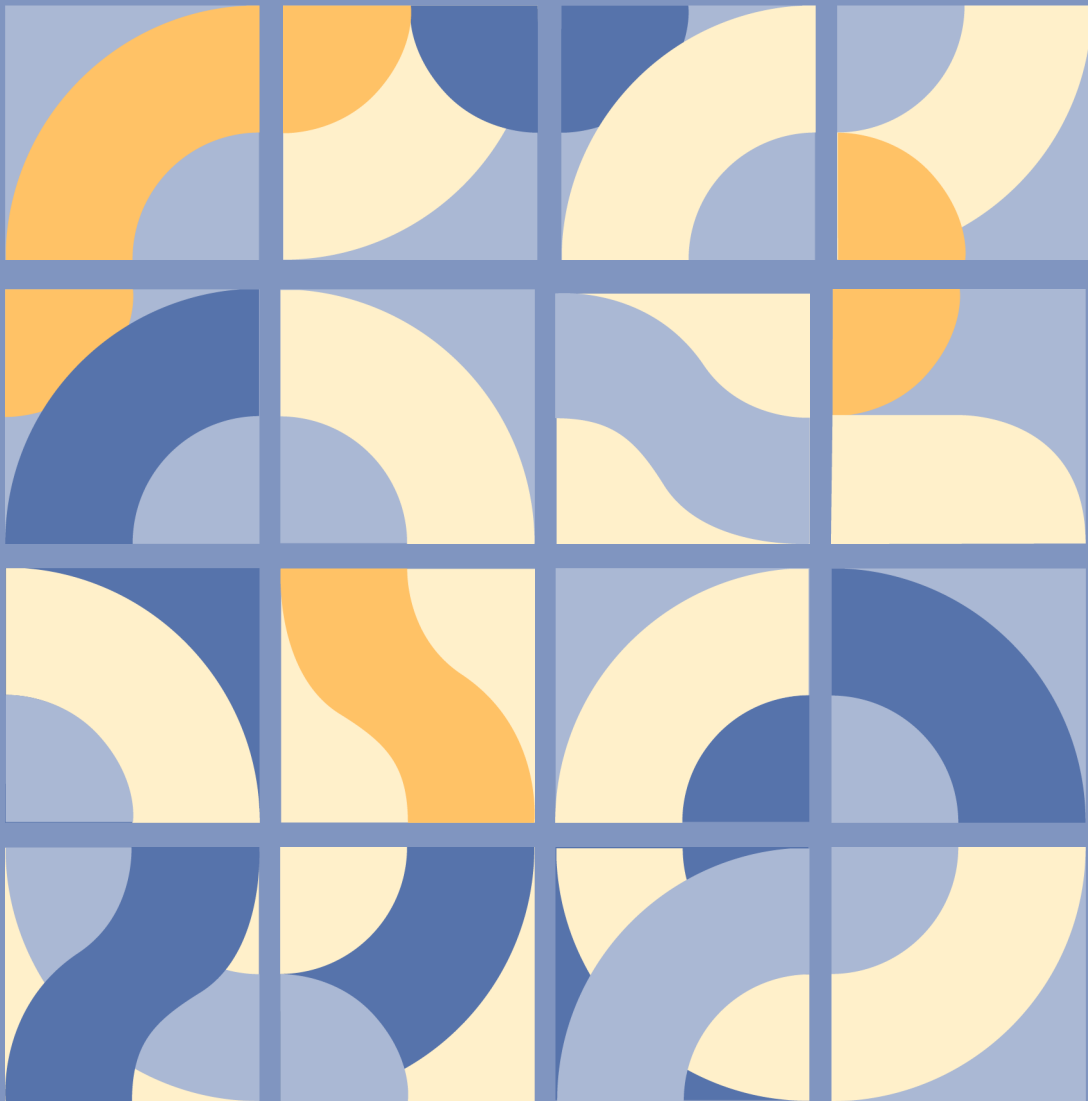


August-September 2023

Impact Assessment of Urban School Enhancement Project Bengaluru, Karnataka



Submitted to:

Wipro Foundation, Bengaluru



Table of Contents

1. Background	3
1.1. Purpose	3
1.2. Methodology	4
2. Overview	5
2.1. Stakeholders	5
2.2. Financial investment	7
3. The schools	9
3.1. Karnataka Public School, VV Puram	9
3.2. Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar	11
4. Observations	15
4.1. Perception	17
4.2. Design	19
4.3. Model creation	20
4.4. Enablers	21
5. Recommendations	24
Annexure	28

Acknowledgement

Nous Consultants would like to thank the teams at Wipro Foundation and Azim Premji Foundation, for facilitating the smooth conduct of this assessment. The field visit and meetings with various stakeholders were well organised and effective. The teams also shared relevant reports before, during and after the visit, which facilitated the completion of this assessment in a timely manner.

Our sincere gratitude to the government representatives, architects, school staff and children, community members, partner organisations, and all those who took time out of their schedule to share insights from their experience, which have been significant for this review.

We would like to especially thank Wipro Foundation for this opportunity to engage with, and review, an inspiring endeavour.



Karnataka Public School, VV Puram



Govt. Higher Primary School, MR Nagar

1. Background

Wipro Foundation represents the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Wipro Limited. Its work is organised in the four verticals of Education, Ecology, Healthcare and Disaster Response. Over the years, the Foundation has collaborated with more than 400 partners. At present, it is working with nearly 170 partners who have an established track record in the four verticals.

This assessment has been undertaken by **Nous Consultants**, a fraternity of developmental experts with leadership experience spanning civil society, academia, corporate sector, and the government. The Nous team have experience in Impact Assessment, Strategic Review and Planning, Programme Design and Execution Support, Organisation Development and Governance. The work spans several sectors including livelihoods, environment, health, education, governance, etc. The approach is consultative, collaborative and interdisciplinary.

The assessment was carried out in August-September 2023 and pertains to the project period of 1-May-2019 to 1-May-2022.

1.1. Purpose

Since 2018, Wipro Foundation has been working in two schools in Bengaluru Urban South District – *Karnataka Public School, VV Puram* and *Government Higher Primary School, MR Nagar* – with the objective **to improve the overall school environment, including infrastructure, learning resources and other support to enable the school to create a safe environment and improve the students' learning.**

The support from Wipro Foundation has been towards school infrastructure, school furniture, provisioning of learning resources and employee engagement based on school requirements. Wipro Foundation collaborated in these schools with and, on the initiative of, Azim Premji Foundation¹ (APF), which has focused on academic support, from prior to this project. APF's engagement with the schools has been through onsite support to teachers on activity-based pedagogy; curriculum and teaching learning material development and use; improving school processes such as assembly, academic meetings, school-community network; and, advocacy with the community and government stakeholders.

Wipro Foundation and APF together have sought to improve the hardware and software in the two selected government schools, with the **desired outcomes of increased enrolment, quality and equitable education, and improved public perception.** In the process they hope to **establish a model which may be relevant to the government and interested corporate donors/ philanthropists.**

The assessment team has made an effort to review the intervention from a holistic perspective, considering the various factors affecting the schools' ecosystem. This has been done through an examination of: tangible changes in school environment; enrolment and academic performance; and a capture of stakeholder perceptions.

¹ Azim Premji Foundation comprises 3 teams: Field, Universities and Philanthropy. In this report, it has been used to indicate the Field team which is dedicated to strengthening the public school education system in India. 'The Foundation' and 'APF' also refer to the Field team in this report.

