



Improving Foundation Learning (literacy and numeracy) of Children in Grade I-V in Government Schools in Ganjam district of Odisha in India

An Evaluation

Submitted to Youth for Social Development

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I have certainly learned a little more about the education system and the admirable work done by Civil Society organizations in the process of conducting this evaluation.

Sita Sekhar

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An Evaluation
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Executive Summary

Background

The Covid Pandemic across the country had a devastating impact on the learning levels of the children in the primary classes. The children lost out on the learning of Fundamental Language and Numeracy (FLN) during the period. Without this basic learning, the children reached higher classes, but their learning levels were much lower than what they should have been. Therefore, it was imperative to bring these children up to the required level as quickly as possible.

Youth For Social Development, a Berhampur based NGO in Odisha realised the need for efforts to bring the dropped-out children to school as well as to improve their learning levels to bring the children at par with required levels for their age and standard at school. The organization that has a history of working to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in Odisha especially, women, children, Dalits, tribal and people living in slums and informal settlements on variety of themes/issues since 2006, decided to launch a project to impart FLN knowledge particularly to children from economically backward areas and remote rural areas in three blocks of Purshottampur, Rangeilunda, and Khallikote in Ganjam district on a pilot basis. This project was supported by India Development Relief Fund (IDRF).

This report is the outcome of the thorough evaluation of the impact as well as the implementation of the project carried out by Dr Sita Sekhar, a consultant with decades of experience.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted by using a mix of desk reviews, analysis of quantitative data from Baseline and Endline assessments, school assessments, and qualitative data obtained from interviews with a sample of the various stakeholders.

Major findings/ Conclusions

1. The desk review showed that the project implementation was highly efficient, and documentation of each stage was done well. The robust Pratham ASER tool for assessment and the acclaimed TLM provided by Pratham during the training of the YSD team were put to excellent use by the young team.

2. The quantitative data demonstrated the success of the project in bringing children who were irregular or dropouts back to school in large numbers. It also provided evidence for the improvement of the levels of learning of most of the children between the baseline and the endline assessments.
3. The feedback from all stakeholders strongly advocated for the increase of the duration of the learning camps/bridge courses. The stakeholders approved the idea of a scale up as well.
4. The evaluation highlights the overall success of all elements of the project including the assessments, learning camps, setting up of Community Learning and support centres, the conduct of the summer camps as well as rapport building with the Government officials, school authorities and elected representatives.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the evaluation

1. **Extension of the project:** There is a big request for extension of the project elements of both learning camps/ bridge courses and CLSC. There is a demand for deepening the reach of the project at locations that have already been covered as well as to new locations within the Gram Panchayats covered.
2. **Increase in duration of learning camps:** Since there is a loud demand for increase in the duration of the camp from 30 days to longer (a maximum of 2 months) the project design would need to take this into account.
3. **Training of YSD team:** The YSD team would need further training in different aspects of project management and of the education system. Concepts of education like pedagogy, effective teaching methods etc would need to be included in the training.
4. **Training and orientation workshops with Government officials and school teaching and management staff:** Workshops are recommended at district level and block level to orient the officials on the project goals and processes. A similar orientation would be required for the teachers as well. This should be organized in partnership with Government officials for best results.
5. **Liaising with Government to fill vacancies.:** YSD would have to liaise with the Government officials to arrive at ways in which recruitment to fill existing vacancies can be expedited. There would also be alternative paths to be devised and suggested to recruit more teachers such as recruiting qualified youth from the community to volunteer for a short period, persuade the community or political entities to fund recruitment of teachers etc.
6. **Scale-up of the project:** There has been a big yes from all stakeholders to the scale - up of the project. This scale-up would necessitate strategizing on the quantum of deepening versus extension of the program. A mix of deepening in the same locations with follow-up courses and activities and extension to other blocks in the same district would be ideal. Extension to other districts can probably be envisaged at a later stage of the project. If YSD can get assured substantial financial and

technical support they could consider extending to other villages in the same Gram Panchayats, to other blocks and as a first step and assimilate the learnings from that exercise to lead to the second stage of extending to other districts.

7. **Customization and change in project implementation design:** The design of the project should be tweaked to adjust for the planned extension. A larger team would be required. The team would need to be trained. Other changes that would be required are - creation of additional TLM , addition of other subjects in the curriculum, use of more TLM , and increase in the duration of the classes. Field logistics will have to be planned for the new design. More learning centres should be set up in addition to the ones that exist. Customization of the design must be done to suit the scope of the scale-up.

The following chapters describe the background, project details, major findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the evaluation.

Improving Foundation Learning (literacy and numeracy) of Children in Grade I-V in Government Schools in Ganjam district of Odisha in India

An Evaluation

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I. Background

The covid Pandemic across the country had a devastating impact on the learning levels of the children in the primary classes. The children lost out on the learning of Fundamental Language and Numeracy (FLN) during the period. Without this basic learning, the children reached higher classes, but their learning levels were much lower than what they should have been. Therefore, it was imperative to bring these children up to the required level as quickly as possible.

In Odisha, in October 2020, 433 schools (including 425 primary and 8 upper primary schools) in Ganjam closed due to poor enrolment and the government of Odisha decided to merge primary schools with the high schools nearby. This severely impacted on education of young primary level children in the district and led to increased number of school dropouts. The distance between the habitation and the newly merged school in rural habitations was significant for children in the primary age group and parents were apprehensive of the risks involved in sending small children to schools located far away. This step by the Government also compounded the impact of the pandemic.

Youth For Social Development, a Berhampur based NGO in Odisha realised the need for efforts to bring the dropped-out children to school as well as to improve their learning levels to bring the children at par with required levels for their age and standard at school. The organization that has a history of working to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in Odisha especially, women, children, Dalits, tribal and people living in slums and informal settlements on variety of themes/issues including access to basic services (health, education, nutrition, water & sanitation and housing), people's participation in governance, development of children and adolescents and living condition of people affected with environment and climate since 2006, took this task very seriously and decided to launch a project to impart FLN knowledge particularly to children from economically backward areas and remote rural areas in the three blocks of Purshottampur, Rangeilunda, and Khallikote in Ganjam district on a pilot basis. This project was supported by India Development Relief Fund (IDRF). The implementation of the project has been completed and it is now time for review of the impact as well as the implementation itself so that the feasibility of a scale-up can be considered and plans made accordingly.

For the purpose of measuring the impact of the project as well as to understand what parts of the project were effective, and what parts could be improved to make it better, YSD approached Dr Sita Sekhar, an independent Social Accountability, Monitoring and Evaluation consultant, to conduct an independent evaluation of the project.

This report is the outcome of the thorough evaluation carried out by Dr Sita Sekhar.

II. Objectives of the Evaluation

The broad objectives of the evaluation were as follows:

- a. To assess the effectiveness of the project (i.e., the extent to which the project's stated objectives are achieved or can be achieved).
- b. To assess the relevance of the project (i.e., appropriateness of the project in relation to the needs).
- c. To assess the quality of the delivery – quality of those directly involved in carrying out the project and suggest possible ways to improve the project.

To achieve these objectives, an elaborate methodology was developed after understanding the details of the project.

III. Project Details

The YSD Education Project consisted of several parts.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the project were as follows.

- To improve the foundational learning (literacy and numeracy) of children in grade I-V in government schools in remote rural areas and slums, to recover from learning loss due to the covid pandemic.
- To build and train a core team of educators and programme implementers to effectively design, manage and monitor the progress and plan to scale.
- To design an effective long term, scale up plan in the district based on the outcome by working closely with the government department.

3.2 Selection of schools and children

After a small survey of the three blocks, a total of 60 schools across the three blocks of Purushottampur (26), Rangeilunda (16) and Khallikote (18) were targeted in the project. These schools were selected based on various factors such as proportions of children from economically backward communities, from Dalit families and those serving remote tribal and other villages.

A total of 4033 children were covered in the Baseline assessments. Around 3272 children were targeted for the project. Children of Class 1 and Class 2 (a total of 2784) were involved in games and group activities for them to learn basic concepts. Those who scored at level 4 for language were not selected for the learning camp/bridge course. Those who scored at

level 4 for maths were also not included for the learning camps/bridge course (details on the levels of learning for Language and Maths are given in section 3.5). These children were from economically backward communities, remote areas, and tribal or Dalit families. The sample included rural and urban schools and children. Some children with special needs were also included.

3.3 Recruitment and Training of implementation team

A team of ten youth with a mix of those who had training in teaching and those who did not were recruited from the selected three blocks to bring in the different perspectives. Each Block was supervised by a block coordinator. The project coordinator supervised the whole project. The team size was therefore 14. The CVs of the team are included in Annexure 10.

This team was trained by a team of 2 trainers from Pratham. There were two rounds of training, one a 3-day training on the materials and methods to be used and one refresher course of 2 days after implementation was begun.

3.4 Summer camps in selected villages

Summer camps were organized during the summer vacations for primary school aged children, particularly those children who were going to move to standard 3 - 5. The purpose was to enhance their reading and arithmetic skills and reinforce foundational competence. The hidden purpose was also to influence the education seeking behaviour of the parents and children in the villages.

The initiative began with recruiting 31 young community level volunteers, spreading across 36 villages, providing them with basic training on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), and equipping them with teaching-learning materials (TLM). These volunteers engaged with children, daily for two hours in community spaces throughout the vacation period. A total of 181 children participated in these activities. The camps ended with science, language, and math fairs where the children exhibited their projects. Gram Panchayat officials, teachers, headmasters, education officials, and community members attended in large numbers, providing a supportive environment for the children.

The impact of the camp was evident as it generated excitement among children, parents, community members, and volunteers alike. Notably, there was a noticeable boost in confidence among both children and parents regarding the improvement of their learning skills. The closing exhibition on language, math, and science was a culmination of these efforts, and it attracted widespread participation and encouragement from various stakeholders. The success of the summer camp demonstrates the positive ripple effects on the community, fostering a sense of enthusiasm and confidence in the pursuit of enhanced educational outcomes.

