



CENTRAL SQUARE  
FOUNDATION

# EMERGING PATHWAYS

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



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## Every Child Deserves Quality Education

Central Square Foundation (CSF) has been working toward ensuring quality school education for all children in India since 2012. Our mission is to help transform the school education system and improve the learning outcomes of all children, particularly those from low-income communities.

Our work is focused on three impact areas – Foundational Learning, technology in education and the private school sector. Foundational Learning occupies centerstage in our work as we believe that the development of basic reading comprehension and math skills by Grade 3 is most critical to improve learning outcomes of all children. It is key to bridging the wide learning gaps that exist today, ensuring school completion with better learning outcomes, increasing workforce participation and improving overall quality of life. In view of the transformative potential of technology in promoting teaching and learning, education technology (or EdTech) is another significant area of our work. We aim to facilitate the supply and widespread adoption of low-cost, contextualized, pedagogically sound and proven EdTech solutions for children, teachers and parents. The proliferation of low-cost private schools in India over recent years, combined with enrolment data that points to the increasing demand for affordable and accountable education, makes the private school system a vital area of intervention for us. We are working to create an enabling environment for the affordable private school system in India and help identify and address key barriers to improving student learning outcomes.

In order to achieve our goal of enabling positive transformation in school education, we partner with social impact organizations. We also provide technical expertise and project support to the government(s) to demonstrate scalable and sustainable impact on learning outcomes. We also collaborate with the private sector, non-profit organizations and wider ecosystem to undertake research, build and disseminate evidence, and create public goods on critical issues such as classroom practices, technology in education and system governance.

# Our Vision, Impact Areas and Approach



## OUR VISION

Ensuring quality school education for all children in India through system-reform

## IMPACT AREAS



### Foundational Learning

Helping put the Indian education system on the path to achieve universal Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) by Grade 3



### EdTech

Improving the supply and adoption of low cost, contextualized and pedagogically sound, proven EdTech solutions



### Affordable Private Schools

Building an enabling environment to improve student learning outcomes in all private schools across India

## OUR APPROACH



### Building convergence

on making Foundational Learning the biggest priority of the education system



### Strengthening

availability of technical solutions and ensuring wider dissemination and adoption of evidence-driven public goods



### Supporting

government(s) on implementing system-wide reforms



## Note from Founder and Chairperson



**Ashish Dhawan**

*Founder and Chairperson*

Who could have imagined that there would come a crisis when schools would be shut for 9-10 months at a stretch? I am writing this note while we collectively grapple with reducing the learning loss as a result of Covid-19 induced school closures. India was already suffering a learning crisis, which has now further aggravated. Children from marginalized communities and underprivileged backgrounds have borne the brunt. This makes our work of making quality education accessible to all even more crucial.

CSF has strived to provide EdTech solutions that could help with continued learning at home, especially to children in foundational grades of 1-3 in low-income households. We accelerated work on making high-quality content available online to children for free like TopParent and TicTacLearn so that they could benefit from it while at home. We also supported the government(s) in developing and implementing at-home learning solutions at scale across states. For instance, we supported the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Haryana broadcast TicTacLearn videos on Doordarshan. We have always believed in the transformational potential of EdTech, and the pandemic forced us to adopt and adapt to it. While the challenges to access are important to address, we also need to work towards building solutions in vernacular languages with contextual content; integrating solutions into the classroom for improved learning outcomes; and to immunize education from such future crises whether it's a flood or a virus.

Whenever schools reopen, it will be important to assess learning levels of children and help them catch up with grade-level outcomes. This is especially important for children in foundational grades of 1-3. If they fail to read simple sentences with meaning and solve basic maths problems early on, they will find it difficult to stay the course. We must ensure they have some time to catch up and not be ambitious about syllabus completion. We must ensure we teach our children how to walk properly before expecting them to run.

The National Education Policy (NEP) approved in July 2020 accords the highest priority to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN). This was also echoed by the Finance Minister when she announced an urgent need for a national mission on FLN. The mission, which will be launched soon, is the only way to ensure that the learning poverty in India decreases. And the timing could not be better – we need all resources and stakeholders to align with this mission to ensure we help children make up for the learning loss.

We have been supporting, and will continue supporting the government at the central and state levels in designing and implementing the mission for maximum learning gains.

Last, but not the least, I would like to stress the need to reconsider how the private school sector operates in India. The sector educates nearly 50% of the country's school-going children, and the low-fee private schools are currently in shambles because of the pandemic. In our efforts to ensure that the private school sector does not get overlooked by nation-wide reforms, we released a comprehensive report on it. The report outlines the scale of the sector, analyses the challenges it faces and how they can be overcome. We have also undertaken a detailed study to understand the impact of the pandemic on the sector.

We have had our hands full the last year with trying to lay out the roadmap to solve the learning crisis, understand how the pandemic will affect the education sector in the long run, and provide the government(s) with technical and programmatic support. CSF remains committed to enhancing the quality of education provision, and will continue to collaborate with stakeholders across the ecosystem to meet that goal. We have also realized that we need to be more operational and hands-on on all our projects, and own the outcomes. We will keep iterating our approach as many times as needed to get it right, but never our goal and vision.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the CSF family that has been quick on their feet despite the troubling uncertainties throughout the year. And to our advisors and partners whose support has been instrumental in working towards our goal.

**Ashish Dhawan**

*Founder and Chairperson*



## Looking Back: A Few Reflections



**Bikkrama Daulet Singh**  
*Managing Director*



**Shaveta Sharma-Kukreja**  
*Managing Director*

Think-Learn-Do-Iterate-Repeat. While this has always been CSF's guiding mantra, it has resonated most significantly over the past year. The year gone by has been a period of tremendous learning that has contributed to our growth in terms of bringing a sharper focus to achieving tangible outcomes in our impact areas.

In the first six years since we started in 2012, we had the opportunity to support and partner with other non-profits, and provide technical and project management support to the national and state governments. Our experience of working to transform school education has emphasized the need to prioritize the building blocks. This has strengthened our belief that if we want quality learning to become a reality for all children in India, then we must begin with the foundational stage and collaborate closely with ecosystem partners – not only in the areas of design and implementation, but also through evidence generation and thought leadership.

In 2018, we partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Education Team to both streamline and intensify our work. Subsequently, we defined the pathways for each of our priority areas, i.e., Foundational Learning, EdTech and private schools, and identified specific approaches and projects. We made significant progress in working toward these issue areas, and strengthening existing partnerships and forming new ones.

