**Press Release**

**Sampark Foundation’s disruptive, inclusive innovation among Top 100 in MacArthur Foundation’s 100&Change competition for a $100 Million Grant**

**Noida, Feb 21, 2020:** Sampark Foundation’s disruptive, inclusive innovation—Sampark Smart Shala program—aimed at transforming the learning outcomes for millions of children, has been selected as one of the Top 100 in the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation 100&Change competition. We remain in the running for the competition’s award of a single $100 million grant.

“We are delighted that our work has been recognised by such a prestigious organisation. We are proud to be among the Top 100 in the 100&Change competition. Poor learning outcomes among children is one of the biggest problems facing the education system in India, and we are committed to solving this problem through our frugal, tech-driven interventions. We have already transformed learning outcomes for 7 million children in six states across the country, and are well on our way to reach out to 20 million children in the coming years,” said Vineet Nayar, founder chairman, Sampark Foundation.

On February 20, The MacArthur Foundation announced the highest-scoring proposals, designated as the Top 100, in its 100&Change competition for a $100 million grant for a project that can help solve one of the world’s most critical social challenges.

The Top 100 represent the top 21 percent of competition submissions. The proposals were rigorously vetted, undergoing MacArthur’s initial administrative review, a Peer-to-Peer review, an evaluation by an external panel of judges, and a technical review by specialists whose expertise was matched to the project. Each proposal was evaluated using four criteria: impactful, evidence-based, feasible, and durable. MacArthur’s Board of Directors will select up to 10 finalists from these high-scoring proposals this spring.

“MacArthur seeks to generate increased recognition, exposure, and support for the high-impact ideas designated as the Top 100,” said Cecilia Conrad, CEO of Lever for Change and MacArthur Managing Director, 100&Change. “Based on our experience in the first round of 100&Change, we know the competition will produce multiple compelling and fundable ideas. We are committed to matching philanthropists with powerful solutions and problem solvers to accelerate social change.”

Over 144 million children study in more than 1 million public-funded schools in India. In the 17 years since education became a fundamental right, the country has achieved a near-universal enrolment rate of 96% at the primary level. However, all independent surveys—including the National Achievement Survey (NAS)—point to alarmingly poor learning outcomes. If not tackled in time, India’s learning crisis can turn its demographic dividend into its biggest challenge.

Sampark Foundation believes that India needs to fight education inequality to fight economic and other debilitating inequalities. Though there are many different approaches to solving the learning outcome problem, Sampark Foundation focuses on the innovation at the interface of a child and the teacher by putting the teachers at the heart of its plans so that they own and drive the change and claim credit for significant increase in the learning outcomes.

Our aim is to drive significant improvement in learning outcomes among 20 million children in 200,000 public-schools through disruptive, inclusive innovations effectively implemented in partnership with the government.
**Sampark Smart Shala** is a cutting-edge, frugal solution, based on user-centric design thinking, to improve learning outcomes. The SSS program uses five innovations—Audio Box with a rechargeable audio device – a voice mascot called ‘Sampark Didi’ – which delivers 112 carefully researched lessons with songs, music and games; Teaching-Learning Material (TLM), specially designed to work in rural classrooms; these colourful TLMs help explain concepts in linear steps: from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract; Multimedia workbooks, which provide real-time access to online and offline video lessons to users by allowing them to scan the QR codes embedded at the end of each topic; Board Games, enable learning even when a teacher is not around; And the Sampark Smart Shala App, a free BOT-enabled interactive mobile app, which works both online and offline. It is loaded with animated videos, games, puzzles and worksheets, and gives the users a personalised experience.

**About Sampark Foundation:** Sampark Foundation was founded by Anupama Nayar and Vineet Nayar (Former Vice Chairman and CEO of HCL Technologies and author of Harvard Business Press bestseller "Employees First, Customer Second") with a belief that “frugal innovation” and its effective implementation in partnership with the government can drive large-scale improvement in learning outcomes.

We are currently working with 90,000 rural schools, 7 million children in 6 states (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) along with 2,00,000 teachers. A third party assessment in 2018-19 by Feedback Consulting showed a remarkable increase in the percentage of children who answered grade level questions in Math & English: 68% in Chhattisgarh compared to 29% in 2017-18, 54% in Jharkhand compared to 18% in control group with no intervention, 70% in Haryana compared to 23% in control group with no intervention.

**About Vineet Nayar:** Vineet Nayar is Founder, Chairman of Sampark Foundation and former CEO of HCL Technologies, a leading IT firm whose transformation was architected from $0.7 billion in 2005 to $4.7 Billion in 2013 by Vineet, which led HCL’s management practices being taught as a case study in Harvard Business School. He is also author of the highly acclaimed management book, “Employee First, Customers Second – Turning Conventional Management Upside Down which has sold 100,000 copies till date. Vineet has been cited in “Forbes 48 Heroes of Philanthropy 2016 for the pedagogical innovations the Foundation has brought into classrooms. He is also an acknowledged management visionary and a radical thinker and has been included in the elite “Thinkers 50 List” in 2011-2012 which is a listing of the world’s top 50 business leaders.

**About 100&Change**

100&Change is a distinctive competition that is open to organizations and collaborations working in any field, anywhere in the world. Proposals must identify a problem and offer a solution that promises significant and durable change.

The second round of the competition had a promising start: 3,690 competition registrants submitted 755 proposals. Of those, 475 passed an initial administrative review. 100&Change was designed to be fair, open, and transparent. The identity of the judges and the methodology used to assess initial proposals are public. Applicants received comments and feedback from the peers, judges, and technical reviewers. Key issues in the competition are discussed in a blog on The MacArthur Foundation’s website.

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