1.2. Methodology

The assessments have been carried out in broadly three interconnected phases:

Phase 1: Desk Review and Design

A comprehensive desk review of documents made available by Wipro Foundation and Azim Premji Foundation. They included:

- MoUs and commitments made at the time of project launch
- Baseline data and output/outcome reports
- Review of MIS and achievement data

The tools and frameworks for quantitative and qualitative analysis were developed in this phase

Phase 2: Field Assessment

The assessment team visited the two schools for meetings with the APF team, school representatives (including students and parents) and other stakeholders of the projects.

The field assessment covered the following areas of enquiry:

- Nature, quality and suitability of inputs provided at the schools
- Current status of the infrastructure
- Perception of stakeholders was gathered through:
 - Meeting with project team and leadership at Wipro Foundation
 - Meeting with project team at Azim Premji Foundation
 - Focus Group Discussion with school heads and teachers
 - Focus Group Discussions with students
 - Focus Group Discussions with parents and community members
 - Meeting with architects
 - Meeting with relevant government officials to assess the advocacy efforts

Further details of respondents have been shared in the Annexure.

Phase 3: Analysis and report writing

The quantitative data and qualitative insights gathered during field assessment were analysed, a draft and final report (*this one*) shared with Wipro Foundation.

2. Overview

2.1. Stakeholders

Azim Premji Foundation (APF) has been working to strengthen the public school education system, with a focus on disadvantaged regions of the country, through the Field team, since 2001. Over the years, the Foundation has set up district-level institutes that worked to improve the capacity of teachers, school leaders, teacher educators and administrators in public education. In two decades, the Foundation's work through the Field has expanded to 55 districts across seven states and one union territory, covering 270 locations that include Teacher Learning Centres. The aim is to enable 'teachers to teach better so that students can learn better.'²

While most of APF's work is focused in rural areas, the interest to work with urban schools in Bengaluru started in 2015. It was driven by the need to demonstrate models and approaches which improve the public education system in cities. Unlike rural areas, where a majority of primary schools are run by the government, in Bengaluru, only 25 per cent of the schools are "public" schools. Only 10 per cent of children in cities are in public schools, while the corresponding percentage in rural areas is 70. The quality and cost of private schools deprives many children from accessing education.

Once it identified and started working with government schools catering to disadvantaged communities within urban Bangalore, there was the **realisation that long term changes would be contingent upon improvement in the education environment and infrastructure**. Interventions in improving school capacities would need to be complementary to improving the quality of school infrastructure, to cater to the aspirations as well as build confidence among the parent and student community accessing the schools.

A study conducted by APF in urban and peri-urban areas, indicated the main reasons for parents' preference of private schools, and the shift away from the government system as follows:

- Absence of English medium
- Inadequate infrastructure affecting safety and security, and
- Status symbol of sending their children to private schools.

By mandate, APF does not invest in infrastructure improvement of schools. It approached several corporate organisations with a proposal for partnership, none of which materialised. It reached out to **Wipro Foundation** with a rationale and proposal to partner:

- Government schools are where children from the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder attend. In line with the belief about the power of education as an enabler of a more equitable and just society, it is critical to support the vision of government schools as model learning spaces.
- Statistics paint a dismal picture particularly on the rates of enrolment in government schools in Bangalore. These schools have been witnessing a decline in the enrolment rates, with a 30 per cent drop in enrolments in the period 2007-2016,

² <https://azimpremjifoundation.org/field>

vis-à-vis spurt in the numbers among private schools with an increase by 57 per cent, in the same period.

- With the right support – improved infrastructure, resources and appropriate teaching-learning processes, government schools can become institutions which impart quality education and would enable build a positive narrative around the public education system.³

Based on this rationale, APF put forth its proposal in 2018, for creating **a network of strong government schools in Bengaluru which can contribute to the groundswell demand for the public education system** (like the Kendriya Vidyalayas). Given this, the schools identified can become model schools to demonstrate and advocate good quality education among government schools.

The intent of the proposal was that APF would provide support to teacher capacity development, and Wipro Foundation would support infrastructure development and learning resources. After much internal deliberation, the Urban Schools project was launched as a 'special project' of Wipro Foundation.

Central to the partnership was also Wipro Ltd.'s **Infrastructure Creation Group** (ICG), which took responsibility for bringing architects on board and for implementing the infrastructure development activities. **Ostraca** and **Venkataramanan Associates**, two firms that had worked with the Company came on board and offered their design inputs pro bono.

Based on a survey and assessment done by APF of the extent of interest among schools, two were selected for the first phase of the Urban Schools Project in Bengaluru - **New Vani Vilas Government Pre University College, VV Puram** and **Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar**. The criteria used for identifying the schools were:

- The interest and engagement of the head teacher
- The level of participation of teachers in APF organised workshops
- An overall sense of openness to explore new areas and receptiveness to learning
- Level of community engagement

In 2019, the New Vani Vilas Government Pre University College, VV Puram was named as a Karnataka Public School (KPS). Hereafter, the school is referred to as **KPS, VV Puram** in this report. Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar is referred to as **MR Nagar School** in this report.

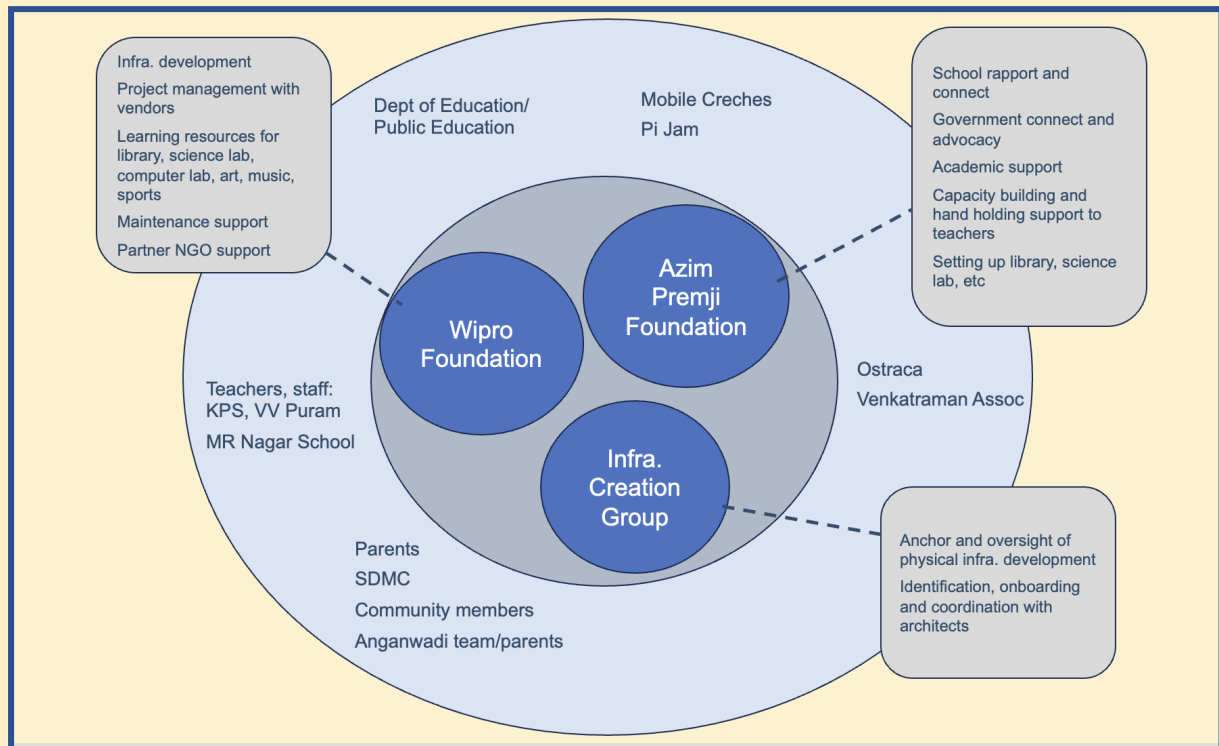
Key to the initiative was the participation of senior **government officers/bureaucrats** who believed in the need and potential of strengthening the public education system in the city. They were familiar with APF's work and were invested in the idea of the Urban Schools Project. The key stakeholders were: Principal Secretary of the Department of Education, Deputy Director of Public Education, and the Block Education Officer. Among them, MT Reju (then, State Project Director of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and Raghuchandra (then, Deputy Project Coordinator of Bangalore South) were respondents for this review.

