

Impact assessment of Kushali Shiksha



Thinkthrough Consulting

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1 Executive Summary

2. Background and Scope of Evaluation

a) Background

Education is a fundamental human right. In the broadest sense, it is the development of and empowerment of people with knowledge and skills. For individuals, therefore, education is the means to employment, increased earnings, better health, and reduced poverty. For societies, it leads to economic development, strengthens institutions, spurs innovation, and ensures social cohesion. Each level of education i.e., primary (grades 1-5), upper primary (grades 6-8), secondary (grades 9-10), higher secondary (grades 11-12), and higher education (post-school) contributes to the achievement of these individual and societal goals. While each level of education is important, primary education is the most significant. This is because it lays the foundation for higher learning.

Collectively, the world is moving towards achieving universal primary education for all people. It is estimated by the UNICEF that close to 90% of the students attend primary school i.e., four in five students. Yet only 74% of the students from poorer backgrounds attend primary school. This is to say that about 64 million students of primary school age stay out of school.¹ Many reasons such as poverty, gender bias, political conflict, natural disasters etc. prevent these students from attending school. However, even with regular school attendance learning is not guaranteed. The UNICEF estimates that globally about 600 million school students and adolescents are yet to achieve minimum levels of proficiency in reading and mathematics despite two-thirds of them being in schools.² The reasons for this are varied, and it ranges from a lack of trained teachers to inadequate learning materials to poor school infrastructure. Learning may become further difficult when students are hungry, ill, or exhausted from work in their homes or farms. This contributes to the learning crisis which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted learning in all societies. The World Bank estimates that in the pre-pandemic years, 57% of students in low-and-middle-income countries could not read or understand a simple story. For Sub-Saharan Africa, the rate stood at 86%.³

Coming to India, the country has made remarkable strides in providing primary education to its population. In 2021-22, there were 12.18 crore students enrolled in primary schools, and this was a 0.76% increase from 2020-21.⁴ This was a result of the concerted efforts of the Union and state governments to educate the Indian population. Some government schemes specifically addressing primary education include Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Mid-day meal scheme etc. However, significant challenges remain.

The Union government recently announced that more than 1.2 million students were already out-of-school in 2022-23. More than half of these students are boys and two-thirds of the students are of primary school age. Uttar Pradesh leads as the state with the highest number of out-of-school Students.⁵ It has also been found by the National Achievement Survey (2021) that the averages of learning outcomes (language-52 and mathematics-41) in Uttar Pradesh are below national averages (language-55 and mathematics-44). Technically, the below-par performance of students in foundational

¹ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/>

² <https://www.unicef.org/education>

³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/ending-learning-poverty>

⁴ UDISE+ Flash Statistics, 2021-22.

⁵ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/over-1-2-million-students-out-of-school-most-of-them-at-elementary-level-govt-101675858595780.html>

skills is known as learning poverty.⁶ It undermines poverty reduction and contributes to intergenerational poverty. It is also an obstacle in the way of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SDGs are a universal call to action for all countries and people. Through SDGs, the world has set before itself ambitious goals of ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Among the SDGs, Goal 4 is dedicated to education, and Target 4.6 is especially committed to achieving universal literacy and numeracy. Therefore, for India, as a responsible country in the comity of nations, it becomes pertinent to address foundational learning skills.



Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals.

Accordingly, the government of India has allowed businesses to complement its efforts in education through CSR. The businesses on their part have contributed enormously to the education sector. According to the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs (India) between FY16-17 and FY20-21, the highest share of CSR funds was channelled into education. The education sector received Rs.29,918 crores worth of funds.⁷

DCM Shriram, through its Foundation, is certainly one of the contributors to education. Through its Khushali Shiksha project, with Pratham (NGO) as the implementing partner it has been trying to address Targets 4.1 and 4.6 in Hardoi.

Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh Context

Uttar Pradesh is a northern state in India and one of the most populous states. It is also one of the largest Indian states area-wise. For administrative purposes, Uttar Pradesh is divided into 75 districts. Hardoi is one of the districts of Uttar Pradesh and comes under the Lucknow division.

Like many regions in India, Hardoi's economy is primarily based on agriculture, and mainly grows sugarcane, paddy, wheat, vegetables, and oilseeds. Of the total population of 40,92,845; 87% lives in rural areas. The National Achievement Survey (2021) recorded the literacy rate in Hardoi as 64.57%. The Survey also highlighted less than optimum learning outcomes of students in primary grades. For grade three, Hardoi scored an average of 51% in the language (national- 62%) and 43% in mathematics (national- 57%). On moving to grade five too, one does not observe any significant variation in learning outcomes. The average score in language was 48% (national- 55%) and 38% in mathematics (national- 44%). While there may be an array of factors responsible for the poor learning outcomes, what is certain is that students in Hardoi demand greater attention.



Figure 2: Map of Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh.

⁶ Learning Poverty is described as the inability to read or understand a simple text by the age of 10 (The World Bank).

⁷ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/highest-share-of-csr-funds-went-to-education-in-2016-21-data-101672341868509.html>

Khushali Shiksha supported by the DCM Shriram Foundation and implemented by Pratham is one such project which exclusively sought to better the learning outcomes through numerous activities. These activities are explained in detail in the next section.

b) About Project Khushali Shiksha

DCM Shriram is one of India's leading business companies with a portfolio consisting of agri-rural business, chlor-vinyl business, and other value-added businesses. Since its formation, the company has been deeply aware of its social responsibilities, particularly towards the communities residing in and around its area of operations. Therefore, DCM believes in designing its CSR initiatives in line with the priorities of the Government and the needs of the local population. Channelising these social initiatives is its CSR arm: DCM Shriram Foundation. The Foundation tries to nurture rural communities primarily in the areas of education, health, livelihood, gender, and sanitation.

Khushali Shiksha is the Foundation's literacy project being implemented in the Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh. It was the result of a survey which revealed that most students in grade five were unable to comprehend the syllabus of grade two. The survey also revealed high dropout rates. Hence, it was decided to implement a learning project targeting basic reading and arithmetic skills with the help of an expert implementing partner. The implementing partner chosen for this project was Pratham, an NGO invested in improving the quality of education in India.

The Foundation and Pratham launched Khushali Shiksha in 2017, and the project continued for the next five years till 2022. During these years, the project was implemented in close to 100 schools and 62 communities/villages. Students (grades 1-5), mothers/parents, school principals/teachers, school management committee members, project volunteers, PRI representatives, govt. actors (DEO, BEO etc.), and DCM and Pratham team members were the stakeholders involved. The key beneficiaries were students in grades 1-5. Therefore, the spaces of engagement with students and other stakeholders included both school(s) and community areas.

To address the learning gaps found among students, the project carried out a range of activities chief of which was the 'learning camps.' These were camps of short bursts of teaching-learning activities for literacy and numeracy that were conducted in schools/villages during the year. They were conducted by Pratham staff with assistance from community members (wherever required). In addition to learning camps in schools, 'student clubs' were organised in neighbourhoods. These were volunteer-led catch-up classes in language and maths for students of grades 1-5. Each of the neighbourhoods also had a 'Mothers group'. These were an organised group of mothers who met every week with the help of volunteers. They were oriented to conduct simple learning activities for their children with learning materials available at home.

When schools abruptly shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic, learning shifted online. And as a part of the project, '*Karona Thodi Masti Thodi Padhai*' and '*Karona Apni Suraksha*' activities/campaigns were introduced to ensure continued learning and appropriate hygiene practices. In addition to these activities, the project also conducted other activities such as school readiness mela, maths and science fairs, village report cards and education rallies, and Education-for-Education a project aimed at volunteers of the project.

Through the project, the following outcomes were expected:

- Improving foundational literacy and numeracy skills in Students of grades 1-5.
- Improving parental engagement in students' education.
- Creating an enabling environment for students' education in schools and communities.

Here is a detailed description of the project activities which happened at two levels- school and community:

School-based activities

Among all the activities, **learning camps** were the most significant because they directly addressed learning in students. These camps were implemented in all years except in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown. Learning camps were short intense bursts of teaching-learning activities spread over a period of 30 days that were repeated several times in the same school/village during the year. They were conducted by Pratham staff with the assistance of members of the community (i.e., volunteers, teachers, and parents) to enhance the learning outcomes of primary school students (grades 1-5). Students attending the camps were organised in groups by their learning levels, and not according to their grades. Accordingly, Pratham created a tracker for language and mathematics to monitor students' progress. The table below shows levels for language and mathematics as per the student progress tracker.

Table 1: Description of learning levels in language.

Learning Levels in Language	
Level	Description
Beginner	Students at this level are those who are unable to recognise or understand written language.
Letter	Students at this level are those who are coming to terms with individual vowels, consonants, and their combinations.
Word	Students at this level are those who are decoding words; this could be done by targeting the consonant-vowel units in a word and then putting them together to read it out or splitting the word into chunks of letters that the child finds easy to do. This level indicates the beginning of word automaticity.
Paragraph	Students at the paragraph level are those whose word decoding skills are fairly automatised and they can handle reading a sentence by applying both nearly learned fluency and meaning-making skills.
Story	Students at this level are those who can easily handle a text or story with fluency and understanding. A story is defined to be a Grade 2 level text in the Indian context.

Table 2: Description of learning levels in Maths.

Learning Levels in Mathematics	
Level	Description
Beginner	Students at this level are those who are unable to recognise numbers: single or double digits.
Number recognition	Students at this level are those who can recognise single/double-digit numbers.
Single digit operations	Students at this level can complete single-digit addition/subtraction.
Double-digit operations	Students at this level are those who can perform addition and subtraction of double digits.
Word problem	Students at this level are those who could solve numerical word problems.

Community-based activities

To ensure that gains from learning camps continue to accrue to the students, a range of community-based activities were also implemented according to the Annual Reports. They included:

- **Mother's groups** were organised in villages according to neighbourhoods. The objective of this group was to orient mothers on simple learning activities that could be conducted with children using materials available at home. Mothers were also sensitised on COVID-19 prevention measures such as handwashing, wearing masks, and social distancing. The groups met usually weekly (usually on Saturdays).
- **Community-based Children's clubs⁸** were established in villages to create an environment where children would be able to learn on their own. They were established in areas where learning camps had been organised. Through periodic contact at set intervals, the Pratham staff would support the groups with appropriate learning materials suitable to be used by the children themselves.
- **Village report cards** that aimed at increasing awareness of communities and mobilizing them to improve interest in children's education. Community volunteers would survey the students (grades 1-5) in a village and share the results of the assessment with the villagers.
- **Education rallies** were held in villages led by the Pratham staff. Children, parents, and parents participated in the rallies. The objective was to raise awareness about the importance of education.
- **Science and Maths fairs** were conducted for students to spread awareness among students and the community about the environment around them and the disciplines themselves.
- **School Readiness Melas** were organised on the school grounds for children and their parents (particularly mothers). It aimed to help mothers in understanding the developmental abilities of their children and the way to engage them through simple activities at home. These Melas were for children entering Grade 1.

⁸ This is also referred to as student's club.

- **Karona: Thodi Masti Thodi Padhai**, a campaign to keep in touch with the communities, spread information, and encourage learning among children. The campaign also encouraged family members to support their children in learning.
- **Karona Apni Suraksha** campaign was designed in response to the second wave of COVID-19. It did not directly address learning. Instead, it focused on promoting safety and prevention through behavioural changes and practices.
- **Education for Education** was an initiative designed for the volunteers to empower the volunteers to better understand and use digital platforms and conduct basic functions such as writing emails, using ZOOM etc.

From the Annual Reports shared with TTC for the five years (2017-2022), it has been found that the Khushali Shiksha project reached out to 13,662 students only through the learning camps. The numbers would have been even higher had the covid-19 pandemic not disrupted the regular mode of teaching. Nevertheless, during the pandemic induced lockdown, the project reached out to 2634 students via WhatsApp and SMS.

Along with the learning camps established in schools, the project also set up children's groups/student clubs in neighbourhoods. In 2017, the project set up 285 children's groups and reached out to about 1500 students. By 2022, the number of children's groups had increased to 1159. Four times increase in the number of children's groups was made possible by the support of the community members, especially mothers/older children, and volunteers. As the project increased, the number of volunteers also increased from 45 in 2017 to 993 in 2022. Mother's groups were formed midway through the project (in 2019). Initially, there were only 336 groups formed and this increased to 417 by 2022. The mother's groups played a very important role in ensuring continuity of learning especially during the lockdown. A detailed analysis of every project activity, from the field review, is given in the section on impact.

c) Objectives and Scope of Assessment

The project was implemented for a period of five years, from 2017 to 2022. Post-completion of the project, the DCM Shriram Foundation commissioned Thinkthrough Consulting (TTC) to conduct an independent third-party impact assessment of the Khushali Shiksha project. The assessment team was also tasked with documenting key processes involved, project milestones, and achievements.

The **objectives and scope of assessment** included:

- To understand the project context through a secondary literature review and stakeholder consultations.
- To evaluate the impact of the project on all stakeholder groups involved in the project and analyse their perspectives.
- To assess project management arrangements, project outcomes and their impact on project locations.
- To document the lessons learned and provide recommendations for the next phase of the project with a focus on strengthening project management and implementation processes, efficiency, and sustainability.

Reference period of the assessment

The assessment covered a time frame of five years (2017 to 2022) for which the project was being implemented.

Geographic coverage of assessment

The assessment covered 10 intervention villages and three control villages. These were spread over five tehsils: Shahabad, Bilfram, Hardoi, Bharkhani, and Tnadiyawan.

d) Approach and Methodology of Study

The study used the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD)-Development Assistance Criteria (DAC) for deriving the research framework, using the measures of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Based on understanding the project nuances, a mixed methodology (involving quantitative and qualitative methods) was adopted for the assessment. The assessment team worked in close coordination with the DCM Shriram Foundation and Pratham teams across all stages of project assessment.

For the assessment, TTC adopted the following **approach**:



Engaging a multi-disciplinary team with expertise in executing high-quality deliverables to the client. The team had considerable experience working on similar projects across geographies.



Data collection for assessment was done through qualitative and quantitative methods. At all stages, the DCM Foundation and Pratham teams were kept involved. All inferences drawn and recommendations made are based on empirical evidence gathered from key stakeholders.



Attempts were made to understand and leverage knowledge and information that already existed with the DCM Foundation and Pratham teams.



Each stakeholder group was effectively engaged to understand their perspectives. While engaging with the stakeholders, the team ensured a structure conducive to free and focused discussion.



The overall process was consultative in nature. Checklists and tools were developed in consultation with the DCM Foundation and Pratham teams.

This approach was employed to evaluate the Khushali Shiksha project based on OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Commensurate to the assessment criteria, the assessment of the project was carried out in three phases: Delve, Diagnose and Deliver.

Phase 1- Delve phase included a desk review of the relevant literature to understand the project context, its roll-out and progress. For the desk review, the documents analysed included annual reports for 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22; quarterly reports: April-June (2022) and July-September (2022); and Pratham's proposal for the project. Based on the insights gathered during the desk review, stakeholder mapping, methodology, and sampling were finalized in consultation with the DCM Shriram Foundation team. At this stage, draft field tools were also prepared for interaction with stakeholders. Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were the primary means of interaction with the students (grades 1-6). A quantitative survey was also conducted among these students to independently gauge their learning levels. FGDs were also conducted for parents/mother groups. In-depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted with all the other stakeholders such as teachers/school principals, volunteers, community actors etc.

For estimating the sample for assessment (quantitative survey), the overall universe was taken as 4029 which is the total number of beneficiaries covered under the project. For the population 4029, $n = (z^2pq)/d^2$, where,

- n = desired sample size
- z = standard normal deviate, which is usually set at 1.96 (corresponding to a 95% confidence interval)
- p = proportion in target population estimated to have similar characteristics; 'p' was taken as 50%
- q = 1-p (proportion of target population not having the particular characteristic)
- d = degree of accuracy required; usually set at 0.05 level (or 5%)

With a confidence level of 95% and a degree of accuracy of 0.05- the minimum required sample size was determined to be 341 for statistically significant results of the study. In addition to this, the TTC team covered a few additional respondents to compensate for various contingencies including that of missing data and outliers. Therefore, TTC proposed to survey approximately 360 students both presently in schools and those who have graduated from the project (completed primary education).

A few other factors were also considered for sampling:

- Beneficiaries were considered from 15% of the total 62 villages in Hardoi where Khushali Shiksha has been implemented i.e., 10 villages.
- The villages were selected based on the number of beneficiaries and their sample sizes shall be determined based on Probability Proportional to Population Size (PPS) sampling.
- The total sample across the district was representative of beneficiaries belonging to different grades and genders.
- Using the purposive random sampling method TTC also included other critical respondents in the ambit of impact assessment.
- The respondents/stakeholders were selected at random according to their availability in their position, and their participation in the assessment was participatory. The research team ensured non-discrimination and inclusion of all gender, class, and ability.
- FGDs/KIIs were conducted to substantiate and triangulate the quantitative data collected.
- All inputs gathered from field research were further collated and analysed.

