

Annual Report 2022-23

1. Executive Summary

PRAYOG is a library-based initiative and has been running libraries in Government schools and community sites to ensure every child has access to diverse children's literature, is able to understand the text/illustration and shares the joy of reading. We intervene through a structured library session approach which takes care of various childhood diversities and is applicable to all our intervention catchment. Our mission is to create a culture of reading amongst children in the entire geography. We also enable other like-minded organizations who intend to engage with children through books and libraries.

Our intervention is limited to Kuchaikote block in Gopalganj district where we are currently engaging with 25 Government schools and 2 community sites. The intervention population is most vulnerable caste groups and muslims, (with almost no to very limited landholding size) with limited voices and is also largely spread over the flood affected areas of Gandak river. These intervention schools and community sites are managed through 2 hubs, one in the eastern part of the Block headquarter and other on the western part. These are as far as 45 kms from the district headquarters with difficulties in reaching out and most of these school are hard to reach for the education administration.

Two of the team members are Wipro Seeding Fellows, which has sown the seeds for our zeal to deep dive into the library work that we do. Our school library program and community library program are being partly managed through this support. By the end of Mar 2023, we have expanded our intervention in 25 Govt schools reaching out directly to >3800 children in Grades 1 to 5 and 2 community sites, initially reaching out to ~600 children but now reduced to 140. 5 community library sites (out of 7) were closed though thoughtfully in discussion with children and parents as there was a repetition of efforts. The community sites began as a response to Covid 19 and post the opening of schools, it was operationally difficult to manage both the programs. The school library program also engages a teacher from the school and space has been offered in the school – together Prayog team and the school system has made these spaces a very vibrant and welcoming for young readers. All of this has been also possible because of our own nurturing through the Wipro association and our understanding on libraries and its elements and making these contextual, has been ever evolving process. We have been getting grants from other donor (Nalanda Charitable Foundation) because of this depth and intensity in our work and this enabled us to focus much on people (library educators), where we are a team of 14 now. Based on our own learning and journey, we focus a lot on capacity building of the entire team on a routine basis and this has yielded results.

In the course of organizational journey, the past year had been full of learning for us. Investment on human resources' capacity building is a must and it should be a continuous activity. People learn quick when we trust them, their speed, their context. A couple of recent joinees are Intermediate pass out but their transition in just a few months has been amazing. So, education qualification alone should not be the criteria of selection rather a continued engagement with people actually shapes them up. Planning exercise is a must and yearly plans help us to remain focused throughout the year. It is based on these that micro plans have evolved and weekly plans play a critical role in ensuring the quality of delivery. Besides some of these critical learning, there also have been a few challenges. Our documentation needs to enhance, we need to be more structured towards this. The team needs to be divided into thematic domains and right now, we are all into operations as well as other tasks as well.

In terms of the library work, we added close to 3000 books this year alone but this is still not enough to begin book lending in all the schools. We need to build our collection.

*In the next three years, we plan to deepen the entire team’s understanding on core library work as well as critical nuances which are also contextual, like understanding on difficult topics like caste, class, race, religion, gender, sexuality etc. We want to offer all library services to all the children, particularly 100% children to avail the provisions of book lending. **We also intend to evolve as a resource organization in Bihar, where many other like-minded individuals and organizations come together for a library or reading culture in Bihar.** We will enable and push these individuals and organizations from diverse geographies and communities to take this mission ahead.*

2. Detailed Report for the Year 2022-23

a) Operational

i. Key programs/initiatives:

| SL No. | Name of Program | Description of Program (Objectives, target group, operational model, # of schools/learning centers, # of children/teachers reached, # of team members involved etc.) | Primary Funder |
|--------|---|---|---|
| 1 | School library program linking reading and foundational literacy | <p>Our school library program has been running to meet the objectives for ensuring each child has access to diverse children’s literature and every child is able to understand the text/illustration and shares the joy of reading.</p> <p>We reach out to children between Grades 1 to 5 in the 25 Government schools. In the first Quarter of 2023, we added 7 more schools to our initial list of 18 schools. > 80% of these schools are in geographically hard to reach areas or are catering to the vulnerable caste groups.</p> <p>In these 25 schools, we are reaching out directly to ~3800 children on a weekly basis. Structured library sessions are conducted during the in-school hours and the schools are reached out as per the roster which has been prepared in discussion with the school headmasters. In case, the sessions are missed out due to unavoidable circumstances, additional sessions are planned in the schools to cover up the missed session. Our library calendar for 2023 can be seen here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1suQBT1ODDWtiSffswe75Zjubhg_SiD5v/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=113329292707520114580&rtopf=true&sd=true</p> <p>In every school, 1 teacher is tagged to the library who are there in the sessions and are also a part of our capacity building exercise. But the sessions are conducted by our trained pool of library educators.</p> | <p>Nalanda Charitable Foundation is the Primary Funder for this.</p> <p>Salaries of 2 team members (Binit and Surya) are taken care by Wipro Seeding Fellowship</p> |

