Samhita
A BETTER NORMAL

Report:
Findings of the Impact Assessment of Pratham's Education Projects Funded by Kotak Securities Limited in FY 2020-21

Submitted to: Kotak Securities Limited

kotak Securities

March 2023

Samhita Social Ventures,

2nd Floor, Jagdamba House, Next to Anupam Cinema, Peru Baug,

Goregaon East, Mumbai 400063.

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Findings of the Impact Assessment of Pratham's Second Chance Project Funded by Kotak Securities Limited in FY 2020-21

1. Introduction

1.1 About the programme

Pratham Education Foundation, India's leading non-governmental organisation working on education, piloted the Second Chance (SC) programme in 2011. The programme was meant to support women and girls over 16 years of age who had dropped out of school before completing their Grade 10. Potential participants are identified and encouraged to re-enter education with a focus on appearing for the Secondary School Examination in the hope that this academic certificate would prove useful for the learners and further their opportunities for educational growth and employability.

The programme supports its primary stakeholders through an intensive one-year engagement, involving a Foundation Course and Main Course. The former helps students cover basics and be brought up to the level of learning subjects taught at Grade 10 level while the latter focuses on the Grade 10 syllabus and exam preparedness. The programme takes end-to-end responsibility of assisting students appear for the certification or Board exam by registering them as independent candidates, taking up responsibility for transporting them to and from exam centres, and collecting and distributing their certificates. The programme also has a component of vocational counselling where it encourages students to explore ideas of what they would like to do beyond Grade 10 in terms of education and profession, and also invites professionals to discuss what pathways to enter professions popular amongst students.

Kotak Securities Limited has been supporting Pratham for their Education focus as part of their CSR practice. In 2020-21, their support was used to engage 354 women and girls across Patna, Hyderabad and Jaipur in the SC programme. This report provides details of the findings of the impact assessment of the programme carried out in November, 2022.

2. Impact Assessment: Approach and Methodology

2.1 Research objectives

The overall aim of Samhita's approach to the impact assessment is to 'prove and improve',

Prove

1. The **efficiency of processes** used to deliver interventions and create impact.
2. The **effectiveness of programmes** in terms of programme impact, social outcomes and improvements in lives of end beneficiaries.

Improve

1. By providing actionable suggestions and recommendations for improving programme design and implementation, thereby strengthening the social impact.

2.2 Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methodology approach to collecting primary data using quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was collected through telephonic surveys with the primary stakeholders of the project while qualitative data was collected through field visits to sampled locations in Jaipur. Details of the data collection methods adopted for this impact assessment study are represented in the next section.

2.3 Sampling

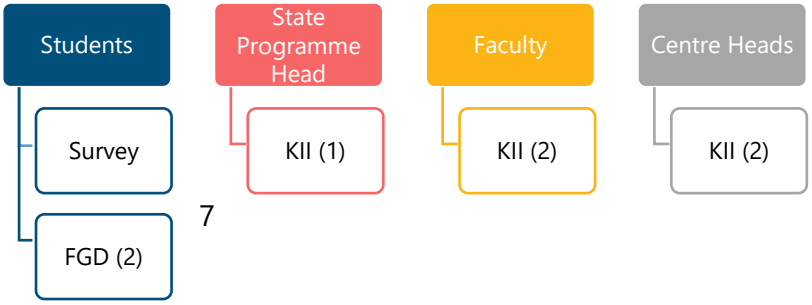
A mix of randomised and purposive sampling was carried out to ensure adequate representation from all cohorts mobilised in various districts for the assessment period. Contact data of all programme participants was requested from the implementation partners and a random sampling exercise was carried out to draw a final sample of 193 women and girls for the impact assessment survey. The quantitative data collection was conducted in a remote manner following all the best practices of this approach.

Sampling	Tools used for evaluation

Study group

193 women & girls

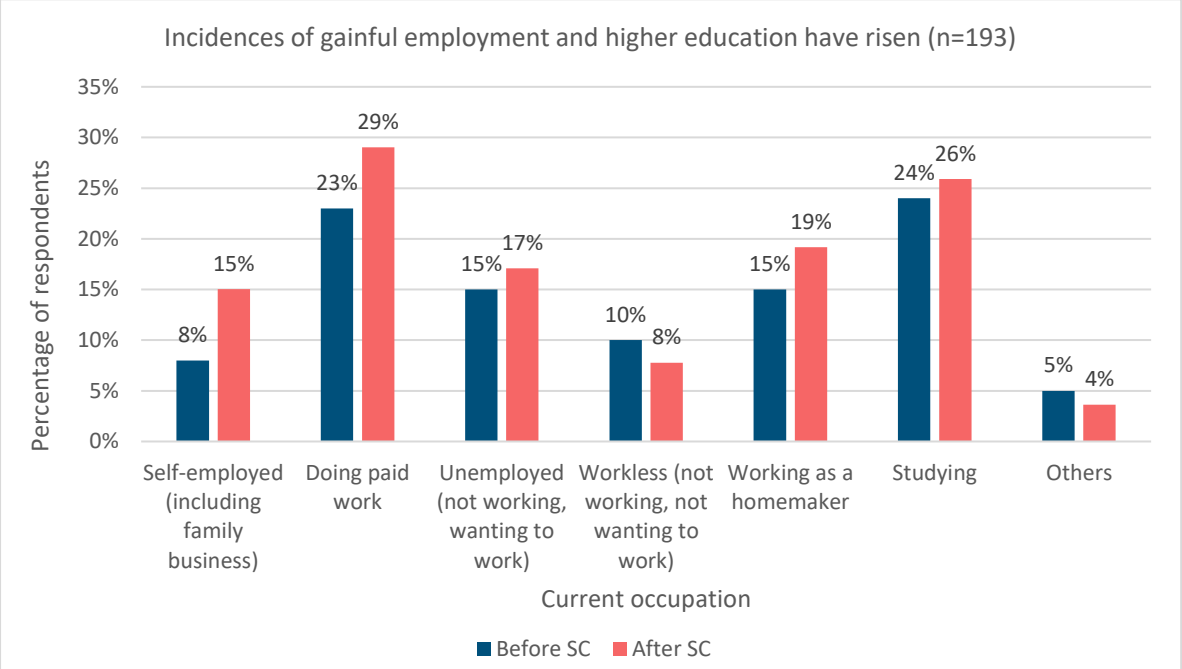
Women & girls who had participated in the Second Chance programme in 20-21



3. Profile of the respondents

3.1 Occupation of the respondents

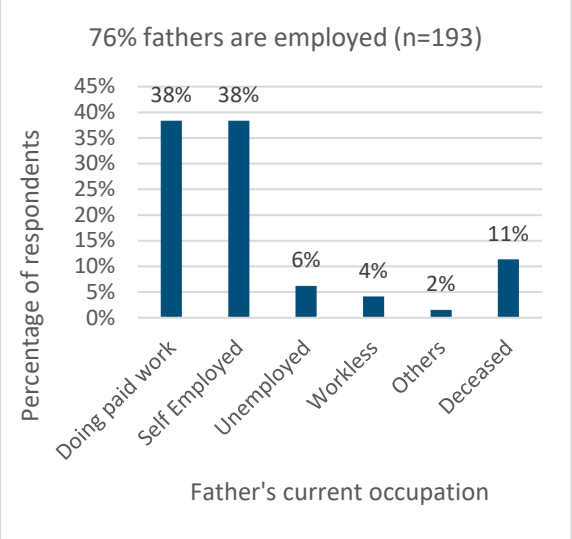
The current occupation of the respondents presents a positive trend overall, with the largest group engaged in paid work, followed by those studying. The latter especially is indicative of the positive effect of the project since the primary stakeholders were drop outs before joining SC but have chosen and been able to continue education beyond Grade 10, presumably through the project's success in impressing upon them and their families the importance of education. While 17% did report being unemployed, this percentage must be read with the knowledge of the adverse effect on COVID-19 on employment in India and cannot be said to be a failure of the project, per se.