3.5 Measurement of learning level of children before learning camp/ bridge course

In each of the 60 schools covered, children from 3rd to 5th grade were given a test using a format used for the ASER survey by Pratham, the learning level of each child in Language (Odiya) and Mathematics was checked. Four levels were specified based on the extent of learning for each child. The levels for language were from 0 to 4 – 0 being the beginner who basically didn't know any alphabet, 1 was a child who only recognized letters, 2 was able to read words, 3 who read paragraphs and 4 one who could read a story. In maths the beginner or level 0 was someone who didn't even recognize numbers, 1 who recognized numbers 1 to 9 but not beyond, 2 was someone who recognized numbers 1 to 99, 3 one who was able to do subtraction and 4 those who were able to do division.

Those children that were at level 4 were exempted from the camp. Those who scored at level 0 to 3 in Language and/or Maths were picked for attending the camp. Those children who were irregular or had dropped out were taught at home as well as motivated to learn and go to Community Learning and Support Centres and school. Parents were also motivated to send their child to school.

3.6 Setting up of community Learning and support centres

The CLSCs were set up to cater to children with low learning levels as well as for those who were irregular to school for reasons such as lack of interest in studies, distance to school, and migration of parents for work. Home coaching and coaching at the learning centre was carried out to get them motivated as well as to bring them to par with other students of their age. These community centres were set up with the cooperation of the local self-Government authorities or the community itself at a location provided by them.

The CLSCs work seven days a week. Monday to Saturday they work for an hour in the morning or evening based on the timing chosen by the community. Each community has chosen morning or evening time based on the work schedules of the parents as well as the school and tuition timings of the children. Those children who do not have access to tuition nearby or cannot afford it come all seven days to the centres. Those who go for tuition on working days come only on weekends.

Once the dropout children reach a particular level of learning they are encouraged to go back to school and come to the centre as well. The irregular children are also motivated to attend school regularly.

A survey was conducted in the local community to identify the irregular children. The dropouts were identified by going through the school attendance records in that region as well as through the survey.

3.7 Running of learning camps/bridge courses for children with lower learning levels

Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) provided by Pratham as well as some prepared by the educators themselves were used to conduct an hour-long class in a group for children of lower level of learning. While children of class 1 and 2 were only told stories and asked to play games in groups (while they learned basic concepts), children of class 3 to 5 were taught Odiya and Maths through group activities, use of charts and pictures as well as games, dance, songs, and stories.

3.8 Measurement of learning levels after learning camp/ bridge course

Once the three ten-day camps were completed, the learning levels of those who attended the classes were measured again. This data has been used to assess the impact on learning levels.

3.9 Assessment of Schools on various aspects

Each school was assessed on a set of 60 parameters related to infrastructure status, availability of urinals and toilets, number of students, number of teachers, availability of school facilities such as black boards, digital boards, digital display etc. Apart from these, the location of the schools and presence of the school management committee, presence of Child cabinets and their functional status were also examined. Quality of the mid-day meal was checked and serving practices were observed.

This information will be used to provide holistic recommendations to the department.

3.10 Engagement with Teachers and school leaders

The YSD team initiated the project by engaging with the head teachers and teachers in the selected schools. They were oriented with the elements of the project. The aim was to get them comfortable with the idea of learning camps so that they would cooperate by giving time in the daily schedule for the camps to be held. It was also done with a purpose to convince them to participate in the classes or at least observing them so that they could understand the Pratham group-learning approach. It was then presumed that they would use those methods on their own as well.

3.11 Engagement with Government officials

Engagement with Government officials such as the BEOs of the three blocks at the district level and CRCCs at the cluster level was done in a concerted effort. They were encouraged to come to the schools and observe the learning camp/bridge course activities, interact with the children and to ensure that the school authorities participated in the project without problem.

3.12 Engagement with Community

The engagement with the community that started with the summer camps was continued throughout the project period. The team visited homes of the children, communicated with the

parents, and encouraged them to send their children to school, to the learning camps as well as to the CLSC when required.

IV. Methodology used for the evaluation

The evaluation was carried out with a mix of Desk Review, quantitative and qualitative approaches.

4.1 Desk Review

The following materials were reviewed in the process of evaluation:

1. Training materials of Pratham
2. Tools for measurement of learning level for Language and Maths
3. Teaching learning materials used by implementers during the camp
4. CVs of YSD's implementation team
5. Periodic reports
6. Project proposal
7. MIS data

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

Data collected during the project at baseline and endline was analysed. Data on school conditions has also been analysed. This data on learning levels of children by location and class, before the implementation and after, distribution of students by gender and learning levels, is presented in this section in tables and charts/ graphs.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

Interviews with a sample of all stakeholders were conducted to get an insight into qualitative aspects of the impact of the project.

The stakeholders included:

1. Teachers who observed the process
2. Pratham team that trained YSD team
3. IDRF team
4. Secretary of YSD
5. SMC presidents and members
6. YSD project coordinator
7. YSD team of implementers
8. Block Education officers and CRCCs of the three blocks
9. Sarpanch of Gram Panchayats covered
10. Presidents and members of the School Management committee
11. Head teachers at selected schools
12. Parents of sampled children
13. Children who attended camps

14. Parents of children who went to the community learning centre

15. Children who attended the classes at the community learning centre

The planned number of each type of stakeholder to be interviewed is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Number of stakeholders planned to be interviewed.

Sl. No.	Stakeholder name /category	Number in Khallikote	Number in Purusottampur	Number in Rangeilunda	Total
1	Pratham team				2
2	Schools	5	5	5	15
3	Students from each school	5 of each class from I to V = 25	5 of each class from I to V = 25	5 of each class from I to V = 25	75
4	Teacher @ 1 per school	5	5	5	15
5	IDRF team				4
6	Secretary YSD				1
7	Project Coordinator YSD				1
8	YSD team member for each school	5	5	5	15
9	BEO	1	1	1	3
10	CRCC	1	1	1	3
11	Sarpanch	5	5	5	15
12	Head Teacher	5	5	5	15
13	SMC member	5	5	5	15
14	Parents of students	25	25	25	75
15	Children attending classes at CLC	6-7 students from each learning centre	6-7 students from each learning centre	6-7 students from each learning centre	18 to 21 students
16	Parents of children attending class at CLC	Parents of each child covered at a centre	Parents of each child covered at a centre	Parents of each child covered at a centre	18 to 21 parents

Table 2 below gives the actual number of each category that were actually interviewed.

Table 2: Number of Stakeholders actually interviewed.

S No	Stakeholder type	Number in Khallikote	Number in Purusottampur	Number in Rangeilunda	Total number
1	BEO/ABEO				2
2	Head Teachers	5	5	5	15
3	Teachers	5	4	5	13
4	CRCC	5	5	5	12
5	Sarpanch	4	2	-	6

6	SMC members	5	3	3	11
7	Children who attended camps	25	25	25	75
8	Parents of children who attended camps	25	25	25	75
9	Children who went to CLSC	5 from each centre			Around 50
10	Parents of children who went to CLSC	5 from each centre			Around 50
11	Secretary YSD	-	-	-	1
12	Project Coordinator YSD	-	-	-	1
13	Block Coordinators YSD	1	1	1	3
14	Educators YSD				10
15	Pratham Team	-	-	-	2
16	IDRF team				4

Note: A few of the numbers do not match the intended ones because of reasons such as non-response from the selected person to repeated phone calls, retirement of the teachers since the project was done, or long migration of the parents of children. This was very minimal and wouldn't impact the results of the evaluation.

Separate questionnaires/checklists were designed for the interviews for each type of stakeholder. While the YSD team, children going to the community learning centre and their parents were interviewed in groups, other stakeholders were interviewed individually. Guiding questions for each stakeholder are given in Annexure 1.

4.4 Risk Mitigation

Any possibility of misinformation or bias was avoided by cross checking all the information by triangulating responses of various stakeholders as well as going through the MIS data, and baseline and endline data on learning levels. What the interviewees said tallied with the what the data showed. The questionnaires were designed to facilitate the triangulation.

Overall, the evaluation has been carried out in an unbiased and independent manner.

V. Major Findings

After examination of the documents, analysis of the quantitative data, and conduct of the interviews, the findings from the evaluation are described in this section.

5.1 Findings from Desk Review

The Teaching learning materials (TLM), Proposal given by YSD to IDRF, Note on Community learning centres, periodic progress reports submitted, assessment materials provided by Pratham, notes on summer camps and CLSCs were examined as part of the Desk Review.

Teaching Learning Material

The teaching learning materials used by the team included material for Odiya and Maths. The Odiya material included alphabet charts, charts with words and pictures to suit the words, stories to be read with pictures, stories with only pictures for improving sentence formation and use of imagination and observation, mathrakyashara all prepared separately for each grade. Most of them were those provided by Pratham but there were some prepared by the team itself. The material is informative, child friendly and attractive in colourful style. The material is also appropriate for group learning as well as for participative approach.

The maths TLM included number charts, exercises in counting from 1 to 100, and interactive charts for place value, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Each chart mentioned the grade it was to be used for and the concept being taught. These were also colourful, clear, and attractive.



Image : Children in a learning camp reading literature in Khallikote

Proposal

The proposal prepared by YSD for the project was extensive and comprehensive. The various activities proposed, material to be used, team to be used and how they would be trained, methodology to be followed, the time frame and sampling methods were clearly laid out. It gave a step-by-step process sequence and provided an understanding of what the project would entail. YSD has largely stuck to the proposed process except when there were some

diversions required. These departures from the proposed method resulted from issues faced in the field – like the increase in schools from 50 to 60 to attain the required number of students for example.

Note on summer camps

This note gave a comprehensive look into the summer camps that were organized in 36 villages by recruiting 31 volunteer youth from the community by YSD during the summer vacations. A total of 181 children actively participated in the summer camp. The impact of the camp was evident as it generated excitement among children, parents, community members, and volunteers alike. There was a noticeable boost in confidence among both children and parents regarding the improvement of their learning skills. The closing exhibition on language, math, and science was received with enthusiasm and it attracted widespread participation and encouragement from various stakeholders. Gram Panchayat officials, teachers, headmasters, education officials, and community members attended in large numbers, providing a supportive environment for the children. The success of the summer camp is demonstrated by the positive ripple effects it created on the community, fostering a sense of enthusiasm and confidence in the pursuit of enhanced educational outcomes. These summer camps lay the foundation for the other activities to follow.