³ Internal note, Wipro Foundation

The Project also engaged civil society organisations for ensuring community mobilisation, outreach and connection. **Mobile Creches** was appointed to run a daycare centre in MR Nagar School and **Pi Jam Foundation** to run computer classes.

Stakeholder map

The image below, depicts the interplay of the various stakeholders who came together to design, develop and deliver the Urban Schools Project.



Intent

The **multi-stakeholder initiative** was launched with the intent to:

- Develop confidence among the community that government schools are as good as private schools, if not better;
- Demonstrate innovative design of schools to serve as models; and
- Demonstrate to CSR teams, a holistic approach of improving the school education system through sustained and simultaneous interventions in the hardware and software.

2.2. Financial investment

At the design stage in 2018, the cost for infrastructure development was estimated to be INR 1.5 crores for the school in VV Puram and INR 70 lakhs for the one in Mutharayanagar (MR Nagar). They were both brownfield projects where the existing infrastructure was expected to be redesigned, repaired, renovated and rebuilt, while the schools were in operation. The unexpected lockdown owing to COVID made the premises available without anybody on them.

By the time of completion of the intervention in March 2022, the cost had gone up to INR 5 crores in VV Puram and INR 3 crores in Mutharayanagar. The costs borne by Wipro Foundation, included infrastructure development; setting up libraries; science and computer labs; art, music and sports facilities. They do not include the cost of staff provided by APF or ICG. The architect firms provided their services pro bono.

	Wipro Foundation				APF	ICG
	2018 Estimate	2022 Actual	Teaching Learning Material (part of overall cost)	Ongoing cost (Housekeeping staff + Material + Repairs)	Learning resource support	
VV Puram	₹1.5 crore	₹5 crore	₹30 lakhs (₹17 lakh on furniture, computers, laboratory equipment)	₹6 lakhs per year	3 to 4 persons	Engaging architects and overseeing implementation
MR Nagar	₹70 lakhs	₹3 crore	₹20 lakhs (₹11 lakhs on furniture, computers, laboratory equipment)	₹4 lakhs per year	2 to 3 persons	

The unexpected/ underestimated costs which led to escalation were:

- Age of the buildings, needing reinforcements and in some cases reconstruction. In KPS, VV Puram ₹1.3 crores were spent on strengthening the structure, alone.
- Old plumbing and electrical lines needed replacement.
- Complete overhaul needed owing to the condition of the toilets, drains and sanitation facilities, for which about ₹1 crore was spent.
- Soft-scaping and landscaping to optimally utilise the outdoor spaces available.
- Delays due to COVID-19 lockdown.

3. The schools

3.1. Karnataka Public School, VV Puram

Overview

New Vani Vilas Government Pre University College, VV Puram is said to be built during the rule of the Maharaja of Mysore. It was brought under the Karnataka Public School (KPS) system in 2019 with the aim of providing integrated, quality education under one roof. The school is referred to as KPS, VV Puram in this report.

The school has classes from Std 1 to 12 with the option of English medium classes. Each floor of the School houses one section - pre-primary and primary; middle and high school; and, pre-University.

The school is located in a populous area of Bengaluru, close to the landmark Lalbagh Garden, and attracts students from some of the most marginalised, informal settlements, of the city. They are largely migrant families of Tamil origin, earning their livelihood from daily wage work. Until the school transitioned into the KPS system, the medium of instruction was Kannada alone.

Over the years, the School's infrastructure had worn out owing to poor maintenance, to the point that teachers were concerned about safety from falling ceiling plaster. The toilet facilities for students and teachers were in poor condition; they were, in fact, not being used much, raising concern about sanitation practices, especially of girls and women on the premises. The campus needed overall repairs, renovation, a fresh coat of paint, all of which would help rejuvenate the infrastructure and, in turn, the "spirit" of the school.

In 2018, APF began discussions with KPS, VV Puram about possible partnership for academic improvement. Over the next year, a team member started visiting the school and worked with the pre-primary section on: implementation of early childhood education curriculum, enhancing enrolment through community interaction, hand holding teachers for improved pedagogy. Teaching-learning material developed by APF was supplied to the school. This coincided with the School's transition into the KPS model.

Infrastructure enhancement

In early 2020, Venkatraman Associates was brought on board as the architect partner to develop a design for infrastructure enhancement of KPS, VV Puram. No template or model reference was provided, since there was none. The architects realised the potential for the School to become a landmark in the city, particularly due to its location in the old city and at a prominent junction. They realised the challenges of working on a 50-year old structure, while three schools (effectively) were in operation. No structural drawings were available and the advice was to not make any structural changes.



The central courtyard is a core element of the school

The architects' aim was to create 80,000 square feet of usable space from half of that in built up area, with functionality that responds to the needs of the school. The core focus was on bringing attention to the open spaces and leveraging adjacencies – the courtyard at the centre and the areas in the perimeter – to make them functioning spaces in the long run. The central courtyard was to be highlighted as the joy of the school, holding together a largely, nondescript building. The overall idea was to bring visual attention to the school, and with a holistic plan on how it should be developed and maintained. The project was about **creating an environment, not an infrastructure**. They created a design for separate playgrounds for each school section, proximate in a way that they could double up as spaces for extending the classrooms.

The Infrastructure Creation Group (ICG) provided the practical lens and service inputs to the architects while the APF team brought insights from how the school space is used. The teachers and principal wanted clean, functional rooms and improvements on infrastructure quality. In the absence of structural change opportunities, the design played with colours (pastel and earthy), patterns on the wall, and grooves. Kota stone was used for the floors to give durability and for ease of maintenance. Low maintenance design, primarily with regular cleaning, was key to the nature of use.

The ICG initiated infrastructure work in early 2020, while school was in progress, despite all the challenges. Soon after, the work stopped due to the COVID induced lockdown. Once construction/renovation was permitted under lockdown rules, it was restarted with workers staying on the premises. The renovation work ended in March 2022. A vendor was identified for regular housekeeping, electrical repairs and plumbing.

Some of the markers of infrastructure enhancement, other than overall improvement, were:

- The courtyard has a covered stage and steps, which serves the dual purpose of an assembly space, where outdoor classes are conducted, and where children eat lunch and also play.
- The perimeters of the school were cleared and additional spaces for play areas and car parking were developed.
- The terrace was roof clad to create potential spaces for use by the community and the school, and also to protect the building.
- The toilets were completely renovated adding grooves and patterns along with the painting.
- The libraries were given a new look with repairs and patterned wall painting.



"Bringing in" open spaces - play area outside the pre-primary classroom

Libraries: Window to a new world

All public schools have libraries, but it takes dedicated resource investment (time, interest, material, space design) to create one that children use and benefit from. As part of the Urban Schools Project, the libraries underwent physical improvements (repairs, painting, furniture); new and appropriate books (mainly in English and Kannada) were sourced after discussions with the teachers; cataloguing was done, classifying them by age-appropriateness, using colours for ease of access. Children and teachers participated in cataloguing and organising the library.



