

1 March 2019

## **Mo School creates history in the world of alumni philanthropy in India**

Year-end blog by **Dr. Susmita Mohanty, Chairperson, Mo School**

### **Getting off the ground**

I took on the Chairpersonship of Mo School Abhiyan in January 2018.

Typical of any new venture, the first few months were spent in legal and incorporation paperwork. We drafted and ratified a resolution, drafted and approved by-laws, and then filed for incorporation.

### **Mo School debut, 10 months and counting**

On 17 May 2018, Mo School came in existence as a 'Society' under the Indian Societies Registration Act of 1860.

On 4 July 2018, we held the 1st Mo School Governing Council meeting.

### **Alumni Philanthropy**

Mo School is a philanthropic platform for Alumni to connect, collaborate and contribute to revamp the government school ecosystem in Odisha. It was launched by the honorable Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Children's Day in November 2017 in response to the philanthropic interest from Alumni residing in India and abroad. A robust and vibrant school education system holds the key to a brighter future for the state and its people. Odisha needs to groom its school children to be successful citizens that shape the emergence of a progressive and cosmopolitan state.

### **Articulating a Long-term Vision**

In January of 2018, I wrote the 'Concept Note' articulating my vision for Mo School. With volunteerism and Alumni engagement being the pivot, I broadened the philanthropic lens to encompass both 'physical' and 'mental' infrastructure.

In consultation with the Mo School team, and inspired by a Mo School brainstorming session we organized in March 2018 with 30+ experts from diverse fields, I identified '12 Thematic Areas' for holistic development that we seek to foster by engaging Alumni and Foundations.

The 12 'Thematic Areas' include:

1. Volunteerism
2. Mentorship & Career Counseling
3. Physical Infrastructure
4. Mental Infrastructure;
5. Health-Nutrition-Wellness
6. Sports
7. Human and Technology-enabled interventions
8. Teacher Support
9. Project-based learning
10. Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Maker Culture
11. Grower Culture & Climate Ambassadorship
12. Entrepreneurship

### **Modus Operandi**

Mo School is the 1<sup>st</sup> ever state-level philanthropic platform that engages Alumni of government schools to reconnect and give back to their alma maters. Alumni can contribute money, time or in-kind resources. Mo School matches monetary contributions with twice (2x) the amount. Donor grants are eligible for tax exemption. At the time of giving, donors specify projects for which they want their contributions to be utilized.

