

PROGRAM REPORT

2019-20

Professionals Alliance for Youths Growth (PRAYOG)

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BIHAR

1. Executive Summary

PRAYOG is working with Government schools and is currently reaching out to 18 schools through in school library sessions. These are spread over 2 Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) in Kuchaikote block of Gopalganj district. We also reach out indirectly to all the schools in the District as we work very closely with the District Collector, District Education Department Officials viz. DEO, DPOs and Block Education Officers.

We are working for **improving libraries**.

Bihar's grade wise dropout (3%) rate in primary schools is amongst highest in India leading to mere 48% (v. India 74%) literacy rate in PRAYOG's current intervention area as per India Census 2011. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 has ensured free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years. Under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Government has been working to provide this provision. While most of the provisions are met, one area which is of quality concern is **the rational deployment of appropriately trained teachers** to maintain the specified pupil teacher ratio (PTR) "Nationally, DISE (District Information System for Education) reports that PTR has dropped from 36 children per teacher in 2005 to 25 children per teacher in 2013 in primary schools. In Bihar, only 19.7% schools comply with the pupil-teacher ratio as compared to 58% at the national level"¹. It is this lack of the quality of education being imparted to the children in primary sections in a States like Bihar that leads to lack in understanding and curiosity to learn. While recruitment of teachers is a process that can be adopted by the Government, quality might take some time to come. Also, in many of the remote locations teachers tend to remain absent from the classes that further leads to quality issues. As a result, children have poor reading and comprehension ability. The biggest challenge is that there is no home-based support for this as almost 90% of the population are marginal and small farmers; share croppers and peasants. While children's attendance to school has increased because of Govt. schemes like Mid Day meals etc, their net learning has continuously reduced.

The current scenario of education in Bihar is facing with major challenges viz. *low Pupil Teachers Ratio, untrained teachers, attendance of students, drop outs, teaching mode being monotonous and not in sync with the child's interest, lack of scope of innovation in the Education system.*

PRAYOG's journey began as a Community Library in 2013 and for the past two years we have been focusing to spread our learning to Govt. schools and strengthen the library culture. We have been focusing into library work with two objectives - children emerge as critical thinkers through libraries and become efficient readers of children's literature and libraries provide access of diverse literary collection/books to all children and shape up as a space where children share their joy of reading.

Our intervention approach focusses on library Intervention with children and involving other stakeholders like cluster resource centres, blocks resource centre, community and the District Education Department in the process. Our focus in the library program is on strengthening *Collection, Space, Engagement Activities and Developing library resource person*. This is being implemented in 2 Cluster Resource Centres, Kuchaikote Block in Gopalganj, Bihar. There are 18 school from both the Clusters with library session in school hours and reach out to ~5000 children. In the library session, we focus on Book selection (according

¹ Annual Status of Education Report (Rural), 2018 facilitated by Pratham

to genre, age group and child's context); Book Keeping and Library Activities (like reading time, read aloud, book talks, book displays, library cards, book lending. Apart from this, the program engages with teachers at the CRC level - discussion on libraries with school Principals/teachers at CRC Level and engagement of teachers in process of collection (book selection/weeding out etc), library session plans. At the district level, the program engages with district level functionaries of Education Department and is a part of monthly review meeting chaired by the District Collector and keep them updated about the progress on library sessions.

In the next two years, the program is aiming to extend its **Collection** - a diverse collection of 5000 books; **library sessions** packages for different age groups: early learning age group (6-8 years old) and 9-12 years old age group; library sessions being conducted in **23 schools** - 60 session per school in a calendar year (*each school to have 2 sessions per week, one for Classes 1-3 and second for Classes 4 & 5*); increasing the **trained pool of library educators** with 50% representation of local female candidates and continued **engagement with Govt system** to advocate for strengthening school libraries based on our experiences.

As an organization, we were just 3 of us (during April 2019 to March 2020) but we are working with unmatched energy of school teachers, CRCCs, BRPs, BEOs, DPOs, DEO and District Collector. The Govt. system may be slow but it is the way ahead and their commitment considering the challenges they face in praiseworthy!

2. Detailed Report for Financial Year 2019-20

a) Operational Aspects

Our focus is that children get an opportunity to emerge as critical thinkers through libraries and become efficient readers of children's literature and libraries provide access of diverse literary collection/books to all children and shape up as a space where children share their joy of reading. PRAYOG ran only one program and that is the '**Libraries in Schools**' program.

