



AANANDSHALA

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Aanandshala Project by BPS Architects – Brinda & Parth Shah in collaboration with Centre for Environment Education, focuses on creating a conducive educational environment including physical, social and pedagogical values in the school and the community.

What is the project about?

Aanandshala program and built interventions are implemented in over 300 primary and upper primary government schools in villages across India. It started in the year 2001-02, with schools in the tribal belt of Gujarat bordering Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The program had to adapt to various pedagogical systems, cultural and social context with technological challenges. With concerns to decrease the dropout rates, improve quality of education in the government primary schools and to imbibe the value of education, Aanandshala took various forms.

The participatory planning approach made sure children, teachers and villagers are active stakeholders. Scientific methods were employed to generate active participation by CEE as part of their programs. The stakeholder conversations lead to brainstorming and sharing of ideas on quality education, its linkages with school infrastructure, management practices.

The school is also an example of development to suit local culture and climate. The development is indigenous; however, intra-village cooperation is sought and advised to develop a kinship. Local crafts and skills were employed as much as possible. Use of local material was resorted to meet most of the physical infrastructure of the school. This engaged the local merchants and business in the schools' activities. Construction waste also was put to use in building development.

The biggest challenge to work in this program was the fulfilling of the need for each school. Thus, starting from site observation workshops with children and then coming to a unique design solution was integral to the outcome of each school's design while at the same time remaining within the scope of the project.

A lot of effort went in developing inclusiveness, creating uniqueness and working as a team. Post occupancy analysis of some of the schools after 10 years clearly showed an exemplary understanding of Aanandshala concepts, which was a winning moment.

Aanandshala initiated with 30 schools of Gujarat in 2001-02 and has become a widely known and well-accepted concept. The model has been successfully replicated in Thada village of Rajasthan and Ghatal with support of Ashiana Housing Ltd. Today the concept has been recognized by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan as well. This unique concept doesn't see a school in isolation; rather it takes an overarching participatory approach. Some of the unique-innovative components of the project are:

- To establish linkages among school teachers and village community.
- To create a vision of the village school through participatory methods.
- To empower teachers, and establish a functional School Management Committee (SMC), separate from the Village Management Committee (VMC).
- To provide basic necessary architectural support to create a conducive physical environment in the school.

What is the impact?

Some basic observations of the impact of this programme for students, teachers and villages are as follows:

- Life skill development,
- Improvement in performance in the annual exams,
- Improvement in school attendance,
- 100% Enrolment,
- 90 % retention,
- Teachers have learned and are practising different methodologies of teaching,
- Teachers Learning Group (TLG) formed,
- Capacity building of School Management Committee (SMC) and active participation of members who look into students performance and opportunities,
- Increased health parameters, particularly, Hb count.

Project Funded by

Ashiana Housing Ltd.

Stakeholders Involved

BPS Architects, Rajkot

CEE – Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad

Ashiana Housing Ltd.

Village Panchayat

School Principal and Teachers

School Children

About BPS Architects:

BPS Architects – Brinda & Parth Shah, is engaged in developmental works in rural areas since the past 15 years. The firm has by now worked directly in over 400 villages in Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan; primarily in the field of school education and social livelihood works.

The Aanandshala concepts jointly developed with CEE have been replicated in over 35000 schools countrywide by their partnering organisations. The principals believe that good design in the built environment should be disseminated and made available to as many people as possible in as many social strata so that the general living standards are improved; more so in those societal structures where such design access is otherwise not feasible. The

office thus devotes almost half of its professional time in projects related to what it calls “mass clients”. The office employs participatory design development processes and rural technologies for most of their built interventions and is almost always supported by a multidisciplinary team of social and environmental experts.

Links to read more:

[Swapnilshala \(A dream school for children and community\)](#)

[Awards and Recognition](#)