Table 3: Proposed and actual number of stakeholders in the impact assessment.

Stakeholders	Research tools	Proposed number of respondents	Actual number of respondents
Students	Learning Assessment Questionnaire, FGD and KII	360	427
Parents/Mother's groups	FGD and IDI	110	128
Teachers/School Principals	IDI	16	15
Volunteers	IDI	20	18

PRI representatives/community actors	KII	4	3
School Management Committee members	FGD	10	15
DCM team	IDI	2	2

Phase II- Diagnosis phase included data collection from the stakeholders mapped in the previous phase. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in the collection of data. The assessment was conducted between 10-13 February 2023. Quantitative data was collected from students (grades 1-6) to ascertain their learning levels. The qualitative aspect of the assessment, on the other hand, focused on understanding the outcomes of the project and the changes it brought in the lives of the participants, their families, and the community. Qualitative data collection utilized FGDs, KIIs and IDIs as tools. These tools contained in-depth semi-structured questions which focused on:

- Developing a better understanding of the project in its current state and collecting relevant information about the project retrospectively.
- Understanding the project life cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring, documentation, handing over, post-handover follow-ups etc.) and the role of different stakeholders.
- Understanding the challenges and opportunities that appeared during the project implementation phase, their management, enablers, and areas for improvement.
- Understanding perspectives of the impact on students, families, teachers, community, and overall materiality for the DCM Foundation.
- Capturing case studies and significant change stories wherever applicable.

Phase III- Delivery phase included collating the information gathered during the field visit. It entailed intensive review and analysis of the primary and secondary data both of which were cross-validated and assessed for veracity, consistency, and completeness. The data generated were analysed to assess the achievements and impact of the project on the beneficiaries. Based on these findings, the present report was prepared.

Quality Assurance

- The first step for quality assurance was to rigorously train the data collection teams. During the training, it was ensured that researchers fully understand the study objectives, methodology and tools. Mock practice sessions were organised to help researchers gain total familiarity with the tools.
- During the data collection, the TTC team deployed was led by a team leader possessing strong experience in qualitative and quantitative data collection. The team leader closely supervised and monitored the data collection. At the end of every day on the field, the core team members did a combined debrief of the fieldwork to address any challenges and inconsistencies in administering tools and collecting data.
- The core team reviewed and validated all the data. A preliminary review of the data was carried out to remove any irregularities and errors in data.

e) Limitations of Study

Though the assessment framework was designed in a manner to ensure high-quality deliverables, the study was constrained by the following limitations:

- The assessment team assigned to the project and the respondents; all spoke Hindi. Nevertheless, variations appeared due to different dialects. The team, therefore, sought support from the DCM and Pratham teams wherever required.
- Recall bias is a systemic error in assessments that involve interviews or questionnaires. It is caused by differences in the accuracy or completeness of the recollections retrieved by the respondents regarding activities or events. For the present project, it was observed that respondents demonstrated recall bias in the case of some activities and their components. This was mostly in the case of activities which were non-recurrent.
- The report provides overall trends and the impact of the project on the students and other stakeholders. It does not attempt to provide any explanations for village-level variations and reasons for the same.
- The insights presented in this report are based on the data/information provided by the various stakeholders including Pratham.
- In the data shared with TTC, only the baseline and fourth endline assessment data were available. Data of first, second, and third endline assessments of the learning camps were unavailable. When probed it was mentioned that the data that was shared is the collated one from the national level. Furthermore, data of only four categories i.e., beginner, letter, para, story, 1-digit recognition double-digit subtraction and double-digit addition were shared for language and numeracy. Based on this, the analysis in the impact assessment phase was conducted.
- This report, therefore, sets forth the views based on the completeness and accuracy of the facts stated or provided in the written material shared with TTC and any assumptions that were included; the inaccuracy or completeness of these facts, accordingly, have a material effect on the conclusions.
- While performing the work, TTC assumed the genuineness and validity of information and authenticity of the documents shared by the DCM Foundation and Pratham. TTC has not independently verified the correctness or authenticity of the same.
- To the best of its ability, the study team has tried to ensure and validate the authenticity of data/information submitted by the respondents. However, it would be fair to assume certain errors in data recording.

3. Key Findings

The Khushali Shiksha project had many interventions aimed at improving the learning outcomes of students in Hardoi. These interventions were implemented at two levels: at school and in the community. The findings section, therefore, focuses on capturing key findings and the impact of the project activities.

Demographic profile of the survey respondents

For the impact assessment, a quantitative survey was conducted with students in grades 1-6. The target respondents for the survey were 360 intervention students and 50 control students. In the field, the team was able to capture responses from 427 students (366 intervention and 61 from the control group). The demographic profile of respondents is represented in the following charts and graphs:

Gender distribution of the respondents

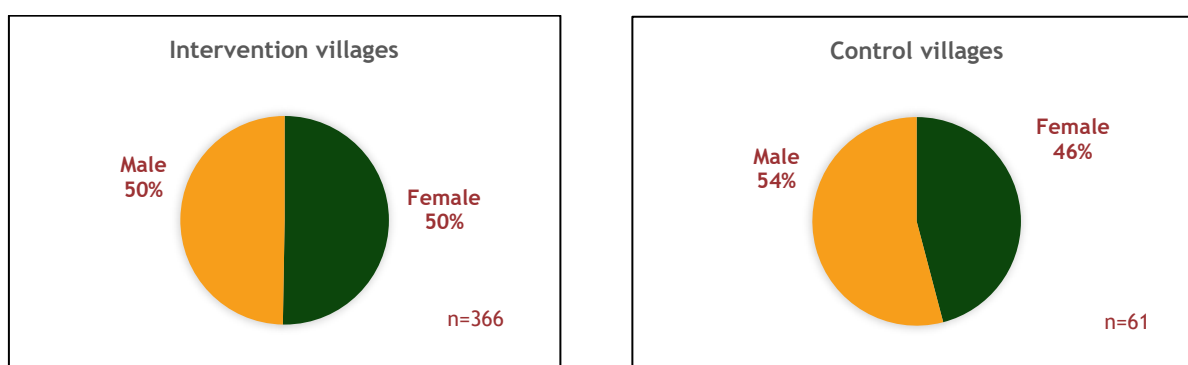


Figure 3: Gender-wise distribution of students in intervention and control villages.

The above pie charts represent the gender-wise distribution of the respondents. Among the 366 students in intervention villages, there were 182 boys and 184 girls. Similarly, among the 61 respondents in control villages, there were 33 boys and 28 girls. Thus, the team was able to maintain an appropriate gender balance in the sample.

Grade-wise distribution of students

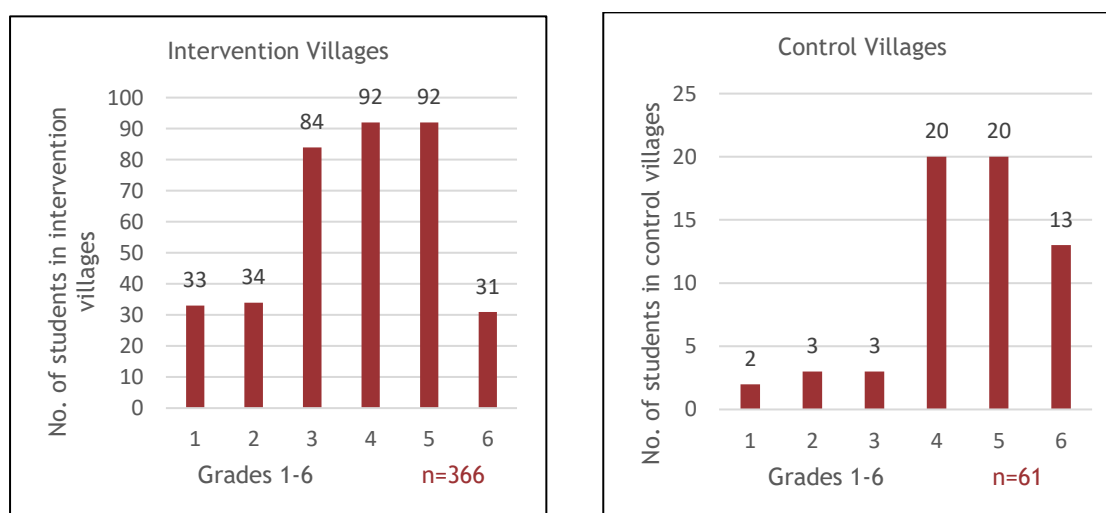


Figure 4: Grade-wise distribution of students in intervention and control villages.

From the above figures, one learns that the sample size in the 10 intervention villages was higher than that in the three control villages. However, the proportion of students surveyed in each grade has been similar. In fact, a greater number of students have been surveyed in grades four and five because it was assumed that these students would have reached a higher level of language and mathematical competency. Additionally, more intensive teaching methods have been adopted for these two grade levels. Students in grade six were surveyed because the assessment team wanted to gauge whether these students had been able to retain the teaching from the learning camps. Based on the responses to quantitative surveys and qualitative interactions, findings have been summarised in five categories: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Assessment of the Khushali Shiksha project

An assessment of any social impact project is a necessary step to identify the positive and negative effects of the same on the community and individuals. Additionally, it can also be used to identify the challenges and opportunities to further develop the project to benefit the community and individuals. For this project, the assessment focuses on five areas: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

a. Relevance

The relevance section of the impact assessment report highlights the purpose of the project i.e., the problem it sought to resolve, and its benefits to the identified stakeholders. In the case of Khushali Shiksha, the purpose was to improve the learning levels of students in grades 1-5.

Finding 1: The Khushali Shiksha project addresses the unique challenges faced by students in Hardoi. The project addresses the needs of the districts and the goals of NEP (2020) and the SDGs.

The Khushali Shiksha project is an outcome of DCM's commitment towards communities inhabiting the spaces in and around its area of operations. DCM also believes in designing its CSR initiatives in line with the priorities set by the government. The latest National Education Policy (2020) gives high priority to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and identifies it as a national mission to be implemented in all primary schools throughout India. This is so because higher levels of education crucially hinge on the successful learning outcomes during the FLN stage.

FLN is described as a student's 'ability to read and write, and perform basic operations with numbers' (NEP, 2020). It consists of reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking (ibid.). In short, it is an essential life skill as also acknowledged by SDG 4 that aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The Khushali Shiksha project exactly addresses this problem in Hardoi. For administrative purposes, Hardoi comes under the Lucknow division. The ASER report of 2016 highlights the poor learning levels of students in the Lucknow of the entire region.⁹ The report records that for Lucknow, only 41.4% of students from grades 3-5 could read at least grade 1 level text.

While secondary literature i.e., the NEP (2020), ASER reports, NAS reports etc. provided a background of the status of learning levels of students in grades 1-5, Pratham the

⁹ A further disaggregation specifically highlighting Hardoi's performance was unavailable for years earlier than 2017.

implementing partner also conducted primary research in the form of baseline assessments to evaluate the learning levels of students in grades 1-5. These assessments formed the basis on which school units were formed for the learning camps. The project was only implemented in government schools in the vicinity of DCM factories. However, the Annual Reports by Pratham on the activities conducted yearly clearly indicate a holistic approach towards learning.

The Annual Reports show that the project invested in creating a supportive and engaged ecosystem in the school and mostly in the communities. Education rallies, school readiness melas, children's groups, and mother's groups were all interventions that ensured that the community was invested in their children's education as well. Furthermore, it was found that the learning materials distributed to the students and the Idea cards shared with the mother's group were in the local language i.e., Hindi. The National Education Policy (2020) also proposes that local language/mother tongue be prioritised to ensure faster learning among children in primary grades. Therefore, the Khushali Shiksha project addresses all the relevant needs and challenges of students in Hardoi.

Finding 2: The project tied up with a partner that was not only an expert in the field of education but also had the experience and capacity of implementing large-scale projects by utilising the existing infrastructure. The implementing partner also had the expertise to identify the right beneficiaries. However, the project's involvement with all stakeholders is not of the same intensity.

For this project, the DCM Foundation partnered with Pratham, an NGO which is an acknowledged actor in the field of education. The objective of this partnership was to improve the learning outcomes of students by getting all the stakeholders involved in education of students. Accordingly, several stakeholders were identified: mothers/parents, volunteers, teachers/principals, school management committees, PRI representatives, and government officials.

Among all the stakeholders identified apart from students, the project's strongest involvement has been with mothers (through mother groups) followed by volunteers. During the FGDs with the mother's group, it was found that they most appreciated that their children have started attending schools and the children's group regularly. The mothers shared their delight in seeing their children know more than them. These changes are due to the teaching methods adopted by Pratham. The NGO believes in teaching children the basics of language and numeracy through participatory activities. The volunteers were another set of stakeholders who were instrumental in the functioning of the project. They participated actively in conducting learning camps, mother's groups, children's groups, school readiness melas etc.

Teachers/principals acknowledged the important work that was being done through the project. Through their IDIs, it was found that they appreciated how children's level of understanding the lessons has improved. They also observed increased school attendance from students who participated in learning camps. According to the teachers, students come to class with greater enthusiasm and participate keenly in class activities. But it was also highlighted by the teachers that there was a bit of academic disconnect between the project focus and the school curriculum. This was especially true in higher grades such as 3, 4, and 5.

Similarly, the field review found that the project did not engage with school management committees and PRI members. Two PRI members, belonging to two different intervention villages that the research team interviewed did not seem to know the details of the

project activities but were aware of a project being implemented by the ‘*cheeni mill wale log*’ (people from the sugar mill). This showcases the low touch intervention towards indirect beneficiaries.

In addition to the outcomes in education, the annual report (2021) detailed the safety and hygiene practices that the project implemented in villages. They included a range of practices. The team was able to verify these during the FGDs with mothers’ groups. A positive unintended outcome was also observed in the FGDs with mothers. Many of them now can move out of their homes and some of them even mentioned participating in community-level meetings even in the presence of men.

b. Effectiveness

The effectiveness criteria in an assessment study measures whether the project’s interventions are achieving their objectives. In the case of the Khushali Shiksha project, the interventions included: learning camps, children’s groups/library groups, mothers’ groups, village report cards, education rallies, community meetings, school readiness melas, and science and maths fairs. Each activity has been assessed in terms of its project components and the role of stakeholders.

i. Learning Camps

Finding: Learning camps have positively impacted the attitudes of students and parents towards studies. A range of activities have ensured that students study in a participatory manner. However, the project has a long way to go in analysing the data it gathers from assessments and using it to implement interventions for each child attending the camp.



Learning camps were the central intervention envisioned for the project. The objective of the learning camps was to enable students in grades 1-5 to read the alphabet, numbers, and words and gradually progress to solving language comprehensions and word problems in maths. Pratham i.e., the implementing partner describes learning camps as ‘camps of short and intense bursts of teaching-learning activities (10 days at a stretch).’

Learning camps were conducted in primary schools. They were managed by a CIM after prospective beneficiaries were identified through a baseline assessment. Within these camps students were clubbed according to their learning levels and not grade levels. Each camp operates for 10 days (roughly a fortnight, not counting the weekends/holidays). At the end of every learning camp, there is an endline assessment to track student progress. Thereafter, there is a break of 10 days during which the CIM goes to teach in another learning camp in another village. This cycle continues until three to four learning camps occur in each identified primary school.

From the annual reports it was found that the learning camps expanded and reached out to more students each year. The following table is a demonstration of the same.

Table 4: Expanding coverage of Learning Camps.

Year	School Units	No. of students reached
2017	20	1323
2018	50	2532
2019	84	4918
2021	82	4889

The learning camps were conducted in all years of project implementation and reached out to a total of 13,662 students in grades 1-5. It was only disrupted in 2020 on account of the country wide COVID lockdown. However, the project quickly adapted to the changed circumstances and reached out to 2634 students through weekly SMS and WhatsApp messages in this period. During this time, physical classes were conducted by volunteers and not CIMs.

Findings from the field:

The assessment team conducted FGDs and IDIs with students, mothers, and schoolteachers to understand the benefit of the learning camp activity for the students, and the following findings emerged during the qualitative interactions:

What worked

- All the students who were interviewed highlighted that participation in learning camp has changed their overall personality in a positive manner. It was further observed by researchers that students were highly vocal and spoke confidently. They were not hesitant to answer the questions that were asked. Students were able to apply their minds to the questions asked and draw conclusions during FGD interactions. Clearly, the pedagogy and mode of instruction were of good quality.
- Students expressed that they had improved in their studies. After attending learning camps, they can read and write better, form sentences from words and solve basic math problems. They also liked attending learning camps more than regular school classes.
- It was observed that learning camps were conducted in the identified primary schools and students in each camp were divided into two groups (grades 1-2 in one group, and grades 3-5 in another group).
- Learning material was available in the local language i.e., Hindi. Students were also taught by engaging means such as flashcards, alphabet/number charts, etc. Generally, a participatory mode of instruction was adopted through action songs, poems, games, and activities which resulted in enhancing student's voice and participation, thereby building their communicative skills.
- It was further highlighted that absenteeism reduced remarkably according to schoolteachers. CIMs would visit each house and get the students to the learning camps. Students were able to recollect the activities conducted in learning camps, and also the names of CIMs. This is an indicator of regular interactions of students with the CIMs and good attendance in the classes.