In Foundational Learning, we supported the government for sustainable impact on learning outcomes. The announcement of a country-wide mission on Foundational Learning, along with explicit emphasis on it in the new National Education Policy (NEP) approved in July 2020, have given the issue of Foundational Learning a huge boost as a national priority. Our support to state governments on Foundational Learning further solidified and we had notable program wins in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana. In Gujarat, we finalized a partnership with the Larry Ellison Foundation to augment our existing efforts. CSF, along with Reach to Teach, now leads the Gujarat Education Coalition (GEC) with other technical partners such as Akshara Foundation and the Language and Learning Foundation (LLF). In Uttar Pradesh, we are partnering with Samagra to support Mission Prerna, a Chief Minister-led initiative that is a large-scale effort toward simplifying foundational learning goals and associated metrics and competencies. In Madhya Pradesh we have formed a partnership with The Education Alliance (TEA), Room to Read and Sol's ARC

for a district transformation project. Together with the Centre for Effective Governance of Indian States (CEGIS), we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State Government of Telangana to co-design and implement strategies to improve district-level performance using an outcome-oriented index on Foundational Learning skills.

Over the course of the year we were able to refine and further our work in EdTech. A dynamic and evolving field, we believe EdTech has immense potential to address the growing need for contextualizing the content and delivery of teaching, thereby improving learning outcomes. We continued to support the creation of personalized teaching and learning tools for the low-income segment. As face-to-face teaching in classrooms stands suspended amid the Covid-19 pandemic currently gripping the nation, the pivotal role that parents and high-quality digital learning solutions can play in education has become increasingly evident. However, the digital divide continues to place limitations on the extent to which we can leverage the potential of EdTech to support children, parents and teachers. Going forward, much needs to be done to curate knowledge on the efficacy of different EdTech solutions and make good content more accessible using different technologies and mediums of dissemination such as television, radio and phones.

We continued to support high-quality non-profits on key projects this year while also actively sourcing distinctive models that can be game-changers in education. As we build new partnerships with more early stage organizations, we aim to enhance the operational and technical counsel we provide. We have gained immensely from our partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and have also received a strong buy-in on our learning agenda from other organizations in the ecosystem.

Some valuable lessons learnt from our journey so far:

1. Work in education reform must be designed for scale and in partnership with the system
2. There are opportunities to build excellent solutions with non-governmental organization (NGO) partners and scale them with states
3. Further work in school education needs to be additive and for the ecosystem

Having concluded an immensely productive year, we move forward with optimism, vigor and a renewed commitment to our agenda of promoting quality learning.

**Bikkrama Daulet Singh**  
*Managing Director*

**Shaveta Sharma-Kukreja**  
*Managing Director*



A photograph of young children in a classroom, sitting at desks and writing on papers. The children are focused on their work, and the background is slightly blurred, showing other students and a teacher. A dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the lower half of the image, containing white text.

# 1. FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

Raising Awareness

Evidence Building and Supply Shaping

Working with the Government

Early Childhood Education

**Learning to read is a prerequisite for reading to learn, and achieving universal Foundational Learning is critical to improving the learning outcomes of children in India**

India has achieved near universal access to primary schooling with close to 97% children in the six to 14-year age group enrolled in more than 1.4 million schools across the country. However, the poor learning outcomes of school-going children continue to be a matter of significant concern. At present, more than half of all students in India complete primary school without having acquired the foundational skills of reading with meaning and basic mathematics. These are gateway skills to every child's learning trajectory, considering that the medium of school instruction after Grade 3 shifts from being largely oral in nature to relying increasingly on text. Children who do not develop strong

foundational skills by Grade 3 are unable to keep up with classroom instruction and the increasing complexity of academics as they proceed to higher grades. Learning to read is thus a prerequisite for reading to learn, and achieving universal Foundational Learning is critical to improving the learning outcomes of children in India.

CSF began to work toward strengthening Foundational Learning less than two years ago. We made substantial efforts to improve our understanding of the issue and define our approach towards addressing the existing systemic gaps to achieving Foundational Learning. While there are complex challenges in the way of achieving universal Foundational Learning, there have also been attempts to address them. We devoted considerable time and effort to learning from previous global and Indian experiences to understand which strategies have been effective and which have not achieved the desired results, especially in connection with issues such as state engagement, awareness raising, classroom practices and binding constraints.

We have outlined a clear roadmap to achieve our goal of universal Foundational Learning in India by employing a three-pronged approach:



**1. Raising awareness about the importance of Foundational Learning among key stakeholders**



**2. Evidence building and supply shaping of effective teaching and learning practices in the classroom**



**3. Working with the government models that strengthen Foundational Learning at scale**



## 1.1 Raising Awareness



**Improving Foundational Learning is critical to resolving India's learning crisis**

It is well acknowledged that India is suffering a learning crisis. The central and state governments, civil society organizations, academicians and the private sector have been working to address this crisis for some time now. The experiences of these varied stakeholders have led to growing recognition of the fact that improving Foundational Learning is critical to resolving India's learning crisis. This recognition has found strong echoes in the National Education Policy (NEP) released in 2020. Calling it a prerequisite, and suggesting a mission-mode approach to achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) for all children, the NEP highlights that immediate and effective action could help prevent nearly five crore children from dropping out of the learning system.

In consonance with this, much of our work has centered around building awareness and enhancing recognition within the education ecosystem about the importance of achieving FLN by Grade 3. Efforts we have made in this direction include supporting government partners to initiate state-wide reform programs, engagement with the ecosystem and media to raise the profile of the issue.

### 1.1.1 SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT EFFORTS

CSF has continuously sought opportunities to support the government on education system reform, by organizing and participating in consultations with the government, industry associations, policy think tanks and academia. We took the lead in organizing a roundtable discussion with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and coordinated NITI Aayog's civil society consultation for recommendations on the NEP. Additionally, we contributed substantively in state consultations organized as part of the public consultation process on the draft NEP initiated by the Central Government.



In addition, we are providing technical and programmatic support to the State Governments of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to promote strong Foundational Learning on a priority basis. The State Government of Uttar Pradesh has adopted a mission-mode approach to improve Foundational Learning in the state. Titled 'Mission Prerna', this initiative was launched by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh during a Corporate Social Responsibility Conclave organized by the Basic Shiksha Department of the state government. He laid out the overarching goals and targets of the mission in detail, which is a critical lever toward facilitating target setting and securing the alignment of key stakeholders. CSF is assisting the State Government of Uttar Pradesh in implementing Mission Prerna by providing technical support through Samagra, a governance consulting firm, along with two technical partners – LLF and the Vikramshila Education Resource Society.