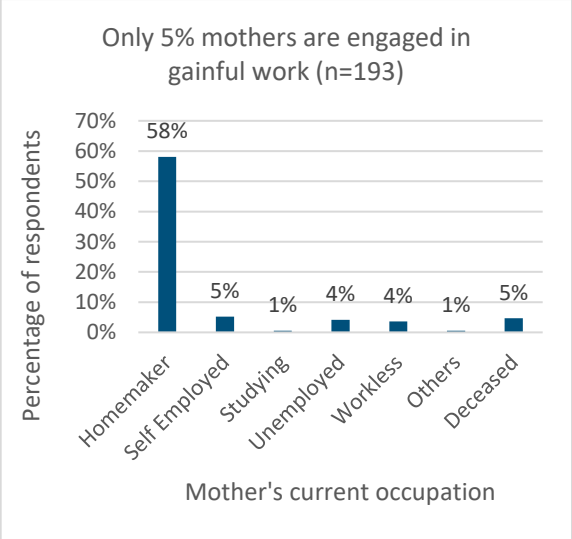
Graph 1: Occupations of the respondents prior to and after SC

3.2 Family occupations

The survey also collected data on the occupations of the parents of the primary stakeholders so as to create a picture of the family's income, educational background, etc. This data is presented in the graphs below:



Graph 2: Respondents' fathers' occupations



Graph 3: Respondents' mothers' occupations

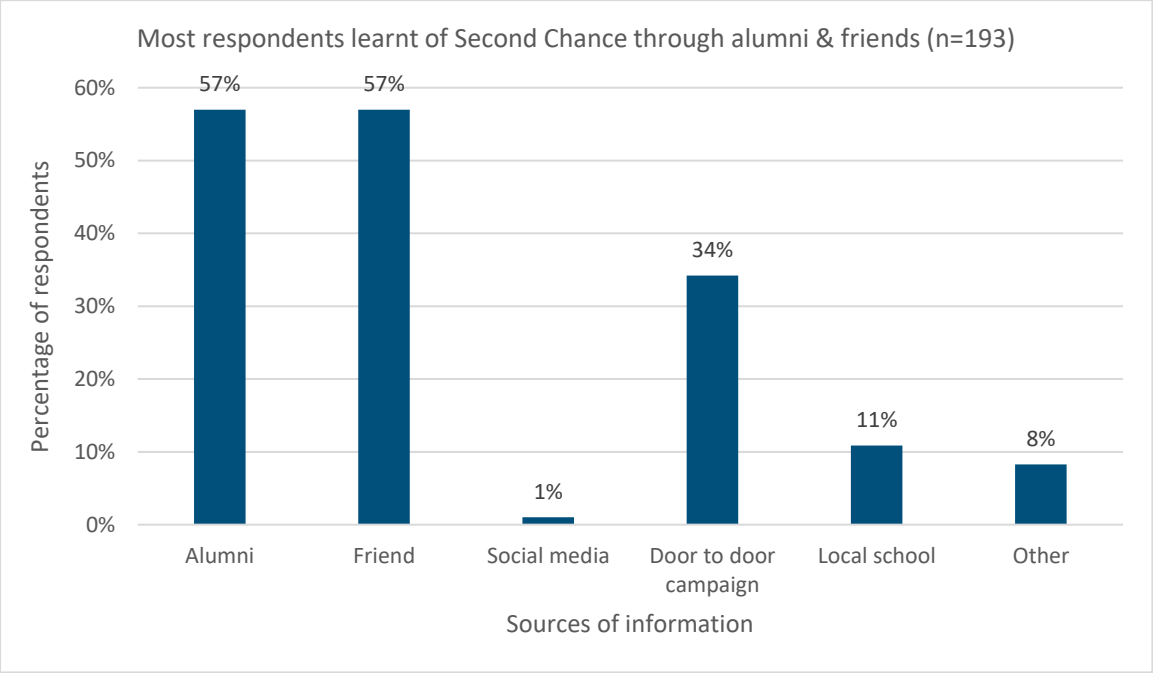
The graphs present a stark image of the norms of labour force participation amongst parents of different genders. While a great majority of the fathers are engaged in gainful work, only 5% of the mothers are. Further, no mothers are engaged in paid work that does not arise out of self-employment, highlighting the barrier to access for women to jobs that may require them to go outside the house. These trends can be seen as having a bearing on the incidence of dropping out in the young girls of these families and, if not for Second Chance's intervention, could be seen to perpetuate these practices intergenerationally.

4. Efficiency Indicators

4.1 Mobilisation

In order to mobilise the relevant primary stakeholders of the project to engage with the Second Chance classes, it was stated by the on-ground personnel that they began the process in March of every year. For the cohort being assessed, this coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19-induced lockdowns in the country. So while earlier the ground teams of Second Chance began mobilisation by going door to door in their respective catchment areas to identify and motivate women and girls who had dropped out of school to attend the classes, now they had to pivot to telephonic outreach.

The sources of learning about the programme, as reported by the respondents of the survey, are represented in the graph below:



Graph 4: Source of learning about Second Chance reported by respondents

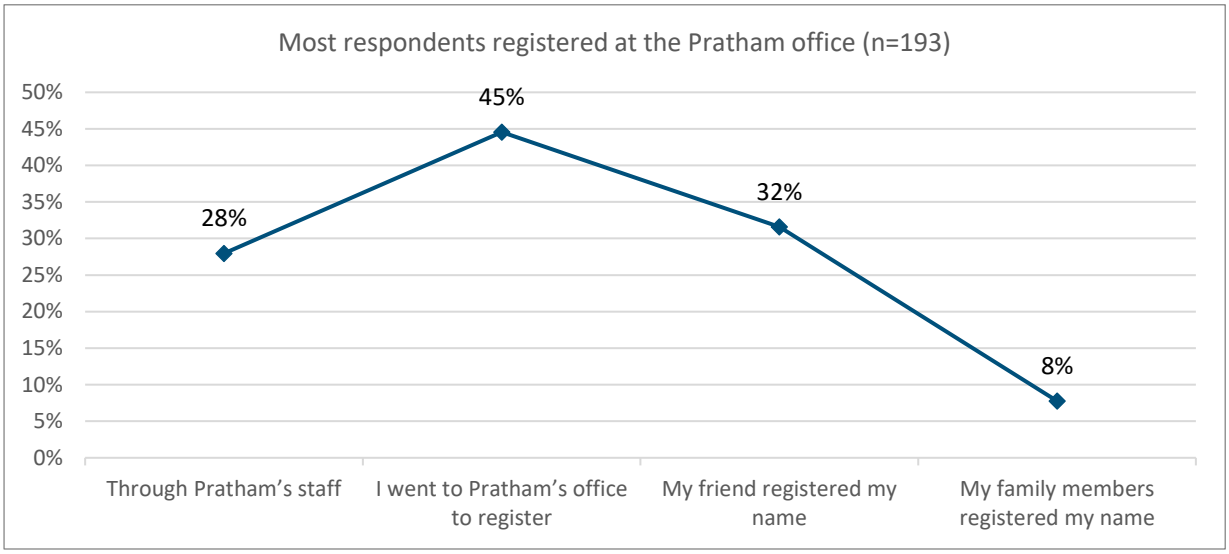
Most respondents report having learnt about the programme through friends or alumni, these may have overlapped. 34% still report learning about it through the door-to-door campaigns, suggesting that these continued when the lockdown was first lifted. The same was corroborated by the project staff the Samhita team spoke with. In general, it was found that the physical campaigning was necessary for the mobilisation of the target cohort since it helped the project team understand the individual barriers being faced by the potential students and address them accordingly. It also allowed them to provide basic counselling to the families and nudge them towards trying out the classes so as to further motivate them to become a part of the programme. Given that the project participants were drop outs, this step was crucial in ensuring successful participation in the project.

4.2 Registration

Registration for classes typically takes place at the centre during the initial week, termed Zero Week, of the programme, as reported by the Pratham staff. This is corroborated by the

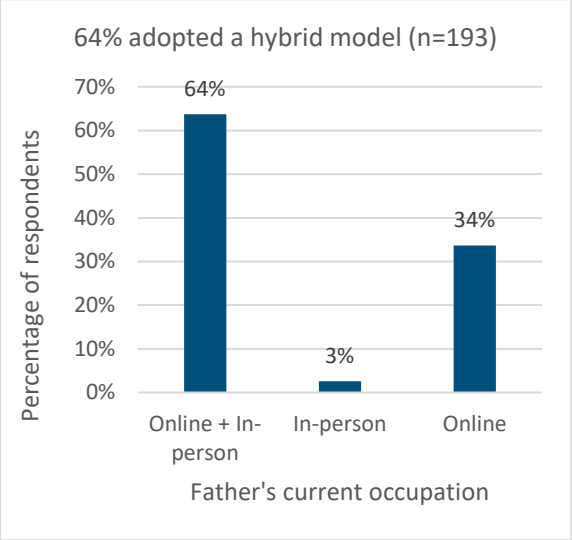
Graph 5: Method of registering for SC

data collected from respondents through the telephonic survey, presented in the graph below.



