

schools of Solapur district and some schools in Pune and Satara districts.

11. Book Publication: Members of SIRF are encouraged to write books on various subjects. However, due to the inability of SIRF to sponsor publication, private houses have to be relied upon. The authors who have been published are Siddharam Mashale, Balasaheb Wagh, and Hema Wagh, Mallikarjun Someshwar, Vaijnath Talikoti, Santosh Jadhav, Rajshekhar Natikar, and Vijaykumar Vasantpure. Three books written by Siddharam Mashale have been purchased and stocked by the state government for all its schools, as reference material. This is one of the most significant achievements of SIRF.

In addition, SIRF participates in a variety of public educational programmes. Some of the ideas for the future include the following:

1. Making the Teachers' Clinic and Students' Clinic part of the regular curriculum.
2. To continue the system of awards for innovative teachers.
3. To set up an "Innovation library" for teachers and students, to which problems can be posted for a solution.
4. To start a monthly/quarterly SIRF magazine.
5. To set up science laboratories in areas where there is a lack of such facilities.
6. To extend the idea of awarding innovative primary teachers to innovative primary schools.

STATE INNOVATION & RESEARCH FOUNDATION, SOLAPUR



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This brief case describes the efforts of three innovative government primary school teachers from Solapur, Maharashtra, to provide a platform to other teachers to engage in innovative educational work.

Beginnings of the Journey

In 1997 a group of young primary school teachers working in government schools in Solapur district, Maharashtra, were motivated to form a *Dhadpad Manch*, by the then Deputy Education Officer, Ms. Suman Shinde. Initially, there was a lot of enthusiasm, but when she was transferred, work slowed down. The year 2004 was a turning point for the teachers, since they were contacted by the Ravi J. Matthai Centre for Educational Innovation (RJMCEI), Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and invited to share their innovative work with the RJMCEI. The three teachers, Siddharam Raygonda Mashale, Ananta Haribhau Baodhankar and Rahul Londhe, responded. Their work was studied and documented by the RJMCEI, and the teachers were honoured with the Sir Ratan Tata Trust Innovative Teacher Award. The group was motivated and thought of popularizing the idea of innovative teaching by roping in other innovative teachers. The teachers felt that they should form a body outside the government, since the transfer of officials had hindered their work earlier. In February, 2006, with the support of RJMCEI, SIRF (State Innovation & Research Foundation, Solapur), was founded. The teachers felt that their hard work had paid off.

Initially, the goals of SIRF were the following: to provide a platform to innovative teachers to showcase their work;

7. **Workshop for people who work for the children of Bidi Labourers:** In Solapur, the population of bidi workers is huge. Bidi Workers Kalyan Pratishthan, Nasik, conducts extra classes for the boys and girls of Bidi workers. For teaching these classes, 12th pass and graduate social workers are assigned, but they are not aware of what educating means. SIRF has organized a 2-day workshop for these teachers. Nearly 45 male and female social workers attended. The request for this work was the direct result of the articles on Creative Education.
8. **Innovative Teachers Award:** SIRF also honours teachers with innovative teacher awards to motivate them. Up to now, 13 teachers who have been successful in solving problems that occur during daily classroom teaching have been honoured with these awards. The quality of the experiment undertaken and the results are considered. The judges have been: Shri Prashant Kothadiya (Sakal Social Foundation, Pune), Dr. Ajaykumar Lolge (Balbharti, Pune), Shri Pradeep More (Education Officer, Primary), and Prof. S. D. Mokashi.
9. **Aurangabad Workshop by UNICEF:** UNICEF, Mumbai and S.E.D.T., Parbhani had organized a workshop on Divisional consultation on Child Rights for which Mr. Siddharam Mashale was invited to guide on the topic of Innovation for Quality Education.
10. **Educational Tours for Members:** Educational tours have been arranged for 21 members of SIRF to best

problem is discussed and a plan devised. The teachers are expected to complete the work research according to this plan. Whenever they have any questions, they are guided. Twenty six teachers have completed such work research, and solved their problems.

