Maharashtra schools raise Rs 216 cr via crowd funding

PAGE ONE ANCHOR

in the state managed to raise a whopping Rs 216 crore from the public — funds that have been utilised for revamping classrooms, building new toilets and on digital initiatives, among others. According to the MSCEERT data, Ahmednagar district has ensured the maximum public participation, having raised over Rs. 30 crore, followed by Pune (Rs 19.82 crore), Solapur (19.03 crore), Aurangabad (15.59 crore) and Nashik (14.80 crore).

So what inspired these Maharashtra government schools to seek funds? Nand Kumar, principal secretary, state education department, says one of the reasons could be the Pragat Shaikshanik programme rolled out by the state government two years ago.

“One of the components of the programme was the compulsory reporting of public participation. Until now, schools didn’t actively seek outside funds. But now, since the programme documents public participation, teachers have started actively reaching out to the community, encouraging them to contribute and also seeking corporate help. There has also been an overall improvement in the quality of education, reflected in many recent surveys, due to which villagers have started investing in zila parishad schools,” he says.

While in most districts, the change is being brought about by the community as a whole, Dhule district, said to be the first in the state to have 100 per cent digital classrooms in its government schools, might owe its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Crowd funding

transformation to a 35-year-old investment banker, Harshal Vibhandik.

“I live in New York and two years ago, I came back to my hometown in Dhule. I had Rs 9 lakh with me and after visiting a few schools, I decided to digitise nine of them. But then, villagers wanted to pitch in too and that is when the 70:30 funding idea came to me, with villagers raising the majority of the money,” Vibhandik says.

An idea that started off with nine schools soon cover all 1,103 zila parishad schools of Dhule with the banker’s friends from abroad, donors, villagers, local NGOs all pitching in. Vibhandik, who is working from India for now, says he also travels to other districts. “People are investing in the idea, villagers are investing in it. It is amazing to see the change,” says Vibhandik.

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