Graph 6: Difficulties in registering for Second Chance

Some respondent students did report difficulties in registering for the class, as seen in the pie chart here. However, it is possible that this arose due to the change in protocol brought about by the lockdowns and the lack of face-to-face interaction between the project staff and students before the classes began.



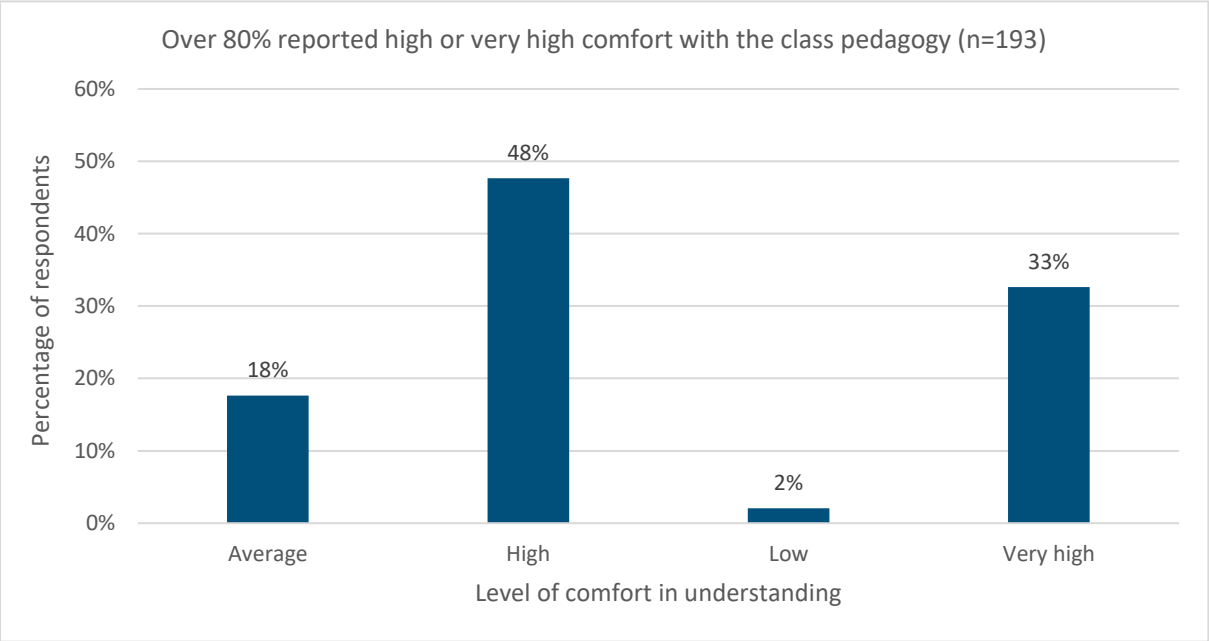
Graph 7: Mode of attending SC classes

4.3 Classroom experience

Most students reported attending both online and in-person classes, as evidenced by the graph here. As reported by the ground staff, online classes were introduced for the first time in SC due to the advent of the lockdowns in 2020-21, which coincided with most of the project period for the cohort assessed through the present exercise. The staff reported quick and large-scale uptake of mobile phones for the purpose of remote classes. Difficulties associated with the digital divide in India did arise – 16% of those who said they attended online classes said they could not access them regularly. However, the Pratham team supplemented regular classes with making the faculty available on call for students who missed online classes, extra or remedial classes being arranged later at night or during weekends, and revisions once in-person classes were permitted again. This ensured that students without or with limited access did not have to discontinue their engagement with the programme. The team reported a general drop out rate of around 10% from the project each year and this was not reported to be any higher in the assessment period.

Despite the best efforts of the Pratham team, on being asked which mode of learning or classes they preferred, 46% of the respondents expressed inclination towards having the entire course being conducted in person. This may be indicative if the unequal access to technology in rural and peri-urban areas, specifically for girls and women, who are often not mobile-owners. It is also a finding that the Pratham team may keep in mind while deciding to opt for hybrid classes in the future, as was reported to the Samhita team.

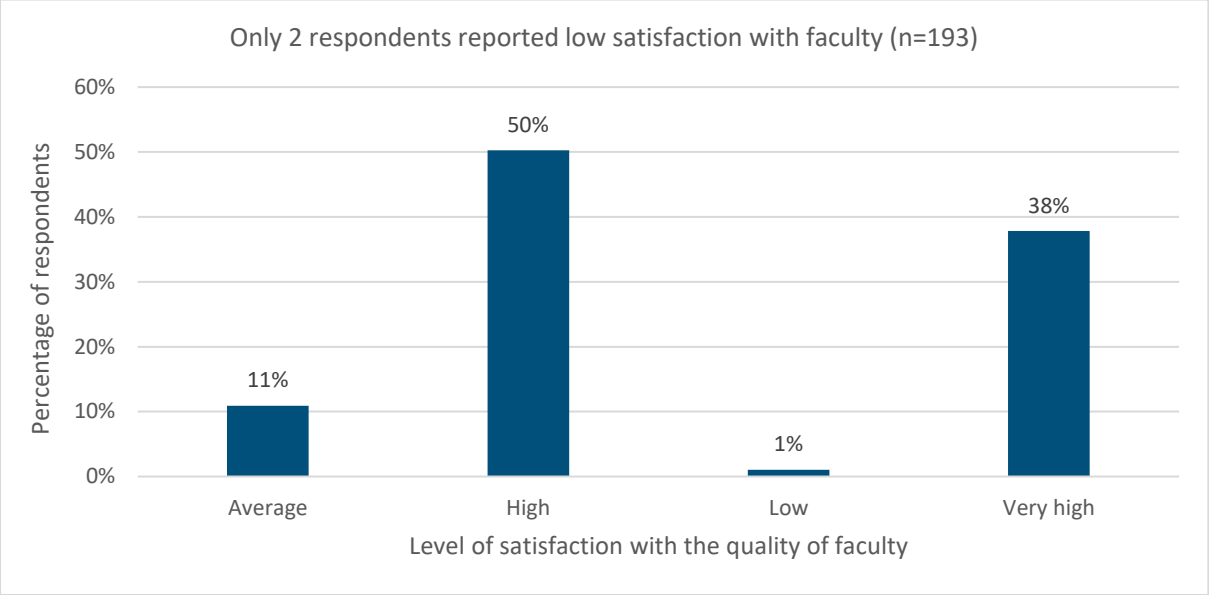
All respondents reported the medium of instruction of the classes to be the vernacular of their respective districts – Telugu in Hyderabad, Hindi in Patna & Jaipur. The comfort of the respondents in understanding what was being taught in the class is presented in the graph below:



Graph 8: Respondents' level of comfort in understanding what was being taught in class

Additionally, 41% respondents reported being very highly satisfied with the curriculum taught in the SC classes while 46% reported being highly satisfied. More than 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum taught at the SC classes was helpful for passing the Secondary Board Examinations they attempted at the end of the academic year.

Satisfaction with the quality of teachers reported by the respondents is presented in the graph below:



Graph 9: Respondents' level of satisfaction with the quality of SC faculty

4.4 Attendance

Over 93% of the respondents reported attending the Second Chance classes regularly. For the remaining 7%, the stated reasons for not attending are tabulated below.

