

CASE STUDY

Atma - Sparsha

A case study on Atma's 3 year Accelerator Partnership with Sparsha Trust

JULY 2022



About Sparsha Trust

Sparsha Charitable Trust is a non-profit organization that works for marginalized communities in Mumbai and aims to help underprivileged children by providing access to education and life skills to achieve better and sustainable living circumstances. Its mission is to implement strategic interventions that ensure quality education by providing preschool and remedial education to children as well as facilitating continuous education by empowering parents from marginalized communities. Sparsha was established in 2000 by a group of people, and Sarika Desai, a seasoned social worker has been leading the operations of the Education Programmes since 2004.

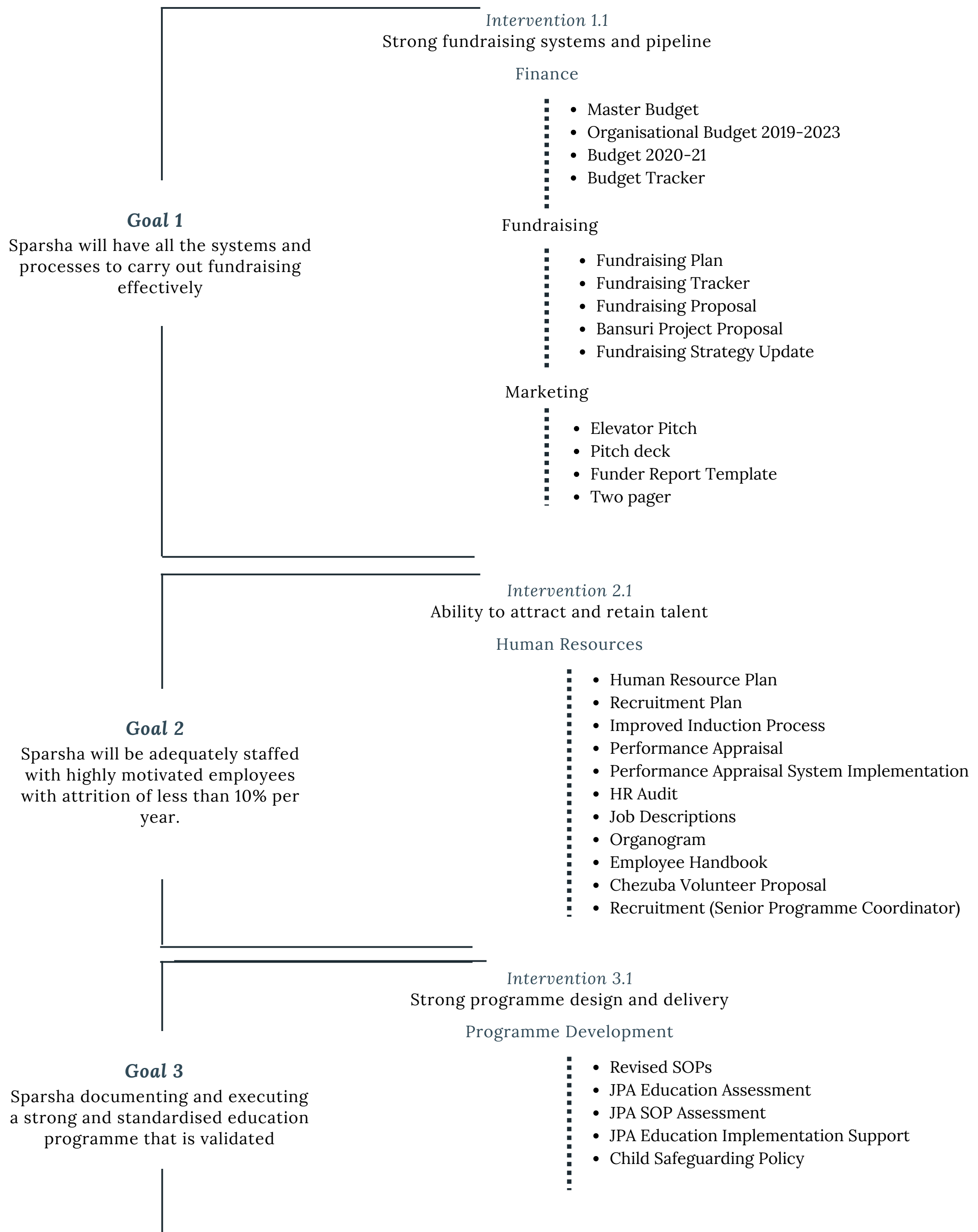
Problems identified

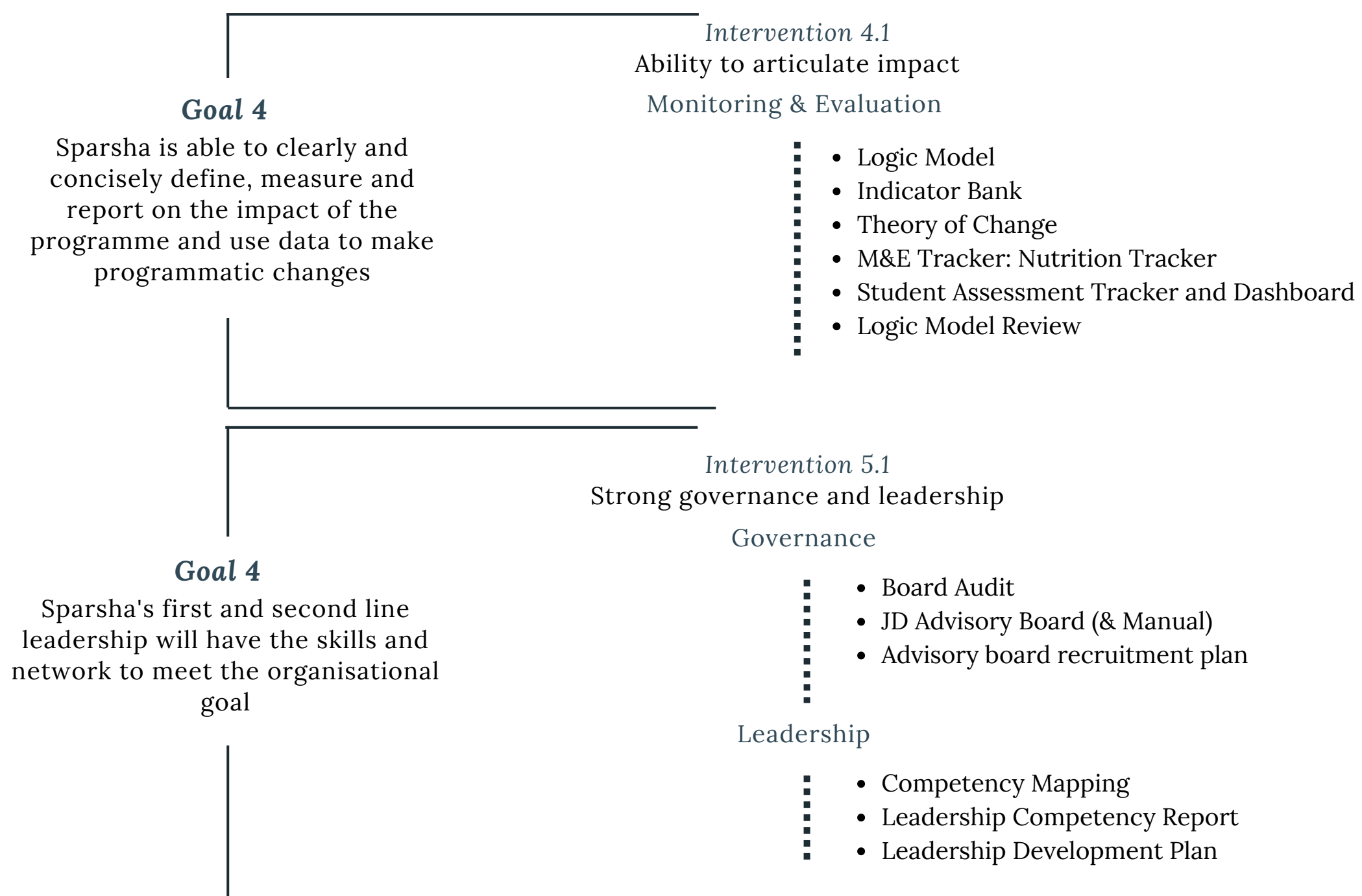
Sparsha's journey with Atma has been interesting. In 2013, they were onboarded as part of the Accelerator Programme. However, within a year, the partnership had to be paused as Atma felt Sparsha was not ready yet to build its capacity. Sarika took this on positively and set out to get the basics for her organisation right in order to get on the journey of strengthening the organisation. In 2019, the time was right for Sparsha to participate in the Accelerator. Sparsha took it on because they wanted to close the gaps they had and learn how to build the organisation and programmes sustainably.