Learnings from the field

- From the data that has been shared with TTC by Pratham, one observes that the learning camps start off at any month during the year. Similarly, there does not seem to be a specific prefixed end date. It was further highlighted on field that due to delay in timeline of previous camps, learning camp for the academic year 2022-23 got delayed and began only in November 2022 and was continuing into February 2023. This showcases how the duration of camps can range from anywhere between

2-5 months and might extend till the end of academic year as well.

- Many students shared that learning camps that are conducted towards the end of academic year are not beneficial to them since this is the time when they require focused support in covering academic syllabus. Students further mentioned that some of them also go to tuitions post learning camps so that they are better supported for appearing in school level examinations.
- There also seems to be no uniformity in the duration of the camps. From the data shared with TTC by Pratham, it was observed that in some years each camp lasted for six days (four camps of six days each) while in other years it was for 10 days (3/4 camps of 10 days each).
- In the field review it was found that the tools used for instruction in these camps emphasize on excelling in specific language and mathematical skills such as identification of akshars (letters), shabdh (words), numbers etc. This leads to rote learning by students. Therefore, the learning assessment tool used by Pratham assesses 'exactly' what the students are taught in the learning camps. This means that students are assessed on their memory and not conceptual clarity.
- Large quantities of field level data are gathered in the form of baseline and endline assessments for every student but there seems to be little to no analysis (and, monitoring and recording) of this data set. Every student's performance is recorded during the camps. Surprisingly, no evidence of analysis of this data, tracking continuity/yearly progress of students was found. This implies that the focus stays on the group and not on individual students. There is also no mechanism that ensures a follow up of a student's performance after the learning camps are over. Thus, at the level of the project, there is no way to understand if a child's learning has improved over the years.
- A mechanism to identify repeaters was also found to be missing during the field review. Therefore, the assessment is unsure if the students who have qualified once are rejoining the learning camps repeatedly till the project ends.

ii. Children's Club

Finding: Through the children's club the project aimed to facilitate peer learning. It sought to build a culture of reading and learning at home. A system trying to achieve these goals was in place but quality assurance strategies for the same were found to be missing.



Children's club was another significant intervention of the project. As in the case of the learning camps, the number of children's clubs also increased as the project expanded as table no. 5 exhibits.

Table 5: Increasing coverage of children's club.

Year	No. of Children's clubs formed
2017	285
2018	570
2019	924
2021	1159

Children's clubs were a part of the project's work in the community. It was formed to facilitate peer-supported learning among children. The idea was to build a culture of studying beyond school hours and to inculcate a habit of reading among children. For forming a children's club, the entire village was mapped first and then divided into neighbourhoods. Children's clubs were then formed based on a neighbourhood. Usually, it was held in an open space in the neighbourhood or in the volunteer's home. This was to ensure that children study at their convenience close to their homes. The clubs would meet for 1.5-2 hours on all days except Sundays. Since students attending learning camps also attended the children's club, there was considerable overlap among the beneficiaries.

Findings from the field:

From the qualitative interactions, in the form of IDIs with CIMs, and volunteers, KIIs with children, and FGDs with mothers, the following findings have emerged:

What worked

- All the intervention villages had formed children's clubs. The clubs were split into two grade groups: 3-5 and 6-8.
- Every child ensured that they attended these clubs without fail. A strong culture of learning was established by the project team.
- Children liked attending them because they were smaller groups, and they had the opportunity to study with their peers. Consequently, attendance was high.
- Each sub-group had a leader, and the group overall was managed by a volunteer. Often the CIMs were also present.
- Learning material in the form of storybooks, and worksheets for practice was made available to the children. Many children's clubs had libraries with a good number of books. Tablets, with video lessons, were also made available to the children. The videos included stories, pictures, and names of colours, animals, vegetables etc., along with math games.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the children's clubs were instrumental in ensuring the continuity of education. Children and their mothers confirmed receiving SMS and WhatsApp messages with daily lessons for children to practice.
- The tablets were functional and utilized by students across all clubs. The content utilization in the tablets were tracked by CIMs at the backend to check for club's learning progress.

Learnings from the field

- Not all children's clubs had a functional library. In the clubs that had storybooks, it was found that they were not very interesting. Additionally, the same set of books was not available at all locations.
- Tablets were being used by children for learning. Each group was given one tablet and it usually stayed with the children themselves. There were a variety of educational topics (in the form of videos) on the tablets that the children watched and listened to. Though the videos watched by children were updated at the backend but there were no means to ensure that the curriculum was progressing in

the online mode. Students informed the research team that many-a-times they watched the same video more than once and didn't wish to move to the next set because they enjoyed the existing content.

- Many times, the children clubs functioned without supervision of a CIM or volunteer. In such a scenario, the group leader facilitated the learning, but it was observed that neither the leader nor other children were aware of which content to access on a given day on these tablets.
- It was found that despite students being given worksheets for practice, their progress on the worksheets was not being recorded or monitored.
- Volunteers were charged with guiding the children's club on an everyday basis. However, it was found that there was no effective mechanism that ensures that another volunteer or a CIM takes charge of the group in their absence. Volunteers informed the research team that, usually, in their absence, one of their siblings who had not received any training from the project team took charge of the group. This was the case in most of the villages.

iii. Mother's groups

Finding: A good initiative to make mothers more participative in the education of their children. However, the setup requires formalised monitoring mechanism. so that it can contribute to the larger goals of the project.



Mothers were always a part of the Khushali Shiksha project seeing as they were the primary caregivers of

their children. However, it was only in 2019 that they began to be organised into groups to make their participation more effective in children's education.

According to the annual report (2019), 1504 mothers of children in grades 1-2 were initially organised into 336 small groups. These groups were formed in the same manner as children's groups i.e., by village mapping. The objective was to encourage mothers' participation in children's readiness for school and eventually towards educational development of their child.

"hum ghar se bahar kam jaate h par mother's meeting mein har shaniwaar milte h. Hum toh bachhon ke liye milte the par abhi humein bhi sahas mila. Jab gaon mein badi meeting hui toh ham sab gaye. Humein abhi gaon waalon ke samne bolne mein darr nahi lagta..."

-Lakshmi (name changed), Ajbapur village.

Findings from the field:

From the qualitative interactions, in the form of FGDs and IDIs with mothers, the following findings have emerged:

What worked

- It was observed that almost all the mothers were motivated and enthusiastic about the weekly mothers' group meetings. They ensured that they came together in a convenient location for this purpose.
- It was highlighted by mothers that these weekly meetings gave them a voice. Not only do they participate in meetings at the hamlet level but are unafraid to voice their opinion in village-level meetings as well.

- Weekly mothers group meetings, facilitated by a volunteer or the CIM took place usually on Saturdays. Mothers were oriented towards activities that could be conducted with their children using materials available at home. This was mostly for children in grades 1-2. Mothers of children in grades 3-5 also were part of the groupings.
- Mothers and other family members cooperated with CIMs in ensuring that their children go to school and attend children's clubs regularly.
- 'Smart mother' concept was introduced. A smart mother was someone in the group who had access to a smartphone. She oversaw the weekly meetings of the group and share 'Idea cards' with them. Idea cards contained details of activities to be conducted with children on a weekly basis. The weekly meeting was also utilized to create awareness among mothers about children's health.

Learnings from the field

- The mothers claimed that they met weekly under the supervision of Pratham team members. But it was shared that there was no record maintained by mothers or CIMs on these regular meetings. There were no attendance registers recording the meetings or any other record of the activities/discussions taking place in the Saturday meetings.
- Most mothers could recall the 'school readiness melas' and the activities conducted as a part of it. They also claimed that in their weekly meetings, the discussion centered on children's education. However, when the team prodded them further on the same, the mothers did not say much.
- It was highlighted by the mothers that they did not have a set agenda for these weekly meetings. They played games with their children, sang songs etc. Furthermore, no record of regular meetings was found.
- The annual reports hint that the idea cards shared with mothers were digital in the form of SMS and WhatsApp. Most of the mothers raised their concern on how these idea cards were inaccessible to them since they can't read or write themselves. They mentioned that they took support from volunteers to understand the meaning of the message. Also, when asked to show record of any idea card messages/ SMS received by mothers on mobile phone, they didn't have the same with them.
- The assessment team found hard copies of the idea cards, but the mothers could not elaborate on the contents except that it is on '*padhai*'.
- There was no one smart mother. Rather all mothers in a group became smart mothers by rotation and the *de-facto* 'smart mother' was the CIM/volunteer. Due to this, during the absence of CIM/Volunteer, the mothers were not aware of the meetings' agenda.

iv. Volunteer Engagement

Finding: Despite volunteers shouldering the greater responsibility of implementation of the project, it has been found that no real efforts went into their selection and training. Similarly, the Education-for-Education initiative which was to lend a helping hand to the volunteers professionally, however it did not go beyond the basics.



Volunteers form the crux of the Khushali Shiksha project. Initially, the project only had 45 volunteers to enable and facilitate work in the communities. As the project expanded to new areas, the number of volunteers also increased. In 2021, there were 828 volunteers associated with the project. They supported the Pratham staff in conducting learning camps, surveyed children for Village Report Cards, helped conduct education rallies, painted blackboards in villages, organised mother's groups, and children's group meetings etc.

Findings from the field:

From the qualitative interactions, in the form of IDIs with volunteers, the following findings emerged:

What worked

- Khushali Shiksha project was powerfully anchored by field level volunteers especially during the COVID pandemic lockdown period. The volunteers were passionate and motivated individuals who have the desire to give back to their community members by providing access to education to children in their community. They were involved in all the major projectmatic activities of Khushali Shiksha. This can be ascertained from the fact that other stakeholders and especially children were able to recollect the names of the volunteers.
- Most of them were residents of the village(s) between the ages 16-23 where the Khushali Shiksha project was being implemented.
- Familiarity of the CIMs with the village(s) enabled them to personally convince prospective volunteers and their parents about the project. This approach had a positive outcome among the volunteers who joined the project before COVID-19 pandemic. They were better aware of the project and its objectives.
- Volunteers were trained in the understanding of teaching materials and the manner of instructing the children and leading group sessions of mothers and children.
- During the pandemic, those who had smartphones were trained in conducting classes on foundational skills. In 2020, volunteers conducted all the learning camps (in an online mode). This has been inferred from the data shared with TTC by Pratham.

Learnings from the field

- It was found that the volunteers were not given proper training to conduct activities such as learning camps or children's groups. Many of them did not have the educational capacity to teach younger students. On being asked if their poor educational levels were an impediment in any manner, a common response emerged: "*kitna hi padhana hai?*" This indicates that the volunteers did not view teaching as a difficult job. According to them, one really does not need any special training to be able to instruct younger students on basic language and maths skills.
- The project did not consider a crucial aspect i.e., the inability of the volunteers to miss out on some activities due to them being engaged elsewhere. When enquired by the research team what they do in such circumstances, the volunteers responded

that a sibling or friend takes over for them.

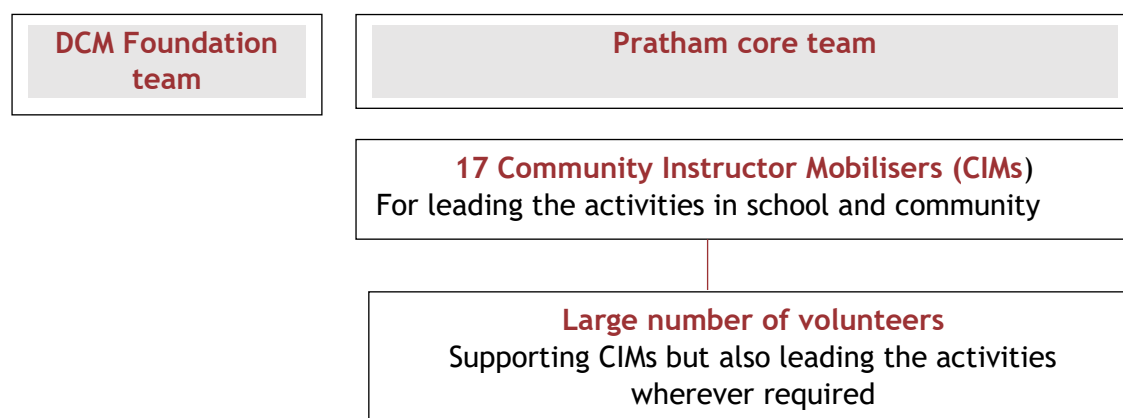
- Children spent a lot of time with the volunteers. During the pandemic, the former went to the homes of the latter for their classes. However, it was observed that the project did not have a child protection policy in place. This would be a welcome addition since the children spend a lot of time interacting with volunteers, CIMs, etc. Surprisingly, the project did not seem to have an inbuilt child protection policy.
- While recruiting the volunteers, the CIMs made it clear that the position did not have any financial incentives to it. Nevertheless, in acknowledgement of the work done by volunteers, Pratham distributed appreciation certificates and even introduced Education-for-Education initiative. The latter was an initiative to help volunteers progress in their own careers. However, the IDIs found this to be a low-touch model where the volunteers were taught basic digital skills such as creating an email ID, making Zoom calls etc. It was highlighted from conversation with volunteers that they would rather wish for a support in building a career portfolio or access to any career opportunities or soft and hard skills trainings.

3.

f.c. Efficiency

Finding 1: The model of project implementation relies heavily on inadequately trained human resources i.e., volunteers. Additionally, the CIMs are stretched to their capacity. Thus, impacting the project's efficiency negatively.

The Khushali Shiksha project is a student-centric model. All activities and stakeholders through their design and participation, respectively, were expected to contribute to bettering the learning outcomes among students. For the seamless implementation of the project, Pratham put a team in charge. The following organogram is a representation of the same.



At a glance, the project had a simple implementation team. However, their responsibilities were vast. The project began with 22 CIMs (before 2022) but the number was reduced to 17 towards the end. Pratham clarified that each CIM was given charge of five villages. When the first stretch of camp begins, a CIM is expected to alternate between two villages. Once the CIM has conducted 3-4 camps in both villages, they were

are expected to move to the next two villages under their charge. In case any new intervention is devised, the fifth village becomes a means for a pilot study. Such a model is directly responsible for the involvement of a huge number of volunteers in the project. From the field review, it was found that volunteers played a huge role in the operation of community activities.

Financially, this is a low-cost model because volunteers became a part of the project purely out of self-motivation without incentives. There were no selection criteria for volunteers. As and when the need arose, more volunteers were recruited. Pratham and the volunteers informed the assessment team of the training received. However, the assessment team through interviews and observations from the field found that the volunteers were inadequately equipped to handle a serious issue such as educating primary-grade children in villages. All of this has a direct impact on the efficiency of the project being implemented.

“isse humara koi fayada toh nahi h, par humare gaon ke bachhe padhenge.” (We get no benefit out of this but children from our village will be better educated.)

-Volunteers on what motivates them to be a part of the project.

Finding 2: The project needs to have a robust system that validates the collected data.

The project in its current form does not have an efficient system of data collection or tracking student progress in place. Pratham, the project implementing partner had shared data of the activities, particularly the learning camps, conducted over the years. As already mentioned, the learning camps focused on increasing proficiency of students in language and numeracy which was divided into several levels. For language, these included: akshar, shabdh, anuched, kahani, and path bodhan. Similarly for maths, they are: single digit number recognition, double digit number recognition, single digit operation, double digit sum, double digit subtraction, and word problem. For both maths and language, students who were unable to even attempt single digit number recognition or identify akshars, were categorised as beginners.

From the data received from Pratham, it was noted that student wise data on each learning level is collected at field and consolidated at national level. Furthermore, there was a lack of consistency in the total number of students between each level. The number/percentage of students were not shown separately within each level in language and mathematics rather they were clubbed. For example, in language the levels shown in data involved ‘beginner+letter’ and ‘para+story’. Similar issue was found with mathematics as well. An additional issue with mathematics data is that the clubbed levels were not consistent through the years.

Additionally, it was observed that there is a lack of cross validation of data or quality assurance of data at the national level. In the absence of a rigorous supervision and quality assurance mechanism, the data was found to be non-comparable on many aspects. This has direct implications on the quality and project’s efficiency.

g.d. Impact

Finding 1: Khushali Shiksha has created a progressive attitude towards children’s education in the villages. This

“hum toh zyada padh nahi sake par humare bachhe padhenge. Hum unko unta padhayenge jitna ve chahein” (We are not well educated but our children will study. We will allow them to study as much as they want to.)”

-Mothers asserting that they will support their children in getting further education.

can be gauged from the increased attendance and participation of students in classrooms.