Reason to not attend	Percentage of respondents (n=13)
Parent had the mobile phone	8%
Non availability of a smart phone	15%
Housework	23%
Family member unwell	31%
Married while studying	8%
Small child at home	8%
No reason stated	8%

Table 1: Reasons for not attending Second Chance classes regularly

Further, about 3% of respondents did not attend any virtual classes while 16% attended them but not regularly. Reasons for irregular attendance by the latter is tabulated below:

Reason to not attend	Percentage of respondents (n=31)
I did not have a good network	3%
I did not have access to smart phone with video call option	29%
I did not have access to laptop with a video call option	35%
Others	32%

Table 2: Reasons for not attending online classes regularly

4.5 Appearance for Board Examination

Nearly 91% of the surveyed attendees reported appearing for the board exams as part of their engagement with the Second Chance project. Reasons stated by those who did not are captured below:

Reason to not appear for board exam	Percentage of respondents (n=18)
Marriage	11%
Had to visit in-laws' home	6%
Small baby at home	6%
Graduated during Covid-19	22%
Currently studying in Class 10	6%
Family member unwell	6%
Health	28%

Table 3: Reasons for not appearing in Board exams after Second Chance

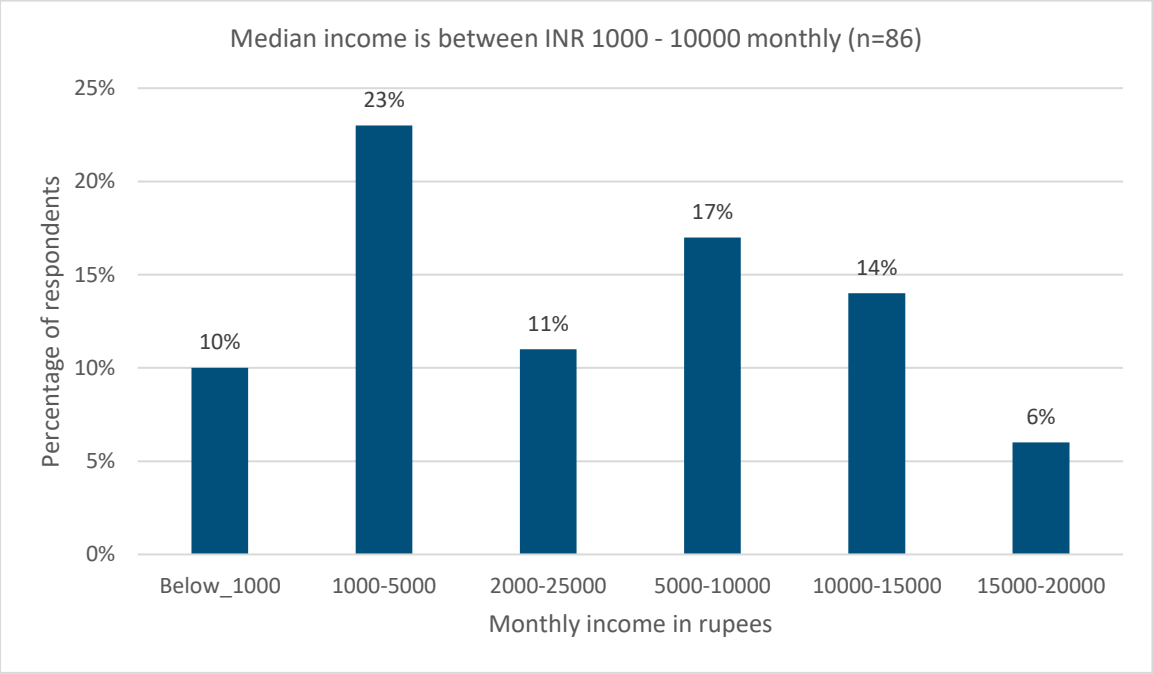
The project team reported that they provided transportation to and from the Pratham centre to the board examination centre for all students. This was seen as very helpful in ensuring that the students could appear for the exams as the centres tend to be at a distance and families were more likely to send their girls out when in care of a known person.

5. Effectiveness Indicators

5.1 Impact on financial capital

Impact on income

The graph below summarises the present monthly income reported by the 44% respondents that were engaged in gainful work at the time of the survey:



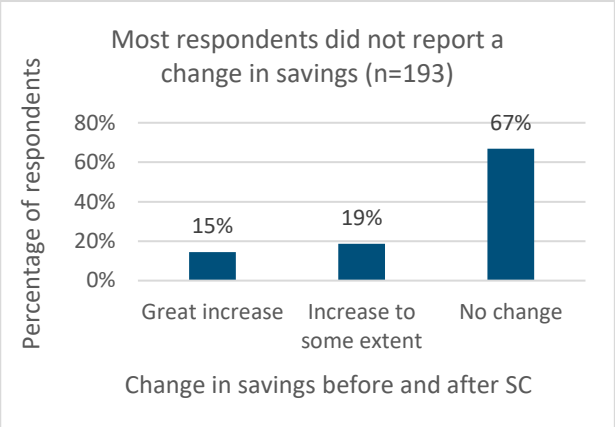
Graph 10: Respondents' monthly income

The largest groups are found to be in the 1000-5000 and 5000-10000 INR a month categories. This is largely in alignment with the data published by Periodic Labour Force Surveys (2019-20) and analysed by Oxfam, putting women's average income from casual work at INR 5,709 and from self-employment at INR 6,626[1]. These were the categories in which the respondents reported to be in terms of employment. While we do not have income data from before the respondents joined SC, the rate of labour force participation has gone up in the assessed cohort, specifically in those doing paid work or self-employed. This may be seen to have a corresponding effect on incomes as well. Additionally, 21% of the respondents noted that participating in the SC project helped them get a job. At the same time, it must also be noted that the economic effects of the COVID-19 lockdown were borne disproportionately by women and girls[2], with higher barriers to accessing paid work, lowering of incomes, etc. This can also be said to have affected the slow growth in income after participating in SC.

[1] https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/women-are-paid-less-than-men-finds-study/cid/1889306

[2] https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects

Impact on savings

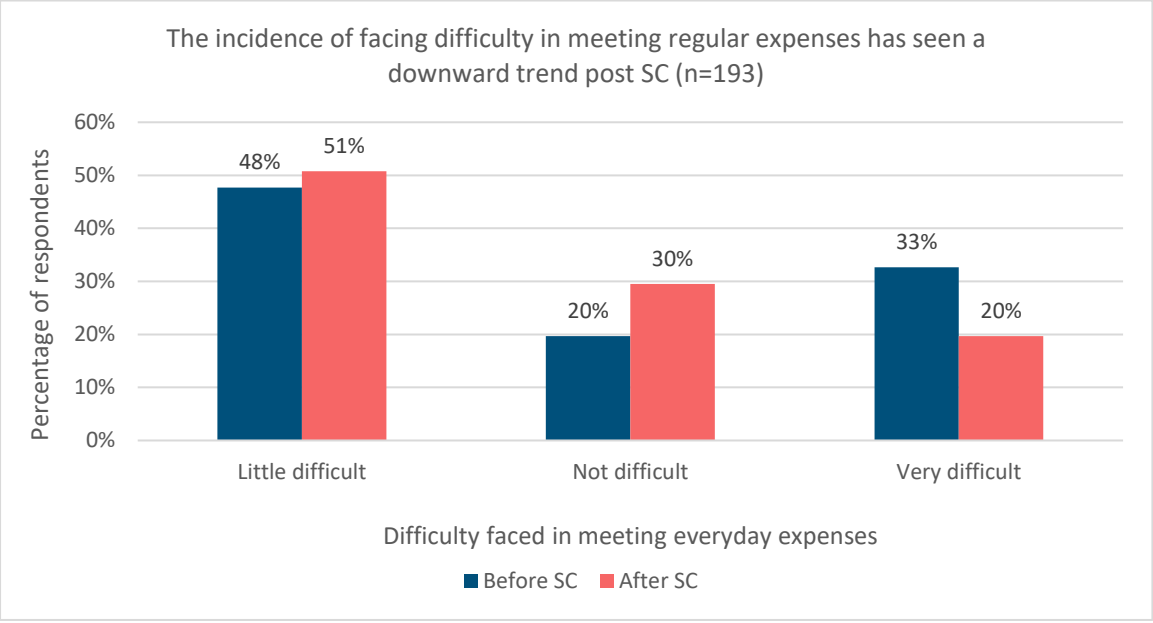


Graph 11: Respondents savings trend

When asked about the state of their savings before and after participating in SC, a majority of respondents did not note a change. There can be many reasons for this. For one, more than 50% of the respondents continue to not be engaged in gainful employment. This is not necessarily a negative trend as roughly half of those women are continuing their education further but does mean that they do not have access to funds for saving. Secondly, the unforeseen effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted before, have caused many persons across the globe to become unemployed or suffer loss of income and the same may be said of the assessed cohort. Lastly, the project does not necessarily focus on financial literacy, which is found to be low in low-income households, specifically amongst women and can be said to contribute to a lack of habitual saving.