### **A record-breaking 1<sup>st</sup> year**

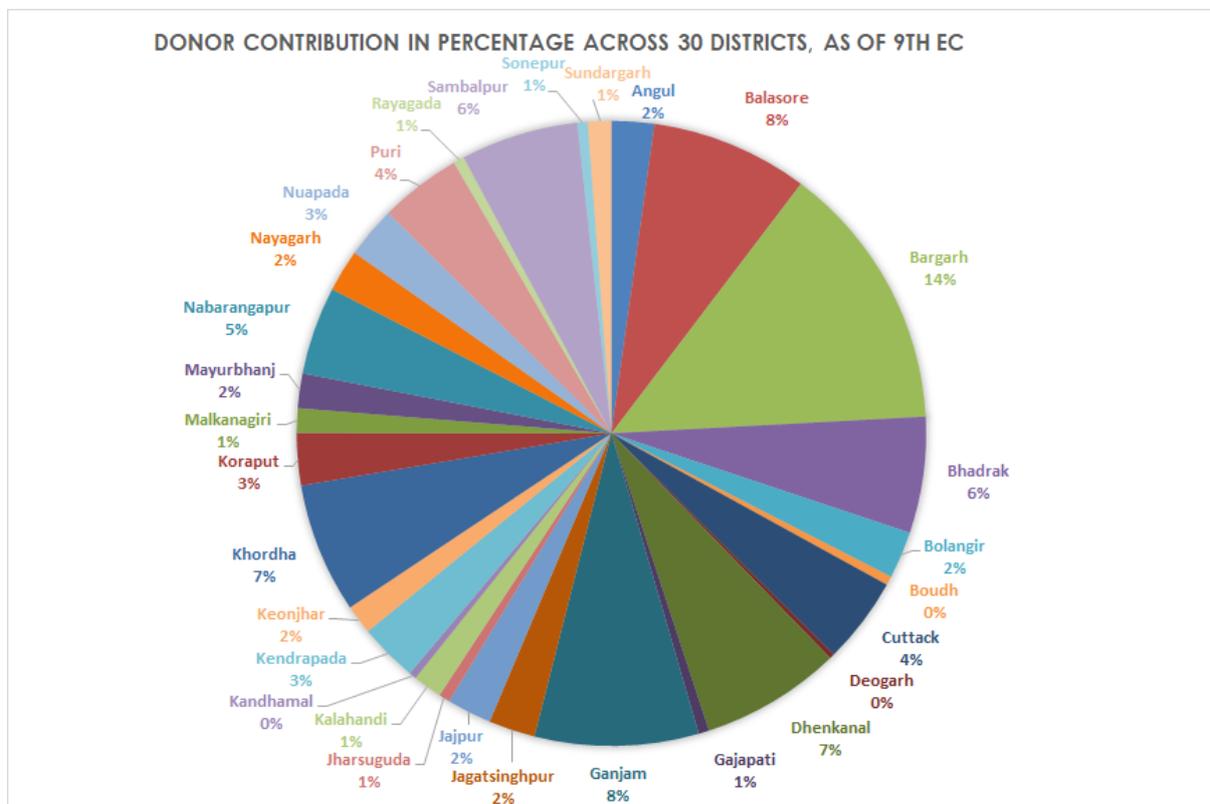
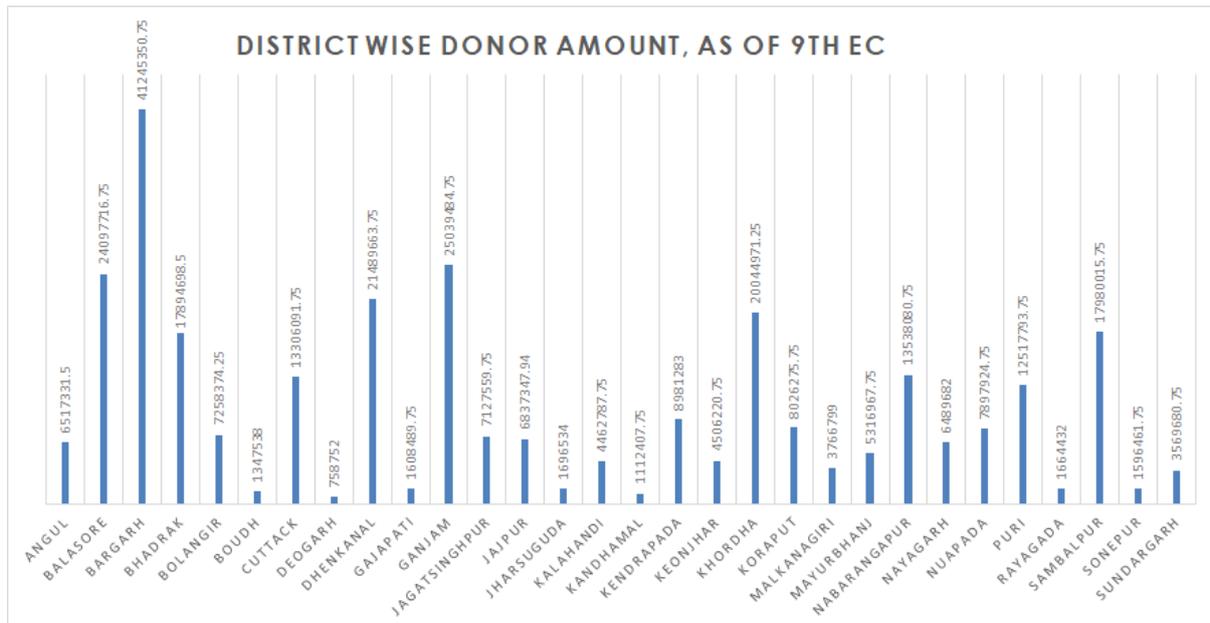
Mo School, in its debut year starting May 2018, and as of the 9th Executive Council meeting held on 1 March 2019, has received **INR 29,76,96,718.00** (approximately, 30 crore rupees or **US\$ 4.25 Million**) from Alumni statewide.

The government has given a matching grant of **INR 59,53,93,436.00** (approximately 59.53 crore rupees or **US\$ 8.5 Million**) leading up to total project cost of **INR 89,30,90,154.00** (approximately, 89.3 crore rupees or **US\$ 12.75 Million**). **1.37 lakh donors** have made this financial contribution to **10758 schools** across **30 districts**.

By comparison, the top 5 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) started reaching out to their Alumni in the late 1990s. IIT-Bombay, for example, got started in 1997. As per a recent article in the Economic Times published on 15 January 2019, IIT-Bombay, Delhi, and Kanpur revealed they have endowments of INR 200-250 crore each without divulging exact figures. This translates to somewhere between 20-25 crores per year, assuming the fund-raising drives have been on for about a decade. What took the top IITs 10 years to achieve, has been accomplished in 9 months by Mo School. This is very

encouraging and perhaps will make for a trend-setting case study in a country where alma-mater philanthropy is still a relatively new idea.