Getting students to access school and learning facilities is a challenge in both urban and rural context. Poverty, illiteracy of guardians, poor living conditions, and child labour are a few reasons why children miss out on school. In such a scenario, the Khushali Shiksha project has done a commendable job. All the stakeholders interviewed indicated that children's attendance has improved significantly. Mothers were especially proud that their children no longer waste time loitering around or bunk school to play with friends. Even the schoolteachers observed improved attendance levels among children after attending camps. During the IDIs with children, they attributed this change to their improved ability to understand texts. In the FGDs, the children volunteered to narrate stories and poems learnt in the learning camps. This indicates the ability of students to retain and recall content that they were taught in the camps.

Evidence from secondary sources, substantiated by field evaluators indicate that this is due to four factors:

- a) advocacy with parents by conducting one-on-one meetings to convince them to send their children to school,
- b) personal efforts of the CIMs and volunteers in getting children to the camps,
- c) instructing students based on their levels of understanding/ learning than expected grade-wise competency,
- d) engaging study material(s) available in the local language and teaching students through participatory means.

The study material and classroom activities were inclusive. This is keeping in line with the requirements set by SDG 4 which calls for 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all'. By endowing children with foundational literacy and numeracy skills, the Khushali Shiksha project is setting the groundwork for lifelong learning opportunities and hopefully, at some point, this will enable the children and their families to break the cycle of poverty.

The remainder of this section will discuss the results of the quantitative survey conducted by TTC in the Hardoi district. The questionnaire was designed to assess the learning levels of students who had attended the learning camps. It also had qualitative questions built in. The same questionnaire was used to assess the learning levels of students in three control villages. This was done to draw comparisons between the two to get a holistic picture.

i. Qualitative outcomes in intervention villages

Students in the intervention villages were surveyed to gauge their ability to recall the project components without further probing. From the overall sample of 366 students, the majority i.e., 57% of them were able to recall all the components of the project without further probing (figure 5).

Having ascertained that 57% of respondents i.e., 208 students were able to recall all the key project components, the survey team proceeded to

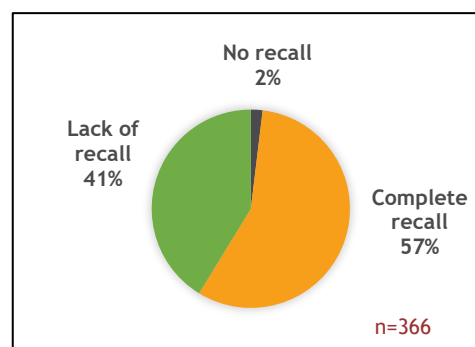


Figure 5: Project recall among participants.

understand their involvement with various activities. Accordingly, the students were given three options which they actively participated in to choose from -

- a) Learning Camps
- b) Children's Group/Library
- c) Maths/Science Fair

From Figure 6, one can decipher that 161 students out of 208 recalled all activities of the project. The highest recall, however, was for learning camps and children's clubs as mentioned below.

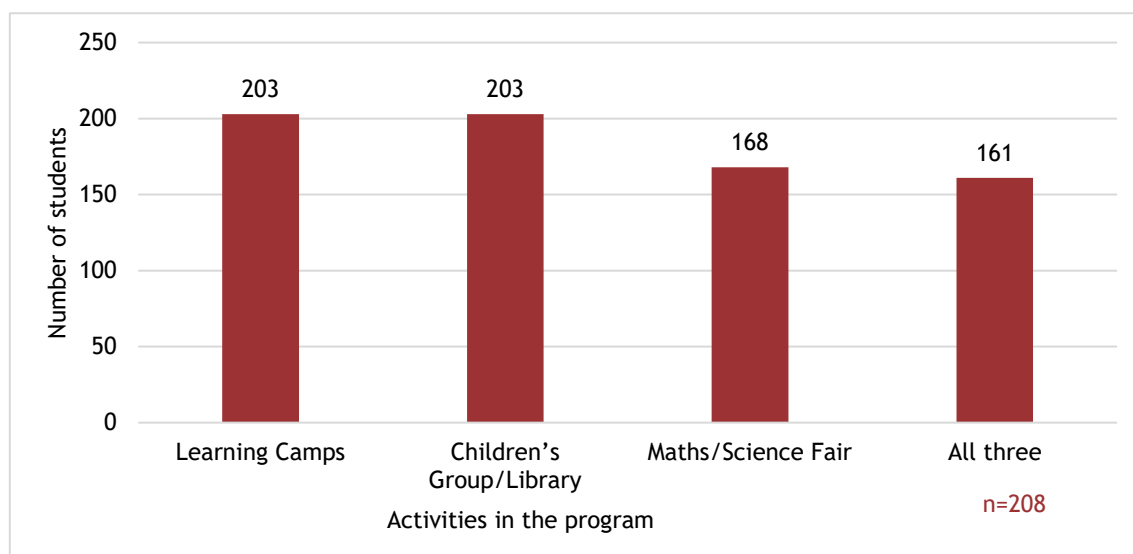


Figure 6: Recall of activity names in the program by children at the start of the learning assessment.

Benefits from participation in learning camps

Next, the survey sought to gauge the benefits of these activities to the children. To understand the same the children were given three options:

- a) Increase in confidence in reading and writing,
- b) Ability to read well, and
- c) Improvement in maths.

In figure 7, 113 students found all the activities to be beneficial on all three counts. The majority of the students i.e., 185 of them mentioned increased confidence in reading and writing as the greatest benefit accrued to them from the learning camps.

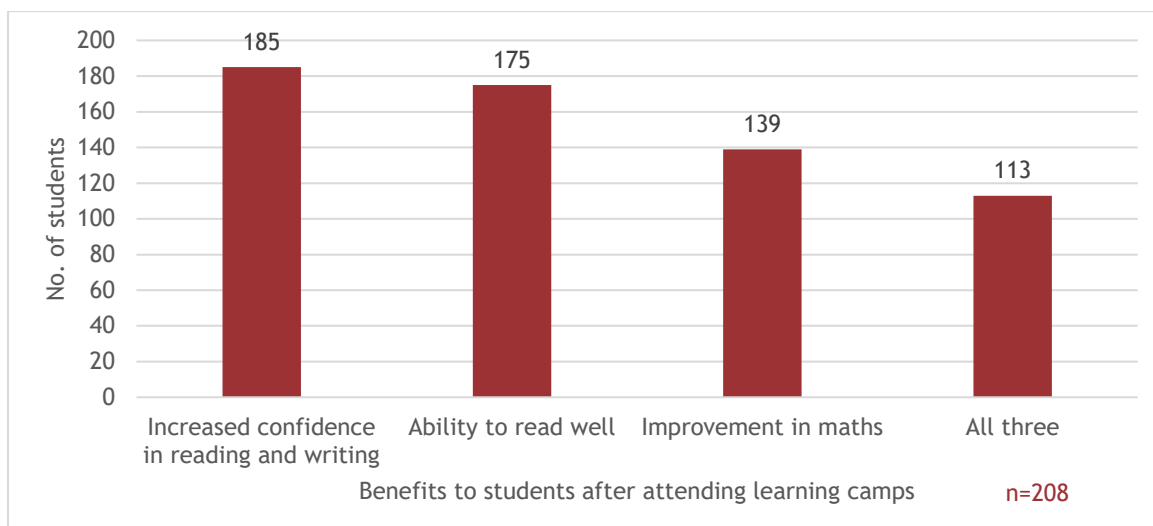


Figure 7: Benefits to students on attending learning camps.

The next section discusses the learning levels of students surveyed since they were all part of learning camps. Section 3.4.2 will deep dive into the impact of the same.

ii. Learning Outcomes in Intervention and Control Villages

The quantitative survey was administered in both the intervention location (10 villages) and the control location (3 villages). The idea was to understand whether Khushali Shiksha had created any impact among the students who were part of the project compared to those who did not have the benefit of such an intervention. The survey had two components, to capture: language ability and mathematical ability. The participants were categorised into two groups: grades 1-3 and 4-6.

Grade-wise distribution of students surveyed from intervention and control villages.

Grades	Intervention villages	Control villages
1-3	151	8
4-6	215	53
Total	366	61

I. Grade 1-3

a. Performance in Language

For grades 1-3, the language levels involved: a) akshar (alphabet); b) shabdh (word); c) anuched (paragraph); and path bodhan (reading comprehension). Those who could not identify akshars were recorded at the beginner level. The results of the survey are represented in the following figures:

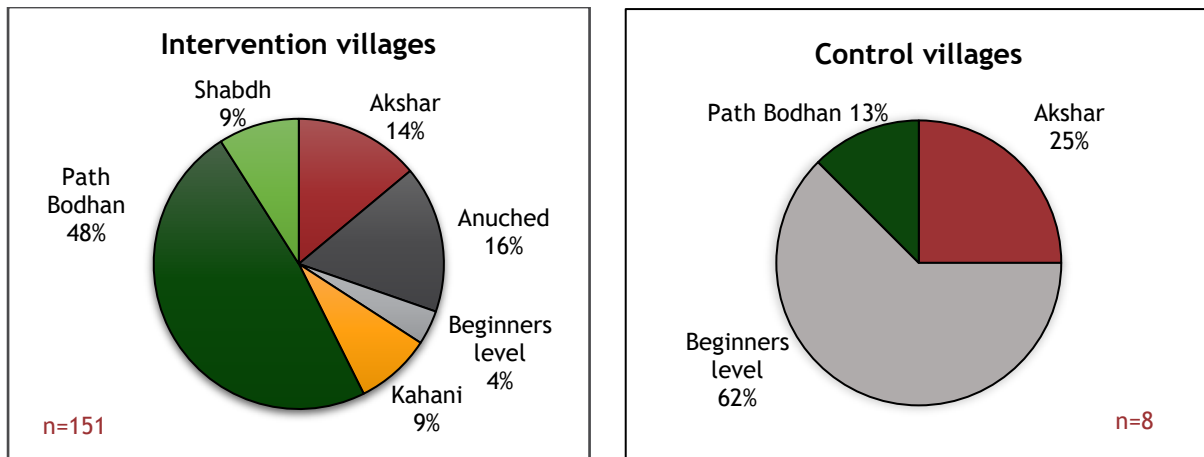


Figure 8: Language-wise learning levels of children in grades 1-3 in intervention and control villages.

- Figure 8 represents a total of 151 students in grades 1-3 and their learning levels as per the learning assessment test. It becomes clear that 48% of them have reached the ability to read and comprehend a text on their own. This means that through project's intervention at least 50% of the students have reached grade appropriate reading levels. This is one of the biggest achievements of the project.
- A total of 14 intervention students representing 4% of 151 sample are at the beginner's level and all the students at this level are in grade one except four of them who are in from grade three. This showcases that only a small portion of students are unable to read even basic akshars and most of them are from grade 1.
- Results from control villages stand in stark contrast to those from their intervention counterparts wherein 62% are at beginners' level. This is a huge number.

b. Performance in Mathematics

For numerical abilities, children in grades 1-3 were examined on the following levels:

a) number recognition (single digit), b) number recognition (double digit), c) single digit operations, d) double-digit sum, and e) double-digit subtraction. Those who could not even recognise single-digit numbers were recorded at the beginner's level.

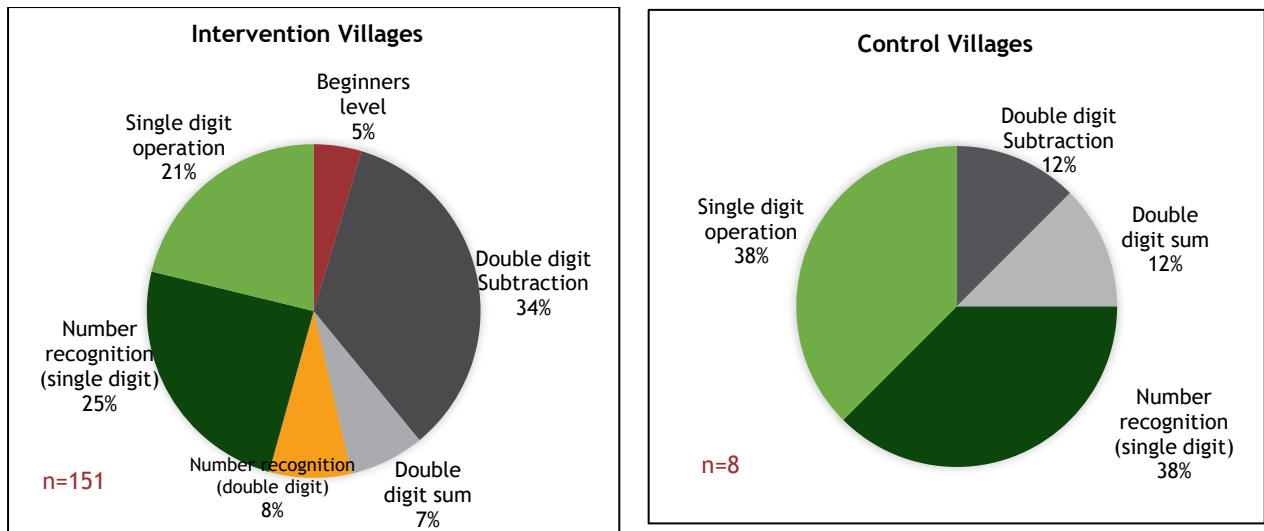


Figure 9: Learning levels in math for children in grades 1-3 in intervention and control villages.

- Figure 9 represents that around 61% of intervention students have been able to move beyond number recognition and are able to perform higher-order mathematical operations. As per NIPUN Bharat's mandate on learning goals of students in grade 2, the student must be able to subtract double-digit numbers and 34% of students were able to solve the same.
- It can also be inferred that in control villages, none of the students are at the beginners level and only around 12% of them are able to perform double digit subtraction.
- Overall, students in intervention villages perform better than their counterparts in control villages.

II. Grades 4-6

Students from grades 4-6 were asked to solve similar questions/levels with the addition of having to answer comprehension questions in languages and word problems in mathematics.

a. Performance in Language

The results of the language learning assessment are represented in the following figures for both intervention and control villages.

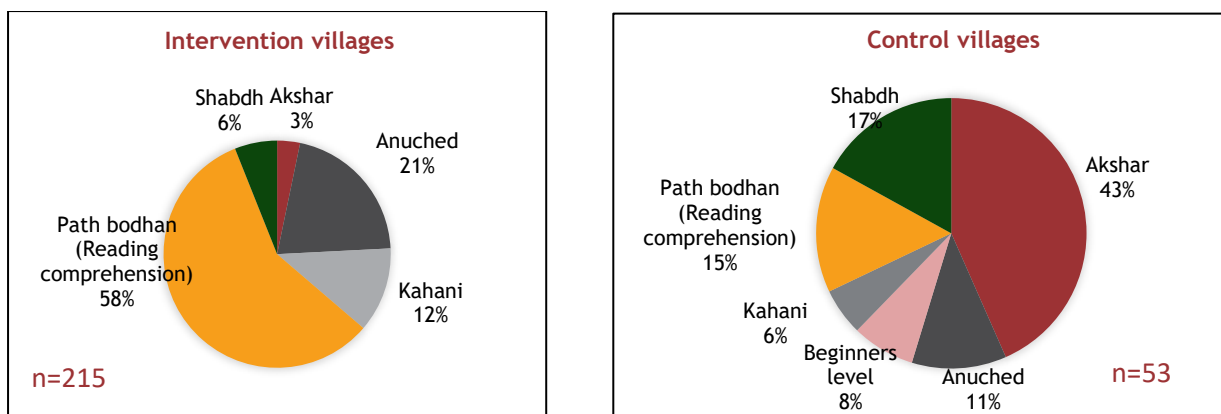


Figure 10: Learning outcomes in language on grades 4-6 in intervention and control villages.

- From figure 10, it becomes clear that 58% of students in intervention villages have reached the *path bodhan* level while the figure for control villages is only 15%.
- At the same time, in control group, a majority of 43% students are at *akshar* level and 8% at beginner's level whereas in intervention group, there are no students who are reading at beginners' level and only 3% of the sample are at akshar level.

b. Performance in Mathematics

For maths, the students were given the same questions with an addition of word problems in the questionnaire. The following charts represent their levels.