Impact on capacity to bear expenses

Respondents of the telephonic survey were asked how difficult they found meeting their or their families' regular expenses, before and after engaging with SC. As can be seen from the graph below, the percentage that found it very difficult has fallen from 33% to 20%, while the percentage of those who do not find it difficult has risen from 20% to 30%. These positive trends can be taken as markers of good impact of the SC project.

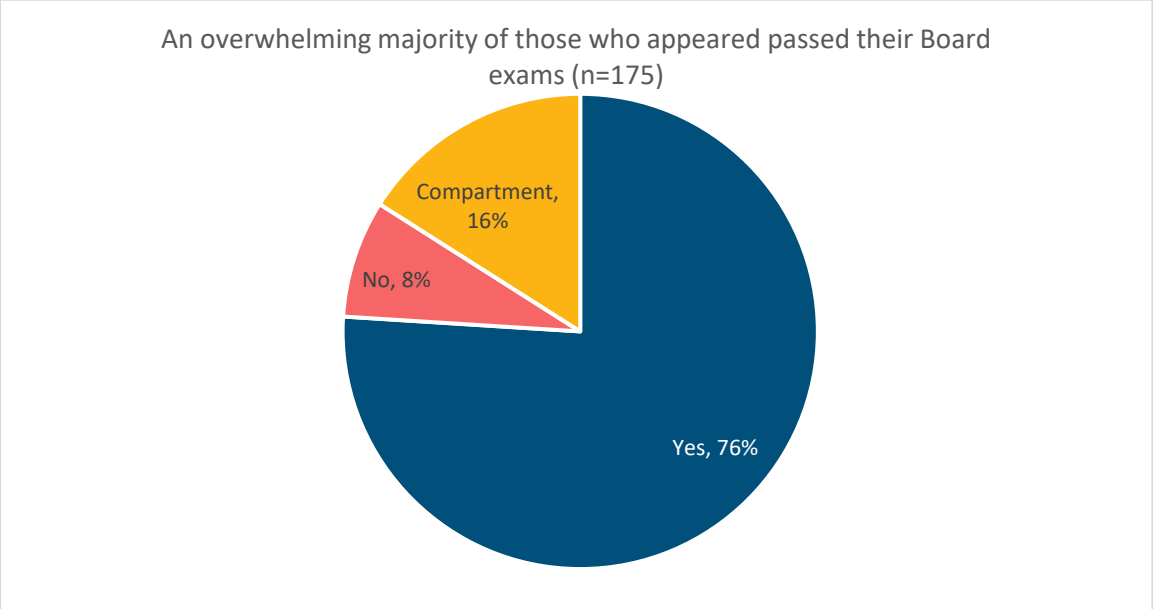


Graph 12: Difficulty in meeting daily expenses reported by respondents

5.2 Impact on human capital

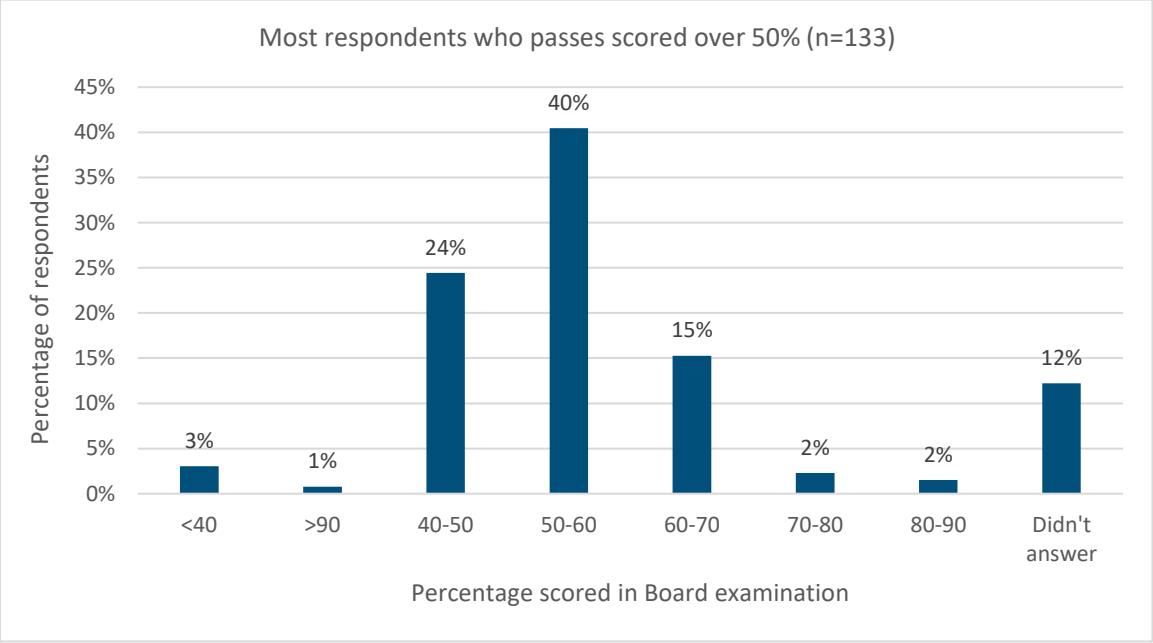
Academic performance

Of the respondents surveyed, more than 90% appeared for the Secondary School Examination. Of these, 76% passed in the first attempt, while 16% had gotten compartments in a subject and were planning to reappear for the same. This is a highly positive impact with direct causal correlation with the SC project and evidences the effectiveness of the project in achieving its primary objective.



Graph 13: Respondents' performance in Board examinations

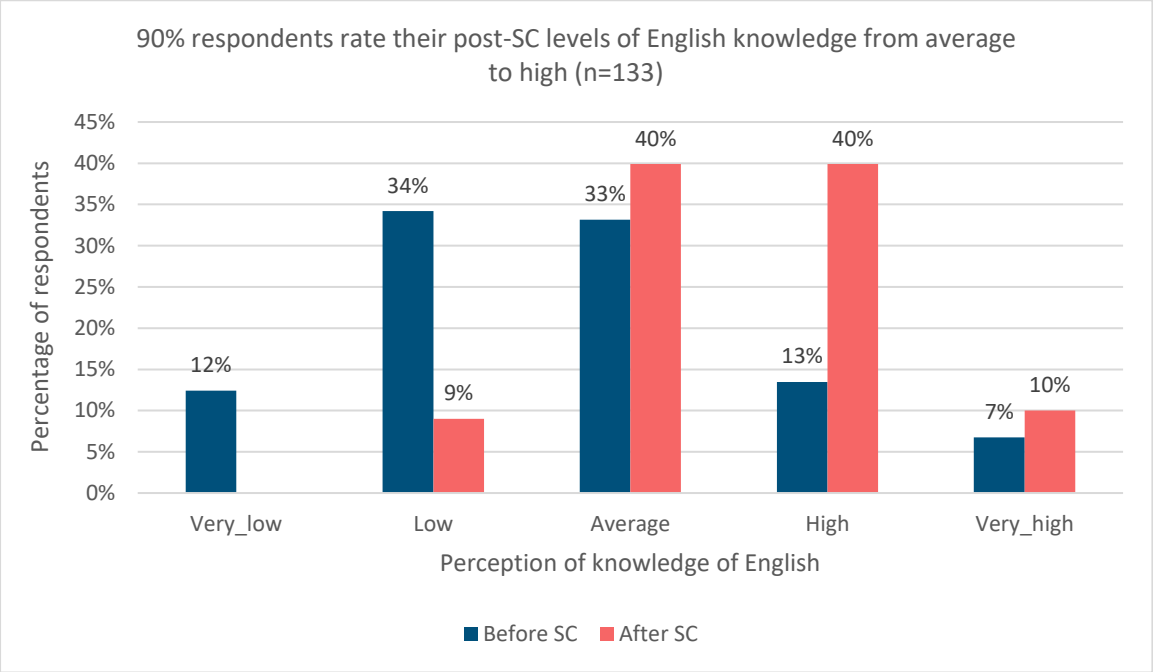
Nearly 70% of the total respondents had cleared their boards at the time of the survey. Performance was generally quite good for these students, with 55% scoring over between 50%-70%, while around 5% scored over 70%. Only about a quarter scored less than 50%.