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| | | Prayog's team size grew in this financial year and we are now a pool of 11 library educators who are fully dedicated to implementing the program. | |
| 2 | Community library program | <p>Our community library program started as a part of response to Covid 19 situation with the similar objectives of ensuring each child has access to diverse children's literature and every child is able to understand the text/illustration and shares the joy of reading.</p> <p>Structured library sessions (<i>see the library calendar in the link above</i>) are conducted with children for the age group of 6 – 15 years on a weekly basis. In each session, the children are divided into three groups (6-8 yrs, 9-11 and 12 and above) and each group is facilitated by a library educator.</p> <p>Till Dec 2022, we were reaching out to children at 7 community sites but we had to reduce this to 2 sites Jan 2023 onwards as the team size was less and to expand the time of reflection of practices at school sites. It was systematically closed in discussion with children and their parents and alternate arrangements at the children's schools were ensured.</p> <p>All the 11 library educators are also involved in the community library program as per their roster.</p> | <p>Nalanda Charitable Foundation is the Primary Funder for this.</p> <p>Salaries of 2 team members (Binit and Surya) are taken care by Wipro Seeding Fellowship</p> |
| 3 | Resource centre | <p>The resource centre was set up in the current financial year and was open to the community in Oct 2022. There were twofold thoughts behind the resource centre:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. fostering a space for learning and knowledge exchange ii. community library <p>The resource centre is an open space where children and young adults enjoy the library sessions, can sit and do free reading and play at their will.</p> <p>2 full time library educators are placed at the resource centre and currently 3 Govt. schools are tagged to this centre where the facilitators also conduct sessions in there during the in-school hours.</p> | Donations from like minded people |
| 4 | Capacity building of organizations/institutions on libraries | <p>The objective of this initiative is to cater library related orientation sessions to organizations working in Bihar who have show an interest towards starting a library program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. In this FY, structured orientation sessions were done for I-Saksham for their pool of 85 edu-leaders in Begusarai district of Bihar. This was for the first time that an organization contracted us for the orientation sessions. | <p>I-Saksham supported the training program for their team</p> <p>Routine funding from NCF was used wherever</p> |

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| | | <p>ii. District Administration Kiphire (Nagaland) and Piramal Foundation signed an MoU with us and we began a structured capacity building exercise for Govt school teachers in Nagaland</p> <p>iii. We engaged in training of 100 library cadre of Jeevika from 32 districts of Bihar. This is a pioneering effort in community libraries and Jeevika engaged us in the training process. We are about to sign an MoU with Jeevika soon.</p> <p>iv. Introductory sessions were also conducted for Azad India Foundation (Kishanganj), Aripana Foundation (Darbhanga)</p> <p>In the coming times, we are considering/planning to formally start a capacity building component for organizations/individuals willing to work on children’s libraries in Bihar</p> | there was no funding available |
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As mentioned in the table above on the community library program, we closed 5 community library sites. Our community library initiative started as a response to Covid 19, when the schools were completely closed. These were in the most vulnerable pockets (dalit tolas, muslim tolas) but were in the same catchment of our intervention Govt. schools. We continued to run the sessions in both the Govt. schools and again in the community sites and in our internal review, we found that our team was not getting enough time of reflect on their practices and we were only conducting sessions. As a result, we mapped the additionalities that needed to be done from our side so that the closure of a community site did not affect the children’s reading aspiration. We immediately started book lending in these Govt. schools (book lending was not happening in all the Govt. schools) and engaged with children and their parents to convey our situation and reasons that we would like to close these sites. Since, the same children were also coming to the schools and we ensured that book lending would begin in the school session, this was understood by all.