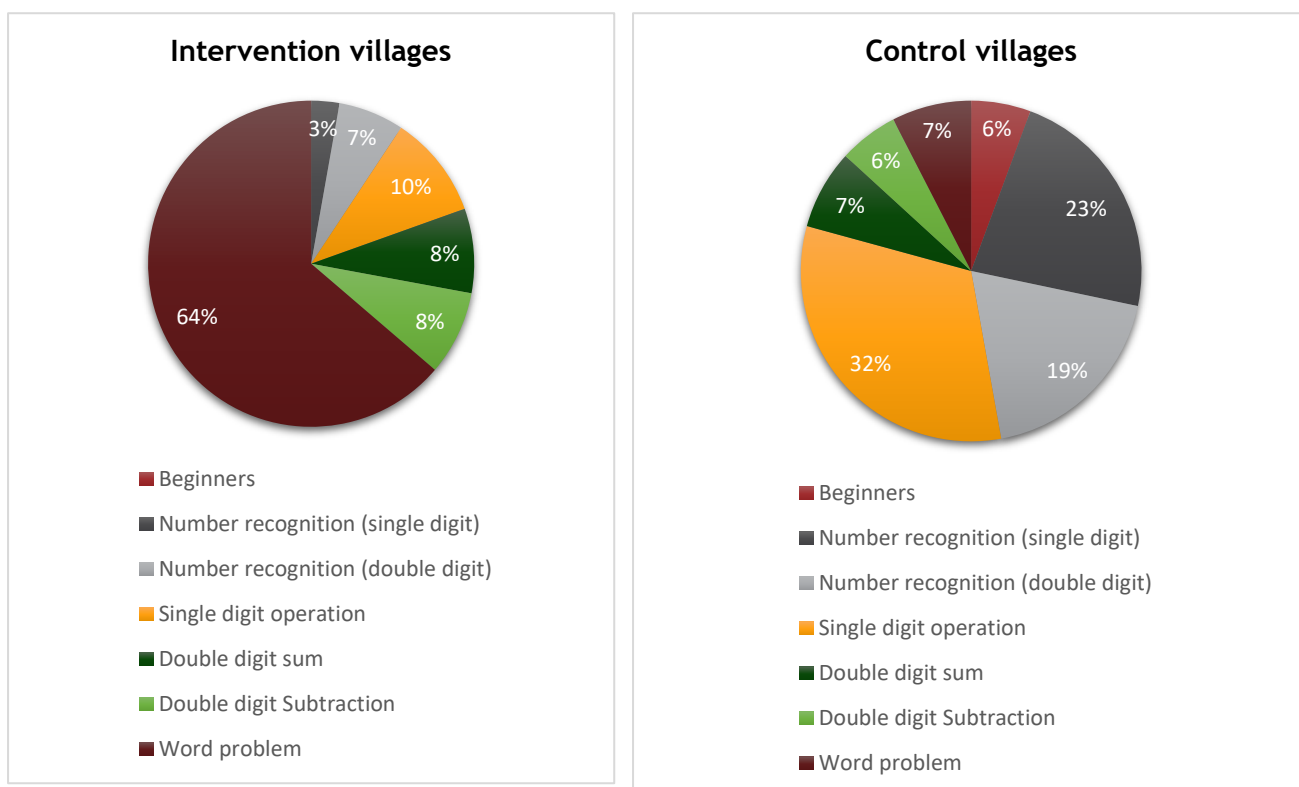


Figure 11: Numeracy levels of students in grades 4-6 in intervention and control villages.

Figure 11 represents the learning outcomes of students in grades 4-6 in maths. From the figure it becomes clear that there are no students at the beginner level in the intervention villages whereas control group had 6% students. Similarly, there were stark differences in the ability to solve word problems for both set of villages. In intervention villages, 64% students had the ability of solving word problems compared to only 7% in control villages.

From the above charts, it becomes clear that students who received the benefit of Khushali Shiksha's intervention have performed better than those who were not a part of the project.

iii. Detailed Analysis

a) Year of joining the learning camp

For intervention villages, the assessment team also probed if the duration of a student's participation in learning camps had any implications on their learning outcomes. The findings have been represented in the following charts:

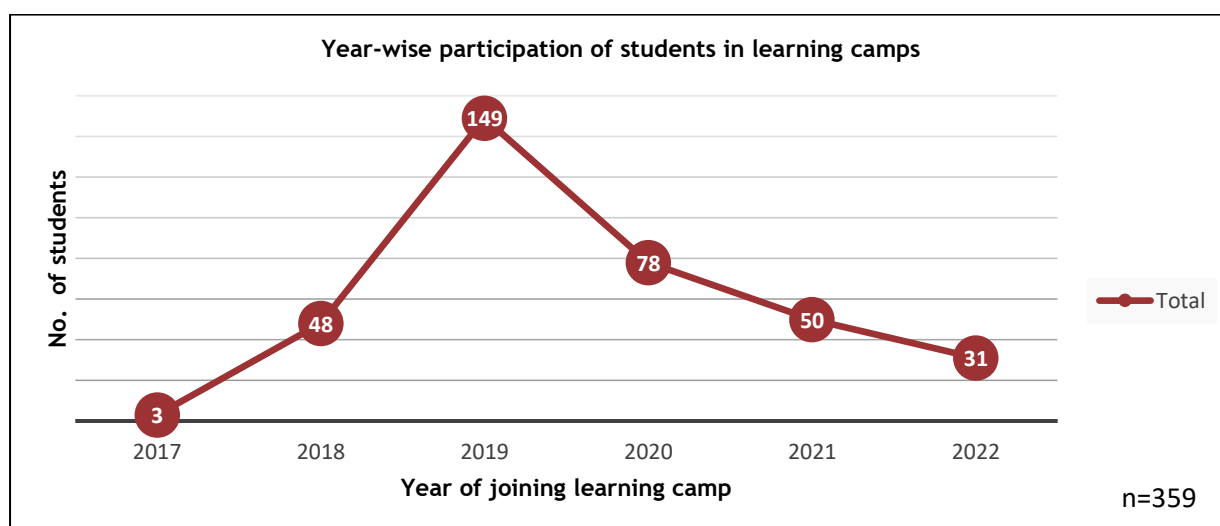


Figure 12: Year-wise participation of students in learning camps.

From figure 12, one observes that from the sample, year 2019 saw the highest participation of students in learning camps followed by 2020.

The subsequent graph analysis showcases the correlation of figure 12 with other project driven factors.

b) Student's learning performance in language and maths with year of joining learning camp

Figure 13 below shows a correlation between the year of joining in learning camps (figure 12) and the learning levels of students in both maths and language. Students who joined the learning camps from 2017 to 2019, have a better ability to solve higher level problems in language and maths than those who joined the learning camps during and post COVID pandemic i.e., 2020-2022.

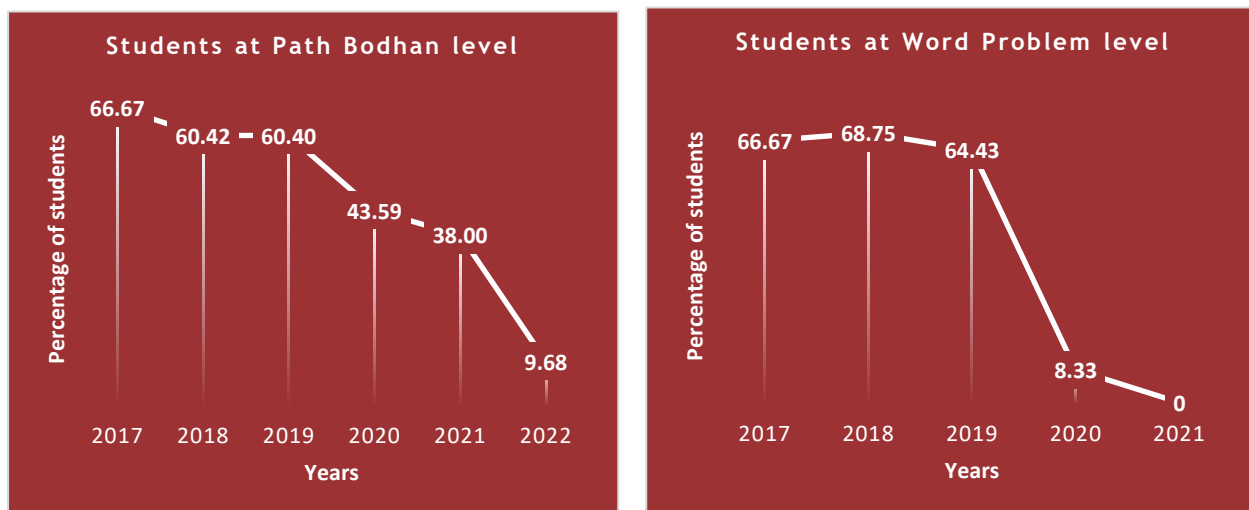


Figure 13: Percentage of students at path bodhan and word problem levels after attending learning camps.

c) Participation in children's club and student's learning performance in language

Along with learning camps in schools, students were supported with their learning at the village level through children's club.

Figure 14 showcases that those who participate in children's club activities are more often able to have a higher ability to reach path bodhan level in languages as compared to those who attend less. The students whose participation was higher in children's club were more likely to be at path bodhan level.

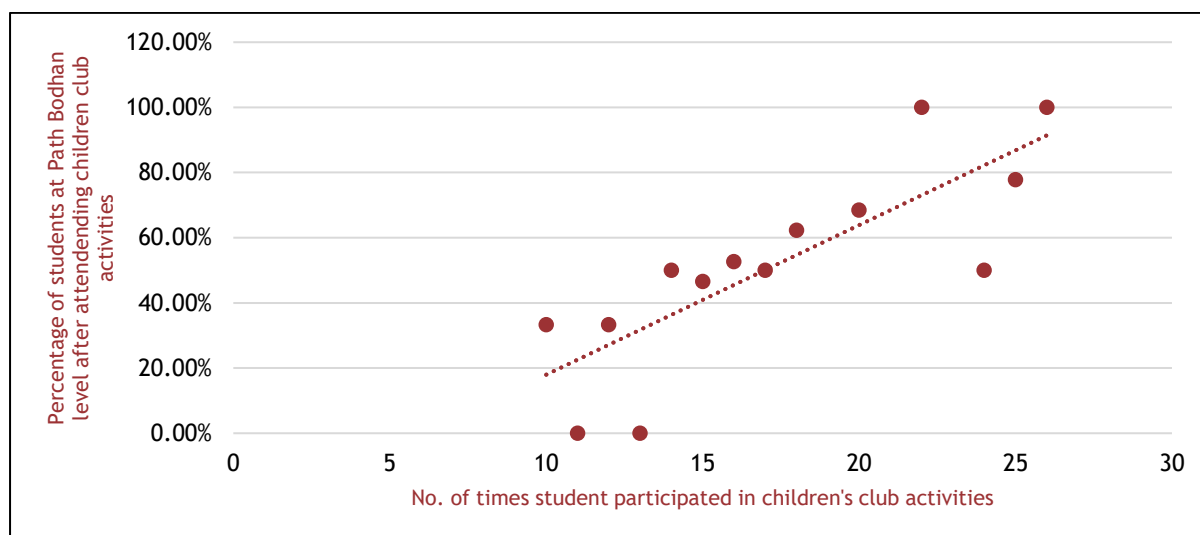


Figure 14: Students at path bodhan level after attending children's club activities.

d) Participation in children's club and student's learning performance in mathematics

Figure 15 shows similar results for word problems in maths. Those who participated in children's club activities more often had a higher ability to solve word problems as compared to those who attend less.

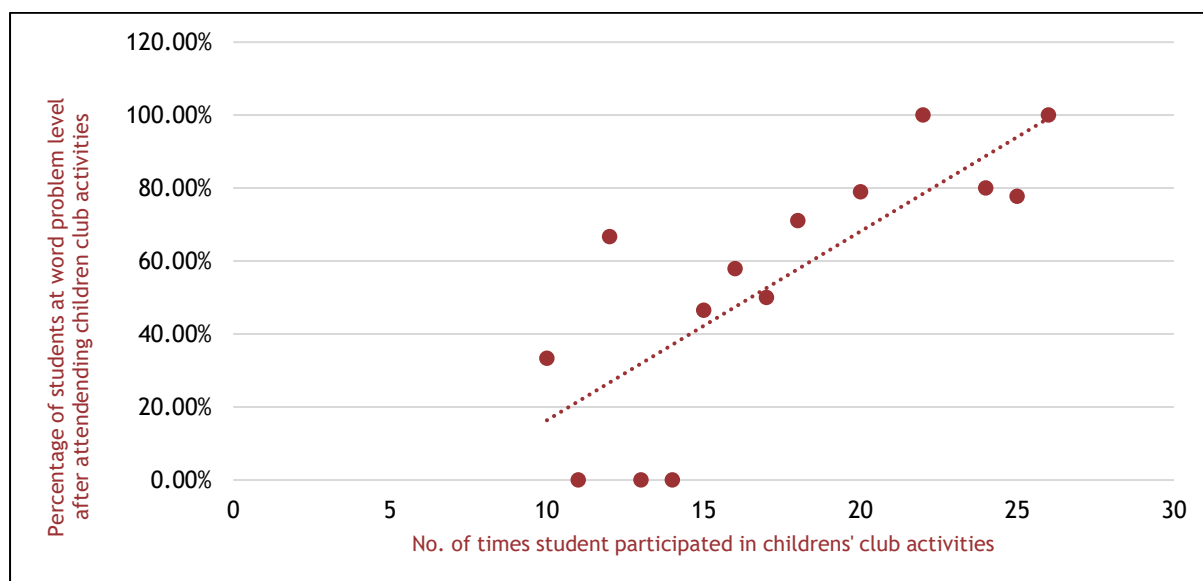


Figure 15: Students at word problem level after attending children's club activities.

e) Gender wise performance in language and mathematics

The assessment has also explored the gender angle of students at path bodhan level for languages and word problem level for mathematics. These are the highest-grade appropriate level that a student must achieve. The findings have been represented below in graphs.

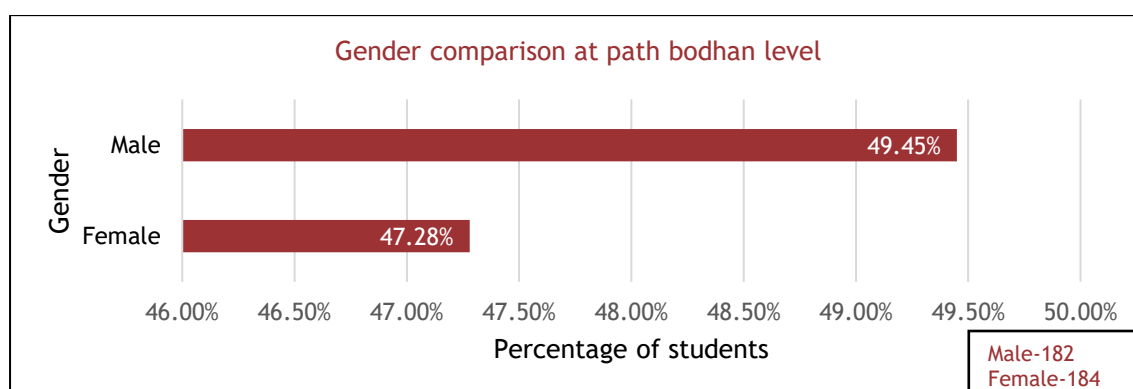


Figure 16: Gender comparison at path bodhan level.

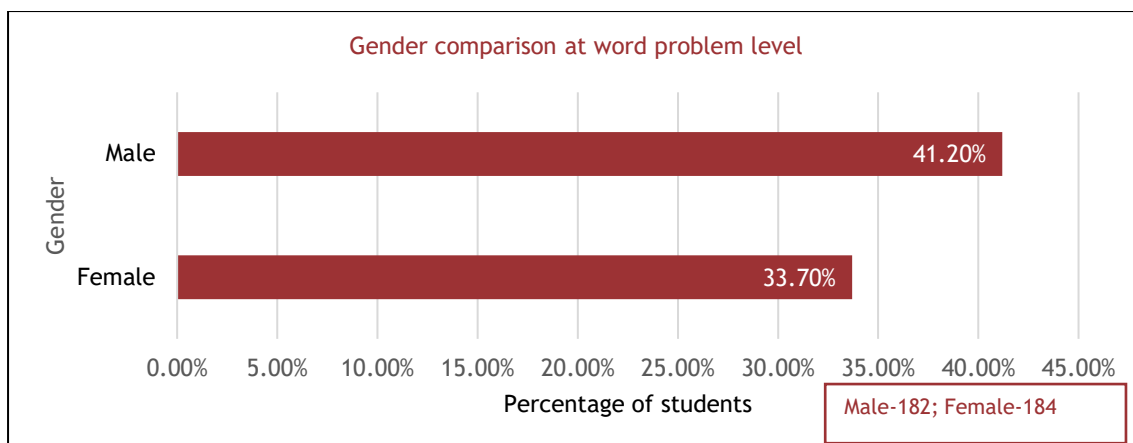


Figure 17: Gender comparison at word problem level

Figures 16 & 17 represent the comparison between males and females in the intervention villages. The former shows both the genders have almost similar abilities in reading at path bodhan level. However, the proportion of females are lesser than males at solving word problem level questions in mathematics.

The above charts and graphs were a pictorial representation of TTC's assessment. Along with this data, TTC has also done a comparative analysis of student's data gathered from field with the baseline/endline data that implementation team i.e., Pratham was able to share. The following section presents observations from the comparative analysis.

iv. Comparative analysis of impact assessment data with baseline/endline data (village wise)

The figures below provides a comparative description of the performance of the villages in Pratham's assessment (baseline/endline) and TTC's impact assessment. Such a comparison will provide a holistic picture of the progress made by students in the intervention villages over the years. For this comparison, TTC has used the data of the three most recent years- 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 to capture performance of students who were most recent participants of the project. For the year 2022-23, the comparison has been done with the baseline data unlike in the case of the other two years where endline data has been used. This is because for 2022-23 the camps were still being conducted.

a) Year 2020-21 (PEAK COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD)

The first level of comparison is done for the peak pandemic period i.e., 2020's endline data. Overall, it was observed that for language and mathematics, a majority of students' learning dropped significantly and a large proportion of them were reading and solving mathematic at a beginners level across villages, while over the years, there has been a considerable progress across villages. The detailed breakup is mentioned in the graphs below.