Image: Children in a summer camp on literacy and numeracy in Purusottampur block

Note on CLSC

The note prepared by YSD on the background for setting up the Community Learning and Support Centre was self-explanatory and thorough. There are ten CLSCs set up under the project. They have covered not only those children who were absentees, but also those who were irregular for various reasons and at low level of learning as well.

The centres are operational on all seven days of the week, one hour from Monday to Friday and 2 hours on weekends. They are conducted in venues that are provided by the community. This has resulted in a sense of participation among all local stakeholders.

Conversations with various stakeholders demonstrated that the learning centres were helpful in bringing children back to school as well as to improve their learning levels. The parents also understood the importance of education for their children and found the learning centres very influential and useful for their children. All stakeholders emphasised that the team members put in a lot of effort to motivate the children to join the classes and then once the children attended the classes and liked the teaching style, they became regular in the class and eventually at school.

Table 3 provides the list of the ten Community learning and support centres (CLSC) by location and number of children served.



Image: children participating a Community Learning and Support Centre in Rangeilunda

Table 3: Number of students covered by block/ward/village in CLSCs

Block/ULB	Gram Panchayat/ward	Village/ slum	Number of students covered
Purusottampur	Ch. Nuagoan	IAY colony	35
Purusottampur	Badakharida	Birajaganath Sashan	38
Purusottampur	Jhadabai	Gaganpur	23
Khallikote	Mathura	Kharipalli	45
Khallikote	Manikyapur	Manikyapur	43
Khallikote	Manikyapur	Matiasahi	32
Berhampur Municipal Corporation	Ward No 1	Utaramukhi	32
Berhampur Municipal Corporation	Ward no 3	Haridakhandi	35
Berhampur Municipal Corporation	Ward no 38	Ambapua	34
Berhampur Municipal Corporation	Ward no 37	Khadasingi	30
Total			315

Assessment materials provided by Pratham

Pratham has been using the assessment materials for their ASER surveys for decades. The material has been found to be very effective in measuring the learning levels of the children in different grades. The YSD team was trained by two trainers from Pratham to use these materials to assess the learning levels of targeted children in this project. The assessment was carried out before the intervention and after the completion of the camps. This gives a measure of the impact of the project as well.

Periodic project progress reports

The six monthly and annual project progress reports prepared by YSD give a comprehensive description of the processes followed for the project as well as of the results from the data analysis through the project period. They reflect the progress made steadily. The reports show that a holistic approach was followed involving the Govt officials, teachers, head teachers and the community. They captured the dramatic improvement in the learning levels of most children who attended the camps. Not only were the children with low levels of learning brought to par with other children, those who were irregular also became regular. The challenges faced by the team during the process have also been highlighted so as to make it easier for future endeavours of the same kind. Overall, the document provides a good overview of the entire process.

MIS Data

The MIS data included extensive information about the schools, the children who were taught at the summer camps, learning camps/bridge course, as well as the ones taught at the CLSCs from all the three blocks. Some of this was used to analyse the progress made by children between the baseline and the endline assessments. It was also used to do some analysis of the facilities at schools, background of the children etc. This rich data has not yet been used fully to understand the nuances of the improvements in learning levels of children.

5.2 Findings from Quantitative data

The summary tables below (Tables 4 & 5) present the numbers of children tested and targeted by level of learning and class during the baseline assessment.

TABLE 4 BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Baseline (Based on all the tested students)											
Class	Total Tested	Language level					Math level				
		0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Class 3	1295	240	191	226	447	191	140	328	267	222	145
Class 4	1354	198	158	233	519	246	114	247	223	298	225
Class 5	1384	148	138	161	613	324	68	210	171	315	296
Total	4033	586	487	620	1579	761	322	785	661	835	666

Note: level 0 for language is beginners, 1 is those who can read letters, 2 is those who can read words, 3 is those who can read paragraphs, and 4 is those who can read stories. For maths 0 who didn't know any numbers, 1 is those who recognized numbers from 1 to 9, 2 is those who recognize numbers from 1 to 99, 3 is those who know subtraction, 4 those who know division.

Out of the 4033 students from class 3 to 5 who were tested, 3272 were targeted for the project. Those who scored above 3 were not selected. Apart from the children from 3rd to 5th grade, 2784 children from 1st and 2nd grade were also involved in the process through games and learning activities.

Table 5 below gives distribution of targeted children by levels in language and maths and class.

TABLE 5 BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Baseline (Based on targeted students)												
Class	Total Targeted for Odiya	Language					Math					Total Targeted for maths
		0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4	
Class 3	1104	240	191	226	447	0	140	328	267	222	145	957

Class 4	1108	198	158	233	519	0	114	247	223	298	225	882
Class 5	1060	148	138	161	613	0	68	210	171	315	296	764
Total	3272	586	487	620	1579	0	322	785	661	835	666	2603

Note: level 0 for language is beginners, 1 is those who can read letters, 2 is those who can read words, 3 is those who can read paragraphs, and 4 is those who can read stories. For maths 0 who didn't know any numbers, 1 is those who recognized numbers from 1 to 9, 2 is those who recognize numbers from 1 to 99, 3 is those who know subtraction, 4 those who know division.

Table 6 below presents the attendance of targeted children in each of the three camps for the children.

Range in %	No. Of Children Present		
	Camp 1	Camp 2	Camp 3
0% - 25%	510	522	326
26%- 50%	702	689	513
51%- 75%	915	880	1019
76%- 100%	987	1120	1379
Total	3114	3211	3237

The distribution of children who were tested by standard, gender, and location (block) is given in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Distribution of children tested by Gender, Standard and Location (block)

District	Block	Total Gram Panchayat /ward	Sample of Children					
			Std-3		Std-4		Std-5	
			Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Ganjam	Purusottampur	8	197	235	225	241	246	254
	Khallikote	11	277	269	244	305	265	265
Ganjam	Rangeilunda	14	162	155	168	171	172	182
Total		33	636	659	637	717	683	701

The distribution of children who were targeted by standard, gender and location is given in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Distribution of children targeted by Standard Gender, and Location

District	Block	Total Gram Panchayat/ward	Targeted Children					
			Std-3		Std-4		Std-5	
			Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Ganjam	Purusottampur	8	151	183	174	178	177	168
Ganjam	Khallikote	11	250	243	211	252	225	207

Ganjam	Rangeilunda	14	139	137	144	149	145	139
Total		20	540	563	529	579	547	514

Once the camps were completed, the endline learning level assessment was carried out. The results from the endline testing are given in table 9 below.

Table 9 Endline Assessment

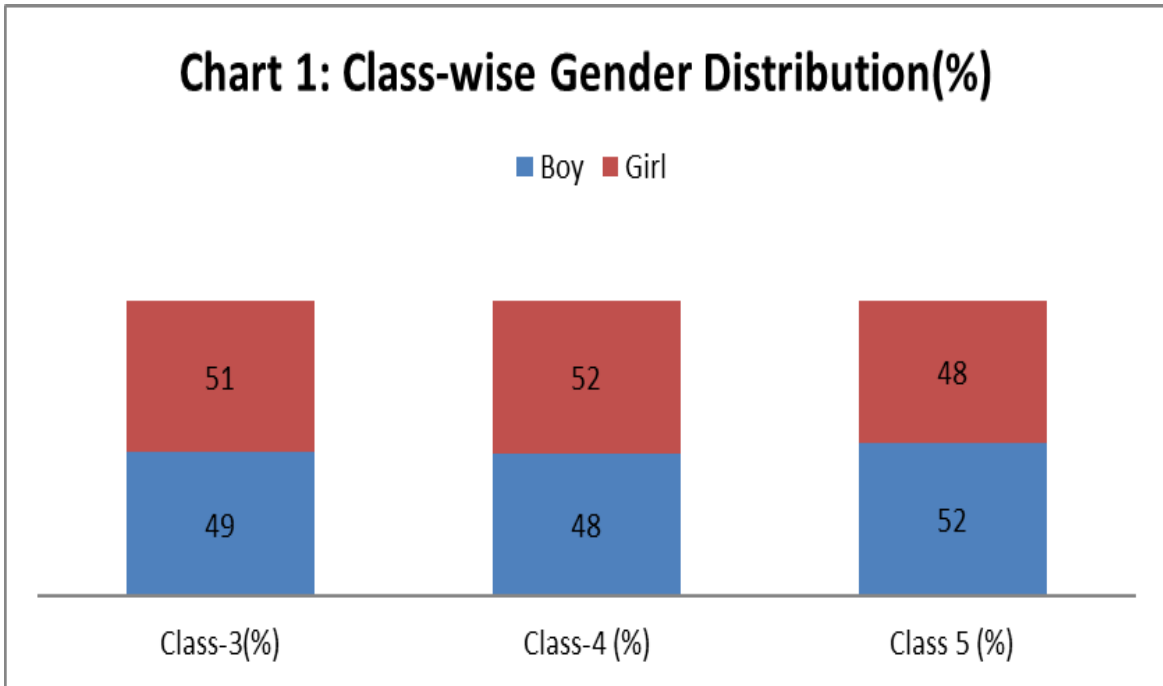
Endline (Based on targeted students)												
Class	Total Targeted Odiya	Language					Math					Total Targeted Maths
		0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4	
Class 3	1093	37	151	142	167	596	10	110	162	354	311	947
Class 4	1096	37	99	120	143	697	10	78	126	298	370	882
Class 5	1048	19	85	109	114	721	3	58	79	217	402	759
Total	3237	93	335	371	424	2014	23	246	367	869	1083	2588

Note: level 0 for language is beginners, 1 is those who can read letters, 2 is those who can read words, 3 is those who can read paragraphs, and 4 is those who can read stories. For maths 0 who didn't know any numbers, 1 is those who recognized numbers from 1 to 9, 2 is those who recognize numbers from 1 to 99, 3 is those who know subtraction, 4 those who know division.

Some of the children were not tested at the endline due to reasons such as migration, absenteeism etc.

Comparison across baseline and endline learning levels are presented below.

