THE PROMISE FOUNDATION

For Mental Health, Education and Potential Realization

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ANNUAL REPORT
2019-20

Our partners over 2019-2020

- Department of Women and Child Development, Karnataka.
- UNICEF office for Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana.
- Aga Khan Education Services, India.
- School of Human Ecology, TISS Mumbai.
- UNICEF (office for Tamil Nadu & Kerala).
- Samagra Shiksha, Government of Tamil Nadu.
- Vision Lab, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.
- Department of Education, University of Oxford.
- Brasenose College, University of Oxford.

INTRODUCTION

The Promise Foundation is a Charitable Trust with its headquarters in Bangalore in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. The Foundation is engaged in local, regional, national and international initiatives to support the development of positive mental health, educational attainments and potential realisation of children and young people disadvantaged by poverty and adversity.

In order to focus on specific vulnerabilities, the Foundation's activities focus on three broad themes:

- Stimulation Intervention Programme (SIP) for the early education years.
- Programmes for Assisted Learning (PAL) for primary and middle school years.
- Career and Livelihood Planning for high schoolers and their peers.

Given below is a report of the Foundation's activities undertaken over 2019-2020.

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

It is well known that strong foundations for the development of skills related to language and literacy contribute significantly to educational attainments through the school years and finally influence the quality of career development all through the later years of life. Therefore the focus of The Promise Foundation's interventions for the early childhood and primary school group over the last few years, has been on the development of oral language skills in young children and literacy learning amongst children in the primary school age group.

Our interventions in this area are executed through:

- A mobile toy library
- A mobile book library
- Village camps
- And our shabda majaa reading programme.

This year, our interventions for oral language development and literacy learning continued directly in five communities surrounding The Promise Foundation office.

The Promise mobile library in five villages in the Sarjapura (Bangalore) area

Our objective is to conduct programmes and bring resources to children "where they are". Hence our mobile library moves from one village to another bringing books and toys to children in their villages. Children borrow toys and books for a week and come for an exchange the next week. Included in the programme is a learner centered reading programme conducted by the Foundation's child development specialists. Given below is an overview of the villages in which the programme was conducted.

Villages visited	Activities conducted
Yamare	• Read aloud sessions - both in English and Kannada
Kadagrahara	• Book review
Chambenahalli	• Language development activities
B. Hosahalli	• Lending books and toys
Sarjapura	

We appoint a child group leader for each village who is responsible to bring his/her peers to the venue at the right time and assist the Promise facilitator.

The session begins with a "quiet time" of meditation. This is followed by read-aloud sessions in both English and Kannada conducted by the Promise facilitator. Children choose a book that they would

want to be read on that day. The focus here is also on building vocabulary. Difficult words are recognized and the meanings of these words are explained in the context of the sentence. Children are then asked to summarize the story read to them. A popular language development activity is "story drawing". Children individually make drawings and build their own, entirely new and original story based on their drawings.

The Gammattina Pethaari is a large trunk filled with toys and books. Children borrow a book and a toy and are encouraged to read and bring the books and toys back for exchange the next week. To motivate children to read and use the books, three children are selected each week to share their review of the books they borrowed the previous week.

Glimpses into the mobile library programme in five villages

Children selecting their toys and books from the mobile library.

Story Telling from a bi-lingual book:
My Colourful Kite

Assisted Reading: explaining word-meanings and vocabulary building

Language development through "story drawing".

Opportunities for independent reading

Using flash cards to learn sentence construction

Children love toys and books! Their enthusiasm is further enhanced when they have the possibility of exchanging toys and books frequently. While our mobile library brings these materials to them, the overall objective of the programme is to create the possibility of laying foundations for oral language development and literacy learning. Our follow up of children who are part of the mobile library programme has indicated that their skills for reading improve. Their teachers consistently report that they do better with their school work showing greater confidence for self-mediated learning.

Supporting Teachers with Resources and Art (SuTRA)

SuTRA is a knowledge exchange initiative from the University of Oxford of which The Promise Foundation is an active member. Over the year, The Promise Foundation continued to use two films it had earlier created to promote teacher knowledge for foundation learning:

- Kannada version - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzWvcT6o_FI&feature=youtu.be
- English Version - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpYnINDdRaY&feature=youtu.be

This film was launched in a meeting in Bangalore on 17th August, 2019, at a meeting at the *Samagra Shikshana Karnataka* (SSK), Government of Karnataka. We had an audience of about 20 resource persons spanning the government's primary education and early childhood sectors.

Demonstration of SuTRA material to Samagra Shikshana Karnataka Officials

Visual processing when reading: The *Looking and Reading Quick* project

Over 2019 we continued to work with Dr. Aakash Agarwal and Prof. S. P Arun from the Indian Institute of Science in the area of visual processing as children get better in their reading skills. This time, Sanjana Nagendra, B. Kala, and Pooja Shah worked with children in middle school. We found that better readers are better at distinguishing letters that look similar. This is a basic finding and we are working to understand how we can use this insight to improve worksheets for pre-schoolers so that they have greater practice with automatic visual processing. This kind of research will probably be most useful for those children who have very limited exposure to print because they have no books at home, and live in places which are print starved (e.g., remote villages, communities with many people who do not read). The visuals in this section were developed by Aakash Agarwal for teacher sensitisation workshops about how the brain works when a child reads.