Contributions range from a few hundred rupees to several lakhs. Contributors come from diverse backgrounds and include wage-earning laborers, homemakers, farmers, small business owners, professionals, academics, artists, administrators and others. The donor spectrum is impressive and inspiring.



Contributions under Mo School are not just monetary. Alumni have also given time, and sweat, for a variety of activities. They teach after school hours, clean up school premises, plant trees, fix broken benches, paint walls, donate books and utensils, and take the time to share a meal, or play a friendly match with the kids. Mo School is both re-interpreting and thereby redefining the idea of giving back.

***We, at Mo School are both overwhelmed, and humbled by how deeply Alumni feel about improving the state of their alma maters.***

### **Outreach**

In its debut year, Mo School engaged in extensive outreach. We have reached out to Alumni residing in small towns, cities, villages, remote areas and also those residing in other continents such as the United States, Canada, UK and Australia where the Odia diaspora strength is significant.

### **Citizen-Government Partnership**

Mo School is a citizen-government partnership. In the debut year, we invited experts from time to time for consultations and exchange of ideas via meetings and workshops. Discussions have covered topics ranging from architecture to audits, from outreach to outcomes.

### **Collaborations with Non-Profits**

In the debut year, Mo School collaborated with the British Council, Raspberry Pi Foundation, and Art 1<sup>st</sup> Foundation. British Council is helping improve English proficiency, while Raspberry Pi Foundation is focusing on teaching digital making and 21<sup>st</sup> century coding skills. Art 1<sup>st</sup> uses visual arts as a pedagogical tool to create learning environments that nurture and strengthen the imagination, visual literacy, creative skills and cultural awareness of children and educators.

### **Mo School Caravan: Delivering Content on Wheels**

In partnership with Bakul Foundation and Tata Trusts, Mo School organized a Caravan comprising the 'Mo School Gadi' aka a fleet of 3 vans loaned by Tata Trusts. The fleet traveled with a curated set of books in 3 languages (Odia, Hindi, English) and ten international animation films curated by internationally acclaimed film maker Suresh Eriyat. A crew of animators, storytellers, artists, photographers, and volunteers traveled with the vans to 18 schools in remote areas of the 3 southern districts: Raigada, Kandhamal, and Kalahandi. The Caravan traveled from 27 January – 10 February and was the 1<sup>st</sup> pilot to test the idea of delivering inspiring content on wheels. The overarching goal of this Caravan was three-fold:

- To bring world class content to school children to stretch their imagination, create a sense of wonder and catalyze creativity
- To sensitize the Alumni to focus on developing the mental infrastructure of children, in addition to filling the physical infrastructure gaps
- To reach out to schools in small towns and remote villages in Odisha

Next year, we plan to expand the Caravan state-wide and cover all districts from Mayurbhanj to Malkangiri.

### **Alumni revisiting old memories and bonding with current students**

Around Republic Day (26-30 January 2019), Mo School facilitated and supported a district-level and school-level Mo School Alumni Meet and Celebrations. The event was designed to bring together past and present students and teachers to celebrate school memories through a photo exhibition, and to felicitate Alumni who have shown commitment via the Mo School Abhiyan to rejuvenate their alma maters. The event was meant to also serve as a catalyst for the Alumni to engage with the students and school authorities to collaboratively chart a future roadmap for their respective schools.

Of the many photo albums that were shared during these celebrations, I was personally touched by one from MKC High School in Baripada, Mayurbhanj. My great grandfather, Bidyadhar Mohapatra, was an alumnus of this school. He was the first law graduate of Mayurbhanj, and served as the Revenue Minister under Maharaja Ram Chandra Bhanja.

### **Challenge going forward**

The challenge going forward is to ensure proper implementation, monitoring, and quality outcomes for the 21387 projects from 10758 schools for which Alumni have contributed money as of 1 March 2019. Projects that have received funding focus on filling infrastructural gaps or enhancing existing facilities. E.g. libraries, laboratories, ceiling fans, toilets, water purifiers, furniture, bicycle stands, boundary walls, new classrooms, and more.

Mo School plans to leverage technology, local organizations, district officials and private citizens for tracking, auditing, and reporting. Transparency and accountability are vital to keep up the momentum of the debut year and build trust over the long-term. Our target at Mo School is to try and cover nearly 67,000 schools and over 7 million children across 30 districts of Odisha. This includes 1192 heritage schools that are over 50-75-100+ years old, the oldest being 212 years old.

### **A beginning has been made**

Engaging in philanthropy is an honorable and gratifying act, regardless of the quantum, nature, and approach of giving. I invite Alumni in Odisha, pan-India and those residing abroad to continue to support Mo School with gusto, keep up the momentum in the years ahead and help revitalize the government school ecosystem.

***Mo School hopes to bring about change that is lasting and meaningful. We just got started and have a long road ahead of us.***

End of Blog.