Outreach summary table

| Outreach Summary | # | Remarks (Mention frequency/mode/nature of engagement where applicable. e.g. daily through WhatsApp; once a quarter through Zoom; weekly face-to-face interactions etc.) |
|---|----------|---|
| Community Learning Centers | | |
| Number of community learning centers | 7 | 5 of them were closed down in Dec 2022 as these were in the same catchment area of the Govt schools and most of the children were coming to both the school library program and the communities |
| Number of children directly engaged with, in community learning centers, on a regular, ongoing basis | 595/140 | In the 7 community centres, we were reaching out to 595 children but with the closure of 5 |

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| | | sites, currently 140 children are directly engaged in 2 existing sites |
| Number of children directly engaged with, in community learning centers, through workshops/events | 595/140 | Same as above. Our events/workshops cater to all the member children |
| Schools | | |
| Number of schools directly worked in | 25 | Till Dec 2022, we were intervening in 18 schools. With the increase in team size (4 new members) in Jan 2023, we started intervening in 7 additional schools |
| Number of schoolteachers directly engaged with on a regular, ongoing basis | 25 | Each school has a resource teacher allocated for the library session that we facilitate |
| Number of schoolteachers directly engaged through workshops/training | 25 | All of the teachers are a part of the training/workshops that we do for them |
| Number of children directly engaged with, in schools on a regular, ongoing basis | 3843 | |
| Number of children directly engaged with, in schools through workshops/events | 2767 | Events like Children's day, Book discussion in the morning assemblies were conducted in the schools. These numbers are for the 18 schools that we have been intervening with, no event in the 7 new intervention schools were done |
| Any other Settings, Modes or Groups | | |
| Contribution towards guest editing of newsletters | 2 | Prayog team contributed towards guest editing of 2 newsletters: i) Bookworm Beyond Borders, Jan 2023 issue on mental health matters ii) Samuhik Pahal newsletter, Mar 2023 |

b) Educational

In the educational learning and work that we did in the FY 2022-23, all our work engaged the Founder and Program Managerial team. This includes the following:

| Sl.no. | List of activities | Whose role |
|--------|---|--|
| 1 | Design of a library calendar | Founder (primary role), co-designed by managerial cadre |
| 2 | Design of library sessions | Managerial cadre (primary role), inputs and vetting done by Founder |
| 3 | Facilitation of sessions at schools and community library sites | Managerial cadre and grassroots cadre (primary role), Founder actively participated in observing and supportive supervision as a part of process review for quality assurance of delivery of session |
| 4 | Design and conducting of events for children | Managerial cadre and grassroots cadre (primary role), Founder's role in reviewing and vetting the design |

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| 5 | Design and facilitation of capacity building of sessions | Founder and Managerial cadre (primary role) |
| 6 | Collating and designing the library-based newsletters | Founder and Managerial cadre (primary role) |
| 7 | Process documentation of all the library elements and engagement processes | Founder and Managerial cadre (primary role) |

There is a zeal and an organizational culture to deepen our understanding in what we do. Our library intervention focuses on reading/understanding text/illustration and connecting the children to a world, which relates to both their context and also an imaginary one. This is something we are learning and to engage with children of very young age to young adolescent age group. Some significant evolution in the team has been mentioned below:

- **Establishing a connect with children and building a free, non-threatening environment.**
This aspect is a must to begin when we engage with children and our team has understood the need and art of doing this. This has also been integrated in our routine sessions
- **Planning and review:** each sessions learnings are captured and reflected during the weekly meeting or at the end of day as well. This helps in exchanging the response of children to a particular text/illustration and how do we ensure that more and more children open up in sharing. For eg. In a read aloud session on a book titled, *Ammi ki Saree*, a child named Zulfiqar got very emotional and shared to our library educator (Ragini) that he could relate to the story because it's of a weaving community and even he belongs to the same and helps his father, pre and post the school hours. That connectedness and the freedom of sharing is an enabling component in education and our team looks to engage with responses/sharing by children
- **Selection of the text:** what was considered risky to discuss within the team as well till few years ago, the team is now open in discussions and sharing. Caste, race, religion, sexuality, gender – these are not very easy to open but the team now relates to the text and is adding values in such discussions where difficult topics are being discussed. Book reviewing has become a daily activity for the entire team now (even the newest ones). Because of these discussions, and also looking into the preparedness of children, good books are being introduced to children through a series of library activities.