The APF team worked with students and teachers to popularise the library and the ways in which it can be used. Gradually, teachers started sending students to the library to research project topics. In KPS, VV Puram, the library is most popular among the 4th and 5th Std. students of the English section, and among the 6th and 7th Std. students of Kannada medium.

Children have started thinking of the library as a safe space, where they can explore new worlds, unsupervised - the human body, history, the animal world, and so on. Those who are unable to read well, are observed to be creating their own stories connecting pictures!

A self-managed system has been set up for recording book issues and returns. Students enter the details in a register. Older students are seen to help younger ones fill out the details. Even teachers issue books from the library. Over time, the challenge of books not being returned has been addressed, indicating a sense of ownership and shared interest in the library as a resource.

3.2. Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar

Overview

The Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar (MR Nagar School) was started in 1995. It was set up through community involvement, with three mud classrooms and two toilets. Over the years, the asbestos roofs which got very hot in summer, also started leaking during monsoons. The two toilets were in poor condition and there was no drinking water facility. Other rooms were added after some years, but there was no plan, and the blocks were disjointed and not connected. There was no library and the furniture was sparse.

MR Nagar School is Kannada medium where at present there are 153 children studying from Classes 1 to 7. There are four female and one male teacher in the school. Most teachers have been with the school for over ten years. There is cooperation and teamwork among the teachers, and a high level of commitment, an example set by the Principal.

In addition, there are 82 children in the creche for children from 0 to 6 years, which is being run in the school premises by Mobile Creches.

Nested in an urban residential area, the school caters primarily to children of migrant workers from North Karnataka, UP, Bihar, West Bengal. Parents work on construction sites, as domestic workers and in the garment factory in the area. Nearly a quarter of the children in the school are from other states.

Many families go back home during festivals or in the agriculture season, and children miss school for several months. Most children studying in the school are first generation learners. There are issues related to continuity, as children move schools based on their parents' job. At the time of our visit there was one child in Grade 7, who had never been to school before.

There are three other government schools in a radius of five kilometres, one Karnataka Public School, one aided school and one higher primary. There is also one private school.

Since both parents leave home early for their workplace, most times children walk to school on their own. The building of roads and highways has affected accessibility to the school, since it is risky for children to cross the roads. As both parents work, the older siblings are often left to care for the younger ones, with the nearest *anganwadi* being over four kilometres away.

Intervention

In 2018, the head teacher met the APF team at a meeting in Mangalore. She requested for a facilitator for the school. Following a visit to the school, the APF team started providing academic inputs.

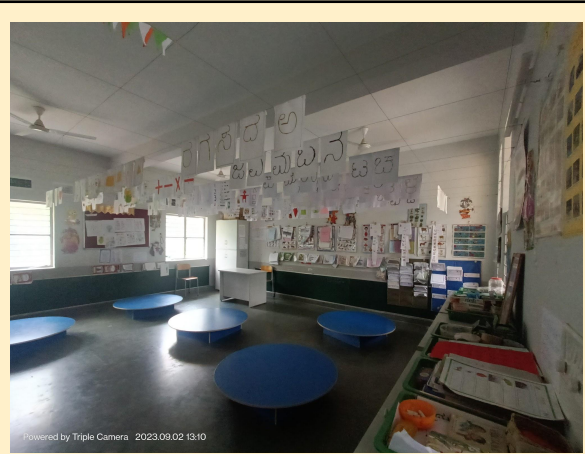
In 2019, about eight months later, a list of required infrastructure and material improvements was drawn up - additional classrooms, furniture, toilets, garden, playground, drinking water, sports material, stationery. For any significant infrastructure improvement, the existing mud structures would have to be demolished. Assessment was carried out of the land and existing structures, and designs and plans were developed based on needs. The head teacher got an electric pole shifted by writing to the Electricity Board.

Ostraca Architects was brought on board. Their main design consideration was to create a similar identity for the multiple blocks, by designing corridors and paths that connect them and tie all the independent blocks together and create a variety of spatial experiences within the school. They also aimed to introduce landscape elements to enhance visual and functional experience for users, utilising the large expanse of green, which can be designed effectively for better aesthetic and functional utilisation. The existing floor space of 312.93 square metres was to be increased to 991.96 square metres - of which 520.7 square metres was to be the creation of a new, first floor.

From 2019 to 2022, reconstruction of the school building was carried out with remodelling wherever possible. Seven classrooms were constructed, a science lab was created, a library, art and music room, kitchen and dining room were added. Three rooms serving as creche for younger children were created. Separate toilets were made for boys and girls, and drinking water facilities were provided.



The corridor connects different blocks creating a unified school presence



Primary school classroom

Some of the markers of infrastructure enhancement were::

- Corridor connecting different school blocks creating a unified school identity and presence.
- Stage with use of coloured steel pillars bringing focus and attention to the space
- Different levels of the land used to create an amphitheatre, with the banyan tree as a focal element
- Open grounds for play, basketball, open gym
- Backyard used as kitchen garden.

The infrastructure development was completed in March 2022.

Since 2022, MR Nagar School has also been functioning as a training and resource centre for Cluster Resource Persons.

Experiential learning from nature

In 2019, the resource team from APF started nature-based learning at MR Nagar School. The idea was to take children out of the classroom and trigger their curiosity. It all started with taking children for a walk and observing trees within the school boundary - identify the trees, understand their characteristics, see what their leaves are like, their flowering schedule, presence of fruits, etc. Slowly the observations extended to the biodiversity around them, including insects and butterflies.



Displays created by children as part of the nature learning

At the end of each session, children would share their observations. It was evident that children were enjoying these sessions and waited for nature based activities. Many concepts could be introduced through these sessions - how to record observations, how to collect data, what correlations can be made, etc.

There are some chapters in the textbooks which lend themselves to practical observation and learning, like learning about plants and their characteristics - the root systems, the seed systems, etc. Children learnt about symbiosis by observing the fig fruit on the banyan tree, which is host to many insects.

Mathematics concepts could also be taught through field observations, making statistical tables on distribution of trees, calculating averages, measurement of height of trees using similar triangles, etc. Language skills were also developed as children learnt to express their observations and ideas. The benefits in learning were manifold. The work done by children were displayed on posters, for other children and teachers to see.

Teachers were initially hesitant about taking children outside the classroom, because they felt discipline could not be maintained, also they were not sure how the time could be used. Soon, they started appreciating the benefits of nature based learning. The science teacher now routinely explores the possibility of nature based learning in her classes. Nature studies has now

become an important part of the school curriculum, observing trees, birds, butterflies, insects, etc., drawing and recording them, and learning about their habitat. The science laboratory is a big attraction where lessons in biology, chemistry and physics are integrated with practical sessions. Additionally, sports and nature based activities are conducted on Saturday and Sunday.



A banyan tree at the centre of the ground, has become a defining feature of the schools and a focal point for children to sit, study, play and eat under. Creating engagement space around the tree was one of the key design features proposed by the architects.

4. Observations

The Urban Schools project set out with the intended outcomes of:

- **Perception:** Developing confidence among the community that government schools are as good as private schools, if not better;
- **Design:** Demonstrating innovative design of schools to serve as models; and
- **Model creation:** Demonstrating to CSR teams, a holistic approach of improving the school education system through sustained and simultaneous interventions in the hardware and software.

While it is too early in the life cycle of the project to comment on the final achievement of these outcomes, this review has attempted to observe trends and identify an emerging pathway that could lead to such end goals. Wherever the pathway appears to be weak, in the present or potentially in the future, it has been highlighted and suggestions made for strengthening them.