### 1.1.2 STRENGTHENING ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT

Ecosystem engagement is another approach we employ to build a common understanding among stakeholders about Foundational Learning.

We partnered with the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Centre around the release of the ASER 2019, to conduct a panel discussion entitled 'Rethink Learning: Making Foundational Learning through NEP a Reality'. This discussion, moderated by CSF, focused on critical gaps and potential systemic reforms in curriculum and/ or pedagogy for achieving Foundational Learning at scale in light of the draft NEP. The State Government of Haryana, and leading organizations working on Foundational Learning, including LLF, Room to Read and Pratham, were among over 200 participants that attended this panel discussion.



CSF partnered with ASER Centre to conduct a panel discussion titled 'Rethink Learning: Making Foundational Learning through NEP a Reality'



**We partnered with Nexus of Good and FICCI Arise to host an event that facilitated an exchange of experiential learning between government and non-government stakeholders working in the domain of Foundational Learning**

A similar partnership was established with the Nexus of Good Foundation, a think-tank created by Anil Swarup, Former Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). A special edition of Nexus of Good was organized on Foundational Learning and early childhood education in partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Alliance for Re-Imagining School Education (FICCI ARISE). This event facilitated an exchange of experiential learning between government and non-government stakeholders working in the domain of Foundational Learning. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Departments of Education from the State Governments of Delhi, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh shared their learnings from implementing Foundational Learning programs. Several NGO partners, such as Care India, Gyanshala, LLF, Madhi Foundation, Pratham and Room to Read also shared their experiences.



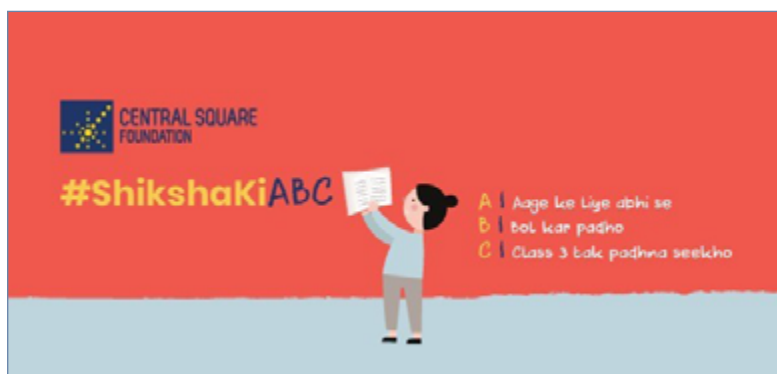
Nexus of Good: School leaders presented innovations related to Early Childhood Education, which is key for children's school readiness

### 1.1.3 FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING IN THE MEDIA

The media can play a vital role in informing the public about the importance of Foundational Learning and help make it a national priority. CSF shares research, evidence and successful case studies with senior editors and other members of the media on a regular basis to ensure that the issue receives sustained and credible attention. This is crucial to promoting informed dialogue on the issue among stakeholders.



Leading English-language newspapers and media outlets including *The Times of India*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Mint*, *The Business Standard*, *The Financial Express* and *The Indian Express* have continuously highlighted India's learning crisis through articles and opinion pieces. Vernacular media houses, such as *Navbharat Times*, *Rajasthan Patrika*, *Lokmat* and *Dharitri* that are widely circulated across different states, have also drawn attention to the gaps in Foundational Learning.



Watch the campaign video:  
<https://bit.ly/39Mae2I>



We launched a digital campaign named **#ShikshaKiABC** on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to develop salience on Foundational Learning. It reached a wide audience:  
**Twitter: 9 million +**  
**Facebook: 20 million +**  
**YouTube: 5 million +**

In January 2020, we launched a digital campaign named **#ShikshaKiABC** on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to stress the need for universal achievement of Foundational Learning. Through this campaign we aimed to reach out to key influencers and parents to create awareness and recall on the issue of Foundational Learning. Remarkably, **#ShikshaKiABC** reached an audience of over 9 million on Twitter, over 5 million on YouTube and more than 20 million on Facebook. The campaign received nearly 4.6 million views across various other social media platforms.

Further, we produced a special edition of our monthly newsletter *The EDge* on NEP, which amplified the opinions of noted experts in the field such as Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, Rukmini Banerji, Sridhar Rajagopalan, Yamini Aiyar and Ashish Dhawan.

## 1.1.4 LEARNINGS AND WAY FORWARD

We are keen to sustain the momentum around achieving Foundational Learning. In May 2020, the Government of India announced the launch of a Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission for children in Grades 1-5. The mission will be formally launched in early 2021. In order to create a favorable environment for the successful implementation of this mission, CSF will support key stakeholders in the coming year. Also, we will strive to find success stories in achieving Foundational Learning goals and disseminate information on such practices widely for learning and adaptation by others in the ecosystem.



**Evidence generation and supply shaping are key levers in our strategy to develop effective classroom practices**

## 1.2 Evidence Building and Supply Shaping

One of the major roadblocks to improving Foundational Learning outcomes in India is the lack of scale-ready and proven classroom solutions that are holistic and pedagogically sound. Therefore, generating evidence and shaping supply are key to developing effective classroom practices. Our aim is to identify the building blocks of an effective, comprehensive solution, such as classroom instructional design, tools and material for teachers and students, teacher training, as well as few aspects of community engagement and parental involvement. Through a research- and experiment-driven approach we hope to identify and document approaches that work, along with the conditions under which they work.

### 1.2.1. GENERATING EVIDENCE AND PUBLIC GOODS

In the past year, CSF has undertaken some critical initiatives in the process of generating evidence and public goods on programs and practices.

We conducted a landscaping exercise to identify promising early learning organizations and capture their practices. Our aim is to partner with other non-profit organizations that demonstrate the intent and capability of providing technical support to state governments on early learning programs. These programs were studied through the lens of our 5T approach (inspired by RTI International), i.e., Teach, Tools, Test, Train and Teacher support. A vast number of programs were studied as part of this landscaping exercise, some of which are run by organizations such as LLF, Room to Read, Akshara Foundation, Vikramshila Education Resource Society, Sol's ARC and the Organization for Early Literacy Promotion (OELP).