Challenges: libraries in Govt. schools are not functional and children have no access to a collection in their schools. Children also face literacy challenges as reading skills are poor. Added to this, school environment is missing which should encourage children to read more diverse text

Inputs:

- **provisioning and strengthening of school libraries** – build and strengthened library collection in schools with books appropriate to age group and genre
- **designed library sessions in place** – this involved implementation of designed library sessions. Designing of library sessions was a critical input and PRAYOG learned a lot through our training availed via Library Educators Course.
- **Govt. system engagement** – sessions on elements of libraries like vision, activities, collection, selection, space etc were conducted with teachers at the CRC level

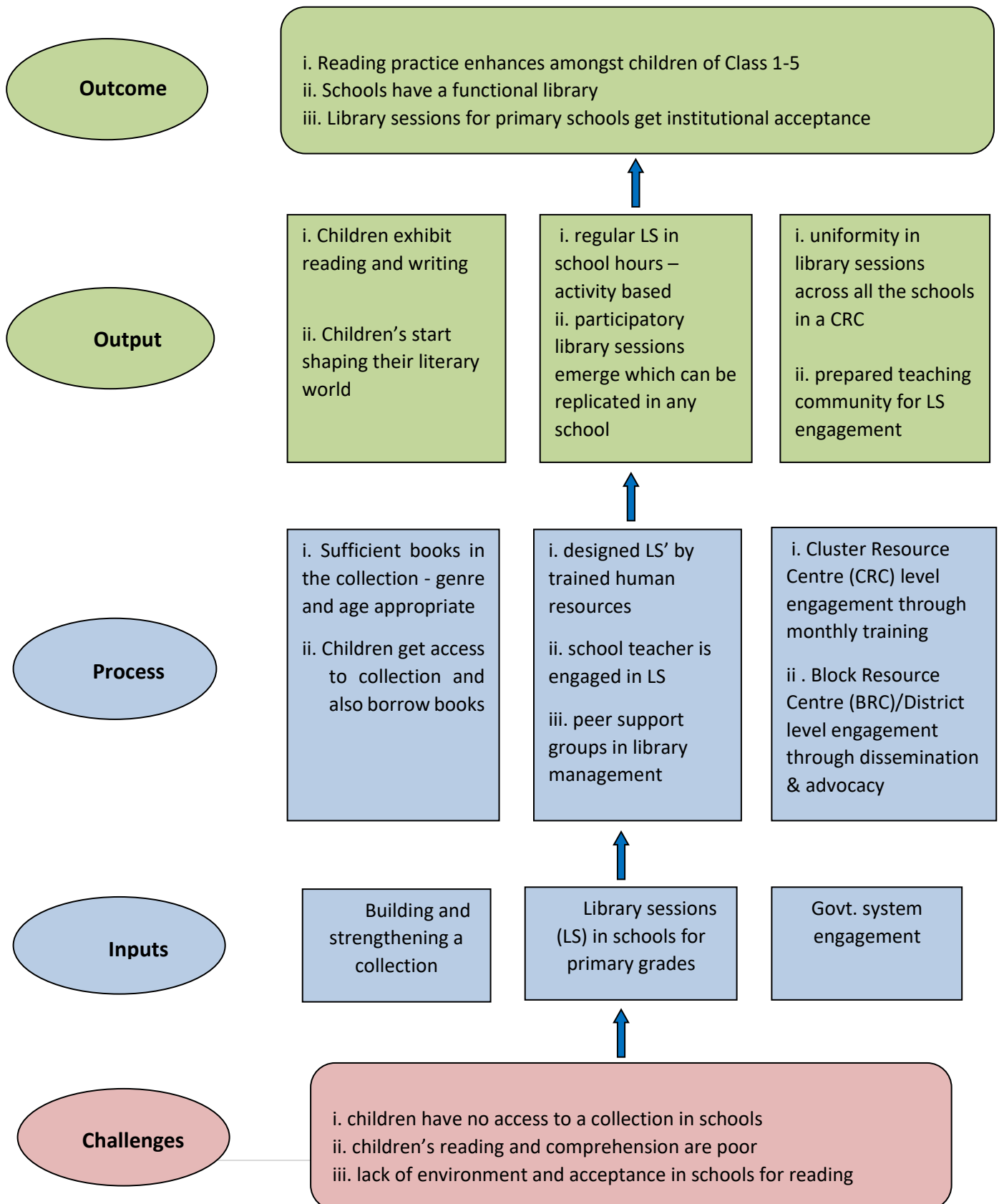
Process:

- **ensuring sufficient time for books to be with children:** sufficient and appropriate books were displayed during the library sessions and children also get to borrow books to take them home for reading but this only happened on pilot basis and would be scaled up in coming two years
- **library sessions** were conducted in schools by a pool of three library educators. School' offered support by leveraging one teacher during the session and libraries were managed by peer groups in the school. eg. taking care of book borrowing and book maintenance. Children were also provided with notebooks where they reflected their understanding by writing and drawing in a small pilot that would now be replicates to all other schools
- **engagement at CRC/BRC and District Education department** during their monthly meetings around various elements of library and dissemination of findings

Outputs:

- children exhibited their **reading and writing** and started shaping their literary world. Significant outputs were increase in the number of books they have read, their write-ups and drawings being displayed in their classrooms and schools
- **standardized library sessions:** regular in-school sessions led to their standardization and these are ready to be replicated across all the schools in the cluster

- **prepared teaching community:** a few teachers got equipped with the sessions and run activated libraries in their schools



Outcomes:

- 100% of intervention schools have **functional library** – collection, space and engagement but more needs to be done
- **reading practice enhanced** amongst children in primary grades
- **library sessions** were accepted by all schools during the school hours

The work approach was to focus on all the children in 18 Government schools, which is giving access to quality text to ~5000 children.

Sl.No.	Name of CRC	School Name	Principal's Name	Total no. of teachers	No. of teachers for Class 1 and 2	Enrollment boys	Enrollment Girls	Enrollment Total
1	RMS Baliwansagar	UMS Khem Matihaniya	Ramnath Yadav	12	2	236	355	591
2		NPS Pokharbhinda	Rajesh Pd.Gupta	3	1	47	48	95
3		NPS Laxmipur	Krishna Kumar Yadav	5	2	39	35	74
4		UMS Belbanwa	Vinay Kumar	15	2	208	259	467
5		UMS Sherpur	Jitendra Kumar	10	2	178	190	368
6		NPS Bankat	Mohan Kumar	4	1	40	38	78
7		UMS Baliwan Raimal	Subhash Rawat	11	2	174	262	436
8		PS Pokharbhinda	Shahanwaz Ahmad	6	2	63	61	124
9	UMS Belwa	UMS Mithua	Ali akbar Hawari	8	1	130	97	227
10		NPS Sheetal Bardaha	Jainendra Kumar Pandey	4	2	96	102	198
11		UMS Kaithwalia	Mukhtar Prasad	7	1	88	100	188
12		UMS Bangalkhand	Ramendra Prasad Yadav	8	1	113	104	217
13		PS Mauje Sirisiya	Brajkishore Sahu	5	2	60	82	142
14		PS Chauchakka	Urmila Kumari	3	1	20	39	59
15		UMS Belwa	Satyendra Ram	22	2	247	304	551
16		NPS Madhomatth	Mritunjay Kumar Pandey	4	1	41	30	71
17		UMS Sirisiya	Kashinath Baita	17	2	254	266	520
18		UMS Bedauli	Nandkishore Prasad	12	2	146	155	301
				156	29	2180	2527	4707

b) Educational Aspects

The focus was mainly on reaching out to children and also teachers through planned sessions. While the program team was responsible for both designing and implementing the sessions; both the Wipro Fellows also spent their time in preparing both the children and teachers for a better experience in the library sessions. Some of the core works that the Fellows were involved into”

