

Executive Summary

Second Chance Program:

Pratham Education Foundation, a prominent non-governmental organization in India, initiated the Second Chance (SC) program in 2011. This program specifically targets women and girls aged 16 and above who had previously dropped out of school before completing their Class 10th. The primary objective of the SC program is to provide a pathway for these learners to re-enter education and obtain their Secondary School Examination certificate.

97% of the surveyed attendees reported appearing for the board exams as part of their engagement with the Second Chance project. 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 the care of a known person.

Efficiency Indicators

Classroom experience

Most students reported attending 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 in 2020 due to the advent of the lockdowns in 2020-22 and continued during the present project period for the cohort assessed.

Attendance

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

Academic performance

Of the respondents surveyed, more than 97% appeared for the Secondary School Examination, up from 90% last year. Of these, 86% passed in the first attempt, while 4% 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.

Performance was generally quite good for the students who've cleared the examination, with 53% scoring over between 50%-70%, 22% scoring between 70%-80% and 3% scoring over 80% as well. Only about 9% scored less than 50%.

Perception of knowledge

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.

Impact Indicators

Impact on income

Only 20% of the respondents are engaged in employment. 31% are studying while 47% reported being homemakers at the time of the survey.

The largest groups are found to be in the 10000-15000, which is much higher than the average income for women in the peri-urban communities of the cities surveyed. 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 not gone up for the assessed cohort. It was found that in many cases despite having cleared the examinations, many women faced barriers from their families in terms of engaging in employment outside their households. This can be seen as a barrier to the programme's intended impact as well and may be taken up as an issue to address by means of sensitisation and awareness drives within the target communities.

Impact on savings

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. 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.

Sustainability Indicators

Soft Skills

The project also had a positive impact on the participants' soft skills. 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.

Recommendations

Support for post 10th opportunities

Involving families and communities for vocational progress

Hamara Gaon Project – Elementary Education Project

The Hamara Gaon (HG) project, launched by Pratham Education Foundation in 2018, aims to address the gap in foundational learning levels among school students in the country. It operates in communities across India, with a focus on encouraging village communities to take ownership of their children's engagement with school education.

Efficiency Indicators

Mobilisation

The HG project, initiated by the Pratham Education Foundation, heavily relied on local youth who demonstrated initiative, potential, and patience. These youth, often students in Classes 8th and above, were identified by community-level staff such as the Community Resource Leader (CRL) or the Community Instructor Mobiliser (CIM). Together with volunteers, they conducted a door-to-door mobilization campaign to enlist younger school-going children from Classes I to VIII. In some states, government schools served as the initial point of contact, allowing direct engagement with students through school administration.

Crucially, mothers of children in Classes I to V were also actively engaged. This approach was based on several factors. Mothers play a vital role in their child's education, and their active participation was essential. By engaging them, the project strengthens the first touchpoint to knowledge and education that a child experiences at the early childhood level, which is a crucial time for inculcation foundational concepts. By leveraging the time spent together by mother and child, learning at home could be fostered effectively. For this purpose, mothers were equipped to support their children's education. Initially, mothers participated alongside their children in the program. Later, they were engaged separately. These efforts attest to the positive impact the project had on the mothers involved.

Community-level engagement

HG program also effectively engaged local youth and mothers. One of the ways they did this was through local staff selection. Pratham ensured that resource leaders and mobilizers working on the project hailed from the same localities or communities where they operated.

In summary, the engagement of local youth and mothers as active participants in the HG project has been instrumental in its successful execution.

Learning mechanisms

HG also had a comprehensive and thoughtfully custom-created approach tailored to address the diverse learning needs and abilities of the different aged children it engages. The program divides students into three distinct groups based on their grade levels:

All student groups are encouraged to meet beyond Pratham activities. It is believed that group learning enhances engagement with material shared by the HG team. Students actively participate and have reported enjoying the game-based learning style.

Hamara Gaon's holistic approach ensures effective learning experiences for students across different age groups.

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 Hamara Gaon (HG) program has led to a remarkable improvement in students' learning levels. When comparing the initial national ASER test results with the outcomes achieved by children who participated in the program, we see significant improvements. At the time of the beginning of the programme, slightly over 50% of Grade 5 students in rural India could read simple text at a Grade 2 level. Additionally, only about 28% of students had reached subtraction levels in arithmetic. However, after participating in the Hamara Gaon program over 81% of the children could read stories effectively while more than 89% of the students achieved or surpassed subtraction level proficiency in arithmetic.

These results underscore the effectiveness and impact of the Hamara Gaon project. Moving forward, the program should continue evolving to ensure students can progress adequately to higher levels. The dedication of the ground team and the commitment of the community have significantly contributed to this positive transformation.

Impact Indicators

Increased student engagement in schools

All students surveyed believed that it was important to go to school. In the qualitative interactions with students as well, they reported that they enjoyed going to school and have further become more involved in classrooms through asking questions and taking part in activities.

Increased engagement of mothers

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The Hamara Gaon project not only impacts students but also uplifts and empowers the mothers involved.

Sustainability Indicators

Performance in school

As part of the survey, we asked students which subjects they faced difficulties in.

English and Mathematics, both of which are the chief focus of the HG project, continue to be subjects that are most reported as difficult by students. This is indicative of a there being limited spillover of the effects of the learning camps for the students at school or with regards to school subjects and examinations.

Recommendations

1. Reverting to a continuous 30-day learning camp

The learning camps have been divided into 3 periods of 10 days each in order to increase retention.

2. Formalising the involvement of volunteers

Volunteers are a crucial part of the Pratham HG programme and carry out many important tasks within the project such as mobilisation and conducting mohalla classes and all sessions with children in the community post the SRM and learning camps.