(Credit: Aakash Agarwal, 2019)
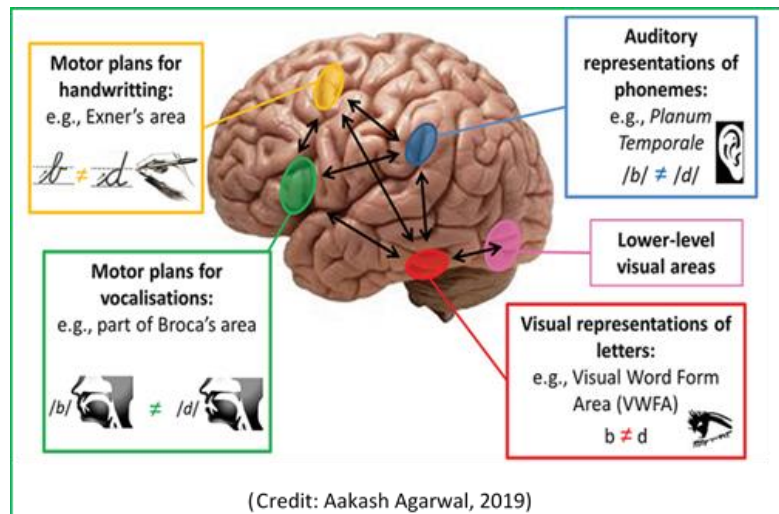
## Karnataka's Chili Pili Curriculum Reform for Pre-schoolers

This initiative is led by UNICEF (office for Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana). Partner agencies include the Department of Women and Child Development, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), Education for All mission (*Samagra Shikshana Karnataka*, SSK), teacher groups, institutions of higher education, and educational NGOs.

A key focus for 2019-20 was to begin linking the core principles of the foundational learning curriculum for the below 6 year olds with that for 6 to 8 year olds. This focus is timely given the clear signal from the National Education Policy (draft) to see learning from age 3 to 8 as falling on a continuum. A second focus point of our engagement with the Chili Pili Curriculum Reform was to share the latest developments in the field of emerging literacy and show how this has been linked to the new curriculum that has been developed with technical leadership given by Prof. Sonali Nag. A third focus of our engagement was to unpick the daily workings of a story-based emerging literacy programme: what should lesson plans focus on? Which language and emergent literacy skills will a story be able to comprehensively stimulate? Are there any skills that fall by the wayside when there is a focus on a story? See Appendix 1 for one output from this partnership.

Key areas of support provided by The Promise Foundation to this effort include:

- A desk review of the themes in the previous Chili Pili curriculum was conducted to help link the earlier with the new curriculum. This desk review was conducted by Sanjana Nagendra.
- Drawing up a teacher resource to support children's phonological development. These activities are now embedded in the language and emergent literacy curriculum.
- Drawing on work done in the Promise Shishukendra, the following sequence for story telling has been suggested:

Sequence for Story Telling

(Credit: Sonali Nag, 2019)
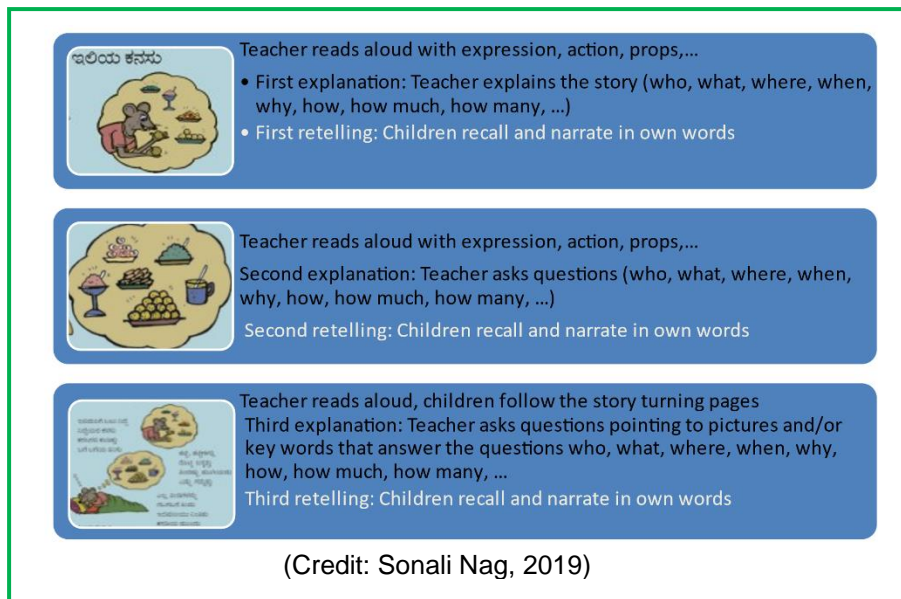
Progress on the Chili Pili Curriculum

Meetings were held with Government, NGO and Funding Agency partners and the Chili Pili Curriculum continued to be developed for the 2019-2020 period with inputs from multiple agencies, including The Promise Foundation and Prof. Sonali Nag. Given below are glimpses into the range of issues discussed during the curriculum development phase.

Thematic extraction from meeting notes by Sanjana Nagendra highlight the following:

- **Should the curriculum be prescriptive or suggestive?** The key tension in this regard is to provide enough instances of support for all teachers while also ensuring we acknowledge that teachers need the space to bring new ideas into the programme. From decisions taken in this meeting, the decision-making is towards a suggestive curriculum. Examples of suggestive ideas include: List of questions [for stories, activities] so that teachers know what to ask; Suggest topics with activity details and material details for 'projects' per week

- **How integrated should the curriculum be across age-bands?** From the discussion of members in this meeting it is clear that the consensus is for interconnected programmes. The following were discussed on how to operationalise these ideas when planning the curriculum for 3-4, 4-5 and 5-6 year old children:

  o Nature of questions to be asked will be different at each age group. Echo questions (asking questions as you go along the story) and recall questions (asked at the end of the story for details said during the study) may be asked for the younger ages with more inferential questions (on information implicit but not put into words) for the older children.
  o Grading questions to promote socio-emotional thinking (put yourself in shoes of the character, ways to support the child to understand feelings and emotions).
  o Consider a project theme that is common for different levels. For example, on the topic of 'landmarks' age-wise topics could be as follows: what is next to your house? (3-4 year old), what do you see on your way to school? (4-5 year old), and draw a map of how you come to school, and discuss the direction concepts of left and right (5-6 year old).

- **To theme or not to theme?** The Chili Pili curriculum reform will change many aspects of the earlier Chili Pili curriculum but remains committed to a theme based approach. In a thematic approach every month has a theme and all sessions cohere around this theme. Examples of themes include Modes of Transport and Family and Neighbourhood. One matter for discussion

is whether material must be dropped if it does not fit a theme. A decision in this meeting was that 'non-theme' materials can also be given, and this decision was prominently discussed around what games will enter the curriculum.