Atma's Approach

The Life Stage Survey (LSS), Social Problem Definition workshop and Vision & Mission workshop were the tools used initially to chart out the major gap areas and plan for the next three years. The pandemic affected the organisation very harshly (with them losing 14 centres and a chunk of funding) and it also affected the partnership. However, both Atma and Sparsha continued on through the time by reassessing their needs and planning ahead. Before each project, the objectives were revisited and aligned. Simple processes like defining the end deliverable and discussing its usability and relevance to the organisation helped stay on track and deliver appropriate solutions

Solutions





Sparsha's Growth

Life Stage Survey

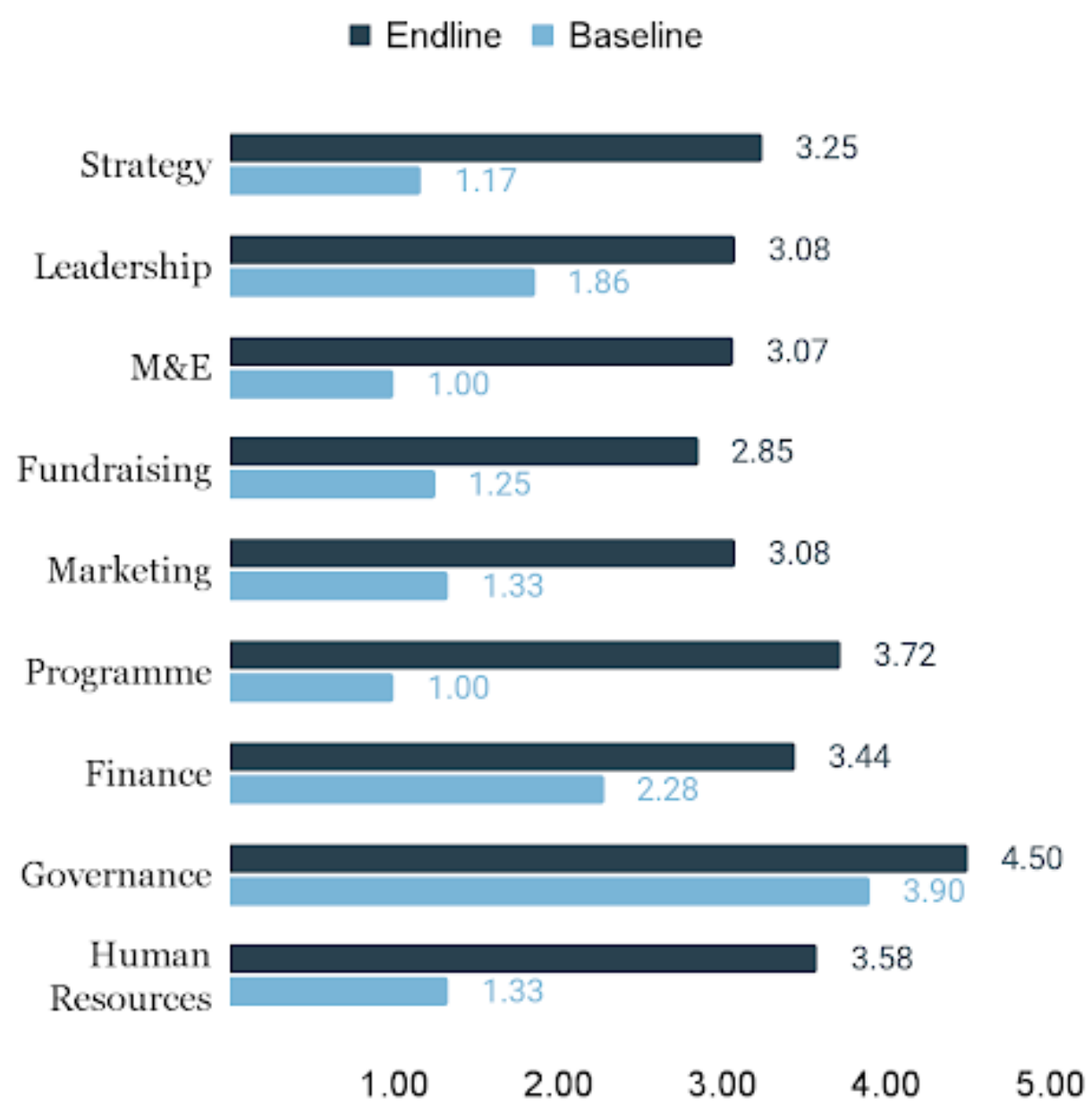
The Life Stages framework defines the five board stages through which a nonprofit organisation typically progresses. An organisation in the final stage will have achieved self-sufficiency and sustainability while continuing to evolve.