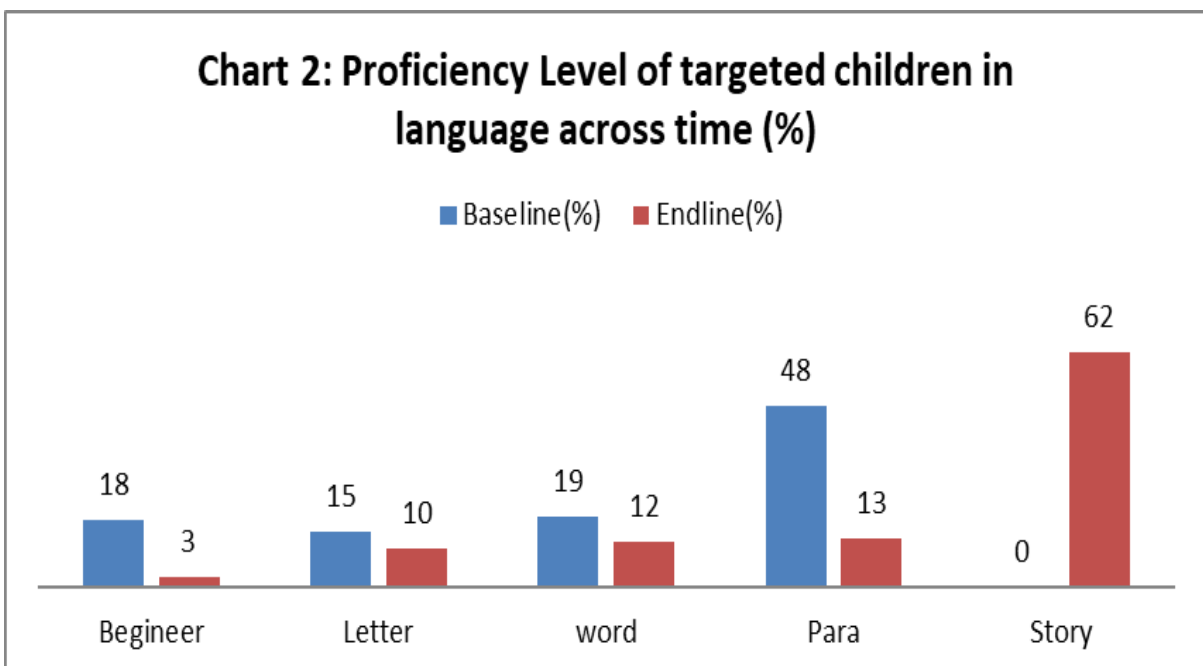
Chart 1 shows the distribution of children by gender by class.



As can be seen the gender balance was not skewed.

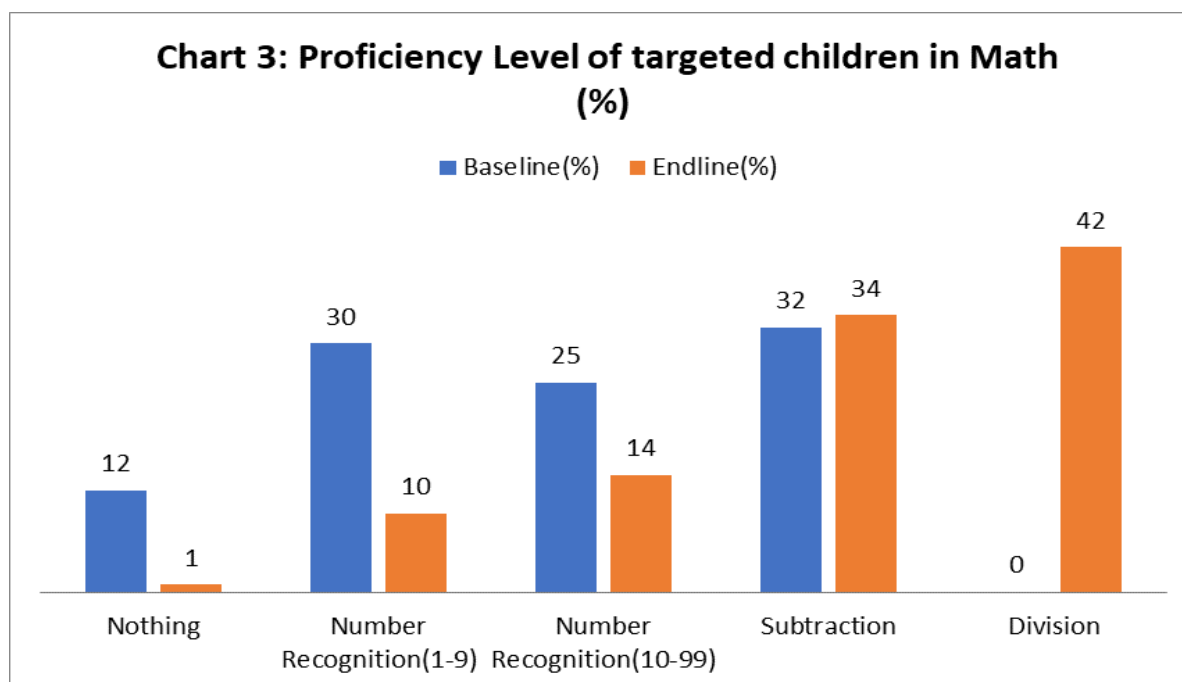
Language assessment

The changes in levels of learning from the baseline to the endline assessment demonstrates the improvement in levels because of the intervention. Chart 2 depicts this significant improvement at the overall level. It can further be observed that the percentage of children in the first four levels has gone down between the baseline and the endline. This indicates that most children jumped from the lower levels right up to the highest level, where it can be seen that, the level went up from 0 to 62% which is a substantial jump.



Maths assessment

Chart 3 below, clearly shows the dramatic changes that have occurred in the maths learning levels of children after the intervention. Even in Maths the same thing has occurred. Percentage of children in the first 3 levels has decreased by a reasonable level, while the percentage of children in the last two levels has gone up, with the percentage of children in the highest level of division going up significantly from 0 to 42.



School Assessment

Different types of schools were covered for representation. Some of these schools were managed by ministry of Education Govt of India, some by School and mass education department Odisha, and some by Department of Education, Odisha. Three of the schools ran in shifts. While 22 of the schools had Odiya and English medium offered, the rest offered only Odiya medium.

Table 10 below gives the distribution of schools by category.

Table 10: Distribution of schools by category

Category of school	Number of schools
Upgraded/merged school	4
High school	4
Primary school	25
Upper primary school	27
Total	60

The average number of teachers is around 5 across the schools, 3 women and 2 men. Most of the schools have Head teachers. A total of 6940 students are enrolled in these schools of

which 49 percent are boys and 51 percent are girls. There are around 15 drop out students across the schools which is not a significant number.

Thirteen of the schools do not have a building. Almost all the schools have toilets for boys and girls. However, the number of toilets for children with special needs are much fewer than for other children. Most of the schools have reasonably good infrastructure facilities such as classrooms, library, kitchen for mid-day meal, electricity and drinking water facility. Electronic and digital facilities are largely unavailable. School management committees have been set up and are functional in most schools. Every school has a child cabinet, but they are hardly functional.

5.3 Findings from Qualitative data

Information gathered from the FGDs and interviews with various stakeholders is presented in this section.

CRCCs

It is very important to keep the children interested in education. If they get a fear of education, they will distance themselves from it and that would be dangerous for society as a whole.

The child gets the confidence that he or she can do anything once they attend the learning camps.

Government officials – One ABEO of one of the blocks was aware and was interviewed. He opined that the YSD team member was very competent and a very good teacher. He wanted her to be sent more often. He had observed some classes. He found the approach very interesting. He found the impact on the children to be good. He said irregular students became regular. The project was useful in mainstreaming the children according to him. He found the team to be dedicated. His suggestions included aiming at 80 to 90 percent improvement in learning levels, increase of duration of camp from 30 days to 1 or 2 months and said it should continue for six months. He felt that the education system was good but due to vacancies not being filled and there being a shortage of teachers the schools are not able to manage the large number of students. Block Education Officers of two blocks were newly appointed and were not aware of the YSD project in detail. However, the ABEO responded on behalf of one block. One BEO had participated in the discussions with the team, instructed his staff and school staff to cooperate with the team, made some visits to some schools as per the YSD team. However, he couldn't be contacted for an interview. The YSD team said that he told them he felt he wasn't ready enough to give feedback in his view!

All CRCCs of the three blocks were interviewed. The conversation with all of them was very informative. In general, they were appreciative of the effort by YSD and had observed the activities conducted by the team. They found the teaching style very novel and interactive. They said that they observed that the children were well engaged and participating actively.

The TLM was also found to be appropriate, though some of them suggested that there should be more TLM used.

Sarpanches

I go twice a week to the school to inspect various things. I observed the learning camp/bridge course classes and found them very different and engaging. I attended the fair after the summer camp too. I spoke to many children in my Gram Panchayat and they were very happy about the camps.

I have donated books and notebooks for the children and also appointed two temporary teachers using Panchayat funds.

Elected representatives – Sarpanches interviewed were unanimous in their admiration for the project. Some of them mentioned the activities of the summer camp that was held in their village and praised the knowledge it brought them. They were thankful for the hope it brought to the community. They had observed the classes and met the team members. They were proud of the fact that some of the team members were from their Gram Panchayat. One sarpanch said that he had contributed from panchayat funds to hiring of teachers at the school. He also donated books and notebooks from his personal funds. That, he said was not sustainable as every sarpanch may not do so. There was a request from all the sarpanches that the project be extended as the children of their villages were benefiting a lot from the camps and learning centres. Some even suggested that the YSD educators be absorbed in the schools as teachers as there is a general shortage of teachers.

Most of the sarpanches interviewed expressed the desire that the project be extended to other villages in their Gram Panchayat.

All of them said they are willing to provide whatever support they can provide to the team if the project is extended.

SMC Presidents and Members

Children don't listen to their parents but listen to their gurus. The youngsters taught so well that those who were not interested in studies also got interested.

We were instrumental in getting a teacher removed because he was not coming to the school regularly.

The school in our village didn't have female teachers. When the YSD team members came and were loving and engaging, the children found it to be a contrast to the only male teachers they had.