Details of training courses/workshops attended by core team members, and any other steps taken to enhance the core educational expertise within the team:

| SL No. | Name of training course and organization providing the training | Details including: purpose/objectives, who were the facilitators, # of days, location, key learnings, impact on your work. | Which team members attended? |
|--------|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1 | Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by OELP | This Course provided the basic understanding on foundational literacy and numeracy. What does that mean to us in the education space and the ways in which children's learning (literacy and numeracy) can evolve. | Surya and Ragini |

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| | | <p>OELP team led by Keerti Jayaram facilitated the sessions and we attended this in Kishangarh, Rajasthan.</p> <p>As a part of our learning, we learnt the significance of environment building for learning – open and free discussion with children, mindfulness activities, physical activities as children, especially those <8 years old have very less attention span, the significance and ways of making a print rich classroom set-up, various corners like name corner, responsibility corner etc, designing games and activities related to literacy.</p> <p>As an organization, we piloted with our learning in 1 school and we are now integrating these with our routine library activities. For eg. The treasure hunt game in library session now also have games focusing on literacy</p> | |
| 2 | Introduction to Libraries by Bookworm | <p>This Course is offered by Bookworm Goa and introduces all the elements of a library though a mix of theory and practice. The Course is spread over three months with 2 contact periods in Goa and also engages the participants with a field project to deepen their understanding in library practice.</p> <p>The two members from Prayog could deepen their theoretical connect and also understand the nuance of library activities and practices, overall helping them relate to focusing on why we do, what we do (as library practitioners). More critical insights and questions are being now put up in our weekly planning exercises.</p> | Siddhi and Zaineb |
| 3 | Internal capacity building of PRAYOG team | <p>Individuals: Nayan Mehrotra and Thejaswi Shivanand</p> <p>Nayan’s session was on library structuring and deepening our implementation of library activities and library management. We had planned to take this further and 2 sessions were held so far in this FY</p> <p>Thejaswi Shivanand engaged with PRAYOG team as a request to add depth in our library work (as we felt that we are limiting ourselves only to facilitation of sessions). Thejaswi helped us realize and formulate specific library projects for the team members, for eg. Exploring and building a local connect to the library (a project on local</p> | All the team members |

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| | | art forms or local folklores/songs etc that can be captured in our library; documenting the history of the local place – coming up with stories that are in the verge of being lost; etc) | |
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We aim and plan to evolve as a library resource organization and our continuous learning around library practices should happen. The following areas of training is sought for our team:

- Children’s literature and the ways to connect them with children (contextual)
- Deepening understanding on caste, class, race, religion, gender, sexuality etc (these are all difficult concepts and how can our local team members as well connect strongly with the theories and existing realities). We need this because children of all age groups are also living through it on a day-to-day basis
- Integrating art work in the library domain
- Documentation skills – daily notes/journal writing is being currently practiced but how to structure a document could be a significant learning for the entire team
- Digital and legal literacy for the team – how do we train our team
- Designing sessions and preparing modules for capacity building exercises

c) Organizational

i. **Legal Status:**

PRAYOG (Professionals Alliance for Youths Growth) is registered as a Trust. The organization has a 12A and 80G certification.

ii. **Organizational Structure and Culture:**

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/design/capacity building components 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 facilitating library sessions in the schools and both the community sites. He has been associated with PRAYOG as a Program Co-ordinator since May 2017. He is also a Wipro Fellow. Binit also facilitates the capacity building sessions and has been nurturing the pool of library educators in the organization since the beginning

Kailash Kumar (Library Educator): is a Graduate and has been taking care of field operations by facilitating library sessions in the schools and both the community sites. He has been associated with PRAYOG since July 2019

Professionals Alliance for Youths Growth

Ragini Kumari Sharma: is a Graduate and has been taking care of field operations by facilitating library sessions in the schools and one community site. She has been associated with PRAYOG since Sep 2020

Anita Kumari: is a Graduate and has been taking care of field operations by facilitating library sessions in the schools and one community site. She has been associated with PRAYOG since Sep 2020

Rambha Kumari: is a Graduate and has been taking care of field operations by facilitating library sessions in the schools and one community site. She has been associated with PRAYOG since Jan 2023

Chandan Kumar: is a Graduate and has been taking care of field operations by facilitating library sessions in the schools and one community site. He has been associated with PRAYOG since Jun 2023

Gudiya Kumari: is an Intermediate pass and has been taking care of the resource centre, and running the community and school library program. She has been associated with PRAYOG since Jan 2023

Seema Kumari: is an Intermediate pass and has been taking care of the resource centre, and running the community and school library program. She has been associated with PRAYOG since Jan 2023

Ishwar Chauhan: is a school drop-out. He is the caretaker for the resource centre and plays multiple roles in the organization, viz cooking for guests, arranging for logistics etc. He has been associated with PRAYOG since Oct 2022

Ashok Kumar: is a Graduate and is currently engaged as a driver. He also is keen into reading and participates in team discussions. He has been associated with PRAYOG since Oct 2022

Siddhi Kalbhor: is a post graduate from Pune University. She is an India Fellow and has been placed with us for 18 months since Aug 2022. She is also involved in designing and facilitating sessions.