- **Why supply teaching-learning materials?** If there is a recurrent cost in running a preschool it is linked to supply of teaching-learning materials. Ideally these materials should be used and reused till they become frayed and need to be thrown away. The loss of a material investment means that an asset that was thought to be part of a school expenditure is lost. A perverse way in which the loss is managed is to lock away the teaching learning materials – neither teaching or learning is done with the material. This was discussed with examples from center after center where materials were locked away. The general consensus was, however, that 'props' help teacher 'to implement and make learning better'. A decision in the meeting was to list materials that must be supplied.
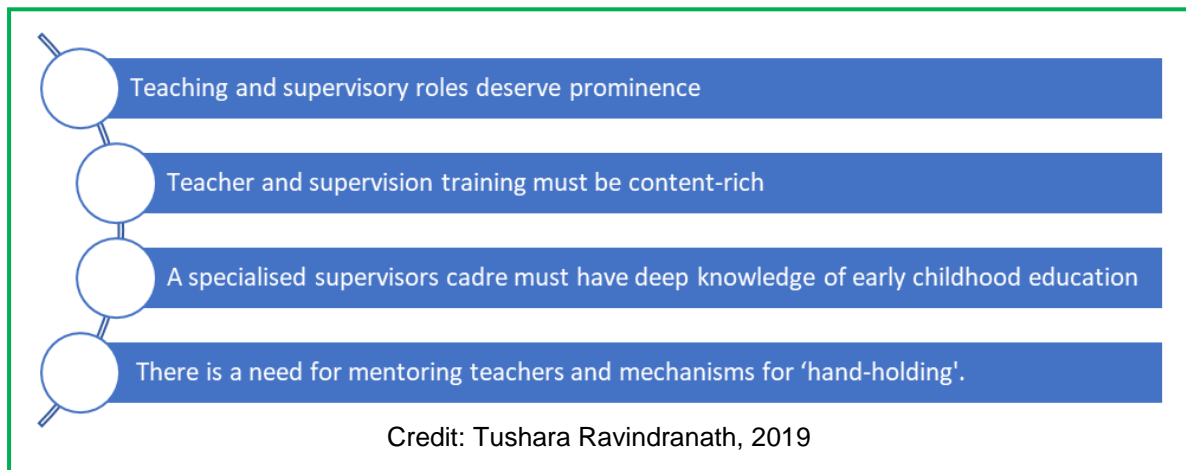
The Literacy Conference: Quality at Scale. Seminar on Literacy and Reading in Indian scripts and Languages.

Sanjana Nagendra and Tushara Ravindranath attended the conference in New Delhi. Speakers included Prof. Sonali Nag and Prof. Rauno Parilla. The conference was hosted by Room to Read (India) and USAID. A key thrust of the deliberations was on how we should be thinking about quality intervention for all.

Quality in the Classroom: Interviews to help with policy implementation

Tushara Ravindranath conducted an ethnographic study to understand implementation challenges for quality in the classroom. A specific focus of the study was the primary school education bureaucracy. Information was collected through interviews held with officials in three states of India and non-participant observation in curriculum development meetings in two states and an international conference deliberating on quality at scale. The findings from these interviews and the observations suggest the urgent need for quality training since, as one teacher said, trainings too often remain "very touch and go".   Based on this study, the figure below depicts that key messages to be disseminated.

Implementation challenges for quality in the classroom

- Teaching and supervisory roles deserve prominence
- Teacher and supervision training must be content-rich
- A specialised supervisors cadre must have deep knowledge of early childhood education
- There is a need for mentoring teachers and mechanisms for 'hand-holding'.

Credit: Tushara Ravindranath, 2019

For an extended extract from the report of this study see Appendix 2.

CAREER AND LIVELIHOOD PLANNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The Promise Foundation partnered with UNICEF (office for Tamil Nadu & Kerala) and and Samagra Shiksha, Government of Tamil Nadu to implement a programme that focused on building capacity for the delivery of career guidance services to high school students from economically disadvantaged homes in Tamil Nadu. The Promise Foundation's Jiva Approach to Career Guidance and Livelihood Planning formed the core of this engagement. The project was implemented between June 2019 and March 2020. It was designed to have the following objectives:

1. Review, adapt, and translate the English Jiva Kit with local teachers and experts to co-create a Tamil Jiva Career Guidance Kit.
2. Conduct the workshop for students in pre-selected schools using the above Kit where head teachers and headmasters of participating schools would join as observers where possible.
3. Evaluate outcomes of the intervention and make recommendations to GoTN for bringing the intervention to scale for the state of Tamil Nadu.

Programme preparation and implementation were intensive process driven activities in which the Government was consulted and its participation was ensured at every level.

Review, adaptation and translation

A Career Guidance Working Group was formed, tasked with reviewing and adapting the original Jiva material to suit the Tamil Nadu context, and then either translate the material from English to Tamil or develop new material. The guiding principle for the review was a strong focus on cultural and conceptual adaptation, rather than on linguistic/literal equivalence. At the same time, an important objective of the adaptation was to immerse students in the vocabulary necessary to negotiate their career development tasks. Therefore, new vocabulary related to career development was also introduced. For example, the Tamil word vazhvathara pani (வாழ்வாதாரப்பணி) was used to provide students with the vocabulary to understand that career is not merely a job. It is "work as the bedrock of life" and "vocation which is holistically anchored in one's life and community".

Creation of new material

An important objective when creating the Tamil career guidance Kit was to collate a comprehensive career information system relevant particularly to Tamil Nadu. Documentation and career information specialists with previous experience in career information management reviewed all relevant sources of government approved career information including ITIs, Polytechnics, NSDC centers and Universities (State and Central). The existing Jiva database was edited and a revised database of 180 career information cards specific to Tamil Nadu was created.