Graph 14: Results of the respondents who cleared their Grade 10 certification exam

Perception of knowledge

Another indicator tracked by the survey was the respondents' perception of their knowledge levels. We see an upward trend in this in all subjects tracked. Data for English is provided in the graph below.

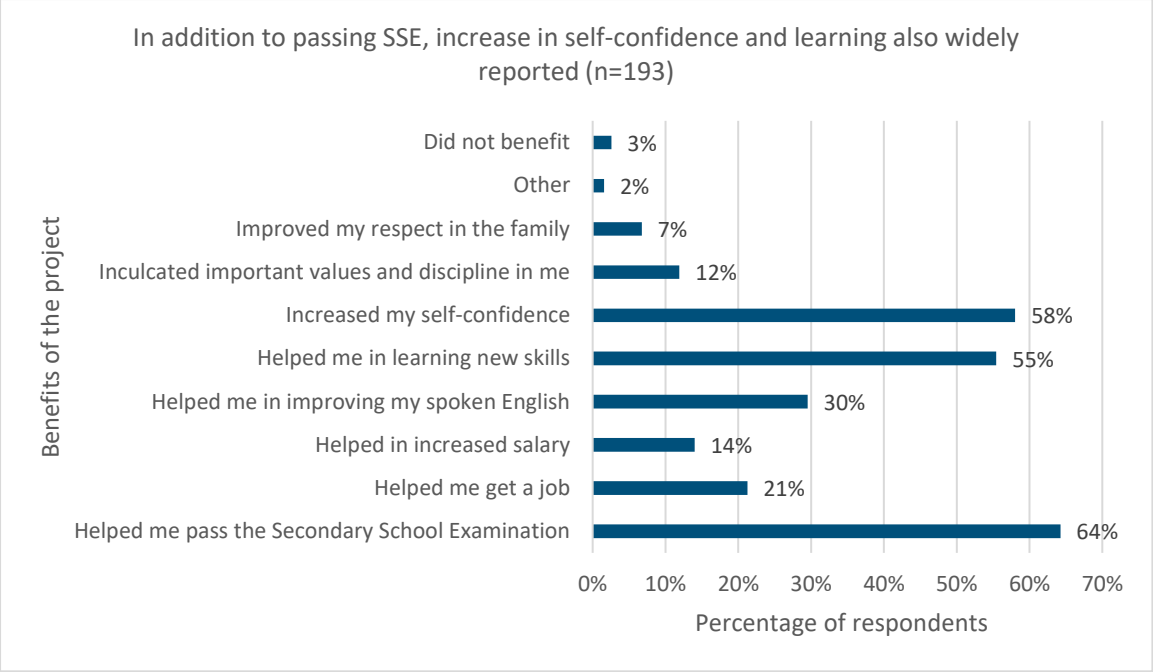


Graph 15: Respondents' perception of English knowledge before & after SC

For both Maths and Science, over 80% of the respondents reported that their knowledge of the subjects improved post attending SC classes. The remaining 20% stated that their knowledge of the subjects remained the same after classes. As noted by students as well as faculty during qualitative data collection, it was common amongst the project participants to consider themselves incapable of studying well enough to clear Grade 10 boards before joining SC while afterwards they can be said to have become evidently more confident in their academic abilities.

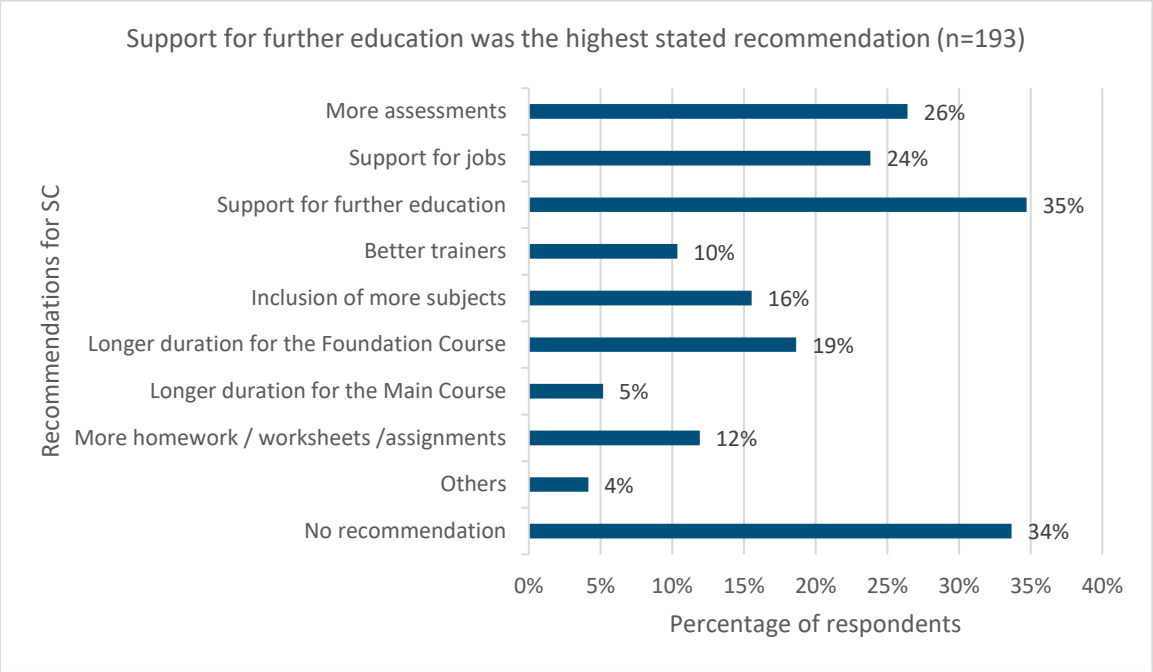
5.3 Soft Skills

The project also had a positive impact on the participants' soft skills. The following graph collates the responses of the survey participants when directly asked about the benefits of the SC project. As can be seen, 58% reported an increase in confidence, 55% reported learning new skills, while 30% said it helped them improve their spoken English. These skills are widely considered important to gain employment and are bound to hold the project participants in good stead for the purpose if they seek jobs.



Graph 16: Benefits of SC reported by primary stakeholders

6. Recommendations



Graph 17: Recommendations for the SC by survey respondents

6.1 Support for further education

As seen in the graph above, over a third of the respondents believe the project could improve by providing support for further education. Many of the respondents directly mentioned an interest in taking up further studies but were unable to do so due to varied reasons such as lack of information on how to go about it, lack of flexible class options such as those provided by SC or lack of financial wherewithal to support further studies. While the SC project might be limited in its scope to assisting women and girls graduate Grade 10, a module on providing information and access to opportunities for pursuing further education may be included in the programme to allow those interested to be able to continue education. Further, a sensitisation and awareness session for the families of the students can ensure that they receive the familial support required for continuing education for those interested.

6.2 Vocational training linkages

The second largest recommendation from project partcipants was support for jobs. While it is understandable that the Pratham team cannot take this up within the scope of its programmes, a deepening of the existing *Dasvi Ke Baad Kya* module may be considered. While the project team mentioned that this module is held for all students, with students being encouraged to make mind maps of their aspirational professions, the prerogative of gathering information on these pathways is presently on the students themselves. The project team also reported that professionals from fields that are widely reported by students as being of interest are invited to discuss the academic pathways of entering the profession. However, few students remembered these activities or seemed to have benefitted from it. It is recommended that a more individual and information-oriented module be created for the *Dasvi Ke Baad Kya* aspect of the SC project. This may involve creation of groups among the class of students aspiring to similar professions and the

project staff assisting them in identifying pathways to enter the profession. Resources such as education and vocation camps can be recommended to the students. They may also be connected to organisations that assist students in continuing education beyond Grade 10 or accessing vocational / professional training.

Report 2:
Findings of the Impact Assessment of Pratham's Hamara Gaon Project Funded by Kotak Securities Limited in FY 2020-21

1. Introduction

About the project

Pratham Education Foundation, India's leading non-governmental organisation working on education, piloted the Hamara Gaon (HG) programme in 2018 in 6 cities in India. The programme was meant to fill the gap in foundational learning levels of schools students as found by national ASER tests and to encourage village communities to take ownership of ensuring their children's engagement with school education. The programme enters a community with the vision of creating age-wise clubs of children in school that are used as sites of volunteer-led group learning. The groups are meant to be actively led by Pratham staff for a period of 3 years. However, the first iteration of the programme was extended to help mitigate the disruption in learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and as such, by the time of this study, Pratham had not exited any of the communities it engaged with under the programme.