Syeeda Zaineb: is a graduate from Delhi University. She is an India Fellow and has been placed with us for 18 months since Aug 2022. She is also involved in designing and facilitating sessions.

Both Siddhi and Zaineb are now working on process documentation of all our works.

For the second line management, we have Binit Ranjan, who has been associated with us since 2016. We are also nurturing our female members into this role and Ragini and Anita are the ones whom we expect to see in this role very soon. We believe that organizational culture is very eccentric to the growth and survival of any organization. Culture comes with practice and it is a long-term phenomenon. We keep on engaging our team on a routine basis. Some critical steps that we take to ensure this are:

- Collective decision: any decision that we take, either program, procurement, recruitment etc, it is well discussed in a team meeting. Everyone's opinion is sought for this and the team is aware of everything that the management does/planning to do
- The project proposals/budget/salaries of all is openly shared with the team
- Weekly meetings serve as a platform to discuss any issue within the team
- Leaves are the only serious matter at our side and we do consider special leaves/work from home for female team members
- Health care is something we strongly believe and we stand with the team in case of any emergencies
- Salaries/TA are always paid on time. There have been instances in the FY when there was no money left in our account, but the Trustees ensured the salaries through personal contribution without the team getting to know about the crisis (*not because of shortage of funding but for reasons related to delay in transfer of tranche*)

Since 2016, only 1 member has left us due to personal reason (marriage). This speaks a bit about our culture. The team has bonded well as a family. The entire team stood together and physically contributed during the construction of the resource centre.

- iii. **Capacity Enhancement:** for the capacity enhancement, we make a list of trainings that are being offered by Wipro partners or other partner organizations and then based on individuals interest and requirements of the program, we urge to apply for these trainings. Apart from that we have also kept separate budget head for capacity building under NCFs support. For instance, we were able to cover cost of resources persons through this budget
- iv. **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.
- v. **Financial Overview:** We are supported through Grant Support from Nalanda Charitable Foundation and Wipro Seeding Fellowship. The budget for past three years are: FY 2020-21: INR 6 lakhs, FY 2021-22: INR 24 lakhs and FY 2022-23: INR 30 lakhs (all NCF budgets). In FY 2021-22, we consulted for Quest Alliance and there was an additional budget of Rs 10 lakhs. The consulting fees was donated for the setting up of the resource centre. In FY 2022-23, we raised Rs 8 lakhs from individual donors for the resource centre. Our audit reports are updated and filed till the last Assessment year.
- vi. **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 working closely with the school teachers, CRCCs, BRPs, BEOs, DPOs, DEO and District Collector. In March 2023, we have been approached by Jeevika (Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society, a Govt. of Bihar initiative for SHG networks in Bihar) to partner for the capacity building of their recently formed cadre on library work.
- vii. **Communications/Outreach**
Website: <https://prayog.org.in>

Blogsite: <http://prayoginbihar.blogspot.com>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/PrayoginBihar/>

Instagram page: https://www.instagram.com/prayog_bihar/

3. Plans for next 1-3 years

In the next three years, Prayog plans to:

- i. **Deepen our library program:** understanding around the elements of library and early childhood education has emerged across all the team members. There is more critical thought that goes into planning and executing library sessions with children. The team is thoughtful on the theories around education and education practices
- ii. **All children avail all library facilities:** particularly book lending. Our collection has to grow for this, both quality and quantity
- iii. **Evolve as resource organization in Bihar:** for library-based work and is able to build a library culture in the geography. Prayog will not do this on its own but believes that many library partners can make this possible.

Detailed plan for FY 2023-24:

| Sl.No. | Domains of work | What exactly |
|--------|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Educational | <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Capacity building of our team on relevant topics around educationii. Executing the Library Calendar as per yearly plan – facilitation of sessionsiii. Capturing data (both qualitative and quantitative) and research work |
| 2 | Organizational | <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Expanding the Board size, bringing female members on boardii. Revisiting the existing policies, working on new policies |
| 3 | Operational | <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Hiring of team members and their capacity buildingii. Setting up distinct teams (for school library program, community library program, designs team, capacity building team)iii. Ensuring the strengthening of capacities of the local teamiv. Diversifying the funding sources |

4. Capacity Building and Emergence as a Resource Organization

Capacity building is the core enabler for us and we allocate substantial time and resources for capacity building of our team member. We intend to keep one month for capacity building of each staff per year (in a staggered manner throughout the year). We also are moving ahead towards emerging as a resource organization for library training in Bihar (Jeevika) and other states (Nagaland, which has already begun) and plan to include this for other NGOs in Bihar as well.