Validation of the material

Validation was conducted at three levels:

- The material was trial tested with government high school students considered to be representative of the target group.
- The draft version of the Kit was presented at a stakeholders meeting. This included heads of target schools and government officials. An open discussion was facilitated and feedback from these leaders was recorded.
- The material was reviewed by experts and consultants who were tasked with this responsibility by the Department.

In this way, a career guidance Kit vetted and validated for Tamil Nadu was created. The Kit comprises the following 6 units of material: (1) Facilitator's Manual, (2) Student Workbook, (3) Learning Cards, (4) Career Dictionary, (5) Career Information Cards and (6) Flip Charts.

The Tamil Career Guidance Kit

Facilitator's Manual

Student Workbook

Learning Cards

Career Dictionary

Career Information Cards

Flip Charts

Implementation

This is a 12-hour intervention comprising 24 activities delivered over a period of 3 full days. The activities are delivered in a workshop format, taking a student-led approach. Each activity is supported by different material from the Jiva Vaalvadhaarappani Kit described above. Students record their learnings in their Vaalvadhaarappani Workbook and take this workbook home with them after the intervention is completed. In this way, this record of their learnings remains accessible to them for many years to come.

The Promise Foundation's team of Tamil career counsellors conducted the workshops in 9 pilot schools in three different districts of Tamil Nadu (Chennai, Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur), identified by the Department. Table 1 below provides the details.

Table 1: Details of schools where the programme was conducted over 2019-2020

| Sl. No.	School Name	Location	District	Total Students	Students attended	Dates of workshop
1	Government Girls Higher Secondary School	Market Street	Chennai	163	161	13.14,15. 11.2019,
2	Pathigappa Chemmal K Ganapathy Government School	Kodambakkam	Chennai	188	169	18, 19, 20. 11.2019
3	Government Girls Higher Secondary School	Villivakkam	Chennai	107	93	21, 22, 23. 11.2019
4	Government Girls Higher Secondary School	Cheyyur	Kanchipuram	86	86	21, 22, 23. 11.2019
5	Government Higher Secondary School	Ayyangarkulam	Thiruvallur	160	153	25, 26, 27. 11.2019
6	Government Higher Secondary School	Poonamalli	Thiruvallur	105	33*	25, 26, 27. 11.2019
7	Government Boys Higher Secondary School	Arani	Thiruvallur	153	137	02, 3, 4. 12.2019
8	Government Higher Secondary School	New Gummudipoondi	Kanchipuram	96	87	05, 6, 7, 12.2019
9	MPL Higher Secondary School	Selaiyur (For Std. 9)	Kanchipuram	112	108	07, 8, 9, 01.2020
		Selaiyur (For Std.10)	Kanchipuram	143	40 *	23. 24. 25. 01.2020
	TOTAL			**1313**	**1067**	

The workshops were conducted between the 13th of November 2019 and the 25th of January 2020. Disruptions were encountered because schools closures (e.g., due to monsoon rains, festivals). Despite this, the counsellors reached all shortlisted schools and completed the pilot successfully.

As seen in the pictures that follow, the role of the facilitator is to guide and create an *environment* for career discovery. The Jiva Vaalvadhaarappani Vazhikaatuthal Thitam method takes a *participant-led approach* and promotes peer-learning. In summary, some salient features of this approach are as follows:

- Emphasis is laid on sharpening the participant's orientation to taking *personal responsibility* for career development.

- Providing students the opportunity to summarise ideas, make presentations to the whole class and express themselves in public, also contributes to broader *life skills* such as skills for communication, development of self-efficacy and strengthening participants' self-confidence.

- The *multiple potentials* approach allows for the recognition of a broader range of talents and potentials. Students take away the important message that they are *all* intelligent in different ways, and this could go beyond excelling only the academic realm.

- The inclusion of parents is critical. It creates the opportunity to explain the process of career development to them and show them concrete ways in which they can be involved in their child's career development.