SMC presidents and members -

All the SMC President and members interviewed were aware of the project. They reported that they went on regular inspections to the school and attended SMC meetings. They inspect classrooms, teaching, mid-day meals etc. One of them is a cook at a school, so, she said she observes whatever happens there. They had observed the classes run by the YSD team when they visited the school. They were all very pleased with the teaching style of the team members. They elaborated that the teaching style was friendly, and interactive. The children loved the young educators as they treated them well. The children consider them more as elder sisters and brothers rather than teachers. They declared that the children were very happy with the team members and enjoyed learning through group activities such as storytelling, dancing and singing. There was unison in saying that the level of learning of their children had gone up significantly. One of the SMC members reported that a teacher was dismissed from the school as he was getting drunk and not coming to school regularly or creating scenes. This dismissal was the impact of the SMC's vigilance. Another had an interesting perspective. He said that the school in their village has only male teachers and they are harsh. The children were enthused by the fact that the YSD team members that came to their school were ladies and very loving and kind!

Some of the SMC members said that the children do not listen to their parents when they tell them to study but listen very diligently to the educators.

Most of them said there is a shortage of teachers in their schools and therefore the YSD intervention was very helpful to the teachers and the children.

SMC members unanimously declared that their children needed the intervention to last longer. They suggested that the project be extended in their schools. They also suggested that the future plans should include longer duration as well as follow up. There were also suggestions that other subjects be included.

They were all in favour of scale up to other villages, blocks, and districts.

Head Teachers

We teachers are given so many tasks including counting of cattle! So, we don't have the time to do remedial classes for weaker children.

The YSD team member had a different style of teaching. The children got attached to them.

Head Teachers – All the head teachers were aware of the project and had also observed the classes held by the YSD team. All of them were appreciative of the team's teaching style. One of them proudly declared that some of the YSD team members were old students of their school. They welcomed the process. Most of them liked the TLM and said it was new and interesting. However, some of them did say that they also had the Government-given

and self-prepared TLM that they used. Some of them suggested that more TLM could be used. They defended their teachers and said all of them are given many duties and it gets difficult to teach and complete the syllabus. They cannot focus on the low learning level children as that will take time. There is a shortage of teachers, and they take multiple classes so cannot devote time to these extra classes.

All the head teachers were in favour of increasing the duration of the camp as children need more time to absorb what is taught, otherwise they tend to forget what was taught. They suggested a period ranging from 45 days to 3 months. They appreciated the team members for motivating irregular children and admitted that many of the irregular children had become more regular after the camps. Head teachers at remote village schools said they really need this support for their community children. They observed that the learning levels of children improved after the camps.

All of them supported the idea of a scale up. Some even suggested absorption of the team members into regular posts. They were also suggesting continued support through the year.

Teachers

I observed the class and found it very joyful. Children were enjoying it and the YSD team member was teaching in a friendly manner.

The teaching style of the youngsters was very refreshing and participatory. The children enjoyed the classes and learnt in the process.

There should be TLM made in Telugu as well.

Teachers – All the teachers had observed the classes held during the camps. The teachers from all three blocks were unanimous in their verdict that the project was successful in teaching children in a novel interactive way and improved their learning levels. They also said that irregular children became more regular. They were all praise for the team member who taught at their school. Some of the teachers from remote area schools felt that the project provided them support in teaching. They appreciated the fact that the team members motivated the children and parents by going to their homes.

Almost all the teachers barring a few were willing to adopt the same method to teach as they said they have a shortage of teachers in their schools and so cannot devote extra time to the low learning level children. They said they also use TLM and even prepare their own.

Most of them said the duration of the camp was not sufficient and that the duration should be increased to 3 or six months. Some of them suggested that more TLM be used. One of them felt that the story sessions should be more interactive and communicative.

The teachers were all for extending and scaling up the project as it would benefit children across the state.

Students who attended learning camps

We love the Didi and Sir a lot. They teach us in a very nice way. We loved the story sessions and the dancing and singing the best.

Students who attended learning camps/bridge courses

All the children interviewed were visibly delighted at being with the YSD team member. The team members also displayed joy at talking to them. They were aware of the camp and most of them remembered what they learnt at the camp. Most children liked the story sessions the best and even named the titles of the stories. Others said they liked the songs and dance. Some did say they liked maths. They also mentioned letters and mathematical concepts as what was taught at the camps. Almost all the children said they loved the classes and wanted them to be continued. They said they developed interest in studies after the camps and that they were regular. Some of them even sang the songs such as Mo Odisha during the interview when requested to.

Parents of children who attended learning camps/bridge course

Our children love the YSD team member. We observed the classes they held and found them to be interactive and fun.

My daughter used to cry a lot when we sent her to school earlier. After attending the learning camp, she goes happy and smilingly every.

Parents of students who attended learning camps/bridge courses

Parents of students who attended the camps were very forthcoming in their responses. Most of them were educated up to primary level, while many were illiterate, and others had completed tenth grade. There were some who were graduates as well. Most of the parents interviewed were women, however some of those women said that their husbands follow up on the studies of their children. The men interviewed were also not highly educated but were knowledgeable about their children's education. Most of them were aware of the project and its elements. They said they follow up with the child on the school studies once they return home. They expressed their satisfaction at the improvement in their child's learning level as a result of YSD's intervention.

They were happy that the children were performing better at school. Most of the parents had attended the classes taken by the team and mentioned what was done – stories, dance, maths, and songs. They also said it was a joyous learning for the children.

The parents reported that some of the children who were reluctant to go to school, (one of them used to cry and not want to go to school), were now happy to go. Those parents who lived in remote villages said that the camp was very useful for their children as they had missed out on classes during covid times. Also, since some of the schools were closed due to lack of students, the new schools became far for the smaller children. Most of the parents

are working so find it tough to take the child to the school. The camps therefore helped their children catch up with their peers.

Their only suggestion was that the camps be continued, and the duration of the camps be increased from 30 days. They were all in favour of a scale up.

Students attending classes at CLSCs

When asked why he was not regular to school earlier, one 5th standard boy said ' I didn't like going to school. The teachers don't teach. They come to the classroom and sit peering at their mobiles'

Students attending classes at CLSCs

The learning centre functions on Saturdays and Sundays. Focused group discussion was carried out with a group of children who attended classes at the centre and separately with a group of their parents for each of the 10 centres.

The feedback from the children was generally positive across the centres. Like the children who attended camp at the school, they were aware of the project and loved stories, songs, and dances with which they were taught. Their affection for and comfort level with the team was very evident during my video calls with them. In answer to a question on whether they like the classes at the learning centre there was a resounding 'yeeeeessss' from the children at all centres.

When asked why they were irregular at school earlier, one boy said 'I didn't want to go, teachers don't even teach and when they do, I don't understand what they taught – they come to the class and peer into their mobiles! 'They said they were not regular at the school earlier but after classes at the CLSCs they are motivated to go to the school as they are on par with the other children now.

When asked about how they came to know about the centre they pointed to the team member and said she/he told us. All the children wanted the learning centre to continue classes.

Parents of children attending classes at CLSCs

It is thanks to the CLSC that our children have support with their education. Nobody takes tuition for them and sometimes we cannot afford it too.

My child didn't listen to me when I told him to go to school or to study, but once YSD team member came he loved her and follows her around and has become regular at school and at the centre. He even teaches other children now!

When I observed the class at the CLSC I wished I could go back to being a child and learn through this method!

Parents of children who attending classes at CLSCs

The parents were of varying education levels but very clear about getting their children a good education. All of them said they came to know about the learning centres from the YSD team when they came to their houses. All the parents of the children who attend weekend classes at the CLSCs were aware of the methods used at the centre. Most of them had been to the centre and observed the classes. One of the mothers said ' I wish to be small again as I liked the teaching so much' Many of them said that their children who were irregular to school earlier became regular after attending classes at the centres. They agreed that the learning level of the children improved, and they became more interested in studies. Many of the ones from remote areas said that these centres were a boon for their children as the teachers at school are either not available or not good for slow learners, and there is nobody taking tuitions nearby.

They praised the team members and said that their children liked them and started liking studying as a result. They also said that the children don't listen to them when they tell them to study but are willing when the team member either comes home to teach them or take them to the centre.

The parents reported that the CLSCs were very useful for their children and therefore should continue to function. Some parents from remote areas made the request that the learning centre should function on some weekdays as well in the evenings. Many asked for the duration of the classes on each day to be increased as well.

Some of the fathers felt that English should be taught in the centres as that would give their children an advantage in their lives in the future.

Pratham team

The YSD team is good. Teachers will have to see the change for themselves, then they will get convinced. YSD will gain a good reputation and school officials will call them to train their teachers.

Teaching at the right level is important.

Pratham team

The Pratham team of Narendra Tripathi and Mamatha Tahal undertook the responsibility of training the YSD team for this project. They conducted a 3-day workshop (3 days on Odiya and Maths) giving information on the education system in India, the Pratham approach as well as training them in teaching and assessment methods. Tips were given on involving the community. In addition, the team was given exposure to implementation on the field by visiting NGOs using the Pratham approach. An additional 2-day refresher workshop was held for the YSD team to discuss issues they faced in the field and learn how they could overcome those difficulties. The package for 3rd to 5th standard children included material on health

and wellbeing, effective communication, involved learning while playing. Some material was also provided for activities to keep children engaged. They also provided training on the ASER tool for assessment of learning levels. Emphasis was laid on pedagogy. The participants were given a manual with all the materials.

The two trainers from Pratham handheld the YSD team by creating a WhatsApp group and providing online support. Their feedback on the YSD team was as follows –

1. The trainees were young and new to the education arena. Practical training was essential and would be challenging.
2. The YSD team had a group of talented and enthusiastic young people.
3. They were raw and so needed training on the ground. For FLN, the team was equipped. However, if advanced teaching is to be done, they will need further training.
4. They need to learn how to speak to the children, teachers, and community to be more effective. The children should not realise that they are being taught.
5. The team needs more onsite training in future efforts.

The trainers said that there is certainly impact they could see from what they heard from the team. It is an early impact that volunteers came to join the team. In one instance the sarpanch offered to volunteer in some ways. Parents became aware of how their children are doing in school and how they should motivate them to go to school regularly and follow up on their education on a daily basis. However, on the education system side, teachers must see the change to be convinced to shift to different methods. If the impact is measured and demonstrated the schools will then invite YSD to train their teachers.