Stakeholders

2019-20	278 children
2020-21	1064 children
2021-22	1072 children

Budget

2019-20	Rs. 42,96,600
2020-21	Rs. 38,26,200
2021-22	Rs.35,23,400



Outcomes Achieved

Strong fundraising systems and pipeline

Fundraising is a critical aspect for any NGO. While considerable efforts and projects were done together in the course of this partnership, the lack of human resources and the onslaught of the pandemic hindered Sparsha from being effective in this aspect. Sparsha also has had to face the brunt of long-term funders bringing their support to an end at a difficult time. However, Sarika the director of Sparsha was able to change her attitude towards fundraising and marketing. She is now gearing up to focus on visibility, emerging as a thought leader in the education space and revising fundraising practices in the organisation.

Ability to attract and retain talent

Sparsha has clear systems, processes and documents required for recruiting and managing human resources at the organisation. While there has been an overall decline in the number of staff due to the loss of funding in the pandemic, critical roles of Senior Programme Coordinator and MIS Coordinator were recruited with Atma support. Sparsha has since continued to use the JDs & recruitment process for other recent hires for teaching staff as well. Four skilled volunteers also joined due to the proposal we worked on together.

Ability to articulate impact

Sparsha has been able to streamline several M&E processes through trackers for different aspects of the programme. Defining the programme outcomes, outputs and larger vision helps them with more effective communication, proposal writing and reporting. In addition, there is regular tracking and data collection at the organisation. Sparsha has been able to hire an MIS coordinator who has been able to bring in more timely digitization of data and analysis.

Strong governance and leadership

Sparsha had no effective governance structure when the partnership started. At the end of it, all aspects of Governance have been addressed and highlighted. The Advisory Board Manual was created which clarified the board members' role as well as laid down processes for regular review of the board functioning with points for induction as well. Sparsha now has a comprehensive tool for any Advisory member they onboard and can seek out individuals accordingly with clarity of needs and expectations.

Strong programme design and delivery

Sparsha already had a strong ground presence and a model they knew worked well with low-income communities. With Atma's support, many critical processes were documented thus making the programme one step closer to being personnel-dependent. The Joint Programme Assessment gave insights into strengths and areas of growth which Sparsha promptly put into action immediately. 4 teacher training workshops by 2 experts were planned (with 2 already completed before the end of the partnership).

Sparsha's story



The inability to continue the programmes, shifts in the philanthropic landscape and gaps in talent acquisition during the pandemic put many NGOs on the brink of collapsing. The ability to stay agile, adaptability and learning orientation became the determining factors for the continuity of work. Sparsha's partnership story underlines the same.

Sarika Desai, the Executive Director, at Sparsha Charitable trust, worked on her approach as a leader. Since 2004, Sarika had been the sole leader of the organisation, which was becoming challenging for her. Atma supported the organisation in building a second line of leadership, which played a key role in the organisation. Atma developed strong systems for talent recruitment, improved the basic HR processes and provided guidance for leadership development. Sarika relied on Atma to increase her comfort with sharing responsibilities. Increased delegation and prioritisations of tasks made the leadership more visionary and lesser operational.

Sparsha continued to support 10th-standard students throughout the pandemic. 100% of the students attempted SSE and 97% passed the exams. Despite the struggles, Sparsha ensured programme continuity and is continuing to learn and grow.

"Atma partnership helped continue Sparsha's efforts in making an impact on children's lives. During the pandemic when on-ground staff struggled a lot to shift everything online, the Atma team assisted the team. Since then, Sparsha has never stopped working. As a result, the children haven't dropped out even after school. They went for higher studies in these last 3 years."

- Sarika Desai,
Director at Sparsha Charitable Trust