Trained Jiva Vaalvadhaarappani Counsellors conduct the Tamil workshop
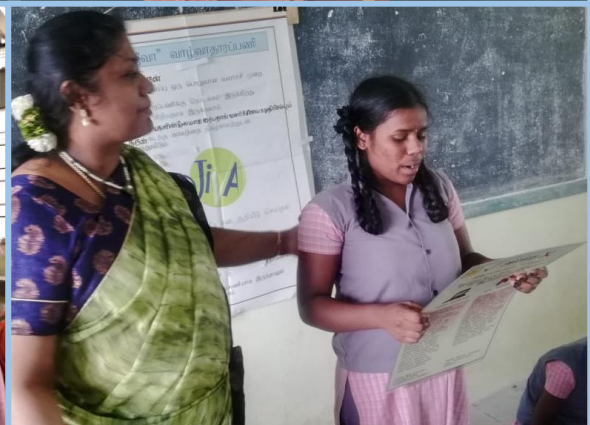
Students find answers to questions and share their learnings through presentations to the rest of the class.
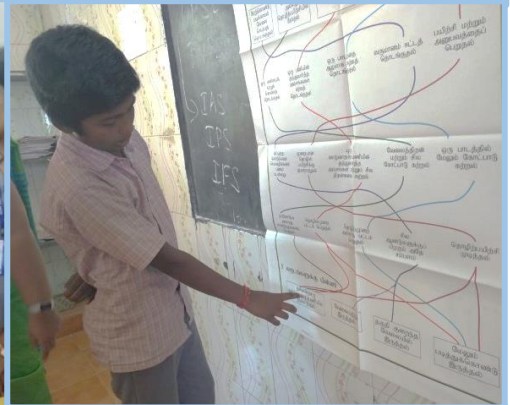
Students record all their learnings in their Vaalvadhaarappani Student Workbooks. This includes their potential profile, career information, career alternatives addresses and contact information
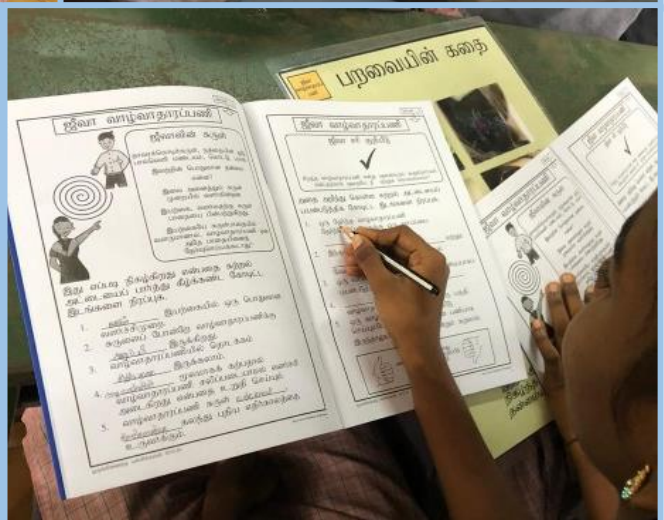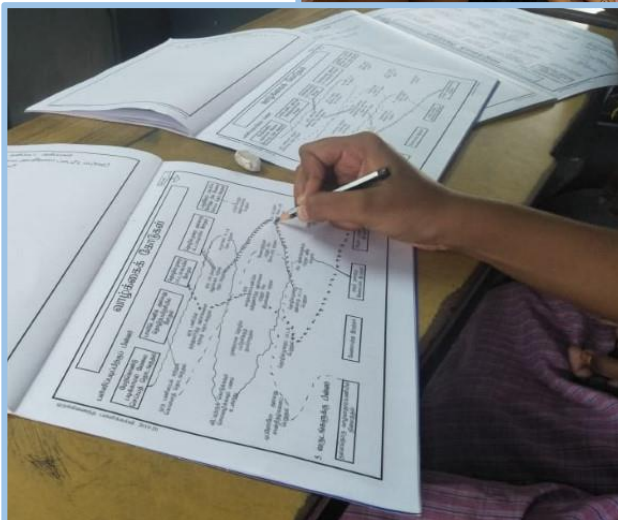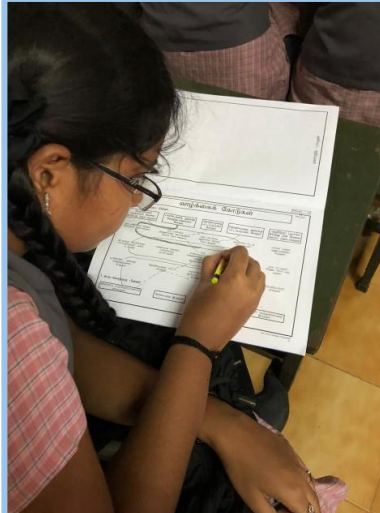
Completed workbooks are taken home by students as a record of their learnings, as a reference book for career information and as a practice book for what they have learned.

Parents are an integral part of the process

A special session for parents is held at the end of the 3 day student programme

Assessment of Outcomes

An important aim of the project was to evaluate outcomes and make recommendations to GoTN for bringing the intervention to scale for the State of Tamil Nadu. This aim was addressed by collecting quantitative and qualitative data and using an established theoretical framework to monitor outcomes. Assessment of the outcomes of the intervention showed the following:

- The most meaningful outcome of a career guidance intervention for high school students is improvement in participants' readiness to make career decisions. Measurement of participants' pre and post intervention career preparation status scores indicated a gain of 37.53 percentage points showing that all students gained from the intervention irrespective of gender or school in which they study.

- We also found that student's age and grade do matter for uptake from the intervention. While Std. 9 students gained from the intervention, the maximum gains were seen for students in Std.10.

At the end of the workshop, students were asked to answer the question: "How did you benefit from this three-day career guidance programme?" A thematic analysis of students' responses showed that almost all students had benefitted from the career development view point. Closer analysis showed a ripple effect, whereby broader benefits in the educational and psychological domains were also seen.

As seen in the following excerpts from students' responses, several positive changes are seen in their orientation to education after participating in the intervention, including improved motivation.

I was not aware about career guidance before. I didn't have any idea what group to choose after completing my 10th Standard. But through this I came to know what I have to choose and how I have to choose the group. I felt it's very, very important in one's life. I like this system of guidance very much.

Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Cheyyur

Through this program, I understood what group I should take in my future.

The programme gave lot of ideas. I understood very well. It gave clear cut idea about our future.

I learnt about my career and also learnt which group to pursue for higher studies. I learnt that only job alone is not enough for my future. Also learning about the job is very essential. I knew about only 5 careers in the beginning but now, I learnt about 147. This was very useful for us and for many other school students.

As seen in the following excerpts from students' responses improvements were also seen in the psychological dimension.

* எனக்கு மிகவம் பயன் உள்ளதுயும் இருந்த
* என்னுடைய திறமைகள் எவ்விவந்தது
* நாம்பிக்கையும் திருமையும் அர்வமும் வந்தது
* இது எனது வாழ்க்கையை தோல்விகள்
* எனக்கு இந்த (CLASS) மிகவு பிடித்த

> It is very useful program. I identified my talents. It created hope, towards the future. I love the class.
>
> *Government Higher Secondary School, Ayyangarkulam.*

This councelling is very useful for me. It tells about taking decisions. I feel good this councelling is give change for me. I feel very happy. I feel very comfortable. I to thank for

> *Government Higher Secondary School, New Gummudipoondi*

ஜீவா வாழ்வாதாரப்பணி எனக்கு மிக உபயோகமாக இருந்தது. அது கனவே இல்லால் இருந்தேன். இப்போது நான் படித்துவிட்டு என்ன வேலை செய்ய வேண்டும் என்று முடிவெடுத்து மிக மகிழ்ச்சியாக சொல்கேன்.

> Jiva career guidance was very helpful to me. I was without a dream but now I have chosen my career. I am very happy with this guidance program.
>
> *PCKG Higher Secondary School, Kodambakkam*

இந்த பயிலரங்கத்தின் மூலம் நீ பெறந்த பயன் என்ன?