Print-rich graded textbooks are central to improving Foundational Learning skills among children

## GENERATING EVIDENCE ON HOW TO OVERCOME CONSTRAINTS IN EARLY LEARNING

**We are working to identify constraints in the value chain of children's literature to bridge the gaps in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN). We are also working with partners like LLF to understand the impact that structural factors associated with multi-grade and multi-lingual classroom environments have on FLN**

India sees a large proportion of Multi-Grade Multi-Lingual (MGML) classrooms, i.e., a situation where one teacher is responsible for multiple grades. This feature is particularly visible in the primary grades. Multilingualism is another facet of most Indian classrooms, as children often come from diverse home language environments that are different from the language of instruction in the classroom. This points to the need for teaching strategies that can respond to linguistic diversity. However, a vast majority of teachers find themselves ill-equipped to manage multi-grade classrooms as they are not adequately resourced and not trained with effective pedagogical practices applicable to such circumstances. We are working with independent researchers and partners such as the LLF to understand

the impact that factors associated with multi-grade and multi-lingual classroom environments have on Foundational Learning outcomes. Based on our findings, we will develop a working model for a viable and replicable multi-grade, multi-lingual classroom scenarios.

Separately, we are working to identify the constraints in the value chain of children's literature to bridge the gaps in FLN. Our team has undertaken a project to develop a leveling framework that will allow for children's books to be short-listed based on their potential for meaningful transaction in classrooms, along with teacher tools to aid their integration into classroom instruction.

## UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMIC GAPS: FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING DIAGNOSTICS

CSF conducted an education system diagnostic in a few states to identify gaps and challenges that influence Foundational Learning outcomes. The purpose of this exercise was to help governments identify, prioritize and contextualize appropriate interventions that could improve Foundational Learning levels in their states. The exercise involved extensive interactions with approximately 100 stakeholders (state officials, district/ block/ cluster education officers, school leaders, teachers, students and parents) in each state. Our tools were created and adapted from several global frameworks such as the USAID 5Rs framework, Doing Reform Differently (Crouch and DeStefano, 2017), the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) program's principal-agent model and the systems analysis framework from Building State Capability (Pritchett, Andrews and Woolcok, 2017).

## SUPPORTING STATES IN CREATING AND ACCESSING PUBLIC GOODS

CSF has supported certain state governments to develop a toolkit to conduct Foundational Learning diagnostics with the aim of developing informed and effective Foundational Learning programs. The state governments have used these tools to identify the root causes of persistent challenges and refine their approaches to achieve Foundational Learning. Importantly, this toolkit has been developed as a public good for use by partners and the larger education ecosystem in the country.

CSF is also providing state governments with the necessary technical support to run effective early learning programs. This support takes the form of directly supplying technical expertise, facilitating partnerships of state governments with other organizations and technical experts who have prior experience of running effective literacy and numeracy programs in other locations, as well as sharing best practices and evidence from relevant national and international programs.

CSF is simultaneously working to increase the availability of other public goods focused on Foundational Learning to aid the work of state governments, including developing a resource bank of high-quality materials aligned to the classroom.

We believe that a collaborative approach to delivering a comprehensive and scalable pedagogical solution, backed by key reforms, is imperative to meet the common goal of Foundational Learning. Our purpose is to build on existing evidence to demonstrate how large-scale education reform could be conducted.

## 1.2.2. SUPPLY SHAPING

In addition to a strong emphasis on the agenda of generating evidence and public goods, CSF is helping build the capacity of supply-side organizations to provide technical support to states, and partnering with other organizations to meet gaps in capacity required to serve disparate early learning challenges. We want to strengthen early learning organizations by providing structured support through technical advisory, facilitating access to evidence and providing support in running experiments on specific components such as curriculum, teacher capacity, pedagogy and assessment.

Efforts we have undertaken in this regard include:



Digital content developed by Teacher App to build conceptual knowledge of teachers in literacy and numeracy



Work with LLF, Madhi Foundation, Akshara and other supply-side partners to build organizational muscle to provide technical support to states



Process studies conducted with our partner LLF to provide them with need-based support on various programmatic themes, to strengthen program design and codify best practices. A total of four studies were conducted on the subjects of struggling learners, oral comprehension, guided reading and four block models to document best practices and innovations in teaching-learning practice



Work with OELP in the domain of early literacy to support 14,000 schools in Rajasthan



Forthcoming work with Gyanshala to implement a pilot project to improve the quality of classroom processes and student learning, covering 1,000 Parishad Primary schools in two aspirational districts of Uttar Pradesh (Bahraich and Chandauli)



To increase the availability of a set of evidence-backed, classroom-tested and easy-to-use tools for use by teachers to effectively deliver FLN skills in the classroom, CSF in partnership with technical partners like CARE India and Trivium is developing a suite of products to be made available as public goods. The tools will be made available on a common open-source platform to assist in delivery of FLN skills.



## 1.3 Working with the Government



**Our goal in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh is to build for scale and sustainability by ensuring strong ownership by the government**

Global efforts for the demonstration of Foundational Learning programs show that successful models include holistic approaches toward program interventions, with attention to pedagogy, curriculum and systemic strengthening. These programs were defined by the recognition of Foundational Learning as a priority for education policy and a high degree of institutional ownership by states.

We have adopted this approach in our demonstration states, i.e., Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, where our goal is to build for scale and sustainability and support the government in owning FLN focussed initiatives. This involves working with the state on:



1. Clear goal setting and stakeholder alignment on goals, targets and metrics



2. Improving teaching and learning processes



3. Building capacity to execute complex reform



4. Increasing accountability

### 1.3.1. GUJARAT: ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR A FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM

**We designed a school readiness program in consultation with the Education Department, which was scaled up to all 33,000 schools**

We are supporting the State Government of Gujarat to launch a state-owned foundational learning program. A PMU has been set up to support the state in its current Foundational Learning intervention, design new interventions to build teacher capacity and conduct assessments.



To understand the challenges faced by the state in achieving Foundational Learning, a dipstick evaluation was conducted by CSF. It included qualitative discussions with key stakeholders and the evaluation of pedagogical practices in the classroom by experts. The PMU also supported the Education Department, State Government of Gujarat, in conducting an assessment of the learning levels of children in Grade 2. The results of this assessment informed the design of a remedial program for Grade 2 children to help them achieve the Foundational Learning level corresponding to their grade by the end of the academic year.

Additionally, we designed a school readiness program in consultation with the Education Department, which was scaled up to all 33,000 schools. It was implemented in the first month of Pragna classes to provide school readiness skills to children joining Grade 1. In consultation with the Gujarat Council of Educational Research and Training, the Foundational Learning components of Pragna were further strengthened with the introduction of orality and reading in common teacher-led instructions.