The programme operates by creating three groups of students in the communities they enter – one comprising of students from Classes I and II, one for Classes III to V and one for Classes VI to VIII. The engagement methods for all 3 groups are different so as to cater to the different needs of children at all ages. Additionally, the programme also engages youth and mother volunteers and trains them to start taking up the responsibility of ensuring that the groups regularly meet and are able to receive benefits under the programme.

Kotak Securities Limited has been supporting Pratham for their Education focus as part of their CSR practice. In 2018-21, their support was used to engage with communities across Patna, Vishakhapatnam, Pimpri and Jaipur in the HG project. This report provides details of the findings of the impact assessment of the programme carried out in November, 2022.

Impact Assessment: Approach and Methodology

Research objectives

The overall aim of Samhita's approach to the impact assessment is to 'prove and improve',

Prove

3. The **efficiency of processes** used to deliver interventions and create impact.
4. The **effectiveness of programmes** in terms of programme impact, social outcomes and improvements in lives of end beneficiaries.

Improve

2. By providing actionable suggestions and recommendations for improving programme design and implementation, thereby strengthening the social impact.

6.3 Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methodology approach to collecting primary data using quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was collected through ASER-based learning assessments conducted with the primary stakeholders of the project, i.e. students in Classes 3-5 during the 2018-21 academic years. Qualitative data was collected from secondary stakeholders through field visits to sampled locations in Jaipur and Pimpri. Details of the data collection methods adopted for this impact assessment study are represented in the next section.

6.4 Sampling

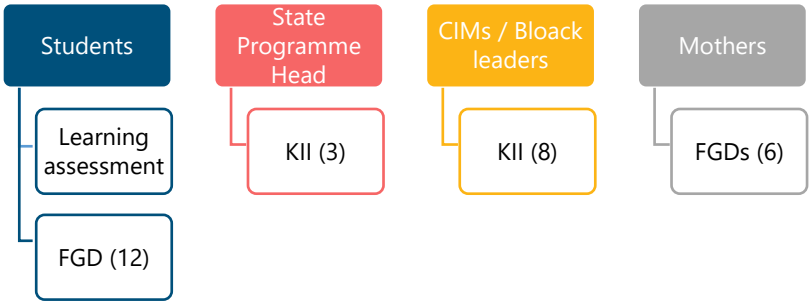
A mix of randomised and purposive sampling was carried out to ensure adequate representation from all communities mobilised in various districts for the assessment period. MIS of all relevant programme participants was requested from the implementation partners and a random sampling exercise was carried out to draw a final sample of 380 students for the impact assessment survey.

Sampling	Tools used for evaluation

Study group

380 students

Students from Hamara Gaon students clubs in Std. 3-5 during 2018-21



Efficiency Indicators

Mobilisation

For mobilisation, the Pratham team depended heavily on local youth who showed initiative, potential and seemed to have the patience for being engaged in a programme where they would have to instruct younger children. The youth would usually be students themselves in Classes 8th and above who would be identified by the community-level staff of the organisation – the Community Resource Leader (CRL) or the Community Instructor Mobiliser (CIM). The community-level staff alongwith the volunteers would first undertake a door-to-door mobilisation campaign to enlist younger school-going children from Classes I to VIII. In some states, instead of the community, the first point of contact were government schools where students could be directly reached through engagement with the administration.

At this stage, the mothers of children are also engaged with, specifically those of children in Classes I to V. This is predicated upon a number of factors such as the keener involvement of mothers in the child's education, leveraging time spent together by mother and child to foster learning at home and used to build the capacity of mothers to support their children's education. Mothers were therefore also invited to participate in the initial programmes by Pratham under this project while later they were engaged with separately.

Community-level engagement

The Pratham staff ensured that the resource leaders and mobilisers who became a part of the project were from the localities or communities where they worked. This was beneficial in ensuring that the staff had a rapport with the community and could use it to engage youth for deeper penetration into the villages selected for the project. The staff that we interacted with as part of this study were all persons with a background in education, having taught students either in schools or as part of development programmes before joining the HG project.

Additionally, as mentioned above, Pratham further leveraged connections through the school administrations of the government schools present in their communities of interest to build regard and trust for the project within the families of the children.

Finally, engaging youth and mothers allowed the organisation to have a household-level stakeholder group that could effectively disseminate lessons, monitor progress and report any gaps. The youth and the mothers were both largely identified based on their level of interest in the project, the initiative and potential they showed and the CIM's understanding of how patient they were likely to be while attempting to educate others. This is to say that while previous education levels were considered since reading and writing are instrumental to the programme, these did not constitute barriers to becoming important pillars of the project and enabling its execution. Both these groups were also incentivised for their engagement through provision of learning material appropriate and of interest to them such as digital training, first aid training etc. Other incentives such as skill training were being

considered by the Pratham team at the time of the assessment, as reported to our field teams.

Learning mechanisms

The programme addressed the different learning needs and abilities of the children it engages with by dividing them into three groups – Class I-II, Class III-V, and Class VI-VIII. The first group is largely engaged with through their mothers.

Mothers of children in Class I-II are empanelled in small groups based in their neighbourhoods. Largely, however, they engage in home-based learning through material disseminated through phones such as Idea Cards or suggestions given on using household material and activities to impart knowledge of foundational concepts like numbers, letters, shapes, colours etc. These are then tested at the School Readiness Mela (SRM) where children are evaluated through games for their foundational knowledge, cognitive, socio-emotional and motor skills. Report cards are given to mothers at the end of the SRM so they can use it to fill any gaps that may exist.

For students of Class III-V, 40–50-day learning camps are held focusing on language and math. These may be held in the community or at schools depending on the specific location team's policy. These use game and activity-based pedagogy to ensure students are able to achieve foundational literacy. A pre- and post-camp assessment helps the Pratham team track their progress.

For students of Class VI-VIII, study groups are formed in the communities. These are led by the volunteers and often visited by CIMs to ensure students are able to understand the material disseminated to them. Physical material was given before COVID while post they have relied on volunteers to distribute digital material. Some students from this age group were also given tabs to access digital learning material.

All student groups are encouraged to meet other than for Pratham activities as well and use group learning to engage with the material shared by the HG team. The students we interacted with all reported actively engaging in these groups and enjoying the game-based learning style used therein.

COVID Response

One of the sectors that was disrupted majorly due to the lockdowns declared by the government in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic was education. Schools on India, specifically government schools in rural India, were completely unequipped to switch to remote learning. Students, too, did not have equal or unrestricted access to infrastructure for digital learning. Given all these challenges, Pratham was able to use its community-level resources to successfully pivot to a mechanism that allowed it to continue its project activities and mitigate the loss of learning suffered by the children of the programme.

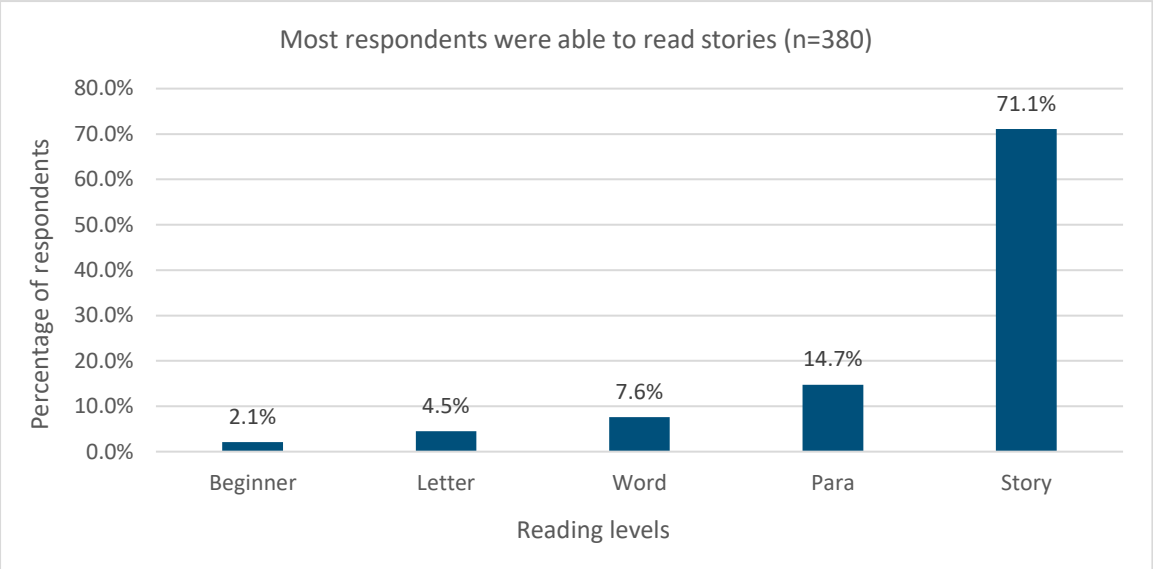
A multi-pronged approach was utilised for the pivot. Firstly, the curriculum and learning material was digitised. This material began to sent to volunteers and parents who had access