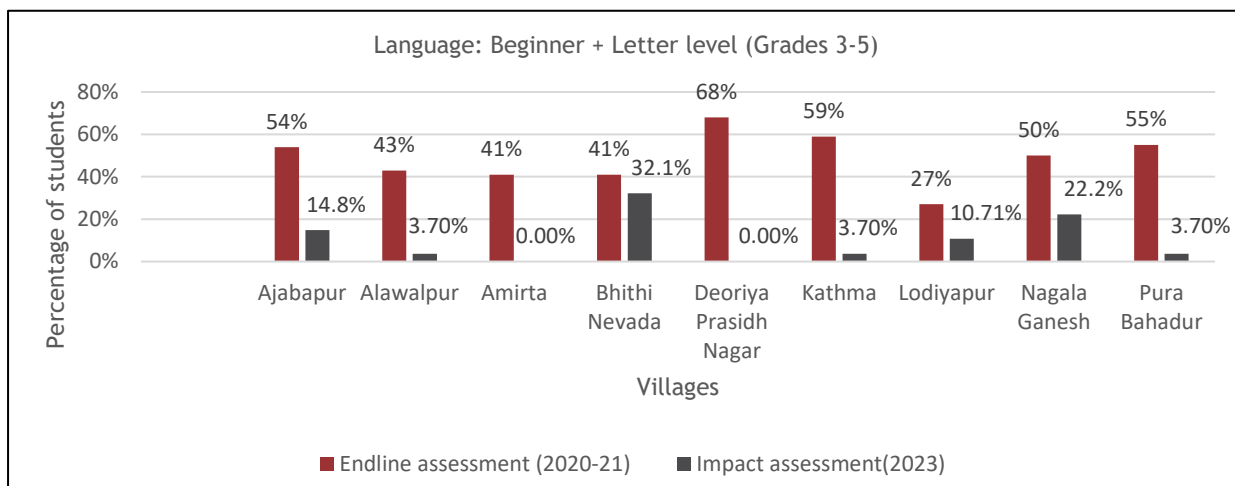


Figure 18: Comparing learning outcomes of 'beginner+letter' for 2020-21 and 2023

Figure 18 compares the performance of students in the endline assessment (2020-21) with the impact assessment data for the 'beginner+letter' level. Among the nine villages, TTC could not find any students at beginners level in Amritha and Deoriya Prasadh Nagar villages. The latter has made impressive progress considering it had the highest percentage (68%) of students among all the villages who were at the 'beginner+letter' level. Lodiyapur village shows a reduced number of students at this level. However, its progress has been slow considering that there has only been a 17% reduction in the students at 'beginner+letter' level.

The next figure shows the comparison of students who have reached 'para+story' level.

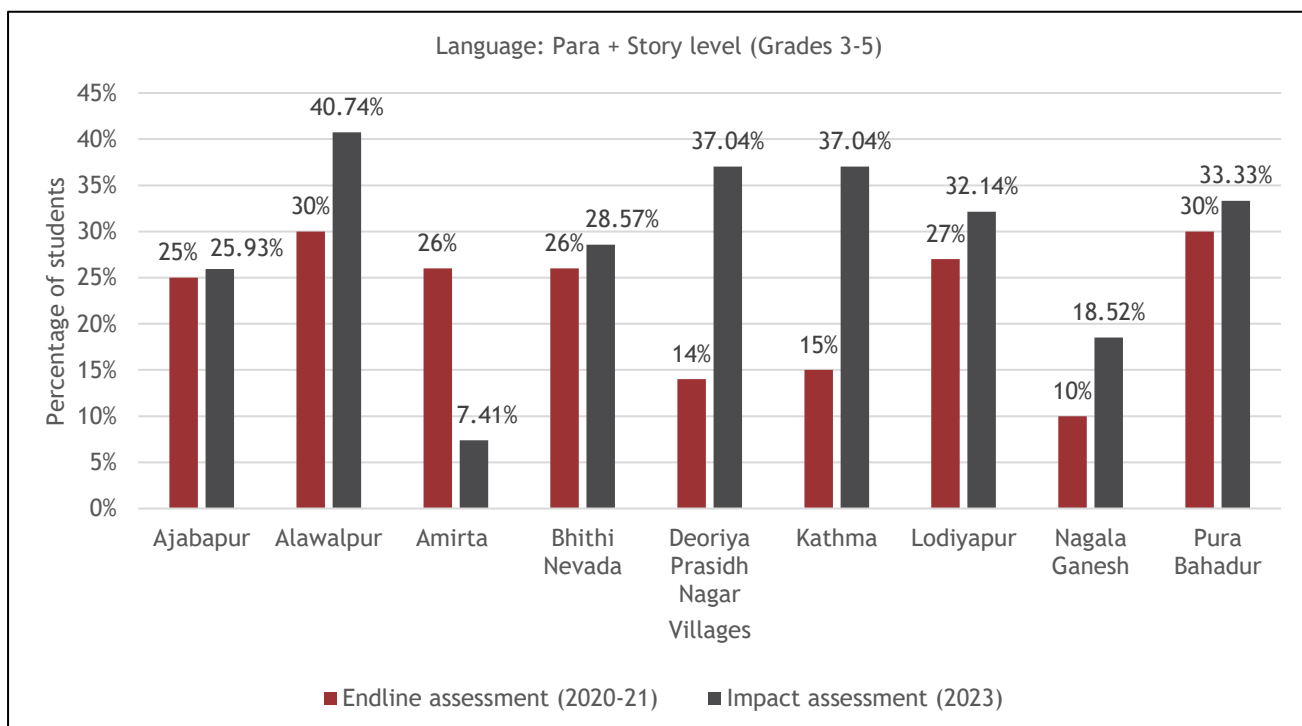


Figure19: Comparing learning outcomes of 'para+story' for 2020-21 and 2023

Figure 19 shows the level of students in the endline (2020-21) and impact assessment (2023) with regard to the highest reading level in language i.e., ‘para+story’.

All villages have shown an improvement in the number of students at this level. Deoriya Prasidh village shows a 23.04% improvement. Amritha village is the only exception that shows 18.59% decline in the percentage of students with the ability to solve questions of ‘para+story’.

Just as in the case of language, comparisons have also been drawn for villages in solving mathematical questions.

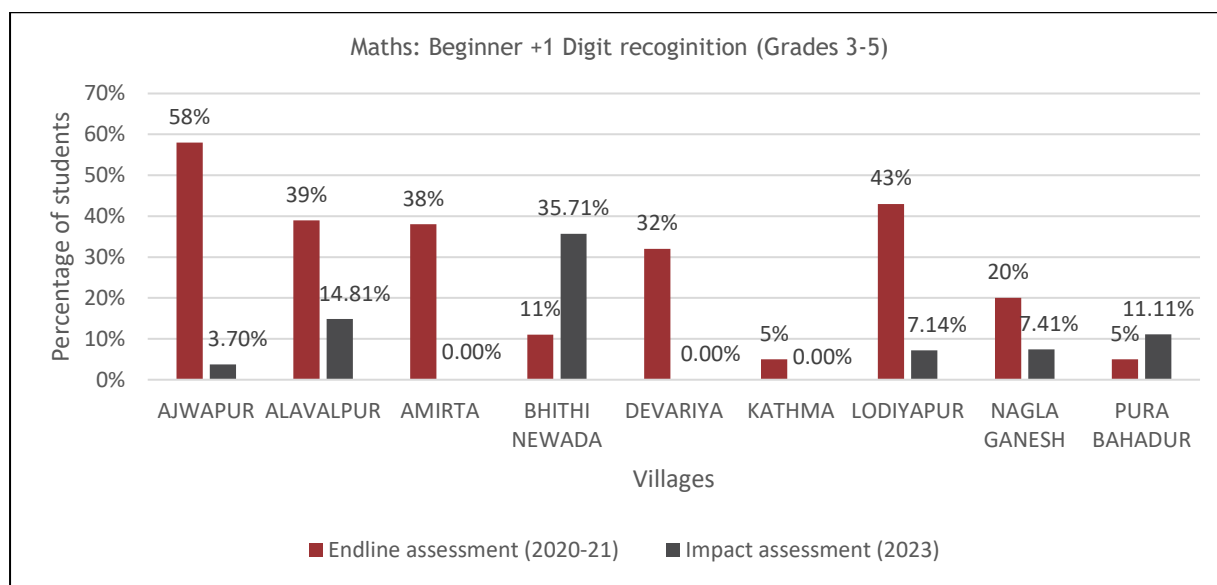


Figure 20: Comparing learning outcomes in ‘beginner+1 digit recognition’ for 2020-21 and 2023.

On comparing the learning levels of students in Maths from the endline assessment of Pratham (2020-21) with the impact assessment (2023) at ‘beginner+1 digit recognition’ level, one observes similar results as in case of language. Amritha and Devariya villages have no students at this level with an addition of Kathma village as well. Pura Bahadur and Bhithi Newada are the only two villages which show an increase, after the impact assessment, in the percentage of students at the ‘beginner + 1 digit recognition’ level.

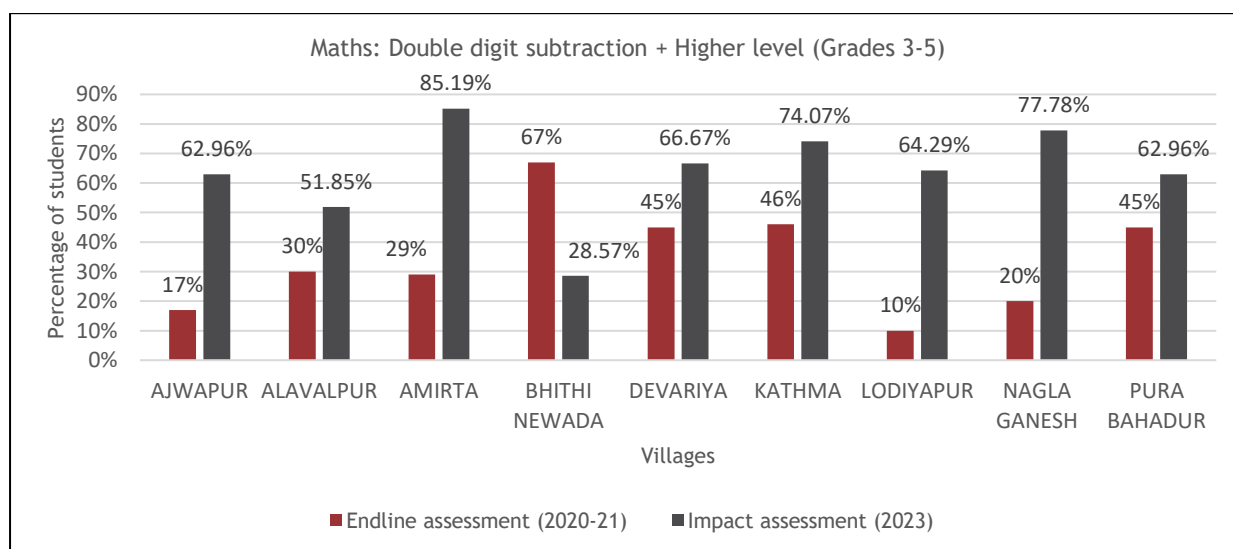


Figure 21: Comparing learning outcomes in ‘double digit subtraction+higher level’ for 2020-21 and 2023.

Figure 21 compares the learning outcomes of students in maths regarding double-digit subtraction and higher level (word problem) capability.¹⁰ From the graph, it becomes clear that all the villages have shown considerable improvements at this level except Bhithi Nevada village which shows a decline of 38.43% of students with the ability to perform this function.

b) **Year 2021-** The next set of four graphs compares the endline data for the year 2021-22 for language and maths with impact assessment conducted by TTC.

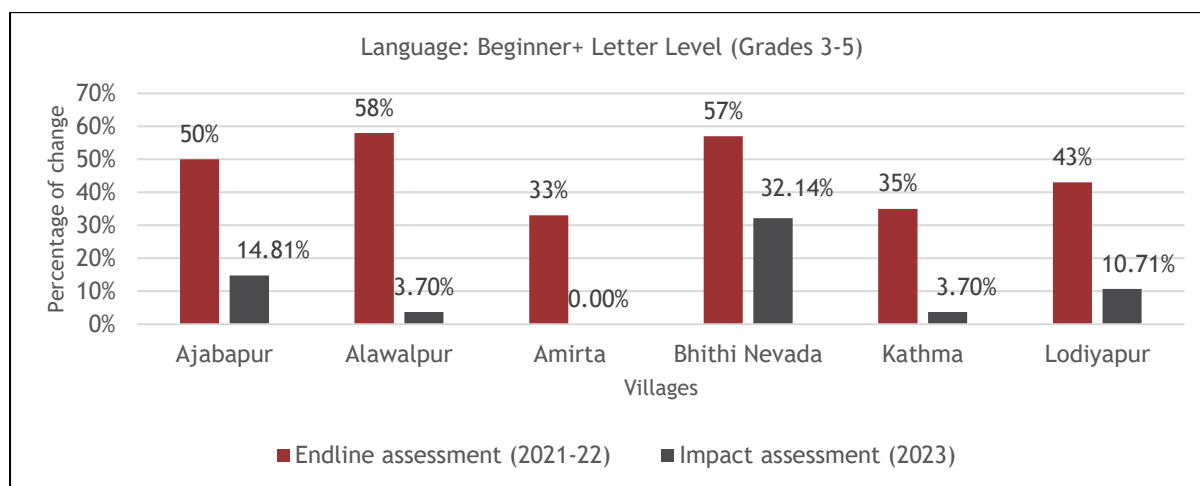


Figure 22: Comparing learning levels in 'beginner+letter' for 2021-22 and 2023

Figure 22 compares the performance of villages in the endline assessment (2021-22) with the impact assessment conducted by TTC. The figure compares the performance of students at the 'beginner+letter' level. Without exception, the graph shows that since attending the learning camps in 2021-22, all villages have reduced proportion of students at this level. Amirta village performs the best. The impact assessment (2023) shows that all students have crossed to higher levels of learning.

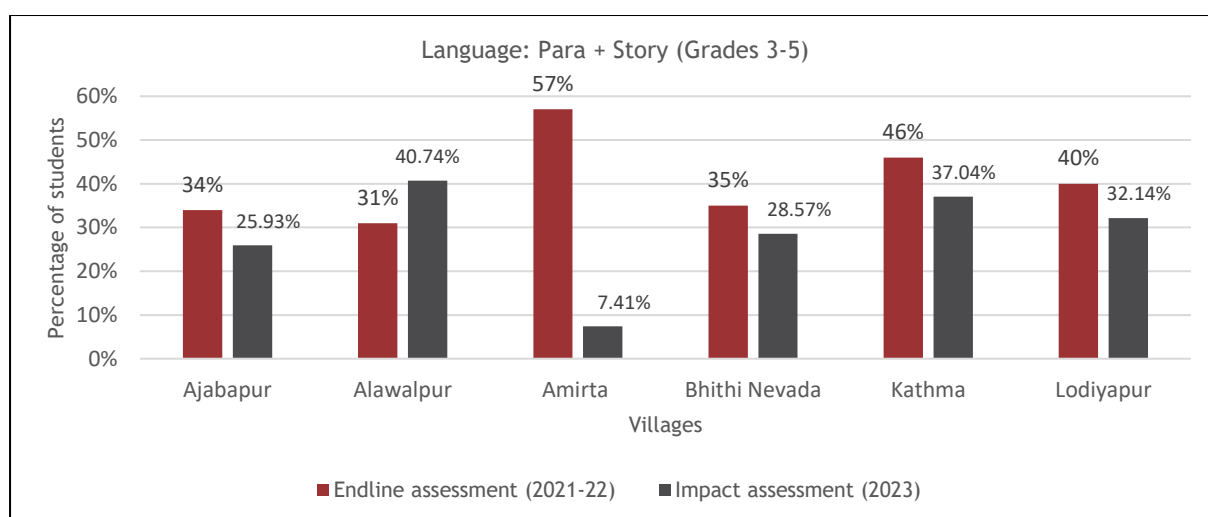


Figure 23: Comparing 'para+story' for 2021-22 and 2023

¹⁰ In the data shared by Pratham with TTC, village-wise performance in double digit subtraction+division was shown. However, TTC has replaced the division function with word problem with the assumption that both are abilities that require higher levels of skills.

The above figure 23, tries to identify the performance of students at higher levels of ‘para+story’. Comparing the data of endline (2021-22) and impact assessment (2023). Alawalpur village seems to be the only village which has shown a 9% increase in students with the ability to read paragraphs and stories. The performance of other villages have been more or less similar. Majority of students in villages like Amirta where less number of students have reached para and story level are still currently at akshar(letters)and shabd (word) as per the impact assessment.