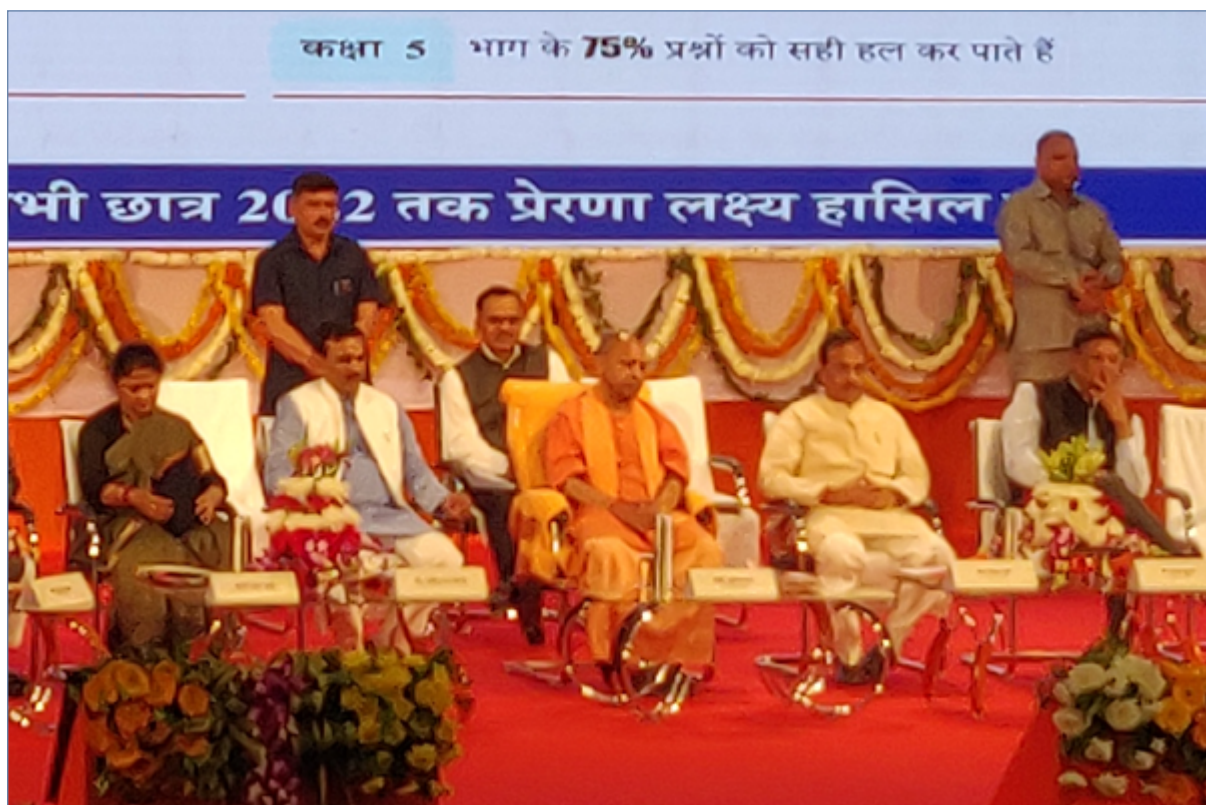
Capacity building workshops were conducted by CSF with officials from the Education Department (cluster resource centers, block resource centers, district and state officials) to familiarize them with the importance of Foundational Learning. Luis A Crouch, eminent economist with RTI International and CSF board member, discussed efforts from countries across the globe that have successfully contributed to improving learning outcomes. Exposure visits have also been undertaken to observe mathematics and literacy programs in the states of Haryana and Karnataka.

### 1.3.2. UTTAR PRADESH: MISSION PRERNA – A DEMAND-LED APPROACH TO IMPROVING FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES



The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath, launched Mission Prerna in March 2020 with the aim of ensuring that all primary school-going children are able to attain foundational literacy and numeracy skills by 2022. CSF is supporting the State Government of Uttar Pradesh and implementation partner Samagra to co-design and implement this program. A Chief Minister-led program, Mission Prerna adopts a demand-led approach wherein clearly defined goals and metrics will be communicated through the system and coupled with a robust accountability and assessment system to create the impetus for improving foundational learning outcomes.

**Clearly defined goals and metrics will be communicated through the system and coupled with a robust accountability and assessment system to create the impetus for improving Foundational Learning outcomes**



Yogi Adityanath, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, launched Mission Prerna in March 2020

Key elements of the program include:



**Prerna Ghoshna:** A gamified approach to goal-setting through a block-level competition where each administrative unit will self-nominate itself for third-party assessments of learning outcomes



**Administrative Initiatives:** A series of systemic reforms to streamline service delivery of the program



**Academic Initiatives:** A series of academic interventions to improve classroom elements, such as pedagogy and learning materials, as well as high-quality, regular and appropriate teacher training and mentoring



**Accountability Initiatives:** Efforts to track progress, provide feedback loops, and independently measure progress made toward achieving stated goals



### 1.3.3. MADHYA PRADESH: PROJECT ANKUR – A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

CSF has signed a three-year agreement with the State Government of Madhya Pradesh to improve Foundational Learning in Grades 1 and 2 by enhancing the capacity of the Department of School Education to better deliver the FLN program. We are working toward this with a coalition of partners including The Education Alliance (TEA), Room to Read and Sol's ARC.



**CSF has signed a three-year agreement with the State Government of Madhya Pradesh to improve Foundational Learning in Grades 1 and 2 by enhancing the capacity of the Department of School Education to better deliver the program**

The core components of the program include establishing a Foundational Learning cell within the state's Department of School Education and testing evidence-informed solutions in three innovation districts. Implementation of this program commenced in July 2020.

Meanwhile, in response to the current closure of schools owing to Covid-19, Project Ankur is contributing to the state's DigiLEP program through a team of content experts and digital learning specialists that has been set up to dedicatedly engage in initiatives specific to Grade 1 and 2. DigiLEP aims to reduce learning loss among elementary grade students by providing daily learning resources to their parents using the medium of WhatsApp, leveraging radio channels to share interactive audio stories, and enabling regular teacher-student interactions through calls and text messages.