to cellphones at home, along with instructions to use it. For those who did not have access to phones, they were either guided to safely procure the material from neighbours with phones or were provided the material directly in accessible community spaces where boards were used by volunteers to write the questions, information, etc. that was part of the learning material. Eventually, when it became safer to meet, mohalla camps were held in small groups with all safety precautions duly followed, to replace the learning camps held for Classes III-V earlier. These allowed Pratham to ensure that there was a minimal break in learning and was further leveraged as an opportunity to educate children on COVID safety measures.

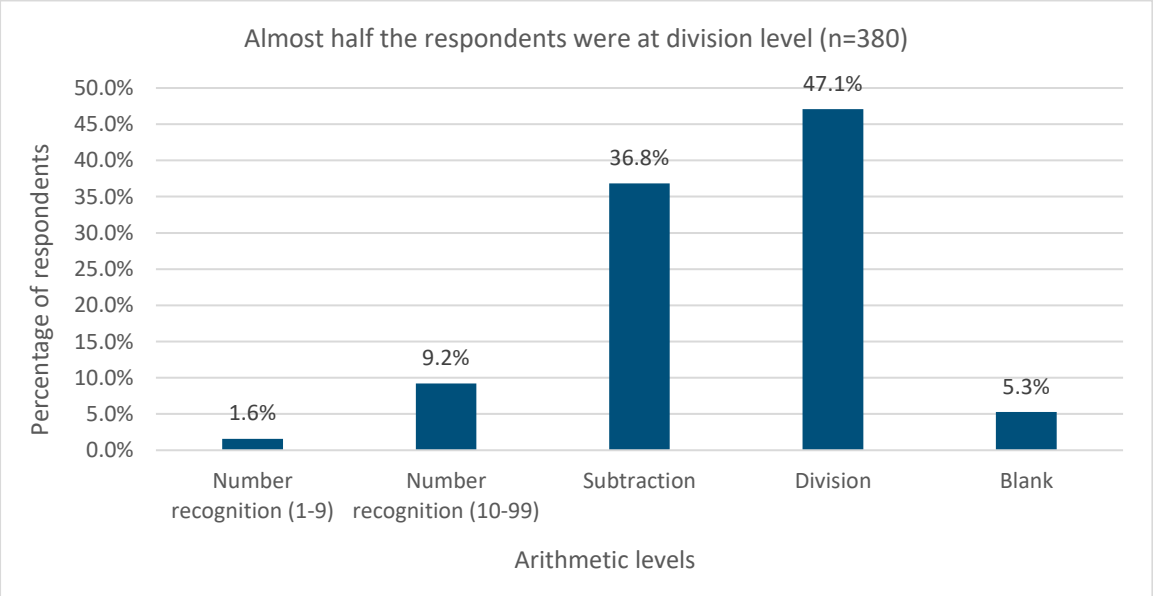
Effectiveness Indicators

Learning levels

Students who had been in Classes 3-5 during the programme period up till 2021 were assessed through a modified assessment tool based on the publicly available ASER tool. Tools were translated in local languages for each location to facilitate easier understanding and remove any language barriers to reflect accurate learning levels. The following graphs presents the findings from the assessment.



Graph 18: Students learning levels in reading



Graph 19: Students learning levels in arithmetic

As can be seen, there has been a drastic improvement in the learning levels of the students. The national ASER test reported at the time the programme was started that slightly over 50% students from Grade 5 in rural India could read simple text at Grade 2 level while only about 28% reached subtraction levels in arithmetic. Here we see that over 71% of the children who underwent the Hamara Gaon programme in the Kotak-supported communities

could read a story while more than 83% are at or beyond subtraction level in arithmetic. It must be noted that the ground team pointed out to Samhita during the field visits that the conditions at these communities had been so dismal when they began that instead of focusing on subtraction and division, they had begun at addition level, and children were expected to level up to subtraction. To account for this, the Samhita team also added an addition component to the Arithmetic section of the assessment tool, whereby 85.5% of the respondents were successfully able to complete the sums presented while around 8.7% were not tested for it.

The results attest to the effective and impactful nature of the Hamara Gaon project and must be used to further build the programme to ensure students can progress to higher levels as adequately.

Increased student engagement in schools

Through the focus group discussions held with students of Classes I-VIII, it was found that the students did report higher engagement and interest in school and various subjects post the project. Involvement in their respective study groups or clubs formed through the project was high as the peer-learning and play-based learning models created an incentive for them to attend. Consequently, they were able to get adequate practice in many aspects of the language and arithmetic subjects they had at school, helping them understand concepts further taught at school better and thereby allowing them to perform better. Volunteers and Pratham staff also helped the students with homework they received from their schools. All these factors came together to make learning more engaging for students. Some of the respondents did, however, report a dislike or lower performance in subjects not covered by HG such as English or Hindi, where it was a second language. Some students also expressed a desire for more advanced math problems as they felt the current subject material focuses more on basics, which they have now mastered. This could show a gap that the programme can fill to maximise its impact.

Increased engagement of mothers

As reported by the field staff we interacted with, mothers were initially very shy and hesitant to step out of their homes to participate in the groups created for them. However, once they started attending the School Readiness Melas, their participation has become so central to the project that the organisation is now considering connecting them with Nipun Bharat, the Indian government foundational literacy programme. Mothers lead the study groups for students in Classes I and II, ensure that the learning material sent on WhatsApp in properly understood by their children, actively conduct learning activities at home (counting, colour identification, animal and vegetable names, etc) and are instrumental in SRMs. Their engagement with their wards' schools has also gone up with most of them now actively visiting schools at parent-teacher meetings, report card presentations, etc. and are keenly aware of their performance at school. They are able to more effectively communicate with teachers about their children's classroom performance and learning behaviour. The HG staff also reported some mothers going on to become Anganwadi workers through their support

post their engagement with HG. These factors attest to the positive impact the project has had on the mothers that it involves in the project.

Recommendations

Inclusion of advanced concepts

While the programme was created specifically to resolve the issue of lack of foundational literacy in India, given that it engages students till Class VIII, inclusion of more advanced concepts may be considered by Pratham. Students as well as some volunteers reported that for older classes, solving problems at a more basic level becomes repetitive and it may be more useful to start providing more advanced learning material to them. Since this demand may not be uniform across the entire students cohort and to ensure that no child in forced to abandon foundational learning before they have mastered it, Pratham may consider the creation of advanced material for children upto Class VIII and distributing it to children who indicate the proclivity and aptitude to engage with it. Volunteers and community-level staff can identify such students and instruct and guide them to engage with the advanced learning material as a separate group within their larger class group, which can continue to receive the material presently being utilised for this purpose.

Structured incentivisation of volunteers

Both volunteer groups – youth and mothers – were seen as indispensable for the programme by our field team while the same was affirmed by the stakeholders we spoke with. Given that a substantial amount of time is contributed by both to allow the project to be executed smoothly, it makes sense to include a structured incentivisation mechanism in the project to both reward them and motivated them to continue to actively participate. Skill training as well as career guidance could be useful for both cohorts and should be included in the project design after a needs assessment to identify the appropriate skills that can be taught.

Team Samhita

Divya Agarwal
Shiboni Sundar
Prachi Patni
David Mathews

Supported by:
rohan sarma
Dwiya Saha