- i. **Designing sessions for teachers assigned for the library in the CRC platform:** the session design and training were facilitated at CRCs on a monthly basis and focused around selection of text, introduction to children’s literature, elements of a library, childhood diversities etc.
- ii. **Situation Assessment of a Vibrant library:** a comparative assessment of two libraries, Khuda Baksh Oriental Public library and District library of Gopalganj was done based on elements of library: collection, human resources, interactions, activities, space and administration.
- iii. **Displays and Book talks as means to engage children in reading:** ‘displays and book talks in children’s library’ was selected because of the local context in an existing library program in a Government school in Bihar where children were not able to select books for their reading. Based on the local context (socio-cultural-economic backgrounds) of the children, three themes were selected for display: childhood dreams, world around us and difficulties. It was divided into 8 library sessions and there was change in book displays marked with a change in collection. Book talks were conducted initially and then children learnt and did book talks which was an amazing learning. They also wrote/drew their understanding from text on notebooks and there is an emergence of change in practice in book selection. The most critical actors identified in this change were book talks and allowing them to borrow books till the next planned session. This practice is going to continue in the school library program.
- iv. **Strengthening collection by ensuring engagement of ‘children’s parliament’ in the school:** introducing elements of a library to members of child parliament of the school and the engaging them to select books for their library. This took almost two months and involve 10 sessions.
- v. **Book Display with teachers:** this was a very challenging exercise that was done by one of the fellow’s over a two months time frame. Teachers from a school were taken through Book displays and were allowed to pick books of their choice for reading and reflecting.

The team’s understanding on education perspective has evolved and our understanding on library and library work has significantly improved in the past two years. The team now believes in better understanding of elements of libraries, early childhood education and role of libraries, engagement with children’s literature and how to move ahead in the pathway to making a vibrant library has been our major learning.

In 2019, the team members participated in LEC English Course conducted by Bookworm in Goa and LEC Hindi course conducted by Eklavya in Bhopal. These were a seven months course with a mix of contact periods and online mode. These trainings really served as a paradigm shift in the team’s understanding and approach towards our library work.

Apart from this, the organization also witnessed the visit of Ms Sujata Noronha from Bookworm to assess our progress in library work and also suggest us on ways to improve our library program. Both the Fellows also visited Muskaan in Bhopal to see their library work and integration of their library with early childhood education.

Apart from these, we were approached by the following organizations to share our library experience and this was only possible because of our rich capacity building done via LEC Courses:

- both the Fellows were also invited by a Siwan based NGO, Parivartan, to facilitate a discussion around library with their staff and how do they engage in making their library a vibrant one
- Sitamarhi team of Piramal Foundation, working as Aspirational District Fellows visited us for understanding our library work and approach in Government schools
- Discussion with i-Saksham's team of library educators on approaches to strengthen the library program
- Was invited as a panelist by the District Collector Purnea, to be a part of panel discussion on Education scenario in Govt schools in Bihar
- We are collaborating with Bookworm in 2020 June onwards to help us further strengthen our Libraries in Schools program.

Our focus in 2019 was mainly on enhancing our understanding on libraries but in 2020 and in near future, we would be looking forward to build our capacities on early childhood education.

c) Organizational Aspects

The Organization has a 12A certification. We prepared the documents for 80G certification in the last Quarter but then was suggested by our CA that April 2020 onwards, a fresh application would have to be given to re-allot the 12A and 80G certificates.

The team profile is as below:

Surya Prakash Rai (Founder): an M.Phil from IIT Bombay and has worked for various national and international NGOs for past 10 years. Takes care of all the operational aspects of activities at PRAYOG.

Abhishek Kr. Sharma (Co-Founder): a BE in Electronics engineering from BIT Mesra and MBA from XLRI Jamshedpur. Takes care of creating forward linkages and fundraising

Binit Ranjan (Library Educator cum Program Coordinator): is a MSW from IGNOU and has been taking care of field operations by activating the school libraries, introducing classroom libraries and other. He has been associated with PRAYOG as a Program Co-ordinator since May 2017. He is also a Wipro Fellow.

Kailash Kumar (Library Educator): is a Graduate and has been taking care of field operations by activating the school libraries, introducing classroom libraries and other. He has been associated with PRAYOG since July 2019.

We are a very small team but we highly respect the basic ethics of team work, self-respect, child rights awareness and stakeholder engagement. We have set protocols for all of these and the second line of leadership is being prepared right from the beginning. We were probably the first organization to push for grassroots champions to be also considered as Wipro Fellows and Binit and Kailash are being also

groomed for the second line of leadership. A new team of 5 female library educators will be on Board by June 2020 and all of these are local women. We have a standardised “hiring policy”.

The organization has initiated to adopt social security measures for its team and for the first time, we introduced “Health Insurance” of all staff with a 70:30 ratio where 70% of the insurance cost is being covered by the organization and 30% by the employee.