* இந்த பயிலரங்கத்தின் மூலம் நான் என் வாழ்வாதார பணியை எப்படதொடங்க வேண்டும் என்று நரிழும் கொண்டேன்.
* கணிணை பாந்நி புரிந்து கொண்டேன். விருப்பார்வை மற்றும் இயல் திறன் தெரிந்து கொண்டேன்.
* வாழ்வாதாரப் பணி என்றாலே என்ன என்று தெரிந்து கொண்ட

> I learnt about myself and also about my interests and talents. After this workshop I have got a clear idea about career.

In summary, the Jiva intervention seems to have helped students identify what their next step in the educational ladder could be and motivated them to seek further education. Most importantly, at the heart of the Jiva Vaalvadhaarappani Vazhikaatuthal Thitam approach to career guidance lies the personhood of the student. Analysis of student's responses indicates that this intervention is likely to have played a significant role in strengthening that personhood. Insight into personal talents and interests seems to have improved. Most importantly several students indicated that the programme

gave them hope and confidence for the future. Indeed as one of the students quoted in this report so poignantly states, "I was without a dream but now I have chosen my career".

Quantitative and qualitative analyses showed that career guidance as it is described in this report, has the potential to transform individual lives and thereby contribute to building a stronger workforce and ultimately to the common good. Based on this evidence, the Government decided to seek funds to bring the project to scale for Tamil Nadu by approaching the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) Government of India (GOI). UNICEF and The Promise Foundation supported a PAB submission by Government of Tamil Nadu to the MHRD for upscaling this pilot tested child focused, values based approach to career choice for high school students in the Government schools of in Tamil Nadu.
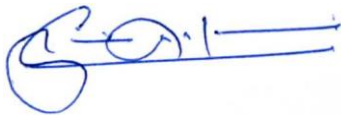
The full report of this intervention is available here http://www.thepromisefoundation.org/files/documents/3e98858b-cf7c-4987-8762-8f082a3cc03d.pdf on The Promise Foundation website.

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END NOTE

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The Promise Foundation's work continued over 2019-20 and a particular highlight was the opportunity to work with various government departments in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Our hope is that the work done over this year would have laid the foundations to bring these various interventions to scale in these two states for the benefit of many more children and young people.

At the time of writing this report nationwide restrictions have been imposed as a result of the global pandemic. Schools have been closed and children are required to stay in their homes. The Promise Foundation as with many other institutions around the world has never encountered such a situation. It is our aim to make the adaptations necessary in our methods and approaches so that we can continue to serve our target groups over the coming year.

Gideon Arulmani,
Director,
The Promise Foundation.
31st March 2020,
Bangalore, India.

Appendix 1

Karnataka's new Chili Pili Curriculum brings focus on supporting children's oral language and emergent literacy

Sonali Nag[1], Lata Menon[2] and the Emergent Literacy Working Group in Karnataka[3,4]

Children with little exposure to print in the environment are at a disadvantage for all aspects of learning. When children start with this disadvantage their skill development is often slow and behind the skills attained by their age-mates from print-rich homes and neighbourhoods. One way to bridge the gap and ensure all children are ready for school-based learning is to offer high quality emergent literacy education early in a child's life. The power of an emergent literacy intervention is supported by a large body of evidence. This evidence shows that if a programme only focuses on emergent literacy it is not the best programme. Instead, a programme that promotes strong spoken language and concepts about how print works makes for a better emergent literacy programme. It is this combined foundation that ensures smooth learning of reading and writing in Std. 1, 2 and 3 in primary school.

A well thought out emergent literacy curriculum is not available in most public early childhood centers across India. In Karnataka, we are addressing this gap through a year-long curriculum for the 5-to-6-year-old child. The curriculum is targeting the combined foundation skills

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of oral language development and concepts about print. The curriculum builds on the oral language curriculum for the 3 and 4 year old child that includes conversations, stories and rhymes.

The new oral language and emergent literacy programme sits within a larger curriculum reform of the *Chili Pili* programme that has been in use in Karnataka's *anganwadi* centers for well over a decade. The new *Chili Pili* curriculum has been under construction in Karnataka since 2018.

The emergent literacy curriculum in context

The emergent literacy programme in the *new Chili Pili* is alert to the particular complexities of multilingual and print-starved settings.

Multilingual contexts are common across Karnataka. One kind of context is when there are many languages in the child's home and neighbourhood with one of those languages being the language of instruction in the early childhood education (ECE) center. Sometimes, however, none of the home or neighbourhood languages are the preferred language in the ECE center. The child must learn a new language. Similarly, the child may know a distinct dialect already but must learn the more standard variety used within the ECE center. In addition, many times, a single early childhood classroom enrolls children with multiple home languages. This multilingual setting is common in border districts in the state as well as in urban and peri-urban locations where languages mix because migrating families from different places settle in one place together. The need is for a curriculum that is sensitive to this wide variety of language settings. A simple approach to this complex challenge in the new *Chili Pili* is to have rich visualization of the Kannada material. A further approach that will be explored is to have about 30% of the curriculum in the local dialect and only 70% in the standard language. These sorts of innovations with the early childhood curriculum are important because children benefit from a bridge between the home and the school language.

Another pressing concern is that many children in Karnataka's early childhood centers have very little exposure to handling books at home. Handling books is essential for children to know more about print. It helps children know the direction in which print must be 'read' (left to right, top to down), and what are the important parts of a book (e.g., which part of the book is the cover, where in the book does the story begin - first page, where in the book does the story end – final page). Exposure to books also allow for exposure to the symbols that make up written language. It allows children to become more sensitive about the curves and dashes that make up symbols even though, at this stage, the names of these symbols are not yet known. Along with the sensitivity to certain dots and dashes comes an alertness to the preferred ways in which visual elements combine in the writing system. This too is an important foundation skill that helps children to quickly begin to read when they reach Std. 1, 2 and 3 in primary school. Given this background about the importance

of children's concepts about print, a simple approach to address print-deprivation is to create many possibilities for book handling within the pre-school. Here, the aim is not for the child to 'read' the contents of the books like a parrot in a manner that is sing song but without meaning. Instead, the aim is to infuse joy and excitement about books, to show how a story sits on the pages of the book.