Additionally, the Project Ankur team is currently undertaking the following work in Madhya Pradesh:

- 1. Developing a blended learning model for students:** Use of digital content in classrooms to engage students with a curated repository of learning resources, as well as leveraging mass communication channels such as television to disseminate educational and value-based content
- 2. Capacity building for teachers online:** Use of the CM RISE portal for teacher training, specifically, to hone skill sets and build expertise to support remote learning
- 3. Engaging with parents as co-educators:** Continuous support to parents of students learning at home to enable greater exposure and retention of content

Moving forward, the Foundational Learning program will build on all of these elements in all focus districts across Madhya Pradesh.

### 1.3.4. TELANGANA: A PUBLIC GOVERNANCE APPROACH TO IMPROVING LEARNING OUTCOMES

**CSF is providing technical, research, project design and management support to the reform initiative in Telangana**

CSF and CEGIS have entered into a five-year association with the State Government of Telangana to reorient the focus of the education sector toward improving learning outcomes in the state, with particular attention to achieving Foundational Learning by Grade 3. This reform program is premised on: strengthening the performance of the education sector through regular and independent measurement of learning outcomes; incentivizing district-level improvements in outcomes; piloting and scaling evidence-based interventions to improve pedagogy and governance; and, providing districts with the support and flexibility to chart their own pathways to address local constraints and improve performance. CSF is providing technical, research, project design and management support to this reform initiative.

TELANGANA



### 1.3.5 HARYANA: LANGUAGE LEARNING AS FIRST STEP TOWARDS IMPROVING FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY

**LLF, one of CSF's grantee partners, runs literacy programs in Haryana. CSF will support LLF to build on the program and drive student learning**

LLF is implementing the Prarambhik Bhasha Shiksha Karyakram (PSBK) or Early Language Literacy Program in partnership with the Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad (HSSPP), with the objective of improving student learning outcomes in seven districts of Haryana. LLF's approach involves strengthening expertise on literacy among state resource personnel through specific courses, supplemented by the design of an early-grade literacy package to improve literacy outcomes.

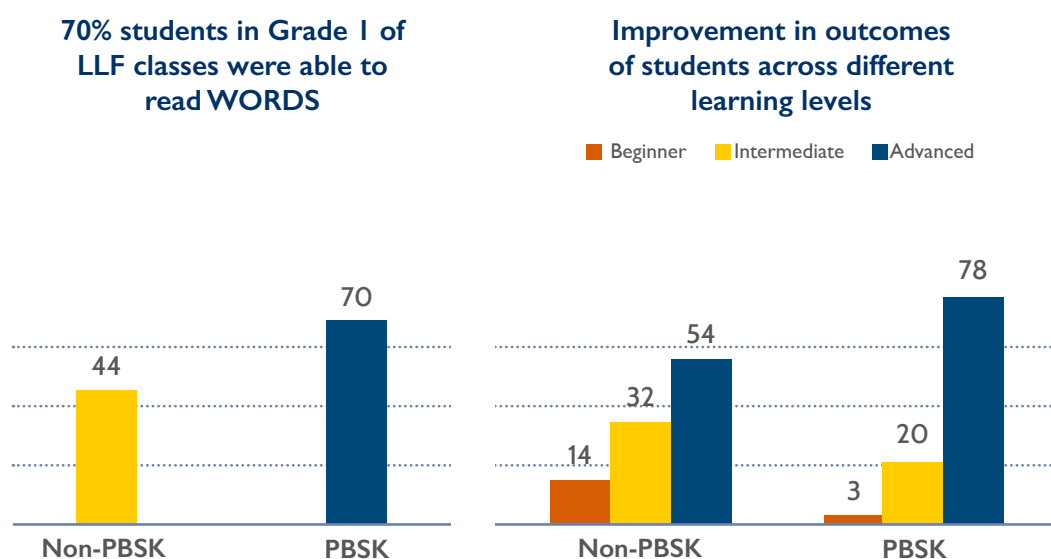
HARYANA



PSBK focuses on building capacities of the State and District Resource Group and Block Coordinators who, in turn, are responsible for the capacity building of teachers. The teachers support a school-level intervention in seven districts to demonstrate learning, supplemented by regular classroom observation and need-based assistance by resource personnel. The resource personnel also draw upon their expertise in literacy to support the state with reform initiatives, such as those concerning textbooks and assessments.

Grey Matters India conducted an independent evaluation of PSBK in 175 schools of Kurukshetra in 2019 to understand the impact of this program. The study showed a significant number of Grade I students moving from the beginner to intermediate level in terms of their language skills; and a 24% increase in the number of students moving from the intermediate to advanced level. This is further supported by LLF's Internal Data (March 2020) according to which 70% of all students in Grade I were able to read words.

**Fig 1: Study conducted by Grey Matters India (GMI)  
in Kurukshetra, Haryana, 2019**



In 2019, CSF entered as risk-funder into the first ever CSR Development Impact Bond (DIB) in India for education, aiming to improve the learning outcomes for Grades 1 and 2 in Haryana by 2022, with LLF as the implementation partner. Other DIB partners include Social Finance India as service provider, and IndusInd Bank and SBI Capital Markets Limited as outcome founders.

CSF is working closely with LLF to build on the success of PSBK to launch a state-wide FLN program in the new academic year.

In response to Covid-19, LLF has initiated Har Ghar Pathshala with the State Government of Haryana, an initiative to ensure students in Grade 1 and 2 are well supported with learning packages to reduce learning loss. Under the initiative, differentiated literacy activities are shared with parents and assessed on WhatsApp by government administrators and teachers. Given the digital divide, LLF has also mobilized non-digital home learning by creating and distributing student workbooks through teachers, administrators and volunteers. In addition, LLF is conducting online courses for 700 personnel and 4,500 teachers in Haryana. The online courses have shown 80% completion and an average score of 83% on quizzes. They incorporate a specific component on supporting parents to enable their child's learning, with a larger vision to build active community engagement in order to improve learning outcomes.