Capacity Enhancement: for the capacity enhancement, we make a list of trainings that are being offered by Wipro or their partners and then based on individuals interest and requirements of the program, we urge to apply for these trainings. For eg. Binit had finished the LEC Hindi course but we still urged him to attend the LEC crisp Course for Wipro Fellows offered by Bookworm. Kailash applied for LEC Hindi Course this year but he was not selected for the Course.

Governance: there is a Board of Trustees who take any decision with the inputs from the staff. Apart from this, we have two advisors who suggest us on our stand in the programs or relationship with stakeholders.

Financial Overview: We have never been a funded organization from inception in 2013 till Feb 2019. Our source of funds was contribution from high net worth individuals, and in the past three years through fellowship from Wipro. In the past three years, our average budget had been Rs 6 lakhs per year. We have all the yearly audited financial reports from 2013 to 2019 and every year the Income Tax Returns are filed and submitted.

In Feb 2019, we received our first funding support from Nalanda Charitable Foundation (NCF) to strengthen our library program in Government schools. They have committed us to support an yearly budget of Rs 12 lakhs for two years.

Other Partnerships: we have a strong support from the District Administration and we have a letter of Approval from them to implement our library work in these schools. As an organization, we are just 3 of us (so far) but we are working with unmatched energy of school teachers, CRCCs, BRPs, BEOs, DPOs, DEO and District Collector!

Communications/Outreach

- Website: <https://prayog.org.in>
- Blogsite: <http://prayoginbihar.blogspot.com>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/PrayoginBihar/>

d) Outcome of work

Some of the key outcomes that I see in the past one year has been:

- Increase in children’s interest in reading the books
- Routine functioning of library sessions in the school hours in all the Government schools
- Engagement of school teachers/Principals in these schools

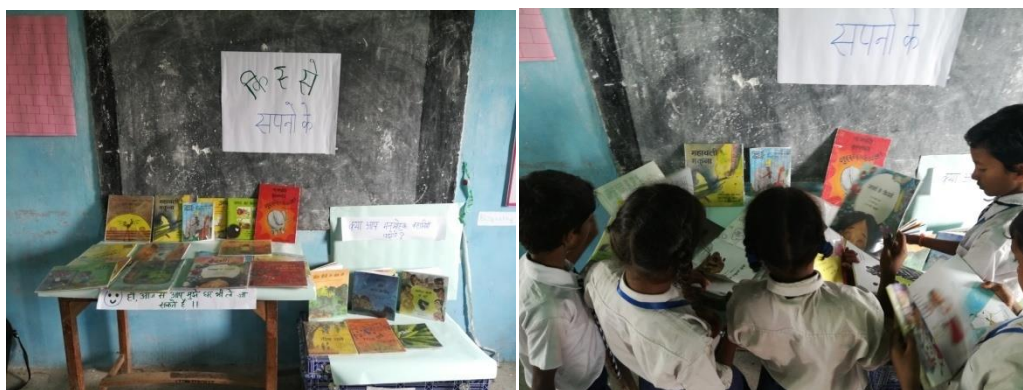
To understand the real outcome of the library work that we do, an extract from LEC Field project that was done by one of the Fellows is being shared below, this reveals our engagement and efforts with the children (we are thankful to Bookworm to have pushed us to do this wonderful field project).

“Displays and Book talks as means to engage children in reading” was a field project done by the organization in 2019 and there were eight

In the **first session**, the display was set up and children were introduced to a few books. The nature of the books was discussed with them and then they were asked to pick books which they would like to issue. This was happening for the first time and hence there was an excitement. Out of 27 children who attended, all picked up books but only 6 of them stopped for a while and looked at other books as well before selecting their choice. The rest just picked the books randomly. They were also given notebooks and were told to either write or draw something based on their reading of the text.

In the first session, children also participated in covering the books with a transparent cover. But, this was only done once!

Pic 1 & 2: Display sessions on childhood dreams



For the **second session**, I observed that all the children returned back the books though I was initially afraid of books getting lost. In discussion of the stories they read, some of them narrated the story well. When I looked at their notebooks, **all the write ups and drawing were copied as it was in the stories**. There was nothing which emerged as their own thinking. But, there was a realization that I hadn't engaged in that way with them nor did I give an examples through which they could understand. Though, *there was one girl whose write-up was different and she expressed that she did not like the portion in the story where friends of the protagonist laughed at her whenever she talked to the tree* (in 'Best Friends/जिगरी दोस्त'). For me, this emerged as an example where I could use it for the third session and discuss more with children on how to write/draw their views.