Changes in school enrolment

One of the indicators of perception of the school, reflecting the confidence of the community are the enrolment levels in the school. The following tables capture the enrollment over the years in both the schools.

Karnataka Public School, V V Puram									
	Pre-Primary		Primary		High school		PUC		
Year	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Total
2018-19	0	0	49	54	47	68	52	61	331
2019-20	6	3	43	52	53	56	87	105	405
2020-21	34	33	39	43	53	51	96	104	453
2021-22	34	34	72	76	66	69	136	146	633
2022-23	46	42	115	107	61	67	131	134	703
2023-24	23	22	124	102	98	90	111	100	670

The student enrolment at KPS V V Puram saw a 40% increase in 2021-22 following the infrastructure development. Factors including recognition as Karnataka Public School in 2019, the start of English Medium from Grade 1 to 10, and the introduction of the Pre-Primary section, also contributed to increase in student enrolment. Enrolment of boys is higher in Primary, High School and PUC in 2023-24.

Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar							
	Primary (Grade 1 to 7)			Creche			Total
Year	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
2018-19	69	71	140				140
2019-20	77	65	142				142
2020-21	76	65	141				141
2021-22	85	78	163				163
2022-23	84	77	161				161
2023-24	79	74	153	35	47	82	235

There is a 16% increase in enrolment in MR Nagar School in 2021-22 after infrastructure development. The start of the creche facility has resulted in an increased number of children at the school in 2023-24. In the Primary School, the enrolment has not seen a dramatic rise, as many parents prefer sending their children to English medium schools.

The Head Teacher at KPS VV Puram shared that the **pass percentage at the high school level has increased from 24% to 75%** over the past two years. The teachers in both schools further shared that there are **improvements in attendance** and **reduced dropouts** in the past two years.

SDMC meetings are held each month at both schools. Over 50% of parents attend these meetings.

This review did not have in its mandate to comment on the learning outcomes of the students in the schools, which is an ongoing exercise carried out by APF in its teaching-learning enhancement work. Some of the outcomes that it tracks through regular assessment are: learning levels of the children, and grasp on concepts and methods. Grade-wise assessments are administered to assess improvements in different subjects, especially in English, Science and Maths.

Towards these outcomes, APF facilitates monthly workshops called by the Department of Education focussing on how to teach, innovative methods in pedagogy and tracking learning outcomes, and behavioural management. **The MR Nagar School is a Cluster Resource Centre**, where training programmes are held, and serves as an inspiration to other teachers who visit the school.



4.1. Perception

This review spoke with the range of stakeholders to gauge their perception of the changes effected by infrastructure improvement. The Project hoped that a positive perception of the two schools would lead to: improved enrolment and attendance; decrease in dropouts; an engaged community, especially parents; increased participation of the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC); improved attendance during parent teachers' meetings.

There is a visible sense of **pride and ownership** among the teachers, staff and students. The teachers in KPS, VV Puram significantly attribute the improvement in school results to the infrastructure improvement. The improved infrastructure attracts both good quality students and senior teachers.

Teachers say they feel motivated when they work with a mixed group of students - those who are academically strong, and those who need extra attention. They believe a positive environment has created an internally driven commitment to enhance the school's reputation and the students' exposure to the world, like participating in an art exhibition at Bengaluru International Centre or in intra school competitions.

Basic infrastructure improvements, from single bulbs to tube lights, and clean toilets, for instance, have perceptively changed the way teachers feel about staying after school hours, proactively communicating with parents, supporting students who need extra sessions, and so on. For instance, one of the students in MR Nagar School, who was being schooled for the first time and was admitted in an age-appropriate class, was helped by their teacher, after hours, to come to par with classmates.



"Once the infrastructure improvements were made, the changes were perceptible. The provision of play material and learning equipment and furniture made the school attractive for both parents and children.

Children of all grades started coming. The school was able to attract more children and better teachers. Children have the feeling that "this is my school". Their aggression has reduced, they are respectful, and they know that they cannot use bad language in school.

Parents have become ambassadors for the school and help in publicity and propaganda among the community."

Primary School teachers, VV Puram

Both parents and teachers agree that "private schools do not do any magic in their teaching". It is the **associated elements that create a positive perception**, thereby convincing parents to pay high fees, often beyond their means, even in affordable private schools. Most of the elements have been addressed during the Urban Schools Project (by the school or by the Foundations) - spruced up infrastructure which not only serves as a feel-good factor, but also as an assurance of safety for the child; attractive books and teaching material; English language teaching; uniform; access to computers, among others.

The community connect and mobilisation of SDMC to speak up, makes parents feel like they are **being heard and are respected**. The two schools have also started giving some homework in response to parents' request - another element of preference in private schools, ostensibly because it keeps children home in unsafe neighbourhoods when both parents are at work. Parents note that teachers have better oversight over students when compared to private schools, and are much more approachable. In private schools, they feel the interest is only in fees, and not in the development of the child. They have observed **positive behaviour changes in their children**. Even at home they do not waste food, wash utensils after meals, display enhanced hygiene awareness and keep the toilets clean. There is an overall increase in discipline quotient and reduced squabbles with friends and siblings!

Students noted that their school **does not feel like a government school**. They are aware of the fact that private schools, despite the high fees, do not ensure good academics. In both the schools, the students spoke about the open spaces, the trees, and the scope to play as important reasons for why they like their schools. The improved library was called out as a key attraction for their school. Students have displayed ownership by taking on responsibility of cleaning, 'traffic management' for using toilets, watering plants, organising and running the library, and so on.

Parents, teachers and students are now looking towards filling the human resource gaps - primary school teachers (KPS, VV Puram), physical education teachers, music teachers, among others.



4.2. Design

From its deep and vast experience, APF had an awareness of what it would take to complement its teaching-learning inputs and strengthen the perception of public schools. However, it was the **pivotal role of the ICG** which translated their awareness to design and infrastructure development. It brought a practical lens, structural advice and service inputs to the endeavour. The ICG participated with a commitment to the cause of public education, and not merely as an experienced, infrastructure team. It brought on board architects who came with the same spirit of contribution to the community, and not just as design vendors. Senior members of the ICG and of the architects' firms were constantly in touch with the progress of the project on the ground. **They believed that public infrastructure can make a statement and trigger a positive spiral of change.**

Key observations and learnings gleaned during the review, pertaining to design are:

- The redesigning of public schools has to be viewed as **an opportunity for visual change and significant upgrade**, and not just an effort for “doing up” the existing facade. The architects believed that public schools can look and feel just as good as private schools and committed themselves to **doing something radical**, keeping in mind that every school is unique, and **there is a dearth of environment, and not of infrastructure.**
- Needless to say, **children have to be at the centre** of design considerations. Their security, safety, connectedness and usability are primary requirements.
- The resultant design changes should **contribute to creating a landmark of pride for the neighbourhood.** Auto rickshaw drivers are often seen to stop and take selfies in front of MR Nagar School, while parents and community members display the school over video calls to their family members back home.
- **Open spaces can be designed for enhanced and purposeful usage**, just like enclosed areas are. This could lead to creating spaces for running classrooms in the open; facilitating pathways for nature-based studies; covering terraces to make

safe areas for students; including backyards into classroom areas; play areas; nutrition gardens, and so on.

- Attention to functional adjacencies and integration of different elements helped to create a feel of a **cohesive structure** with parts flowing into the other.
- The design must **go beyond the functional and respond to the aspirational**, with colours and elements that has the **potential to catalyse change** through positive perception of all stakeholders.
- A key practical consideration for sustaining the infrastructure is the **ease of maintenance**, especially given the nature of use. Material selection (e.g., kota stone flooring) while adhering to budget, is key to ensuring long-term maintenance.