A co-developed project

Karnataka's emergent literacy curriculum is co-developed by multiple agencies. The programme has attempted to structure learning opportunities in a way that ensures a smooth transition to the *Nali Kali* programme in primary school. Teachers in primary schools and anganwadis, and supervisors of ICDS have been key contributors to shaping these templates. This innovation allows Karnataka's twin programmes—*Chili Pili* and *Nali Kali*—to actively unpack how the learning continuum must look from the early childhood center to the primary school classroom.

The emergent literacy programme has also attempted to infuse daily sessions with the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of the State. NGO and community partners brought their work in local schools and preschools to produce the stories and narratives in the lessons, and university partners echoed the need for a comprehensive program with a thorough review of what more needed coverage. Finally, the emergent literacy programme has been conceived to address the multiple components within emergent literacy. These components have been drawn from research studies in Karnataka (e.g. Nag, 2007; 2013; Nag & Arulmani, 2013; Nag et al., 2014; 2018a, 2018b) and work in other Indian languages across India (e.g. Nag, 2017; Vagh et al., 2016). In summary, the Chili Pili emergent literacy curriculum is an example of a consultative and much-discussed development process with a strong input from child language experts.

See Box 1 Below

End Note

The primary objective of any emergent literacy curriculum is to provide strong foundations for future literacy learning. The programme needs to be responsive to local opportunities and reducing of barriers to oral language development and concepts about print. The new *Chili Pili* has the potential to create these opportunities and actively reduce hurdles in the learning journey after children start school. Once completed, *Chili Pili* resources such as the teacher training manual and curriculum developer manuals are likely to be useful for other States that want to simultaneously develop children's oral language and emergent literacy.

In the larger scheme of things, this multi-agency project provides an approach to address India's commitment to a learning continuum across the pre-school and primary school stages.

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Box 1

The Chili Pili Oral Language and Emergent Literacy Programme: In Brief

Children must listen and engage with oral texts. This is done through a story- based curriculum with linked supplementary narratives. The child's own story telling is also at the core of the talk in class.

The stories and narratives introduce new vocabulary in simple to moderately difficult sentence structures (semantics and morphosyntax). Activities encourage attention to beginning and ending sounds in words (phonology) and breaking up sentence into words and words into syllables (becoming analytic about language). These promote foundation skills for learning to read and write.

Children look and engage with print. Becoming aware of print is important to the programme. Because of this, the proportion of wordless picture books is balanced with picture books with simple texts. Name labels for objects in the room and picture flashcards with akshara or name labels (e.g., door, pencil, tomato, banana) are in the materials for the classroom. The exposure to print is incidental and embedded within other learning activities.

The story-based curriculum is structured around high-frequency sounds in the language. In Std. 1, children in the State learn to read and write the akshara for these high-frequency sounds. In pre-school, there is exposure to these akshara through shape finding, shape sorting, air writing, giant writing and similar other activities. These too promote foundation skills for literacy learning.

A step-based approach. Activities are graded. A series of exercises strengthen vocabulary knowledge and narration skills, syllable awareness and print awareness, visual discrimination and visuo-motor skills. A continuum of learning is maintained with activities building on the curriculum for the 3 and 4 year old and growing in complexity to flow into the *Nali Kali* programme.

Chili Pili is a foundational curriculum as suggested in the new NEP.

Needs Analysis

Quality Education at Pre and Primary Level Classrooms in Government Schools in India

Voices of Resource Persons for Teacher and Supervisor Training

Introduction

The role of teachers is critical to the quality of education delivered in pre and primary schools. In resource constrained government-run schools and context, teacher training, supervision and mentoring become especially important. Broadly, this needs analysis identifies the challenges to quality education delivered through teachers within the public education sector in India. For this, ethnographic interviews were conducted with various stakeholders and functionaries with rooted experience in teaching, teacher training, research, and governance.

Government schools are strained to meet the expectations and aspirations of parents whilst also understanding the needs of children. Even with increased efforts and resources allocated to planning for quality education, on the ground implementation seems to fall short. Through the interviews, three key stakeholders in quality education delivery were identified as teachers, resource persons, and the government. For each of these groups, the challenges and potential mechanisms to address these challenges have been self-identified through the interviews. This provides a well-rounded and ground-up understanding to develop an applicable and practical implementation framework for the lower bureaucracy to apply in delivery of quality education to classrooms in India.

Brief Description of Methodology

As discussed earlier, this analysis is based on ethnographic interviews to understand the narratives, lived experiences and self-identified mechanisms to address challenges around quality education in government run schools. To ensure we captured different perspectives of these challenges and the reliability of the data, two measures were taken. First, interviews were conducted across three different states: Gujarat, Karnataka and Delhi. Second, interviews were conducted with various stakeholders ranging from teachers, public officials, NGOs, and researchers. The categorical identification of implementors of quality education, the challenges and the potential mechanisms to address these challenges were self-identified by the interviewees themselves. And so, the three key functionaries identified are:

Teachers: Teachers interviewed for this analysis have direct experience in teaching at the pre and primary school level in government-run schools.

Resource Persons: To ensure quality assurance in education, the role of teacher training and teacher supervision is critical. Resource persons perform a key role in teacher supervision. Cluster is the basic unit for planning and monitoring at the school level. CRPs (Cluster Resource Person) performs supervisory duties to ensure quality improvement of schools at the cluster level where as BRPs (Block Resource Persons) do so at the block level. Resource persons (RPs), therefore, are in important part in the cascade model of quality education delivery in the Indian public education system. In the interviews, the key monitoring roles were associated with the CRPs, BRPs, and the nodal officers (in the case of Karnataka Public Schools – KPS).

The Government: In this analysis government is defined as the body that is responsible for policymaking. This definition is based on the narrative of the government reflected in the interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended for the key issues to be self-identified and for the narratives around quality education to unfurl organically. This analysis, therefore, provides rooted and practical implementational mechanisms informed by the lived experiences of the key functionaries and stakeholders in quality education delivery.

[The rest of this extract focuses on the analysis of interviews with Resource Persons.]