### 1.3.6 TAMIL NADU: A FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM IN

**Foundational Learning Improvement Program (FLIP) was piloted in two districts and adapted to the rest of the state through the government machinery. In 2021, the State Government of Tamil Nadu will support the rollout of a comprehensive Foundational Learning Mission in 14 districts**

TAMIL NADU



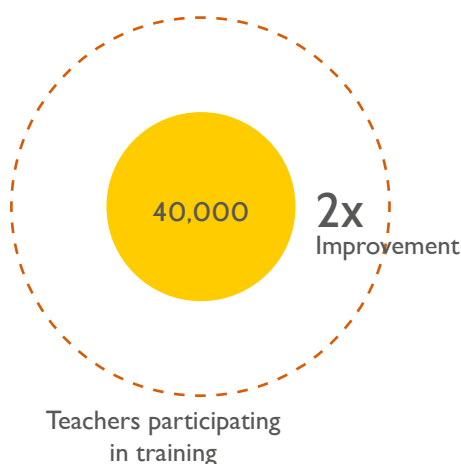
#### PARTNERSHIP WITH MADHI FOUNDATION

Madhi Foundation supported the state of Tamil Nadu to design the **Foundational Learning Improvement Programme (FLIP)** with the aim of improving learning outcomes for Grades 1, 2 and 3. Madhi Foundation provides technical support and is the implementation partner on Foundational Learning to the State Government of Tamil Nadu. FLIP has led state-wide initiatives including textbook reform, promotion of FLN blended learning for teachers, reduction of learning loss through cascade training and introduction of data-driven decisions through the TNVN app – a classroom observation tool for middle management. CSF provides programmatic support to Madhi Foundation.

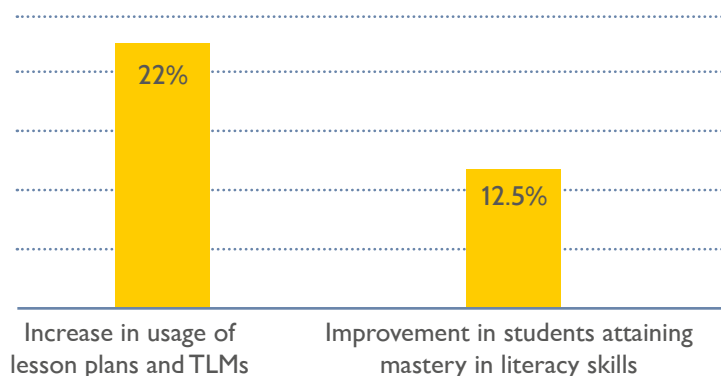
The core components of FLIP are the 3Ts:

1. **Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs):** Support in the development of textbooks, workbooks and teacher handbooks
2. **Training:** Capacity building of the Block Resource Teacher Educator (BRTE) and teachers through high-quality blended training on FLN
3. **Tracking:** Strengthening observation and academic support to the classroom through BRTEs and HMs via the TNVN app

The program has seen high adoption and engagement with over 40,000 teachers participating in training and a 2x improvement in BRTE classroom observation, resulting in an increase in usage of recommended practices in the classroom (such as lesson plans and TLMs) by approximately 22%. Early program data also suggests an average improvement by 12.5% in the number of students who attained mastery in literacy skills after 3 months of the intervention.



**Fig 2: Impact of FLIP**



The program was piloted in two districts (Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram) and adapted to the rest of the state through the government machinery. In 2021, the State Government of Tamil Nadu will support the rollout of a comprehensive Foundational Learning Mission in 14 districts. This Mission will build on FLIP with clear and measurable goal articulation for FLN improvement across the state.

In response to Covid-19, Madhi is piloting three programs to support learning at home – TeacherChamp, Happy Learners and Foundational Learning on WhatsApp (FLOW). Teacher Champ aims at supporting teachers in creating online content and running online classes, while FLOW and Happy Learners support students with content, basic reading and assessment through Interactive Voice Response (IVR). The key learnings from these programs will feed into a long-term plan for the state.



**A year of preparatory class before Grade I can help bridge learning gaps in early years and improve school readiness of children**

## 1.4 Early Childhood Education

There is much evidence to suggest that quality early childhood education (ECE) can improve the school readiness of children and help bridge learning gaps in the early years. It has been demonstrated that children exposed to ECE perform better in the early primary grades. The National Education Policy 2020 also highlights the importance of one year of preparatory class. Therefore, introducing a year of preparatory class before Grade I is critical to all future learning and development of children.

An ECE program comprising elements such as a dedicated teacher for pre-primary school, quality learning materials, instructional time for children and child-friendly infrastructure, can go a long way in ensuring better school readiness of children



The State Government of Assam is running a pre-primary program called Zero Class (Ka-Shreni) in all primary schools of the state

An ECE program comprising elements such as a dedicated teacher for pre-primary school, quality learning materials, instructional time for children and child-friendly infrastructure, can go a long way in ensuring better school readiness of children. In line with this view, the State Government of Assam is running a pre-primary program called Zero Class (Ka-Shreni) in all primary schools of the state. As the age of entry across formal schools in Assam is six years, the program targets children aged 5-6 years for the delivery of quality ECE.

CSF signed an MoU with the State Government of Assam in January 2020, as part of which we are supporting the state's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan office and the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) to bridge the gap in learning levels of the 5-6-year-olds in Ka-Shrenis. The Vikramshila Education Resource Society is our technical partner in this effort to strengthen ECE interventions in 2,574 Ka-Shreni classrooms across 33 districts in Assam. Out of these 2,574 Ka-Shrenis, 50 pilot schools will be closely monitored and supported by CSF and the Vikramshila Education Resource Society. Our program intervention includes the design and development of standardized classroom packages with a focus on all ECE competencies, capacity building of teachers, and technical support to the State Government of Assam.

As a result of this intervention, 11 key resource persons (KRPs) and 99 resource persons have been trained to provide quality ECE training in Assam. KRPs have been trained to map activities with learning outcomes prescribed in the state and national curricular guidelines for school-readiness. A 30-week thematic instruction plan founded on activity-based pedagogy has been developed and shared.





**Girindre Beeharry**

*Director, Global Education Learning Strategy  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
Board Member, CSF*

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## Effective Philanthropy is Responsive to Contextualized, Sector-specific Needs

Improving learning outcomes at scale is hard. And because the matter of poor learning is so concerning, we like to try everything. But good intentions are just not good enough. There is a vast literature on improving education systems that reminds us just how hard it is to make progress, when progress depends on the unobserved interactions between millions of teachers in millions of classrooms facing tens of millions of students for many hours a day, many days a year, year after year.

Some geographies do better than others. But it is hard to draw common lessons from education systems that are celebrated, say for their performance in PISA. Finland looks very different from South Korea and different again from Vietnam – but they do seem to have in common a deep, society-wide belief that all children can and should learn. This is a very powerful belief, one that shapes expectations, norms and actions. If you believe this, then you don't wash your hands off students who are falling behind, as many invariably will, you make it your business to catch them up and keep them up. How you do that is to be crafted in your context.