The Pratham team had some suggestions on how the program can be improved. For the team they suggested further skilling be done by offering some courses to them for free so that they can secure their future as well. Competitions can be held for mothers and prizes given out for motivating children. They felt that the 30 days duration of the camp is not sufficient for sustained learning of the children and suggested an increase in the duration of the camp. They also suggested that teachers be involved for better impact. Since District Magistrates and higher officials in the Education department are adept at innovative thinking and like such thinking as well, it is a good idea to work with them.

As a conclusion they said that since Pratham doesn't have a presence in Ganjam district, it would be a great idea for YSD to build their strength and offer their services to the district schools.

Prem Garg, IDRF team

Knowing the deficiency in Foundational Language and Numeracy learning levels across the country we wanted to partner with an organization that would carry out a project to demonstrate the existing level as well as to implement a program that would increase the level of learning among children. YSD came across as a suitable Organization as I knew Bibhu for several years and was familiar with the work of YSD.

IDRF Team

I spoke to the Chief Executive Officer Dr Vinod Prakash, Board Member Dr Prem Garg and the Executive Director Rajeev Jain on a group call.

Importance of evaluation of Project

Dr Vinod Prakash pointed out that IDRF had supported several projects, but they did not have an independent evaluation of the projects until now. They said they were pleased at the prospect of getting an overall perspective of the implementation of the project as well as its impact apart from the project reports given by the organizations themselves.

Reason for decision to support YSD

Dr Garg said that he had known Bibhu for over a decade and was impressed with the work of YSD. Since FNL was a key area of deficiency as demonstrated by ASER surveys of Pratham over the years, they felt it was important to bring the children who had fallen back or dropped out back into the mainstream at the level they should be at.

Project Design

Dr Garg said they wanted to build the capacity of the organization and have them foray deeper into the education area. Rajeev Jain and he explained that since YSD was recruited as a partner, the project design emerged from their discussions with YSD. Not only was assessment included in the design, teaching in a different way that was more interesting and participative to children was too.

Partnership of YSD with Pratham

They also helped YSD forge a partnership with Pratham which has an excellent track record in the education sector especially in the FLN area. IDRC was instrumental in persuading Pratham to provide YSD the training required to be able to carry out assessment of learning levels as well as do the teaching on the ground. Pratham was initially reluctant but came on board and partnered with YSD by providing the training to the YSD team. IDRF felt that Pratham did a good job.

Their view of the project impact and improvement for future efforts

The team appreciated the capacity building of the YSD team. There could have been more use of secondary data to compare with their baseline and endline data. More information on how the project efforts helped the team get from one point to the other would have been helpful. Overall, they were appreciative of the impact on the children.

There was an apprehension on what impact there had been in terms of building a rapport with government officials to facilitate an improvement in the system itself. Next time around they would like to see a larger impact on the system itself so that the effort is sustainable.

Support to scale up

The IDRF team's view was that a scale up would be considered with a few conditions. One is the reduction in the unit cost of the project and the other is they would wish to see more impact in terms of larger number of children reached and improvements in Government teaching style and systems. They also pointed out that it would be a good approach for YSD to garner funding from other sources as well as forge partnerships with other organizations.

Secretary YSD

'The highlights of the project were two-fold for me. One – YSD has built a competent, efficient team that understood the project objectives and implemented it well. The second – we now have a well-connected education ecosystem of Government officials, head teachers, teachers, elected representatives and community, that learn from each other.'

YSD secretary

Mr Bibhu Sahu is the secretary of YSD. Here are the highlights of the interview with him.

Reasons for taking up the project

The main reasons why he decided to take up the project were –

1. The covid pandemic had a significant impact on the school going children as their education was paused with schools being closed.
2. The organization was on location distributing rations and imparting covid safety related information during that time.
3. Because of the national policy of no detentions, children kept getting promoted without learning. Parents raised these concerns during the field visits.
4. The marginalised communities either by caste or by economic status or disability status in remote villages were the worst affected and he felt they needed to be helped.
5. Elected representatives also requested YSD to take some action in this context.
6. YSD has considerable experience in the education sector in general, so they were able to muster up the courage to get into service delivery in the sector. A small survey was conducted to assess the number of schools that had closed, and the children affected.
7. YSD wanted to do something to reduce the number of children dropping out of school. Distances to the new schools were also detrimental to regularity of children.
8. It was important to make sure children continued their education as their parents also were motivated to educate their children so that they could have better lives than they themselves did.

Expectations from the project

There were two main expectations from this project for him.

1. YSD understands that Education is a vast sector and is a critical one for holistic development to happen. IDRF supports work in the education sector, so YSD thought of approaching them for support. The idea was to improve capacities of YSD team in this sector.
2. Since they were keen to focus on FLN in primary education, they decided to start there. IDRF informed him about Pratham and their work in the education sector. So, they approached Pratham to provide their team the training. It was expected that this training would help achieve their objectives.

Support provided by Pratham

Pratham's support was very useful, and the team was able to build capacity to venture into this project. He explained the steps that were taken by Pratham. These have been described earlier in this report. The secretary was well informed about the process followed for implementing the project, and was constantly in touch with his team.

He said that the work with schools involved assessment of basic infrastructure, capacity of the school management committees, and how they could adopt group teaching. YSD also worked with District Institution for Education and Training (DIET) to give inputs on designing of training materials for teachers.

The whole exercise was participatory and the school authorities and govt officials were constantly updated about the field events. They were made presentations on pedagogy, empowering teachers' preparation of TLM etc. Assessment reports of the children were shared with all stakeholders. This demonstrated how children can be taken to higher levels of learning, how capacity of teachers can be enhanced, how the education system, SMCs, and whole ecosystem up to the district level can be strengthened.

Capabilities of the team

The team was trained by Pratham, and they implemented the project equipped with that learning. However, they need further training for them to be able to work on scaling up and deepening the project. The scale up would need them to know more about pedagogy and preparation of appropriate TLM.

Utility of the summer camps

The summer camps that were held at the beginning of the project implementation, had the effect that was expected. All stakeholders got enthused and participated in the fairs at the end. A change in education seeking behaviour began to take place.

Contribution of Pratham

Pratham played a key role in the training of the YSD team for this project. The team benefited from the experience of Pratham in the preparation of materials. The team learned to carry out assessment using their ASER tool and used the TLM for implementing the project as well. Pratham also trained the team in the setting up of MIS data and using it for monitoring and evaluation. The concept of teaching at the right level was introduced to the team by Pratham.

Community learning and support centres.

There was no direct support from IDRF for the setting the CLSC up. However, they were included in the implementation of the project. Space for the centres was given by the community. There are ten CLSCs in all in the three blocks covered. The expectation is that these centres will be useful for children who are part of child labour, drop out children, and girls who have dropped out, get access to education. This would bring about an improved education seeking behaviour among the community members. Once that happens the children will join mainstream schools and be part of the formal education system.

Sustainability of the project

According to the Secretary sustainability of the project is possible through the following factors:

1. Involvement of parents especially the mother, in the project
2. Facilitation of peer group learning
3. Involvement of teachers and school leaders
4. Continuous monitoring and following up on the project activities
5. Identification of poorest schools and deepening the activities in the remote areas
6. Capacity building of the team in fund raising.

He gave an example of an organization called ATMA that has accepted the responsibility of enhancing the team's program design capabilities. Shikshalokam in Bangalore builds capacities of organizations and education leaders.

Possibility and utility of scale up

The project report has shown the potential of the project to have a significant impact on learning levels of the children of vulnerable and marginalised communities. Therefore, a case for scaling up to other blocks and districts especially remote areas there, is made.

IDRF has indicated its willingness to support a 3 to 5 year project for scaling up provided impact is evidenced.

Other possibilities of funding sources

1. CSR of corporate entities can be tapped into

2. The recent trend of intermediary funding agencies can be exploited – eg DASRA and Sattva consulting. High net worth individuals who wish to donate to projects seek help from these organizations.
3. YSD has an MoU with Wipro Foundation for capacity building of the education team for one and a half years.
4. Wipro Foundation as also shown interest in funding a five-year plan to improve learning levels.

Lessons

Some lessons learned according to him are:

1. The best part of the project is that a good team has been built at YSD. Importance of capacity building has been realized. The team understood the project process and implemented it well.
2. YSD must be well connected to the eco system – head teachers. Teachers, officials at district level and SMC members. They all learn from each other.
3. The team understood the real problems of first-generation learners' community. They learned to build a support system for them.
4. The team understood the Panchayat ecosystem as well.
5. The experience of this project will facilitate the development of a larger 3 to 5 year program.
6. The team learnt the donor ecosystem and even the concept of retail donations – eg support from individual community members to run the CLSC.

Suggestions for the future

1. Capacity building should be done vertically and horizontally. Vertical expansion can happen through training on pedagogy and use of technology and horizontal expansion via knowledge of sociology and anthropology of education.
2. Improvement of the development of TLM based on understanding of generational shift in education, history of education and similar concepts.
3. Focus on thematic education but also go deeper into education.

He concluded the interview on a note that a robust methodology should be put in place to track the intervention.

Project Coordinator

When riding a bike, one uses the accelerator initially to pick up speed and thereafter maintains a slow-paced steady movement in traffic. Similarly, this project will help accelerate the children's learning for them to reach a basic level, and then follow up classes should be held to keep them moving ahead.

Project Coordinator

Mr Chandan Sahu is the project coordinator for the project.

Expectations from the project

His expectations from the project were as follows:

1. Making up for the loss of learning during the covid pandemic in the three blocks of Ganjam district.
2. Heading towards the Nipun Bharat mission goal of every child in India achieving FLN
3. Strengthening of the school system
4. Success of the summer camps would translate to cooperation in the project from all stakeholders.
5. Capacity building of the YSD education team

In his view, all these expectations were met even if some were not fulfilled to the extent he had wanted.

Ease in managing the team:

In response to how easy it was to manage the team he said that it was a first experience for him to coordinate a project and therefore tough. The team lacked knowledge and experience, but the training provided help in easing the difficulty. The attrition of team members and having to recruit new members and train them at the beginning was also a new experience for him.