4. **Workshops for DEd Students:** Students of the Diploma in Education course have been provided similar inputs on new projects and work research. A total of 618 student-teachers have benefited through these workshops.
5. **Creative Education:** A series of articles on “Creative Education” written in *Dainik Sakal* newspaper, by Shri Prashant Kothadiya on the work of 40 teachers has done a lot to popularize the work of SIRF. A book titled “Search for Creative Teachers” by Prashant Kothadiya is to be published soon.
6. **Exhibition of Educational Articles:** Under the title of “Exhibition of articles on Creative Education” the teachers are provided with a variety of new information. In this exhibition, articles on Creative Education and Information about new projects are presented. The exhibition has been conducted at Akalkot and Solapur. After it was received well, it was present at a rural teachers Sahitya Sammelan at Marawade, district Mangalvedha. Many visitors appreciated SIRF's efforts. In all, about 4500 teachers have visited the exhibition.

create healthy competition among the teachers; expand the idea of innovative teachers to innovative schools; communicate to teachers innovative ideas in the field of education; engage in discussions on the problems that teachers faced in their classrooms.

Activities and Spread

The work started with a *Teachers' Clinic*, which was a weekly discussion of individual teachers' subject problems, teaching methods. These clinics aimed at coming up with innovative solutions to the problems. These clinics were also supplemented by *Students' Clinics*, weekly discussions with students on their learning problems. Some of the steps taken to popularize the work were the following:

1. Familiarizing themselves with computer and information technology. The teachers started as rank novices and over time have become technologically competent.
2. Whenever SIRF came across some news which praised the work of a primary teacher, the core team would call them up the teacher, congratulate her or him, explain about SIRF and ask the teacher to join the movement.
3. A weekly column named Srajangsheel Shikshan in *Dainik Sakal*, a Marathi newspaper, by Shri Prashant Kothadiya, which included innovative teaching methods of SIRF teachers, proved to be very popular and reached out to a large number of teachers. Similarly, articles written by Professor S.D. Mokashi spread SIRF's message to teachers.
4. Whenever there were training workshops for fresh primary teachers, SIRF teams would contact them,

present SIRF's work and talk about innovative teaching.

Hurdles in the Journey

Initially the teachers faced a number of problems in presenting their ideas effectively to other teachers and educational officers. This difficulty in communication led to a devaluation of the work they were trying to do. Some teachers also felt that engaging in innovative work demanded a lot of their personal time. Often, things would pick up, but an educational officer would be transferred, and the new person might not show the same level of enthusiasm. Managing the finances needed has also been a constant problem. At present, all expenditures are met by the contribution of members, but many projects have been halted because member contributions are unable to finance these. A few sponsors have been contacted, and some amount of help has been received. For instance, whenever a workshop is held at a school or college, the institution is asked to bear the expenditure. Most of the workshops are organized in schools where a SIRF member is working. The members of SIRF rely on telephone communication, since it is the cheapest and most convenient form. Meetings are held every two months. General meetings are announced in newspapers. Letters are also sent to the members periodically, updating them on the progress.

Progress

SIRF has grown to a network of 300 teachers over a three-year period. As Mashale says, "These members have converted usual schools into innovative schools. We say

with great pride that SIRF members can be spotted easily in a crowd." Many of the members have in recent times received local and state awards. SIRF teachers are also engaged in textbook writing work, and in projects on the State Curriculum Framework. A list of the key activities (2007-2011) follows:

1. **Education Innovation Conference:** The 3rd Sir Ratan Tata National Education Innovation Conference held at Sinhadh Technical Education Society Kusgoan, Lonavala, District Pune (Maharashtra) was jointly organized in 2007 by RJMCEI, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, and SIRF. The conference was well attended by the state's education authorities, and was inaugurated by Dr. Narendra Jadhav, Vice Chancellor, Pune University.
2. **Workshops on New Projects:** Various workshops have been organized at taluka level, keeping the need to keep travel costs down. In these workshops, teachers who have carried out projects present the theory and practice of new projects. Such guidance has been provided to 390 primary and secondary teachers from Pune, Satara, Kohlapur, Yavatmal, Latur, Usmanabad, Nasik and Ahmednagar districts.
3. **Guidance on Work Research:** Some teachers are motivated to move from projects to "work research" – research on the difficulties they face in the classroom. A workshop on "Work Research for Teachers" was organized to help this process. The