4.3. Model creation

One of the expected outcomes of the Urban Schools Project is that the selected schools will serve to **demonstrate and advocate for what it takes to offer quality education in the public system**. Beyond improving the public narrative, it was envisaged that the schools would become models that can **inspire other Corporates** to work towards school improvement in similar ways, and also motivate social sector organisations to incorporate **advocacy and engagement with the community and with the government**.

The Urban Schools project has indeed showcased the need and possibilities of a multi-stakeholder initiative. APF comes with **depth and breadth of expertise about public education** - across the entire spectrum of curriculum development, teacher KPStraining, pedagogy support, learning assessments. Most significantly, it has built **rapport with government education departments** and agencies across levels. It has a seat at every table, from advisory to implementation. APF's regular engagement with the schools have given them a position of **trusted friend and supporter for all teachers and students**.

Wipro Foundation and APF, through their investments, have built a robust **network of grassroots organisations** that were able to bring in the participation, opinion and feedback of parents and community members. It was important to bring together all the stakeholders, including the architects and construction anchors around **the faith and belief in improving public education infrastructure**. Wipro Foundation and APF ensured that the Project was **iterative** at every level, **monitored** closely to ensure envisaged outputs, and **synergised** across the hardware and software elements.

There is evidence already of the **idea of a holistic approach** combining infrastructure enhancement along with education quality improvement. **Government of Karnataka has identified 20 schools for improvement, under the Bengaluru Public School programme with an allocation of ₹89 crores**. Of these, four schools are under the BBMP and 16 schools under the Education Department. In these schools, Wipro Foundation will support the design inputs by architects, and APF will facilitate academic improvement.

Based on the ongoing experience at KPS, VV Puram and MR Nagar Schools. Wipro Foundation is focusing on the development of feeder schools to the Bangalore Public Schools. The plan for 10 schools for which there is ongoing support by Wipro Foundation and APF, is as below:

Phase	Details	No. of schools
Phase 1	KPS, VV Puram and MR Nagar School infrastructure improvement cost borne by Wipro Foundation	2
Phase 2	Infrastructure development by the government in 1 school and by Wipro Foundation in 3 schools. These schools are from a list of 20 that act as feeder to KPS, VV Puram and MR Nagar School	4
Phase 3	Plan to take up 6 schools. Teaching learning material has been provided to them. APF will gauge interest in the schools' academic intervention and infra development	6

In addition, the learnings from this experience are also being extended by Wipro Foundation in its support towards:

- 32 *anganwadis* in the feeder areas of Bangalore Public Schools, which are being provided TLM inputs
- Creche facilities in schools where there are no *anganwadis*, like in MR Nagar
- Five integrated science labs at Pre University level @INR 8 lakhs/lab

One of the stakeholders that the Urban Schools Project intended to bring on board but was unable to, is employees of Wipro Ltd. It proposed to use **employee engagement** for activating the computer labs. Apparently, since the engagement is to be done on personal time, not much interest evinced. It was decided to formally bring a specialised organisation on board.

4.4. Enablers

Comprehensive engagement

During the review, it was observed that APF and Wipro Foundation together have been able to provide comprehensive support through the Urban Schools Project. This is what is

largely missed by both, civil society organisations and funders, working in public education. It is essential to not only bring together the **'hardware' and the 'software'** but to do it **in a sustained manner**, and **at every level**. The school ecosystem is hierarchical, and necessitates a lot of patient investment. APF has engaged with the dynamics (in schools and at the Department level) and its challenges in a sustained way, which has made it possible for it to lead the way for infrastructure improvement.

The resistance for other donors to invest in a similar manner comes from the need for long-term commitment, and the necessity to **advocate with the government**. Based on its work over the years APF has a seat at the table pertaining to education policy and implementation in Karnataka, spanning ideation, designing, training, implementation.

Allyship and support

At the school level, APF's sustained engagement and being embedded has created a perception that they will **walk with the school through all its needs**. This has been instrumental in creating a positive response to the engagement on both hardware and software fronts. The government has large resources and could mobilise more than what private donors can; it is the allyship and responsiveness to the needs of schools and their users that makes a crucial difference.

The two Foundations

A pivotal enabler of the Urban Schools Project has been the **synergy and alignment** between Wipro Foundation and Azim Premji Foundation. They each played to their strength and held the many pieces and stakeholders together. Their respective expertise ensured that the essential elements - pedagogical improvement, infrastructure development, advocacy, financial resources, community connect were brought together..

Architects' approach

The ICG brought on board architects who interpreted their assignment not merely as one for redesigning schools, but as **an opportunity to create something transformational** through space design. They offered designs that were not just contextual, aesthetic, and cost effective, but aspirational for the users as well. Despite their pro bono engagement, they actively engaged during construction and monitored the implementation of the project closely. The architects were mindful of "what the school was visually doing to the neighbourhood". Importantly the aesthetic element was designed for functionality, with attention to landscaping, allowing for spaces for play, tree gardens and kitchen gardens. They demonstrated the value of architecture and design to enable change for the better.

Maintenance

Wipro Foundation has **supported the maintenance** of both the schools, so far. Vendors have been identified for regular cleaning, for periodic maintenance and requisite repairs. Especially in the absence of any government allocation for maintenance, this has been crucial, particularly in a large school like KPS, VV Puram. Several schools undergo improvement initiatives by private entities. In the absence of resources for maintaining them, they often gradually revert to their original state of disrepair.

Community engagement

It is evident that the head of the institution and teachers are not the only people who make school transformation possible. It is essential to **engage with the community** around and build an ecosystem of positive perception about the school. The significance of the role of the teams of APF working with *anganwadi* users, community residents and SDMC members has been evidenced in the Project. Until there is an environment where parents feel that they are being heard and their concerns are being addressed, a school will never become a resource which they identify as their own.

It is important to ensure that **community needs beyond education are addressed** - nutrition, documentation, health, with support of local civil society organisations. Mobile Creches, by taking care of small children at MR Nagar School (six months to six years), has ensured that their siblings can attend school. The APF-Wipro Foundation network, fortunately, has the wherewithal and access to bring such partners on board. Government frontline workers have also supported the APF team in conducting outreach activities to enhance school enrolment.

It takes a village...

“The start of the school owes a lot to community members”, shared KL Chenna Gowda, a retired police officer, who is from the MR Nagar area. He got involved with the School in 1995-'96. As there was no school in the locality, community members approached the Education Minister, Govind Gowda. The land where the school currently stands belongs to the government, and was encroached by temporary settlers, where there were periodic antisocial activities. Once



permission was secured for a government school, classes started in a building which the community rented by collecting contributions. After formal approvals and sanction was obtained, the land was cleared, and two rooms with sheet roofs were built in 1996. Over 20 sheds in the settlement were cleared and rehabilitated to other areas. Chenna Gowda received threats but he was not deterred, as he had the support of community members.

The remodelling and redevelopment of the school was much needed. Chenna Gowda proudly says, “It feels like a private school. It is one of the best government schools in South Bangalore.” He feels there is a need for

continued community involvement to function properly, and increase enrolment by regularly talking to parents and motivating them. Chenna Gowda helped plant coconut and other fruit trees in the school compound. Together with another community member, Makkaiyya, he takes care of the trees, watering them when the school is closed, and adding salt and manure. Each year, coconuts are harvested three to four times, and sold by members of the SDMC. The income of up to ₹6,000 per year is used for school supplies after deducting cost of labour, manure, etc. Chenna Gowda takes personal interest in the school, though his children have grown and settled well in their jobs. He participates actively in meetings with SDMC and parents, in an effort to understand their concerns. “The school is like my home.” he says.