Challenges he faced during the process:

1. Liaison with the government officials was challenging till they got the knack of dealing with them. Rapport building with the BEO for each block was helpful though tough.
2. Locating children who had dropped out of the school system was a challenge too. Migration causes the children to drop out or be irregular.
3. Language issues (some families speak Telugu while the medium of instruction is Odiya) also had to be dealt with
4. Teaching the irregular and drop out children was challenging as they were at a much lower level than their peers. Lot of coordination was required to get them to attend the classes.
5. Many of the children had labour class parents. They travel to work and mobilising them needed innovative ways – convincing the parents and relatives was required.

Training by Pratham:

The Pratham training was extremely helpful but those who were recruited later had to be trained by the YSD team. They were very supportive but when problems were faced on the field the team had to go in for a refresher training for that. They learnt the concept of

pedagogy during the training. This would come in handy for their future projects in the education sector. He was very appreciative of the training.

Highlights of the project

The main highlight of the project for him was the immense satisfaction he got when 5th standard children who didn't even know to read came up to the story level after this project was implemented. The second highlight was learning the teach at the right level approach. Instead of the whole class approach where the child gets intimidated, extra classes for those at lower levels using group activities were held. The teachers and students accepted it.

On possibility of Scale-up – Not only would follow up in schools already covered be required, but there is also a case for scale up of the project to other blocks of Ganjam as well as to other districts. Funding would have to be mobilized for this effort.

Improvements to be made in the project. According to him the following improvements would enhance the impact of the project in the future.

1. The team size of YSD must be increased. Further capacity building on pedagogy and content development would be useful for the team. The team learned about basic MIS but further training would be helpful.
2. Apart from individual interactions with Government officials and school staff there should be workshops organized for them to improve their cooperation and for better impact.
3. Training and capacity building of SMC members should also be included. It will be tough, but a concerted effort would make it work.

Ensuring sustainability of the project:

This can happen according to him if the following activities are done.

1. Engagement of parents especially mothers, throughout the process
2. Mobilization of youth from the village to participate in the project activities as supporting team members.
3. The duration of the camps must be increased from one month to about 3 to six months.
4. Advocacy at district level will help.
5. Officials should be encouraged to build this exercise into their own programs.

YSD team of block coordinators and educators

Children from Dalit and migrant families were bullied by other children and insulted by teachers. Tuitions are not available for children of these families.

About 10 to 15 children with special needs were covered in the program, they were unable to go to school because the infrastructure is not suited to them. There are no ramps available in many schools for example. They were happy when we went their homes and taught them.

In some areas we found families that spoke Telugu as their mother tongue. Communication with them in Odiya was not effective. I then found an older child who was proficient in both languages and used her as an interpreter! Gradually, the children learnt Odiya as well.

One boy was very shy and not coming to school either. He would hide whenever we went to his house looking for him. When other children told him about the fun they were having at the learning camp and CLSC he started coming to the classes by himself.

YSD team of block coordinators and educators

A Focused Group discussion was conducted with the YSD project team through a video call. The team members were:

1. Purnima Dey, Block Coordinator
2. Rajendra Badatya, Block Coordinator
3. Arghyarupa Nayak, Block Coordinator
4. Suchitra Biswal, Community learning facilitator
5. Mahima Pradhan, Community learning facilitator
6. Anita Patra, Community learning facilitator
7. Smruthi Kumari Sahu, Community learning facilitator
8. Susanta Pradhan, Community learning facilitator
9. Bikash Panigrahi, Community learning facilitator
10. Aditya Prasad Das, Community learning facilitator
11. Tulasi Maharana, Community learning facilitator
12. Sumitra Jena, Community learning facilitator
13. Swarnamayee Rout Community learning facilitator

They are all either graduates or MSW qualified and have teacher training too. Sushant is trained in teaching children with special needs. They were all aware of the details of the project in terms of the blocks covered, schools covered and the actual teaching process. Each and every one of them was highly motivated and enthusiastic. Their bonding with the children and parents was visible when they aided in speaking to the parents and children.

Type of Children they came across

The kind of children they came across included children from remote villages, economically backward and vulnerable communities and with migrant and labour class

parents. They were willing to learn but they were not up to the level of their standard, so they were hesitant to go to school. They were either at low learning levels because they didn't understand what the teachers were teaching or because they were irregular. Migrant parents added to their difficulties as they moved places so couldn't be regular at school. Girls dropped out due to family responsibilities being thrust on them. Dropouts also happened because the school that was near their homes was closed and merged with a high school. This made the distance longer for the smaller children and they stopped going. The children who attended the learning camps/bridge course were generally of low learning level and some joined in as they saw the other children enjoying the classes. Parents being illiterate or very little educated, also affected the learning of the children. Some of the children were living with relatives while their parents migrated.

On Teachers:

The team observed that there was a shortage of teachers in the primary classes, and they had to do multiclass teaching. They do have training but not in interactive teaching. Most of them sit in their chairs and teach. Engagement of children is low. The team found the teachers reluctant to participate in the team's activities, citing their busy schedules. The team worked hard to persuade them to observe and learn. Gradually they did get interested. The teachers told the team that they are unable to focus on low learning level children as they have deadlines and tasks to finish. Teachers from primary and upper primary schools were easy to influence but the high school teachers were not so enthusiastic.

Eliciting cooperation from the parents:

This was initially tough for the team. However, once they started going home to teach the children and follow up on their attendance etc, the parents realised the effect it was having on their children and started cooperating. The summer camps that were held at the outset also contributed to their participation.

Cooperation from Officials:

Cooperation was not easy to get. Senior officials are extremely busy, and it is difficult to get time from them or to catch their attention. However, the team persisted and persuaded them. Once they were convinced one of them even instructed teachers to observe the classes and follow the YSD method.

The CRCC who are trained and experienced in teaching, were sceptical about how children could be taught in 30 days. When it was demonstrated, and data was shown to them they were cooperative. Subsequently, they even gave suggestions on preparation of TLM.

Participation by children:

Children were very happy to join in when they found the team members singing songs telling stories, and dancing to teach them. Some children were initially quiet and scared while others were naughty. Once one or two classes were held, they got interested. There were some children who speak Telugu as their mother tongue and found it difficult initially but picked up later. Rapport was built with children largely through the activity-based teaching and the TLM used. Some children were persuaded to come by visiting their homes. It was a two-way process based on communication tactics. Speaking to them in a friendly manner and showing them interesting material and telling stories made them curious and interested. Sometimes older siblings acted as motivators.

Perceptible improvements happened in the learning levels of the children even as they attended the camps. The children who were quiet earlier started talking and participating in activities. Oral language developed conspicuously. Parents became more insistent on children being regular and paid attention to their studies. The whole community was engaged gradually.

Challenges faced:

Some of the challenges faced by the team were –

1. The children would forget what they were taught the previous day, or after ten days of the first camp when a gap was given.
2. The zero level children were especially difficult to teach.
3. Time management was a challenge – head teachers were hesitant to give more time for their classes as they felt it interfered with the teaching by regular teachers.
4. Building rapport with officials was time consuming and difficult.
5. It was difficult to bring some drop out children back to school because their parents had migrated and took the children with them wherever they went.
6. Language for communication sometimes became a problem as some of the families do not speak Odiya.

Suggestions:

Some suggestions that the team came up with for improving the program are as follows:

1. Follow-up classes or meetings with the children would help in keeping them from forgetting what they learnt.
2. Increasing the duration of the camps especially for zero learning level children needs to be done.
3. There should be no gaps or minimal gaps in the classes – the camp in one school should be completed and then the team should move to another school.

VI. Conclusions

After the perusal of all the documents related to the project, analysis of the quantitative data collected and having interviewed a large sample of various stakeholders involved, triangulation from the three activities, the following conclusions have emerged.

- 1. The project is a huge success:** Voices of all stakeholders, veer towards a conclusion that the project has been a resounding success. It is to YSD's credit that they have used the training provided by Pratham very well and provided children an opportunity to make up for the loss in learning during the covid pandemic. Huge, concerted efforts by the project team and the cooperation from other stakeholders has contributed to the success. Every cog in the wheel worked to its capacity and made it a success.
- 2. Project design is comprehensive:** The design of the project is well thought out and covers various aspects of the education system. The focus is on improving learning levels of children who lagged behind due to the pandemic, but it is done involving all stakeholders to ensure participation by all of them. Another commendable part of the design is the step of conducting a survey in the areas to identify irregular and dropout students for participation in the project. The summer camps played their part in kindling interest in the various stakeholders.
- 3. Targeting is on point:** The selection of schools in the three blocks based on their location and class of children going there is excellent. It is representative geographically as well as in terms of vulnerability of populations. Coordination by YSD between school authorities, political entities, Government officials and the community was almost perfect. CLSCs were located at convenient locations and students were identified in a precise manner. Small glitches here and there (like not being able to find children who had migrated) were dealt with in an efficient manner.
- 4. Excellent use of Pratham's assessment tool and TLM:** The ASER tool was utilised at the outset to create a baseline assessment so that the impact of the intervention can be measured. The choice of the tool was an excellent strategy. Its use for assessment gives credibility to the YSD project. The use of well tested and used TLM in addition to that prepared by the team provided excellent support to the team.
- 5. Significant impact:** The impact of the project is evident at multiple levels. While the program clearly resulted in discernible improved levels of learning for the children of all grades, capacity building of the young team, sensitization of the Government officials, demonstration of a different way of teaching primary level children in a participatory manner to the teachers and motivation of the community to send children to school and be involved in the education of their children were also achieved in a highly effective manner. The improvement in levels of learning were not 100% though.
- 6. The reach of the concept has been immense:** Penetrating the remotest of areas where services are tough to reach, terrain is tough and facilities are poor, YSD was

brave to venture and run the program. The gratitude of the community and other stakeholders and the smiles on the faces of the children are a mark of the impact of efforts made to reach the vulnerable sections whether it be in rural areas or urban areas. Illiterate parents whose aspirations lie in the education of their children but are underserved due to their circumstances or location were very satisfied with the project.