Pic 3 Book talk on “जिगरी दोस्त “



16 children were present in the library session and all issued books. 3 book talks were done by me and 5 children shared the stories that they read. This time, 38% children stopped and turned the pages to select the books. **I also observed that in the books with Muslim characters (आदिल अली के जूते, बरसता तरबूज), were picked by Muslim boys only. At the same time, books which had a girl child’s face on the cover page (माला की चांदी की पायल, जिगरी दोस्त, बेढंगी etc) were picked by girls only.**

For the **third session**, 25 children attended. All children returned the books that they had borrowed in the previous session and the display was re-set with same 30 books. 5 children shared the stories they read and it was also ensured that the children sharing stories were different each time. 3 book talks were given by me. It was seen that 44% children spent time in selecting their books. All of them also made it a point to enter the book name and issue/submission date on their individual library cards. **For the first time, five boys selected stories on girls**

This time their write up had something different though, the number of children who wrote on the notebook decreased. Out of 16 children who attended in the second session, 5 had written/drawn on their notebook. For the first time, implicit questions were being asked in their write-ups – In a book titled, पकड़ो पकड़ो उस बिल्ले को’, a question was raised that though the girl was very helpful to all, why did she still had to face discrimination from other children?

For the **fourth session**, the theme of the book display changed to ‘World Around Us’. As a preparatory task, children were asked to write/draw on the blackboard – anything that they can related to the world around them. Interestingly, they drew house, birds, fish, boy, girl, river, trees, flowers, pen, road, paddy, well, clouds, dog, glass and temple. It was a time bound activity and almost all the 22 children attending the session participated in the process. Something that I could observe were still missing. **There was no mosque (or a fear to draw that because of minority representation). Domestic animals were missing as well since these children see them in their daily lives, particularly cows, buffaloes and goats.**

55% of children spent time and looked inside books to finally select their choice for issue.

Pic 4-6: Display on 'World Around Us'



The **fifth session** was interesting as some children started asking questions. It was attended by 26 children. The most interesting fact I observed was that **non-fiction books were not issued**. These were mainly the factual books but I realised that the main reason was that this had nothing to do with their local context. For eg. a book called 'हिमचंपा' is about a flower in the Himalayas and one of the child said that he could not relate to this flower.

54% of children spent time and looked inside books to finally select their choice of books. It was the same set of children who started the practice earlier.

The **sixth session** had a participation of 24 children. By this time, still none of the children who had hesitated to discuss had spoken out. It was only the children sitting in the front and middle rows who used

to respond and express. But a wonderful drawing came from a child who had never spoke a word in the session. For a book called, 'मैंने एक बीज बोया', he changed the character in his drawing and drew a picture that he liked most from the story and replaced it with ducks, which were there in his surroundings. 54% of children spent time and looked inside books to finally select their choice of books.

The **seventh session** started with a change in display theme to difficulties. A discussion was done with them of whatever they found easy in their homes and village. After noting things, it was asked if they can share anything that was not easy in their homes and village. There was an initial hesitation and all 23 present nodded their heads. I gave book talks on 'काली और धामिन सांप' and 'मुकुंद और रियाज़'. For the 'difficulties' theme, our display was limited to 20 books only. Since 23 children were attending the session and so far book issue was done by 100% attendees, it was asked to them that what shall they do this time? A few kids suggested that those 3 who could not issue any book can come and read with any one of them as they were all from the same village. Everyone agreed for this! **For the first time, a book with Muslim character, 'मुकुंद और रियाज़', was selected by a non-Muslim child.**

Pic 7 Book Talk



57% of children spent time and looked inside books to finally select their choice of books.

The **eighth session** also the last one for this project was done in a hurry and was done before the agreed date with children as there was a sudden letter from State Education Department for mid-term exam. I requested the principal to allow us to conduct this session and it was attended by 18 children. It was more around discussing on the books they read and they suddenly started to reveal that they too faced similar challenges. 4 children were from rehabilitated families along the road side as their village was cut by floods of the Gandak river. They almost had no way to come to the school but for the school Principal who asked their parents to send them to the school. A Muslim girl said her school attendance was opposed by her uncles. 2 children also said that during the peak agriculture season they have to work in the fields. This time, 67% of children spent time and looked inside books to finally select their choice of books.