5. Recommendations

Wipro Foundation and APF together have sought to bring about holistic improvements in the two government schools, through improvements in the hardware and software, with the desired outcomes of increased enrolment, quality and equitable education, and improved public perception. In the process they hope to establish a model which may be relevant to the government and interested corporate donors/ philanthropists.

While it is too soon to comment on the impact of the Urban Schools Project, some **early outcomes are visible**, and **learnings have begun to emerge**. Based on these, this review makes the following recommendations:

- Efforts towards some of the **expected outcomes** have not yet been addressed, in the absence of which the entire range of envisioned impact may not be realised. It is recommended that these outcomes are revisited, and design changes made as appropriate.
 - **School Development Plans** are to be prepared by teachers and head teachers and monitored regularly. The preparation of such plans is an opportunity for stakeholders to articulate their vision for the school and for the teachers to draw up a practicable pathway to achieve changes.
 - The Project planned to develop **case studies of good practices** from the selected schools, which could be used with **teachers** of other schools. This can be a very powerful practice for public and private school teachers to learn about the possibilities and potential of school improvement. This can also be extended to sharing case studies related to the infrastructure principles and practices with **Public Works Department representatives**, who are in charge of designing and executing school development projects.
 - The Project aimed to **establish public schools as community spaces**. This would require imagining ways in which the community can gain access to the school and use it with a sense of ownership and responsibility. This aspect needs to be explored further. For instance, ways in which terraces and open spaces can be used for community events, and libraries can be accessed by community members. In both the schools reviewed, parents and community members have contributed their time and effort in different ways. This is an area which needs to be strengthened.
- Some of the **learnings from Phase I** which have been incorporated in the subsequent phases are:
 - It is better to work with smaller schools, rather than K-12 ones, like KPS, VV Puram. **Strengthening the ecosystem of feeder schools** should lead the process, rather than the other way around. Once the ecosystem comprising feeder schools and community engagement is strengthened, working with a K-12 school becomes more organic. This is also a cost effective way to approach the intervention, with the budget for one school coming down to approx. ₹1.5 crores.
 - In the first phase, Wipro Foundation worked with 18 vendors for different functions. It has learnt that **working with one vendor** who brings on board other subcontractors as required is a more efficient way and will follow this practice in other locations.

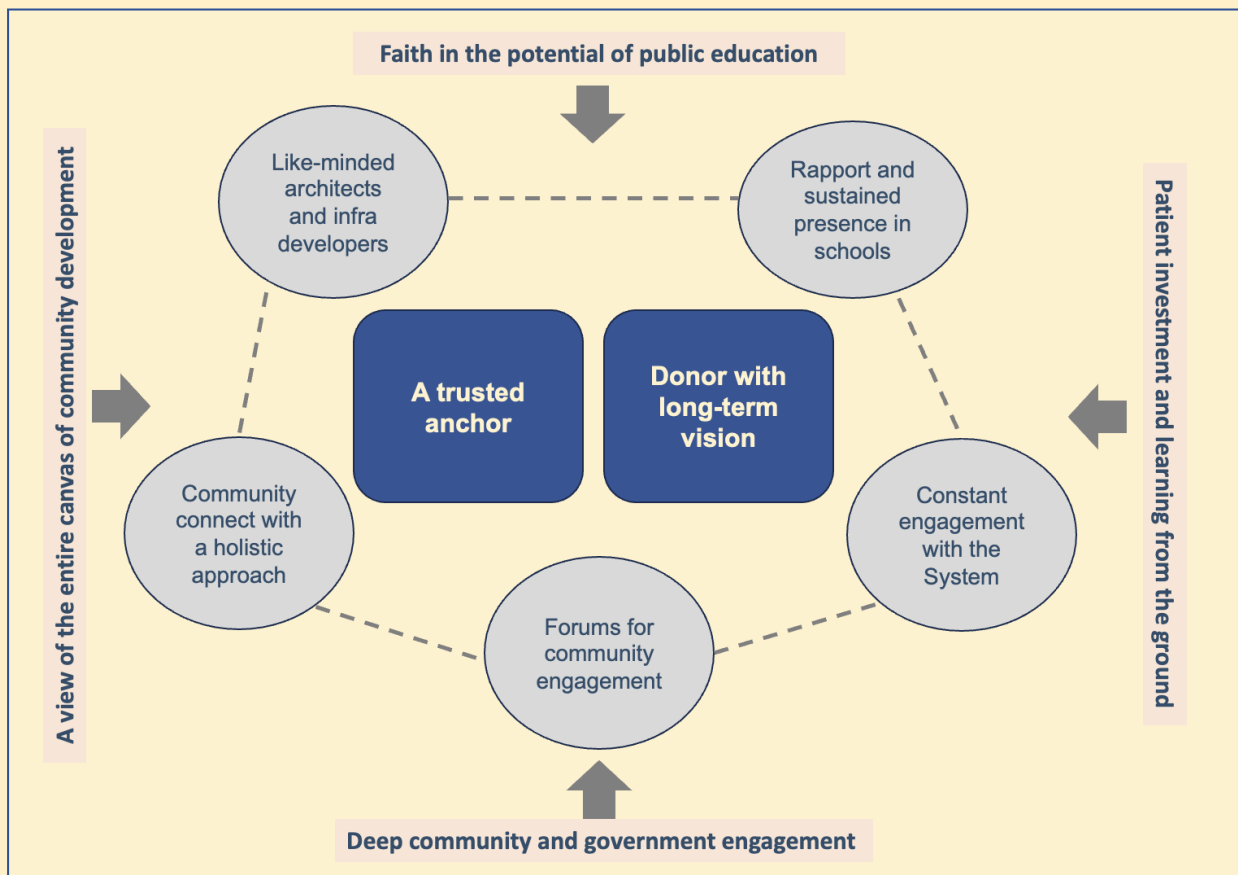
- Wipro Foundation and APF aim to **create a model** around the Urban Schools Project. To be able to do that, there has to be a critical mass of schools (30-40 of them) which have undergone a change. While key learnings and a design template seem to be emerging from the projects undertaken, building a model for a multi-stakeholder proposition, will require drilling deeper into some more elements:
 - Public private partnerships for improving the government education system have been tried out in **other locations**. It is recommended that the Project team engages with them and derives appropriate learnings and features from them around partnerships, sustainability and advocacy. Examples of note include reforms in [government schools in Delhi](#), and [a school in Kozhikode district in Kerala](#), which is impacting government schools in Kerala as well as in other states. This process is expected to not only bring in new learnings but also help to locate the relevance of the model in other contexts.
 - There is a need to **expand the range of stakeholders** to plug the emerging gaps. Some of them are: An organisation (like, Teach for India) which can provide dedicated teachers; a group that works with adolescents on issues of sexuality; agencies that can help strengthen the sports offering of schools.
 - The **sustainability piece of the model** needs to be strengthened in several aspects, some of which are:
 - Dedicated **human resource for running the library** as a vibrant space, as it is being done by the APF team. Ideally, a teacher of the school should take on this role. However, unless their position is advocated for and built into policy, it is unlikely to happen.
 - Even with Wipro Foundation's repair and maintenance support, **signs of breakage and deterioration** are visible in the schools. Glass panes need to be replaced, improved open spaces are being used for gathering excess waste, and the unutilised terrace is becoming a storage for broken furniture (KPS VV Puram). It is essential to think of a **sustainable solution for maintenance and repairs** on a long-term basis. Alongside advocacy with the government for creating a 'maintenance and upgradation' budget, it is recommended that institutional solutions are explored. The idea of social enterprises that offer housekeeping services on contract to schools, as shared by WF, is worthy of consideration.
 - It will be important to **continue and build on the connect with the community**, without whose participation it will not be possible to create a robust public school ecosystem. The partnerships with community-based organisations, have to be seen with a longer term view than the duration of the infrastructure development.
 - While the Department of Education has committed substantial funding for taking forth the model, it is recommended that **additional resource mobilisation opportunities are constantly explored** in order to create a truly multi-stakeholder, public ecosystem. Some of the avenues would be: MLAs for funds from their allocated budgets; Corporates and private philanthropies; and other government departments dealing with vocational education, sports, performing arts, and so on.