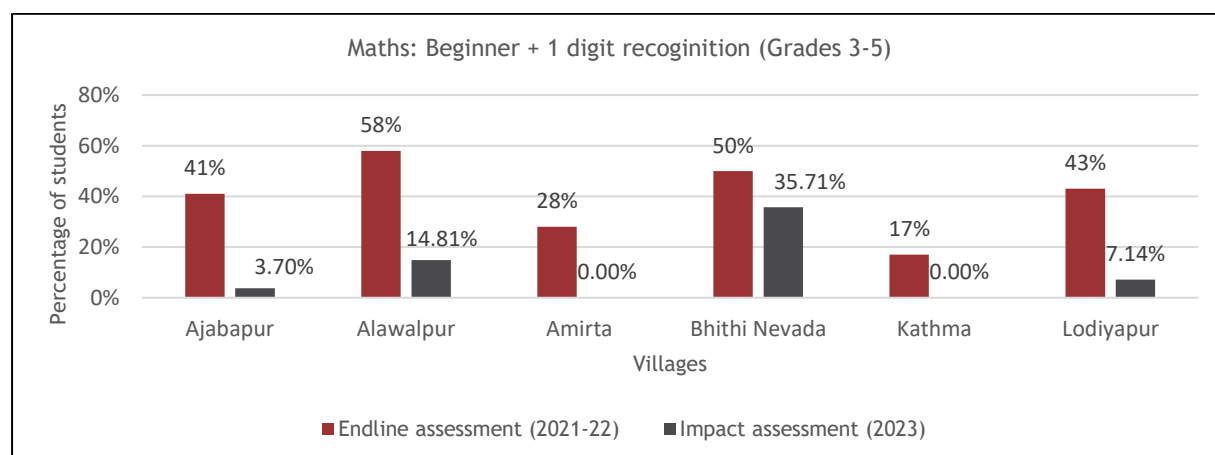


Figure 24: Comparing ‘beginner+1 digit recognition’ for 2021-22 and 2023.

In the above figure 24, all villages have shown a sharp decline in the percentage of students at the beginner+1 digit recognition level. This implies that students have moved to higher mathematical) capabilities.

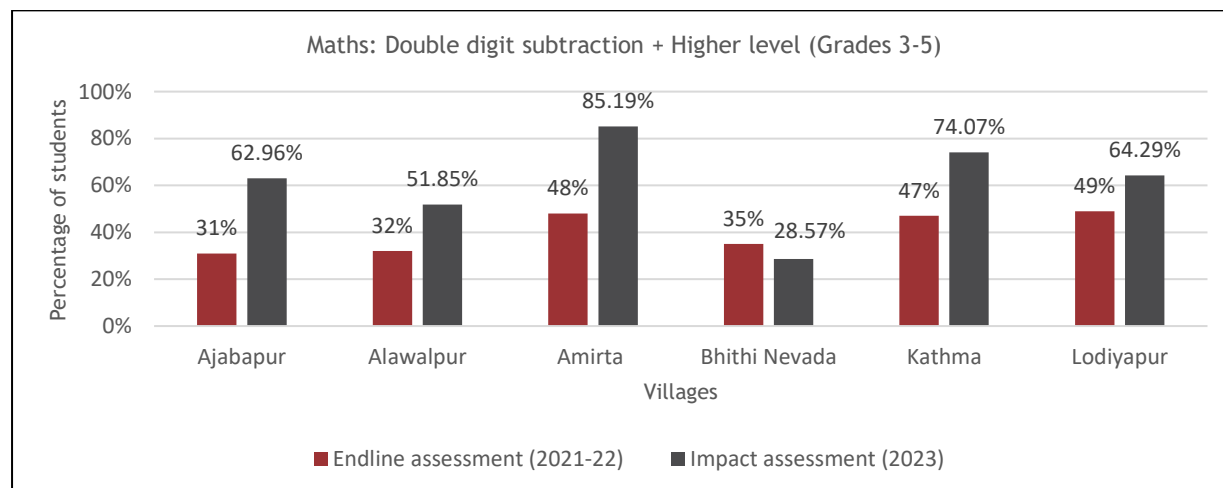


Figure 25: Comparing ‘double digit subtraction+ higher level’ for 2021-22 and 2023

From figure 25, one observes that all villages have shown a marked improvement in the percentage of students with the ability to solve problems of higher order. The highest improvement is visible in Ajabapur village. There is almost a 50% increase in students with the ability to solve ‘double-digit subtraction+higher level’.

- c) **Year 2022-23-** The next set of three figures compares baseline data of 2022-23 with the impact assessment conducted by TTC. For these three figures baseline data has been used for comparison because the learning camps were still being conducted. Therefore, endline had not been conducted and required data sets were not available.

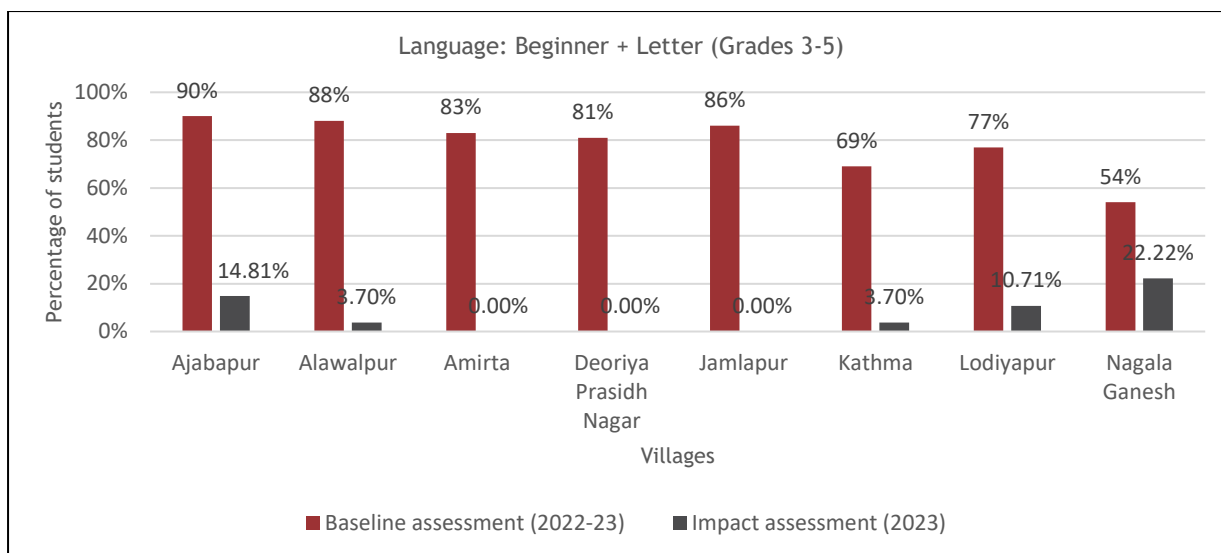


Figure 26: Comparing 'beginner + letter' for 2022-23 and 2023.

From the comparison in figure 26, it becomes clear that with the exception of Lodiyapur, Ajabapur and Nagala Ganesh villages, all other villages have few or no students at the 'beginner+letter' levels. This is an indication of a commendable success of this project.

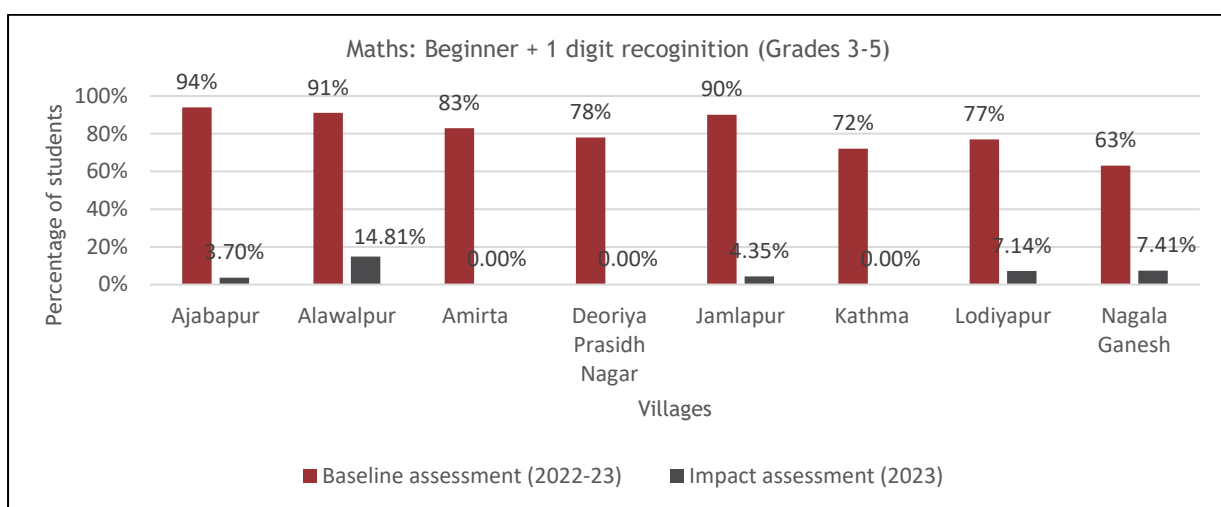


Figure 27: Comparing 'beginner + 1 digit recognition' for 2022-23 and 2023

On observing the above figure 27, one observes that compared to the baseline data, the impact assessment shows that most of the villages have shown a reduction in the percentage of students at the 'beginner+1 digit recognition level' in mathematics as well.

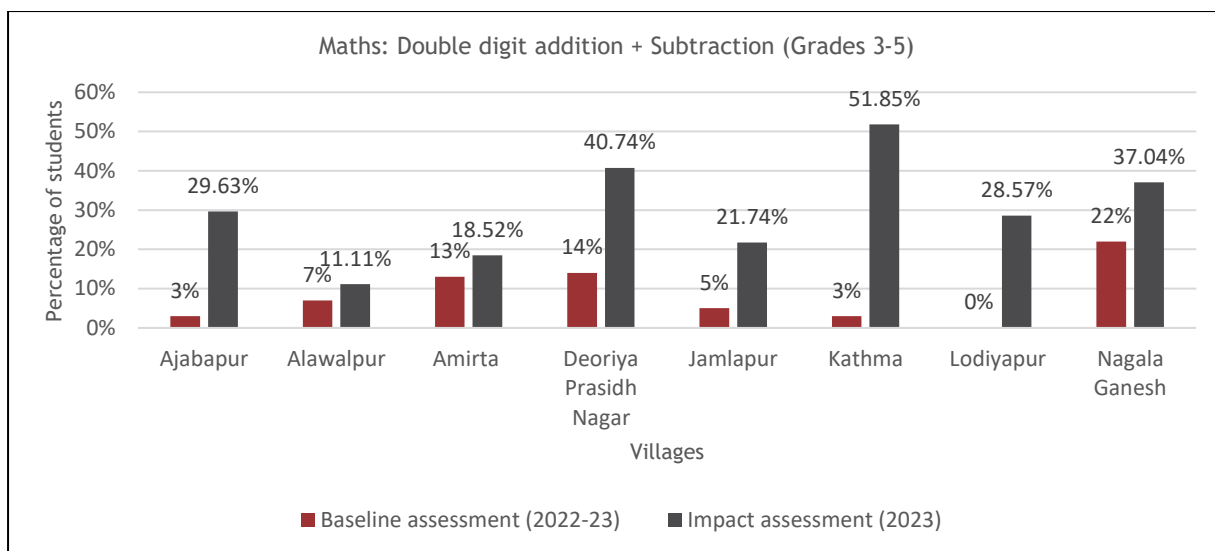


Figure 28: Comparing 'double digit addition+subtraction' for 2022-23 and 2023.

The above figure 28 highlights that all the villages in the comparison have shown commendable improvement in the level of students who have reached 'double digit addition+subtraction' level. Most impressive is Lodiyaapur village where no student in the baseline assessment was capable of solving 'double digit addition+subtraction' level questions but now, in the impact assessment, it was found that 28.57% students are at this level. Kathma is another village which shows impressive improvement.

h.e. Sustainability

Finding: Despite bringing out academic and non-academic improvements in the children, the project in its current format is unsustainable. This project failed to cultivate any lasting ties with the community which would ensure its continuity even after the project is wrapped up.

The Khushali Shiksha project began with the objective of improving the learning outcomes of primary school students. To a large extent it has been successful in achieving its primary objective. Many students, who attended the learning camps and other activities associated with the project, have observed positive changes come about in themselves. These changes are both academic and non-academic in nature. Nevertheless, the project in its current form is not sustainable. This is because of the poor ties with the community.

True, the project, through its various activities involved the community such as education rallies, village report cards etc. but none of these ties are long-lasting. Take the example of primary schools itself. In a village, the primary school is an important institution. Equally important are its staff members. Through IDIs with the principals and school teachers, it was found that the learning camps began with the project staff submitting a permission letter from the Block Office. Once it is in order, the principal allows the learning camps to be held on the school premises. However, once the learning camps begin, there is little to no involvement of the school staff in the functioning of these camps except a customary check-in once in a while. On the part of the CIMs who conducted the learning camps, they only shared the results of the endline assessments with the principals. All teachers without exception, in the IDIs, said that they did not know the progress of their students through the camps. It was also found that the teachers were not aware about the value of this intervention and its link to NEP (2020).

The assessment team observed a similar situation with the *Pradhan* of villages. A *Pradhan* is the head of a village, a representative of the people at the grassroots. However, the *Pradhans* who were interviewed did not have a clear understanding of what the Khushali Shiksha project entailed or what its benefits have been to the children of their village.

Considering the low learning levels in these villages, the project should have made active efforts to engage with people and the structures governing them for a lasting impact to be created. The following sections talk about in detail the recommendations and way forward for the project.

4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Way Forward

Conclusion

The Khushali Shiksha project set before itself a noble and ambitious target i.e., improving poor learning outcomes in the state of Uttar Pradesh. For the assessment of the project, 10 intervention villages were chosen wherein students in primary schools ranging from grades 1-6 were surveyed. Qualitative interactions were also conducted with all the identified stakeholders of the project including the students. Additionally, 61 students from three control villages from grades 1-6 were also surveyed to capture a holistic picture of the project.

Collaboration of the DCM Shriram Foundation and Pratham has proven fruitful. As an implementing partner, Pratham's experience in identifying primary beneficiaries and implementing needful interventions were clearly visible in the project. Learning camps were the primary interventions, and these were only limited to school hours in school premises. To ensure that students continue to learn post-school hours, one more intervention was devised: children's groups. Furthermore, efforts were made to include the village community in the project through mother's groups, village report cards, education rallies etc. All these activities were implemented with the support of the volunteers from villages.

Through the assessment, it was found that there has been considerable improvement in the learning outcomes of the students as well across villages in both language and mathematics. In the intervention villages, 58% of total students answered reading comprehension questions while only 15% of students were able to do the same in one control village. Similarly, for maths, 64% of students in intervention villages were able to solve word problems compared to only 7% of students in control villages. Clearly, the academic gains for the students who have been part of the intervention have been impressive.

In addition to academic improvements, the assessment team observed non-academic improvements as well. Students were very participative and interacted well with the assessment team in FGDs and IDIs. They were not shy in interacting with the assessment team and were able to give thoughtful answers to riddles.¹¹ It was also found that there has been a remarkable improvement in the attendance of students in classes. They enjoyed coming to school.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Pratham quickly adapted itself to the changed circumstances and shifted to teaching online. More volunteers were recruited and learning content began to be disseminated digitally. Through SMS and WhatsApp, it was ensured that students do not miss out on studies. However, students with smartphones were the

¹¹ These were simple questions in the form of games but they required the application of mind.

greatest beneficiaries here. Students who did not have access to smartphones had to depend on their neighbours and volunteers for timely access to lessons. Consequently, learning got disrupted every now and then. During the pandemic, through the Khushali Shiksha project, Pratham also tried to educate the village communities on safe health practices such as hand washing, wearing masks, etc.

Through these measures, and additional activities such as village report cards, education rallies, and school readiness melas, the project was able to create a progressive attitude towards education. Mothers now make sure that their children do not miss out on school. School teachers look pleased with the progress children have made. Volunteers despite not receiving financial benefits take time out to carry out project activities. Nevertheless, the assessment team believes that the project can achieve a lot more for the students and the stakeholders involved. Further suggestions on the same are given in the next section on Recommendations and Way forward.

Recommendations and Way forward

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions an education system that will transform India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all.¹² For the same, the policy has suggested changes in the structure of school education and related pedagogy and curriculum. Figure 29 provides a quick overview of the structural changes.