- 7. Issues in the education system have been highlighted:** The project revealed some of the issues in the education system. Head teachers and teachers complained that they were given all kinds of tasks which left them with insufficient time for their primary task of teaching. Shortage of teachers was cited by almost all stakeholders as an important issue. There was reluctance among the teachers to adopt the group teaching method despite it being demonstrated to them that it is effective. While the senior teachers were not in favour of the teaching style and felt it wouldn't be sustainable, the younger teachers were willing to try it out. The team was young and not experienced in some areas of the education arena. They felt the need for help at some points. However, they more than made up for the lack of experience with their dedication and enthusiasm.
- 8. Availability of extensive information in the MIS data:** The data available in the MIS dataset has been put to some use in the periodic reports. However, there is a lot of information that is still available and can give a deeper understanding of the learning levels, staffing, facilities at the schools and such parameters.
- 9. Certain limitations were recognized in the project:** Some of the children were unable to move up much on the learning scale despite attending camps as well as being taught at home. Some parts of the district had people who spoke a language other than Odiya. This made it a little tough for the team to teach them. The teams met with the same issue with some parents as well. The ten days at a time, 3 camps for the children idea, was found to be challenging by the team logistically. The team and other stakeholders felt the children forgot what was taught and had to be given refresher sessions. The duration of the project was also judged as shorter than what would be required for a better impact.
- 10. Sustainability of the project must be better planned:** It was presumed that carrying out the project would automatically result in acceptance by the system and the process could be sustained by the school system. That stage has not been reached for various reasons. Teachers are not fully bought into the idea, schools do not have the freedom or funds to hire teachers or to train existing ones, though Government officials are convinced of the benefits of this method they are also reluctant to head forward fully into a changed method. They also are defensive that they do have TLM provided by the Government that are prepared by experts for FLN and there may not be a need for different ones. Finally, communities are not influential or equipped enough to bring about changes through their advocacy.

VII. Recommendations for improvement and Scale-up

- 1. Extension of the project:** There is a big request for extension of the project elements of both learning camps/ bridge courses and CLSCs. There is a demand for deepening the reach of the project at locations that have already been covered as well as to new locations within the Gram Panchayats covered. How deep the project extension can be will depend on the resources and time available with YSD.
- 2. Increase in duration of learning camps:** Since there is a loud demand for increase in the duration of the camp from 30 days to longer the project design would need to take this into account. The duration can be increased to 2 months at the most for each school.
- 3. Training of YSD team:** The YSD team would need further training in different aspects of project management and of the education system. Concepts of education like pedagogy, effective teaching methods etc would need to be further emphasized in the training. Training in fund raising methods would also enhance their capabilities.
- 4. Training and orientation workshops with Government officials and school teaching and management staff:** Workshops are recommended at district level and block level to orient the officials on the project goals and processes. This would get a better buy-in from them. Their cooperation will become more meaningful and relevant. A similar orientation would be required for the teachers as well. In addition, they should also be trained in the methods used for FLN teaching including the Pratham approach. This should be organized in partnership with Government officials for best results. As a part of the training, the teachers can be given site visits to where the project has been completed so that they can see the impact for themselves and be motivated to use the methods. This site visit can include demonstration classes, meetings with parents and children and live sessions with children. Experts from the Education sector can be consulted to devise these training program to influence the old and the new teachers at the same time.
- 5. Data mining to a larger extent:** The MIS data is very rich and can be utilized to carry out analysis by slicing by gender of the child, impact of facilities in schools on the learning levels of the children, proportions of children from Dalit, poor and tribal families and their comparative performance with each other and other children, dropout rates of boys and girls etc. This data mining can be supplemented with further research as well. The team members can collect information from all stakeholders on socio-economic parameters as they carry out project tasks. This will provide a better understanding of the education

environment in those areas and therefore facilitate tweaking of the program design for greater impact.

- 6. Liaising with Government to fill vacancies:** YSD would have to liaise with the Government officials to arrive at ways in which recruitment to fill existing vacancies can be expedited. There would also be alternative paths to be devised and suggested to recruit more teachers such as recruiting qualified youth from the community to volunteer for a short period, persuade the community or political entities to fund recruitment of teachers etc.
 - 7. Scale-up of the project:** There has been a big yes from all stakeholders to the scale -up of the project. This scale-up would necessitate strategizing on the quantum of deepening versus extension of the program. A mix of deepening in the same locations with follow up course, activities, and extension to other blocks in the same district would be ideal. Extension to other districts can probably be envisaged at a later stage of the project. If YSD can get assured substantial financial and technical support they could consider extending to other villages in the same Gram Panchayats, to other blocks and as a first step and assimilate the learnings from that exercise to lead to the second stage of extending to other districts.
 - 8. Customization and change in project implementation design:** The design of the project should be tweaked to adjust for the planned extension. A larger team would be required. The team would need to be trained. Other changes that would be required is creation of additional TLM, addition of other subjects in the curriculum, use of more TLM, preparation of TLM in other languages like Telugu, and increase in the duration of the classes. The increase in duration may help children who were unable to make the jump to the highest level, achieve the goal. Field logistics will have to be planned for the new design. More learning centres should be set up in addition to the ones that exist. Customization of the design must be done to suit the scope of the scale-up.
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Annexure 1: Checklist of questions for different stakeholders

FGD checklist for YSD team

1. Names
2. Blocks covered
3. Number of schools covered
4. Process followed
5. Kind of children found – learning level wise, interest wise, economic background wise,
6. Location of schools
7. Reasons for drop out
8. Reasons for lower level -What kind of children had lower levels of learning? Any patterns found?
9. Reasons for drop out and irregularity
10. Capacity of teachers
11. Cooperation and interest among teachers
12. Cooperation from parents
13. Cooperation from officials
14. Ease of Rapport building with teachers
15. Ease of teaching children
16. Methods used to build rapport with children
17. Any improvement observed?
18. Difficulties faced during the process
19. Suggestions for improvement

Questionnaire for SMC members

1. Names
2. Location of school
3. Details of children – class age etc
4. Knowledge about YSD?
5. Knowledge about the project and its components
6. Did they play any role in the program?
7. Were they aware about the activities?
8. Any impact seen?
9. Utility of the program
10. Teachers continuing it?
11. Sustainability
12. Suggestions

Questionnaire for BEO

1. Name
2. Block
3. Qualifications
4. Gender

5. Awareness of program – subjects covered, material used, number of and location of schools covered, activities involved, learning level measurement method etc
6. Interest level
7. Extent of participation
8. Made any observations
9. Comment on process
10. Comments on impact
11. Suggestions for improvement
12. Sustainability of program
13. Scale up viability

Questionnaire for CRCC

1. Name
2. Block
3. School
4. Awareness of program – subjects, materials, tests etc
5. Extent of participation
6. Feedback on implementation
7. View on impact
8. Utility of materials for their work
9. Was it helpful to them?
10. Sustainability
11. Suggestions for improvement

Talking points for Pratham team

1. Names
2. Duration of training
3. Content of training
4. Materials given
5. Feedback on trainees
6. View on sustainability
7. View on impact

Talking Points for IDRF team

1. Names and designations
2. Reason for supporting YSD
3. Expectations from the project
4. Role in Design of project
5. Their role in forging of YSD's Partnership with Pratham
6. Opinion on impact
7. How would they do it differently next time around
8. Would they support the scale up

Talking points for YSD Secretary

1. Name
2. Designation
3. Reason for taking up the project
4. Expectations
5. Team capabilities
6. Pratham's contribution
7. Awareness of project details
8. Sustainability prospects
9. Possibility and utility of scale up
10. Lessons learned and suggestions

Talking points for YSD program coordinator

1. Name
2. Designation
3. Expectations
4. Ease of managing team
5. Challenges faced
6. Training given to team
7. View on Pratham training
8. Highlight of experience
9. Possibility of scale up
10. Improvements to make
11. Sustainability prospects

Talking points/questions for Teachers

1. Name
2. School
3. Class taught
4. Awareness of project
5. Feedback on training
6. Highlights of experience
7. Lessons learned
8. Awareness of project
9. Was it any different from what they do as teachers?
10. Utility for students to improve learning levels
11. Utility for students who dropped out
12. Suggestions for improvement
13. Sustainability

Talking points for Head Teacher

1. Name

2. School
3. Awareness of project
4. Expectations and if they were fulfilled
5. Utility for teachers
6. Utility for students for improving learning levels
7. Utility for students in preventing drop outs
8. Quality of materials used
9. Sustainability
10. Suggestions

Questionnaire for Students who attended camps

1. Name
2. School
3. Class
4. Awareness of project
5. Experience of participation in camps
6. What did they like best
7. Did they find the teaching method useful
8. Did they like the materials used?
9. Did they think their learning level improved
10. Suggestions for improvement

Questionnaire for Students who attended learning centre

1. Name
2. School
3. Class
4. Category – drop out or low learning level
5. Awareness of project
6. Experience of participation in project
7. Did anyone visit them at home?
8. What were they told?
9. What was the reason for drop out?
10. What persuaded them to rejoin if they did rejoin
11. Were their parents able to understand the importance of schooling?
12. What did they like best
13. Did they find the teaching method useful
14. Did they like the learning material?
15. Did they think their learning level improved
16. Suggestions for improvement

Questionnaire for parents of Children who attended the camps

1. Name
2. Classes of children
3. Education level of parent

4. Awareness of project
5. Do they communicate with the child about studies?
6. Were they informed by the school that their child had a low learning level?
7. Did they notice any change in the interest level of the child?
8. Were they involved in the process at any time?
9. Has the camp helped their child in their view?
10. If so in what way has the camp helped?
11. Suggestions for improvement

FGD checklist for Parents of children who attended learning centre

1. Name
2. Education level of parent
3. Class of child
4. Category of child – drop out or low learning level
5. Awareness of project and learning centre
6. Who told them to put the child there
7. Reasons for drop out
8. Reasons for low learning level
9. Do they help their children with studies?
10. Do children discuss their activities at the centre with them?
11. Feedback on learning centre
12. Is learning centre helpful?
13. Suggestions for improvement

Talking points/ questions for Sarpanch /Corporator

1. Name
 2. Block
 3. Awareness of project
 4. Approve of project?
 5. Playing any role in the implementation?
 6. Has it been useful for their jurisdiction?
 7. Has team met them?
 8. Do parents like the program?
 9. Do children find it interesting?
 10. Sustainable?
 11. Scale up possible? Useful?
 12. What way would they take it forward?
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