A discussion was then held that how they liked the past two months when they were allowed to issue books during the library session. A very remarkable point raised by the children was, *why were they not given the books earlier, and would this continue in future?* Children shared that they had read these stories with their siblings, some children got the stories narrated by their elder siblings. In some cases, it was the entire family who read the books which they took home.

3. Plans for next 1-2 years

The work approach would be focusing all the children in 23 Government schools (5 additional schools this year), which is giving access to quality text to ~5000 children. These are all children under early learning age group. Apart from this PRAYOG will establish **model library centres in 5 additional Govt. schools**. To cater to the larger need and effectiveness of reading program, PRAYOG shall work for:

- increasing its children’s literature **collection** to ~ 5000 books. Since children’s literature and for the age group of 6-10 years old is limited in Hindi, we shall have multiple copies of books for smoothed lending practices
- **human resources** is very critical and developing a pool of library educators – a team of 6 librarians to cater to the activities and library sessions in Government schools
- a **learning cum interaction centre** with a vibrant library in the Block where teachers, teacher educators, librarians can visit and learn the best practices
- develop and demonstrate **library activities viz. read aloud, book talks, paired reading**, linking the literacy and library
- publication of **children’s newsletter** and teaching aids
- regular **dissemination/discussion of findings to the Education Department** for policy level advocacy

Sl.No.	Timeline for 2 Years (January 2020 – April 2022)										
	Activities	2020 (Preparatory)	2020 (Intervention begins)			2021				2022	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
1	Collection										
i	500 books are added to collection										
ii	4500 additional books are added to collection										
iii	10 Books developed by children's engagement										
2	Human Resources										

i	Selection											
ii	Preparatory Training											
iii	Routine Training											
3 Library Sessions												
i	Facilitation in 23 Govt schools by Prayog: a) Read Aloud b) Book talks c) Paired reading d) Critical Questions e) Book Displays f) Book issue and returning											
4 Capacity Building of Library teachers/CRCCs of Govt. schools												
i	Importance of library in children's development											
ii	Provisions of libraries under RTE and what schools can do											
iii	Collection - what is a collection and why diversity in collection is critical											
iv	Activities around books:											
5 Discussion and dissemination in forums												
i	Monthly meetings of District Education Department chaired by District Magistrate											
ii	State level forum of development partners working on Education											
iii	Quarterly newsletter by children to all the ~2000 schools of the district											
iv	Print and publication of books developed by children											

5	Data enabled measurement to measure the impact of library sessions on 'reading, writing and comprehension' in both intervention and control schools											
	i	Baseline survey										
	ii	Midline survey										
	iii	Endline survey										

To meet the above, five additional female staff have been shortlisted to be on Board for the position of Library Educators. We are also identifying a library cum resource centre in the block headquarter, which will also help us give a bigger space for the library.

4. Images

Pic 1 & 2 Library intervention with Govt school teachers and children of primary grades



Pic 3 Our work is centre around "childhood"

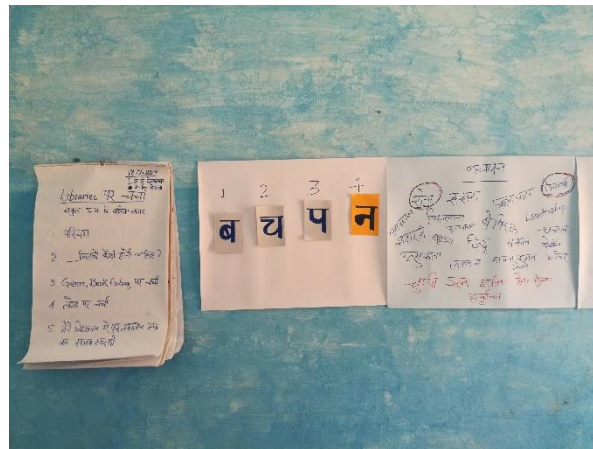


Figure 4 District Collector in one of the library sites and Govt librarians engagement in the Collectorate