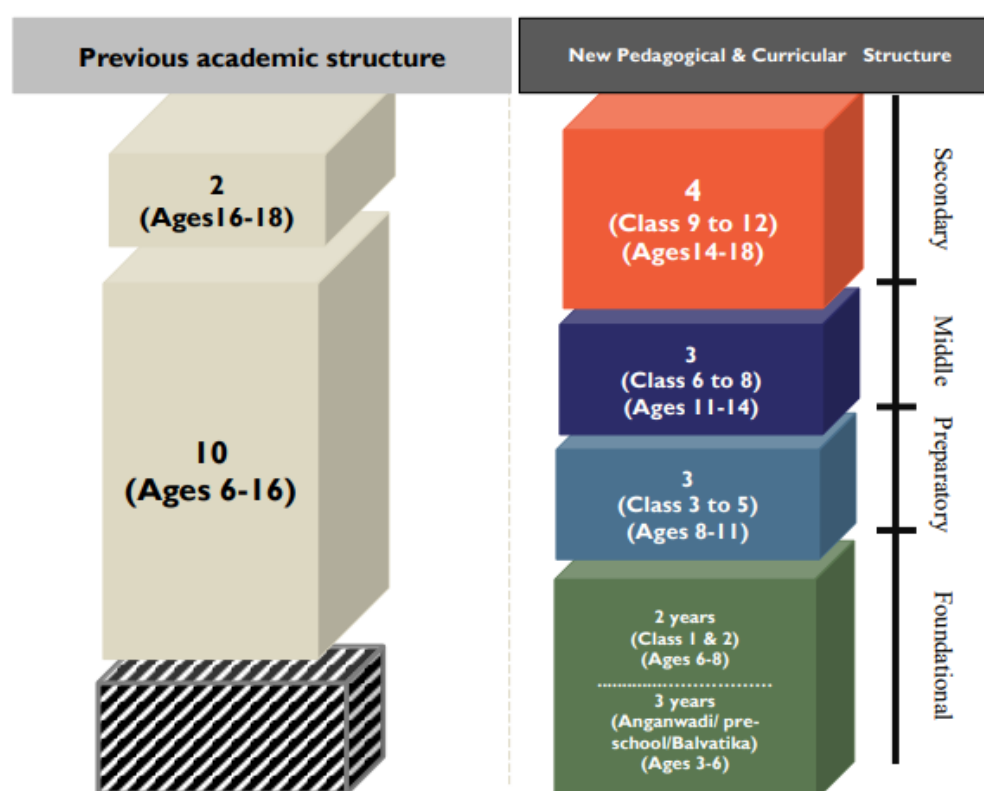


Figure 29: Comparing academic structures suggested by new NEP

Compared to the two-fold academic structure that was being followed, NEP 2020 suggests a new structure which divides the academic life of a student into four parts: a)

¹² NEP 2020: https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

foundational learning; b) preparatory school; c) middle school; and d) secondary school. Through these four levels, NEP aims to achieve certain objectives which are represented in the following figure 30.

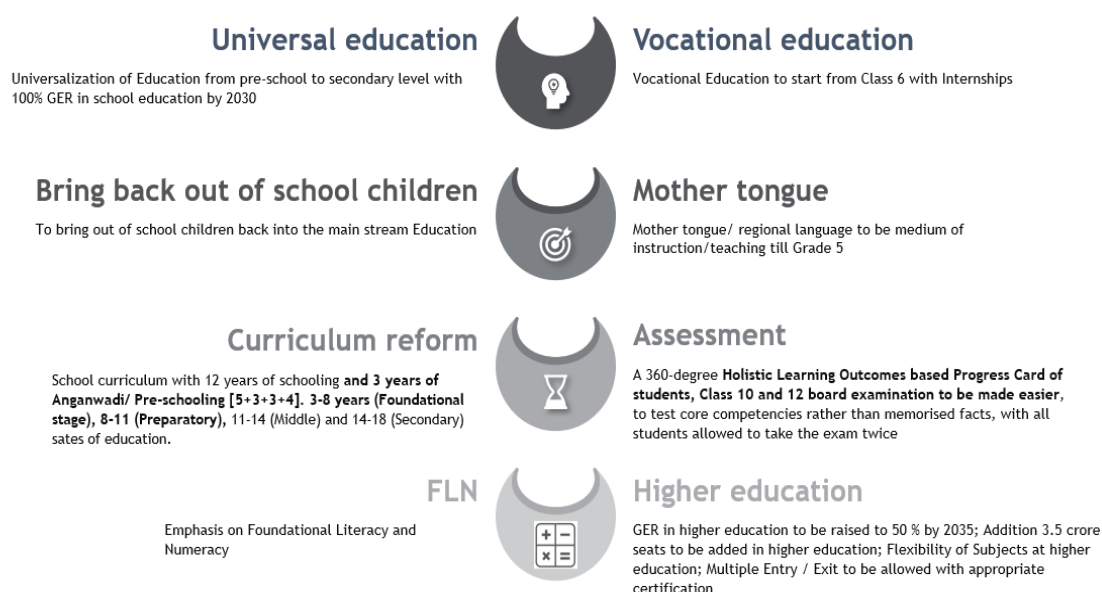


Figure 30: Objectives of NEP 2020.

Within this framework, NEP pays a great deal of attention to the foundational years by focusing on building joyful learning environment, strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy classes, strengthening the existing AWCs that are integrated into the school and finally, promoting the usage of home language through innovative pedagogy which is built in the idea of inclusiveness. A detail of the key activities are mentioned below-

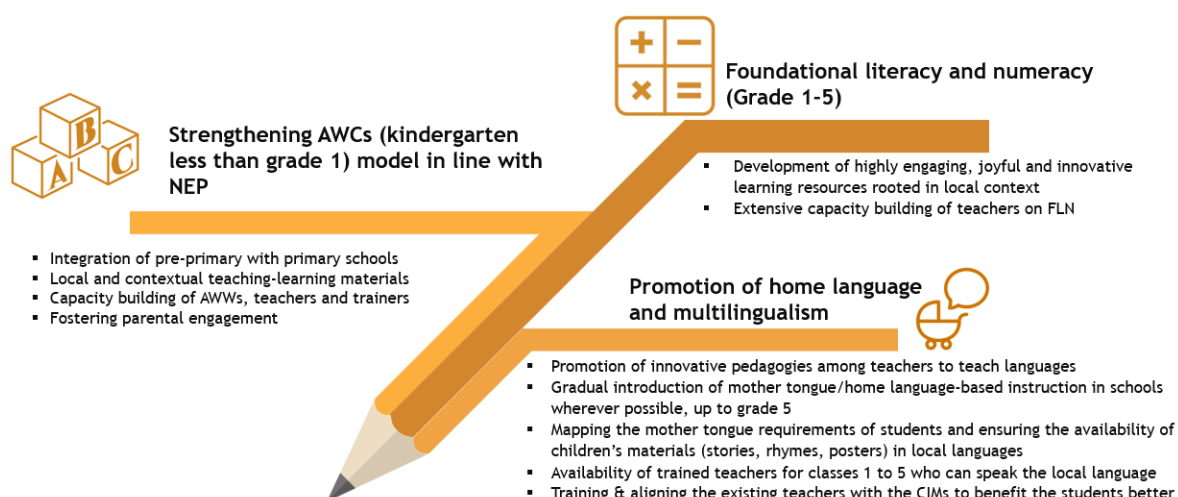


Figure 31: Key activities of foundational years.

DCM Shriram Foundation initiated Khushali Shiksha project deserves credit for having identified a gap in the education system in a socio-economically backward region early on specifically in foundational years of a child. Since the project aimed at bridging the identified gap i.e., the poor learning levels of the students in grades 1-5, the impact

assessment conducted by TTC found this to be beneficial to the stakeholders on many fronts.

TTC, therefore, believes that the project has the potential to create a lasting impact on the lives of its primary beneficiaries and related stakeholders. Therefore, TTC suggests extending project module and align the same with current NEP's mandate for an enriched and impactful intervention in the DCM community. Thus, TTC gives the following recommendations as a way forward. Figure 31 gives a pictorial representation of the recommended model by TTC to build education entrepreneurship set up in the community.

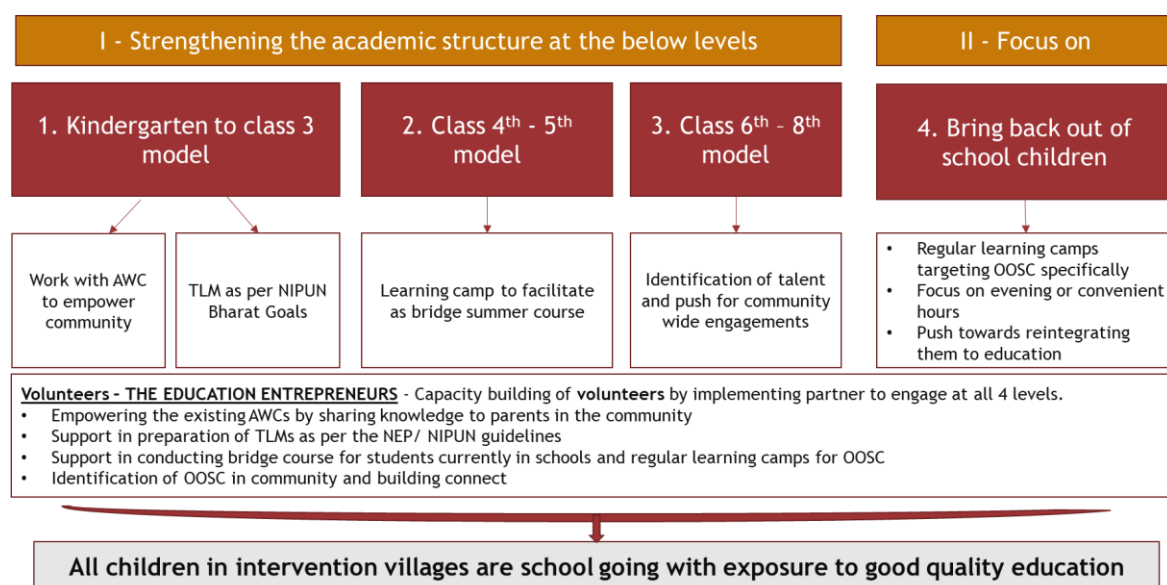


Figure 32: Pictorial representation of recommendations and way forward.

I. Strengthening the academic structure at kindergarten to class 3 model

a) Bringing Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) within the purview of the project and involving mothers/parents group in the education of their children with the support of volunteers.

NEP 2020 envisions AWCs to be the starting point of education in a child's academic life. Thus, Khushali Shiksha project can start from the AWCs. Here volunteer engagement is critical. Well-trained volunteers can help in the capacity building and support in the functioning of the Anganwadi workers. The latter can be trained in age and curriculum-appropriate education with the necessary training and teaching materials. The children can be taught to identify numbers, colours, animals, etc with the help of activities. These learnings can then be showcased in the School Readiness melas annually. This will not only give children a strong base for their further education but also familiarise them with the school environment. Avenues should also be explored for parents of the children to be involved in preschool education.

Engagement of parents group - In the current form of the project, mothers meet in groups of 6-10 every Saturday but the meetings are not formalised from the perspective of a child's education especially so when most mothers have not completed school education. Here volunteers can be the bridge in transferring the pedagogy to mothers. In the weekly

meetings, the volunteers can teach mothers innovative ways to continue their children's education at home in connection to topics covered at AWCs. This way the children will continue their education even at home in a fun way.

The NEP 2020 further envisions AWCs and primary schools within the same premises. Practically, this brings with itself some challenges in coordinating the functioning of the two sets of institutions i.e., AWCs and primary schools. The Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) so far worked in a stand-alone manner in their centres and the primary school teachers only managed their school and its activities. In the new form of functioning AWCs and primary school staff must function together. Therefore, DCM can explore ways to build the capacity of AWCs and liaising mechanisms with the school staff.

b) Incorporate the goals of the NIPUN Bharat Mission while designing and strengthening the teaching-learning material for grades 1-3.

National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy or NIPUN is a project being implemented on a mission basis with the objective to achieve foundational literacy and numeracy by 2026-27 for all third graders. For the same, the mission has set grade-wise goals till grade three. The current learning camps are useful for children but ways to go above and beyond them must be explored. Since the quality of learning depends on the quality of teaching, DCM can explore formal partnerships with District Institute for Education and Training or DIET. These are district-level educational institutions established to guide educational institutions and schools through capacity building of in-service and pre-service teachers. They also implement government policies at the district level. Through a partnership with DIETs, DCM can invest in building up the capacity of teachers from kindergarten to grade 3. Arrangements can be made for DIET to train these teachers in enriching the FLN transaction. A Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) module can also be created for the reference of teachers. Periodic refresher training for teachers can also be organised.

By investing in the capacity building of teachers, the Khushali Shiksha project can be made self-sustaining for a very long period.

II. Strengthening the academic input for students from class 4 to class 5

c) Learning camps should be organised in alignment with the academic session to benefit students in grades 4-5.

From the impact assessment, it has been found that learning camps have proven to be beneficial to students. TTC, therefore, suggests that this must be continued. However, instead of being conducted in the later part of the year, the learning camps must be held at the start of the academic year.

Immediately after the academic year is over (which would be around March-April), there should be a baseline assessment for all students who are being promoted to grades four and five. Through the baseline assessments, an academic profile for each student must be created. Based on academic profiles, students can be identified for bridge learning camps. In order to minimise the disruption to regular school classes, TTC recommends that the summer vacation (May-June) period be utilised for conducting the bridge camps. This way students would achieve grade-level competency in numbers and language, and they will be able to focus better on academics as their academic year begins post-summer break.

TTC also proposes to go beyond the provision of a bridge course curriculum and develop life skills training for these students as well.

III. Strengthening the academic input for students from class 6 to class 8

d) Engage with students in grades 6-8 and give them opportunities to develop their talent.

Students in grades 6-8 would have moved out of the primary school system to other schools. During the field review, it was found that many parents enrol their children in private schools too. However, these are students who have been a part of the DCM community. Therefore, many of them become volunteers in the project and have been involved in teaching younger students. Due to this, at times these young volunteers compromise with their own studies. TTC suggests that gradually these young bright students could be engaged by recognising and building up their talent through community level initiatives.

The event could focus on activities that highlight the education and awareness of the students in grades 6-8. DCM can explore the possibilities of organising quizzes at four tiers: school, block, district, and state level. This can become an annual event and will introduce competitiveness spirit among students. This is a good way to nurture and recognise talent within communities. Once this has taken off, DCM can also explore the possibilities of providing career counselling for students so that they make the best professional choices for themselves.

IV. Overall project input

e) Invest in building capacity of the volunteers - Enabling them to become education entrepreneurs of the community.

Volunteers are critical resources of the project. There is hardly any activity which does not involve them. Realising the important role played by volunteers in the project, the Education-for-Education intervention was designed for them. The idea behind this intervention was to equip the volunteers with skills to help them progress in their careers. However, the field review found that they are being skilled in basic digital skills such as creating email accounts, logging in and operating Zoom etc. The project can certainly go beyond this considering the amount of engagement that volunteers put in to make the project a success since they played a major role in relentlessly supporting even during the pandemic to ensure that learning of students stay uninterrupted. While the efforts of the volunteers are recognised by the project team, more can be done.

First, the project can explore ways of incentivising volunteers. Second, in the revised project plan mentioned above, volunteers can be actively engaged right from supporting education at AWCs to strengthening the learning camp for students currently enrolled in school through summer bridge project and for out of school students through a regular intensive learning camp.

Additionally, means of providing dedicated career support services can be explored. Providing access to a host of certificate courses available online. Skill gaps of volunteers can be identified, and certificate courses can be provided considering their professional ambitions.

f) Enriching the learning centres in villages for students.

Project team to engage with community members in order to seek their support in identifying a designated space to establish learning centres. This will give a sense of formality to children's club/libraries. The goals of the learning centre(s) will remain the same as that of the children's club currently i.e., to provide a designated space for children to study with peer learning. Grades 1-3 and 4-5 will sit separately and there will be designated hours of study. This will allow the students to sit and study without any distractions. Additionally, they will be under the supervision of trained volunteers who can assist the students in doing their homework, explaining doubts in lessons etc.

In addition to providing a conducive learning environment, the learning centre can also become a space to nurture extra-curricular talent or sports. The centres can have sports and educational games. In fact, this can be a pull factor for the learning centres. Trained volunteers can be of great help here. Apart from supporting students in academics, the volunteers can also impart life skills and related knowledge to the students. Since the volunteers are imparting knowledge beyond regular academics and lending their support in the creation of a sustainable education model for the entire village community, TTC believes that they be designated as education entrepreneurs.

With these measures TTC hopes that children will become receptive to better quality education.

g) Bring back out of school children

Additionally, TTC proposes regular evening classes/ learning centres which become a platform for gradually integrating the out-of-school students back into the formal education system. This is important in the context of Uttar Pradesh which has the highest number of out-of-school students (3,96,655) between the ages of 6-14. Here, throughout the year learning classes could be conducted as per students' convenient time slots. The volunteers will be engaged in identifying the vulnerable and out of school children in the community and thereby enabling and motivating them to attend the learning camps. Volunteers can act as facilitators for these children in these camps for any remedial support.

TTC firmly belief that such a model that includes community ownership will become sustainable in the long run. In future, possibilities of replicating this model in other areas could also be explored.