that we need and use it to improve our programs. Our evaluations are more internally driven and aligned with what we are evaluating.

6. SHEF is a responsive organisation – we respond to needs that we see on the ground, by looking for possible solutions and find those by working with the folks whose problems they are. We have adopted an emergent approach, not a blue print approach and found it to work. This ensures that the solutions are realistic, contextual and grounded in social, economic and cultural realities

7. SHEF is a frugal organisation. We have learnt to optimise our resources. We have also learnt that throwing money at a problem is not the only or the best way of solving problems. It is important to find frugal solutions and to keep operations cost effective and as resource un-intensive as possible in the interests of sustainability. In poor countries and regions, very resource intensive solutions are likely to fail at scale and have almost no likelihood of adoption by Governments.

8. SHEF is a patient organisation. It has demonstrated patience with scale. We have learnt that social transformation takes time. While the problems are large and the numbers are enormous, we have realised that we are dealing with complex problems that have been created by multiple factors over centuries. Solving them is not going to be quick or simple. So it is important to focus on the problem, to struggle and grapple with it in all its complexity for as long as it takes, and to resist the temptation of being reductionist in order to scale. Simple things are easy to scale – they might also be fairly trivial. The goal should be to deal with complexity and try and find ways and opportunities to scale without losing essential complexity.

9. SHEF has adopted a holistic approach, because we have adopted a life outcome approach and understand that it is important to look at the lives of people and their problems whole in all their complexity – hence the diversification within SHEF, but all our programs are emergent from each other and support each other. We have also understood that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and it is possible to scale parts without scaling the whole.

10. SHEF has always kept impact front and centre, without being seduced by numbers

    SHEF has refrained from rushing in for easy, quantitative measurements, like third party RCT type evaluations simply because it attracts funding.

11. SHEF does not let funders drive its agenda or programs. It has taken the time to find funding partners whose goal and culture is aligned with the organisation, who are supportive and partners in the mission, without policing from above, demanding quick results and keeping the funding conditional to that.

12. SHEF is a stakeholder responsive organisation: SHEF has worked at building relationships across the board – ranging from the beneficiaries on the ground, to the people who do the organisational work, to funders and donors, to Governments and other NGOs i.e., Building a strong network of enabling supportive relationships, within the organisation and across the board with all the stakeholders, is very important for the growth and success of an organisation.

Where do the leaders want to see SHEF in 10 years?

- Scale our holistic, life-outcome, contextualised, child responsive, social and political critical pedagogical approach across to educators, teacher educators and up to policy makers and education departments, in India and globally.
- Scale our Prerna girls and boys school model across and out – in terms of idea adoption and replication of our model both.
- Develop a shareable model of higher education through our work with the Study Hall College
- Develop a model teacher training program through our College

- Scale across, up, out and deep our critical feminist approach for educating boys.

- Keep on innovating with the use of technology and other media to develop ways of increasing our outreach.

In sum: One of our interns from the US, Zarine Garcia, who has returned to join us full time took all the preliminary interviews from the leaders for this report. Taking an objective outsider view of SHEF she concludes and we agree:

"SHEF's growth has been successful as a result of its commitment to its philosophy and vision, and simultaneous adaptability to each of the demographics it reaches out to. It is firm in its belief and at the same time flexible to the needs of those it serves. Also, the main concern is not just increasing numbers, but achieving deep impacts and making a difference in the areas it works in.. Because it has a real impact in the lives and mindsets of those it serves, the change is lasting, which creates a stronger base for each new endeavour. It has slowly evolved over time in a very organic way, reaching out to meet needs and fill gaps as they have arisen. Staff are committed and motivated, open to learning and adapting. It acts as a small representation of the larger world and in this way is able to observe and address many societal and educational issues, allowing SHEF to then advise on a larger scale. In this way it serves best as a model which can then be adopted and adapted for implementation by other organizations. As such the best method of scaling and increasing impact is not necessarily by increasing numbers and impact within its own domain, but by encouraging and enabling those outside of SHEF's walls to adapt its philosophy and methodology."

The SHEF Leadership Team.