Challenges and Needs identified by Resource Persons

A senior public official commented that there are two key aspects to quality education delivered in classrooms: (1) Teacher education (2) Supervision and monitoring. We will explore these two aspects in detail below.

Teacher Education: In the capacity building workshop held in Gujarat, and experienced consultant explained, "we always hit the wall with mentoring and coaching teachers even with focussed training". Here, the "wall" refers to barrier that prevents actual skills from being imparted to the teachers in training. Similarly, in other interviews teachers' commitment, tenure, level of understanding was identified as factors that negatively impacted teacher training. A respondent explained that at the moment teachers do have training but these trainings are not enough for the teachers. These are "touch and go" trainings for a restricted time (because of logistical reasons as teachers can be available only for a few days). She says, "...there is so much material to be covered so the training is very touch and go".

Supervision: Public officials, members of NGOs, teachers themselves opined that the most crucial part to ensure quality education is monitoring and supervision. Supervisors are largely seen as 'post-men' delivering information and data from one office to the other. The common epithet of 'post-men' refers to resource persons who are primarily given administrative and co-ordination duties against monitoring quality of education delivered in classrooms.

In supervision resource persons do a superficial accounting of the classroom. One respondent commented that CRCs and BRCs usually just remark "this is not there in the class, that is not there in the class", rather than providing enriched supervision and feedback to the teachers.

- Two pertinent questions were raised regarding quality education in the GEC capacity building workshop:

• At which level of the cascade must quality intervention be applied. Some discussants emphasised that it is at the level of CRCs ad BRCs that quality intervention should applied in the cascade. CRPs and CRCs are at closest in proximity to schools with lesser number of schools to supervise making it a suitable fit for the intervention. Or at the higher level, the potential to standardise and scale the intervention might be greater. These opposing narratives must be reconciled.

• Should the delivery model for teacher training and supervision be differentiated based on the level of the cascade or standardised. There must coherence in the material across the cascade.

- Among nodal officers in Karnataka who are supposed to support teachers, there is a lack of understanding of teaching material and preschool learning concepts themselves.

- Similarly, BRPs and CRPs do not have knowledge or expertise in early childhood education to support pre an primary school teachers adequately. Administrative Responsibilities Overwhelming responses highlighted that resource persons are over-burdened with administrative responsibilities. One respondent remarked, "...CRPs are supposed to do supervision but they are given every other

job except that…CRPs, BRPs, nodal officers have a lot of administrative/election responsibilities and are not able to perform their respective roles." Unable to Provide Academic Support to Teachers Resource persons are unable to academically support teachers. Their responsibilities are disproportionately allotted to administrative responsibilities ranging from data to electoral duty.

Data

Data Collection and Insights Data collection happens at the teacher level to every other level in cascade model. Head teacher takes data from the teachers, consolidates and gives it to CRPs. CRPs then consolidates passes the data to higher block, district and state level resource centres/groups. This data is analysed but rarely reaches back in a form that usable to the teachers.

Several respondents commented that data is not revisited and applied at the teacher level. That is whilst data collection happens in a co-ordinated manner the insights from the data rarely reach the teachers for implementation.

Technology

The xxx capacity building workshop brought to light technology-driven solution to quality education as important to the government. This may include online teacher training, dashboards for data analytics, audio visual material for training. However, technology-driven components will require already time-strapped teachers, trainers and supervisor to learn and advance the required skills. In some cases, technology driven online courses were discussed as a replacement for face-to-face training. Here, some of the discussants themselves raised concerns regarding the over-reliance of online material. Whilst online content can ensure standardisation of material and address questions of dilution in training in the cascade model, it does not directly engage, demonstrate, train teachers as is necessary for quality education and communication skills to be imparted. There are other discussion forums created formally through Teacher App or informally among teachers and resource persons in school to address challenges and questions that maybe raised. From the interviews, teachers were satisfied with these initiatives.

How can this be addressed, as identified by Resource Persons

Specialised cadre for supervision for pre and primary school education.

The needs and challenges at the pre and primary level is unique and requires specialised training and deep understanding of early childhood education. Therefore, the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) highlighted this importance.

- Teacher and supervision training must be content-rich whilst also quality rich in terms of time spent to train. Several respondents highlighted that the training material is rather extensive and the training session are too short to train as per the required quality. Some even suggested reducing the content and emphasising in quality of training. However, this is a challenge as teacher training often comes at price of reduced teaching days/hours.

- For any new material that comes in, some respondents claim there is usually some resistance from teachers. It is therefore essential to have peer learning support for teachers.

- System needs to develop a framework that inculcates an academic inclination among supervisors.

- There exists a need to go beyond mere supervision to teacher mentoring. Across several interviews, respondents asked for mechanisms for 'hand-holding' for teachers. Mentoring involves academic support where teachers are able to rely on resource persons to clarify their queries and to

be guided on the best approach to teaching. It is necessary to recognise that teachers themselves are learners in the system.

- After training, based on the same conceptual understanding there should be follow-up. Follow-up is essential for teachers to raise their concerns and clarifications from practical application of the teaching material in classrooms.

- Supervision should be a two-way street where teachers are also able to communicate easily their challenges and concerns.

- Supervision requires certain skills to communicate and guide teachers effectively. An education consultant stresses that, "...people who go into the class to supervise should themselves have the experience in the field and should also have a sound theoretical understanding on the subjects. They should also know how to communicate and show appreciation to the teachers."

- System for strategies for mentoring and supporting teachers has to be put in place, experience. She adds that at the moment teachers do have any real support or guidance from resource persons or the system.

- There are contesting views regarding the frequency of visits of CRPs and BRPs. Some respondents in Gujarat's Pargana schools insisted that CRPs and BRPs regularly visited schools for supervision. Whilst in Karnataka a teacher explained that supervisory visits are rare. Therefore, a system to regularise school visits and providing guidelines for teacher mentorship is an important consideration.

- Administrative responsibilities of teachers and supervisors have to be reduced. Teaching and supervisory roles deserve prominence. A teacher remarked that other officials may be brought to specifically take over the administrative responsibilities of the teachers, resource persons and officers.

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