- The Urban Schools Project is hinged on the hope that school transformation will lead to a holistic change on the ground. In order to do that, Wipro Foundation would like to **share the model with a wider community** of organisations. However, it is one thing to design, develop and deliver a model in one's own ecosystem, and yet another to build it in a way that can be disseminated to those who could potentially take it forward. Wipro Foundation will have to account for the following:
 - **Corporates** who invest in education under CSR, typically, select the easiest of the pieces - infrastructure. Advocating with the government, patient investment in rapport building and handholding, sustained effort in developing teaching-learning material and disseminating them, have emerged as crucial aspects without investing in which the vision of holistic change will not be realised.
 - The key role of **civil society organisations**, with a range of expertise, is crucial. The Urban School Project succeeds because of collaborations of APF with local communities and civil society organisations present there. Engagement with Mobile Creches, for working with younger children and Pi Jam, for computer training in schools complement efforts made in the project. Thus, the initiative has not been seen as an education project in isolation, rather as a trigger and part of a holistic, community development process. To make this part of the model, philanthropists and donors will have to **broaden the scope of investment in education** to include community organisations and other NGOs as well.
 - The anchor role of APF in holding the entire initiative together is crucial and central. Over the years, it has created the rapport and ground for working with schools and the public education system. Being embedded in schools and the System, it has evidenced its ability and intent to transform public education. This **role of trusted anchor** will have to be taken on by other entities in locations where APF will not be able to do so. It would be prudent to identify such organisations first, and then build out the initiative in their work area, rather than the other way around.
 - School infrastructure development is seen by both private and public players in a limited way, bringing in minor tweaks and play of colours. To be truly transformative, it takes the **engaged participation of architects and developers** who have faith in the potential of public education. They must be willing to listen to the intel from the ground about what schools need by way of design.
 - Corporates and philanthropists who show an interest in taking on holistic projects such as the Urban Schools Project, will benefit from **Wipro Foundation and APF's support** - design, train, handhold, monitor. Neither of the organisations has worked in this way before and will have to treat this area as a dedicated vertical, if it would like to proceed on these lines.
 - “Light touch” opportunities to participate in the larger endeavour could also be created. For instance, become part of a collaborative on public education, or invest in a part of the initiative in Bengaluru.

An emerging model

Based on the Urban Schools Project, a **multi-stakeholder model** that is emerging is depicted below. It is built on the foundation of key principles:

- A view of the entire canvas of community development
- Faith in the potential of public education
- Deep community and government engagement
- Patient investment and learning from the ground

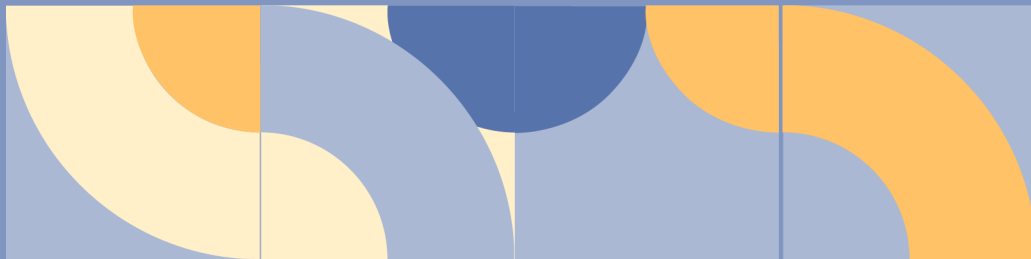


The Urban School Project has all the vital ingredients to demonstrate such a model, and serve as an inspiration towards efforts in strengthening public school education in India.

Annexure

Schedule of meetings

Aug 28	<p>Meetings with Project Team</p> <p>Wipro Foundation : Ramkishan Singh, Meena Bhummannagiri Azim Premji Foundation : Varun Nallur, Vinita Rocha, N Bharathi</p>
Aug 29	<p>Meetings with Architects</p> <p>Wipro Foundation : Ramkishan Singh, Meena Bhummannagiri Venkataramanan Associates: Jahnvi Ashar, Associate Architect Ostraca: Arnab Ghosh</p>
Aug 30	<p>Visit to New Vani Vihar Government PU College, V V Puram</p> <p>Meeting with Primary School Head and teachers</p> <p>Chaya Ma'am, Head Teacher, Primary School Pramila, Jagadevi, Shailaja, Shailashree</p> <p>Team from Azim Premji Foundation : Vinita Rocha, N Bharathi</p>
Aug 31	<p>Meetings with Government Officials</p> <p>Dr. M T Reju, IAS, Secretary Expenditure, Government of Karnataka Mr.Raghavendra, Block Education Officer (North), Government of Karnataka</p> <p>Community Visit</p> <p>Vinoba Nagar Anganwadi Veena, AW teacher, Parameswari, Asha Worker Action Aid team</p> <p>Visit to New Vani Vihar Government PU College, V V Puram</p> <p>Meeting with Parents/ SDMC</p> <p>Team from Azim Premji Foundation : Vinita Rocha, N Bharathi, Nandini Shetty, Jinnah</p>
Sep 1	<p>Visit to New Vani Vihar Government PU College, V V Puram</p> <p>Meetings with school heads</p> <p>Ms. Deepthi, Principal (incharge) PU College Ms. Munisa Begum, Head High School</p> <p>Meeting with Support Staff</p> <p>Zaheer, Prema, Jayanti</p> <p>Team from Azim Premji Foundation : Vinita Rocha, N Bharathi</p>
Sep 2	<p>Visit to Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar</p> <p>Meeting with Head Teacher and other teachers</p> <p>Indumathi, Head Teacher Anita, Sivakumar, Manjula</p> <p>Team from Azim Premji Foundation: Nandini Shetty</p>
Sep 4	<p>Visit to Government Higher Primary School, Mutharayanagar</p> <p>Meeting with parents/ SDMC</p> <p>Visit to Community</p> <p>CFAR: Hegde, Nageshwari, Srilatha</p> <p>Meeting with Creche staff</p> <p>Mobile Creches: Mahadevi, and 3 teachers and a helper</p> <p>Team from Azim Premji Foundation: Nandini Shetty</p>
Sep 5	<p>Debrief Meetings at Wipro Foundation</p> <p>Avinash Kumar, Programme Head, Education, Ramkishan Singh, Program Manager, Special Projects, Meena Bhummannagiri, Procurement Consultant</p>
Sep 6	<p>Meeting with PS Narayan, Global Head of Sustainability & Social Initiatives, Wipro</p> <p>Debrief meeting with Ramkishan Singh, Wipro Foundation</p>



Nous Consultants is a fraternity of developmental experts with leadership experience spanning civil society, academia, corporate sector, and the government. We work with non-profit organisations, donors, foundations, and Corporate Social Responsibility teams to co-design and co-execute strategic and long-lasting solutions for social impact.

Read more about Nous Consultants at <https://www.nousconsultants.org/>