Philanthropy is drawn to the education sector because of its criticality for human development. But the approaches we tend to take are often the ones that suit what philanthropy is good at – innovation to seek direct impact – rather than responding to what the sector needs – a problem mindset, the discipline to recognize and learn from mistakes, the stamina to stay the course, a deep appreciation for the political economy of education and the willingness to be the junior partners to education systems, all of which is an expression of humility. Rare is the organization that displays those attributes. CSF is one of them, and it is our privilege and honor to support their work as they work through how best to assist all Indian boys and girls get the education they deserve.

A photograph of two young students, a girl on the left and a boy on the right, sitting on a colorful, patterned rug. They are both wearing light-colored school shirts and dark skirts or shorts. The girl is looking down at a tablet in her hands, and the boy is also looking at a tablet. The background shows more of the rug and a concrete floor.

## 2. TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION (EdTech)

Encouraging Supply of Contextual  
Solutions and Quality Content

Generating Evidence on EdTech in India

Government Partnerships and  
Large-Scale Adoption in Schools

**In a developing country like India where children's learning levels vary significantly within the same grade, EdTech can be an extraordinarily powerful leveler**

Technology has the power to democratize education by enabling consistent and high-quality teaching to reach millions of children, both in schools and at home, regardless of geographical barriers. It provides an easy medium for children to learn beyond their classrooms, clarify concepts and delve deeper into any subject.

In a developing country like India where children's learning levels vary significantly within the same grade, EdTech can be an extraordinarily powerful leveler. A growing body of research suggests that EdTech holds massive potential to bridge learning gaps by providing personalized learning tools to help children learn at the level and pace that suit them.

EdTech can also be an unparalleled resource in helping teachers enhance their teaching capacity, make their classes more engaging, and allow them to access relevant and up-to-date teaching-learning material and lesson-planning resources. Further, schools and academic institutions can use EdTech to streamline assessments.

EdTech thus holds immense promise to address the multilayered challenges ailing India's education system. With firm belief in the transformative potential of EdTech, we have been working relentlessly to identify its scope and limitations. We have collaborated with several stakeholders including the government, pedagogy experts and investors to integrate affordable, impactful and scalable EdTech solutions with the education system.

After an internal analysis and benchmarking of 4,600 EdTech products, we found that only about 10% cater to the K-12 segment. Moreover, the market is dominated by for-profit players that target high- and middle-income households. This means that a huge section of our population, especially in India 2 and India 3 (i.e., the non-English speaking and less affluent populace in Tier-II and III Indian cities), cannot reap the benefits of EdTech currently. This situation exists despite the rapid increase in the penetration of internet connectivity and smartphones which has laid the foundation for digital learning.

We have adopted a three-pronged approach to strengthen a tech-enabled education framework in India:



**1. Encouraging Supply of Contextual Solutions and Quality Content**



**2. Generating Evidence on EdTech in India**



**3. Building Government Partnerships to Support Large Scale Adoption in Schools**



## 2.1 Encouraging Supply of Contextual Solutions and Quality Content



**Affordability, ease-of-use, and contextualization of high-quality content are key factors that can drive EdTech adoption among low- and middle-income households**

CSF's aim is to make education more inclusive by building a pipeline of EdTech solutions tailored to the needs and requirements of low-income communities. Affordability, ease-of-use, and contextualization of high-quality content are key factors that can drive EdTech adoption in this population segment. We are working with non-profit and private organizations in India and abroad to innovate and create cost-effective products of this nature. We are also developing quality content that targets different learning levels in vernacular languages.



Our supply-shaping initiatives have been two-fold. We have worked to develop solutions that facilitate learning at home as well as those that can be scaled up in government schools.

## 2.1.1. EDTECH SOLUTIONS FOR LEARNING AT HOME

**A rapid increase in smartphone and mobile internet penetration in low-income households in India, coupled with increased screen time for children, make a compelling case for leveraging technology at home to improve Foundational Learning**



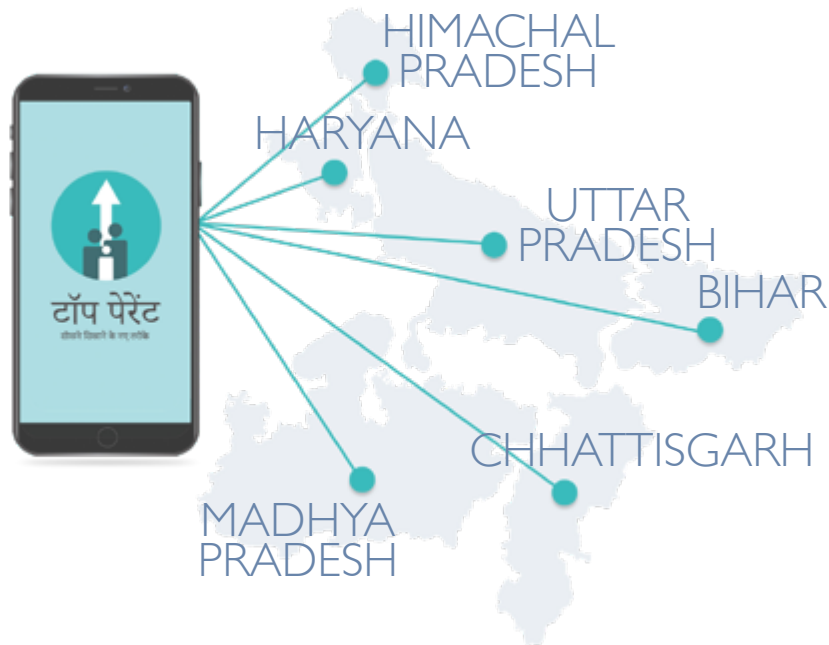
Our work with EdTech solutions at home is aimed at democratizing EdTech for the masses and leveraging it to enable Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN). There is an emerging body of global evidence, led by the XPRIZE competition, on the potential of EdTech to significantly improve Foundational Learning for underserved children. The last few years have seen a rapid increase in smartphone and mobile internet penetration in low-income households in India, which, coupled with increased screen time for children, makes a compelling case for leveraging technology at home to improve Foundational Learning for all children. Our work, which has included an exhaustive landscaping exercise, field studies and literature reviews, has served to illuminate the following key challenges to meaningful EdTech adoption at home in India:

- There is a dearth of pedagogically sound and affordable products for Pre K-3 in vernacular languages
- While the role of parents is critical in driving the adoption of and engagement with EdTech, parental awareness around tech delivered learning remains lacking in low-income households
- The cost of acquiring and engaging with EdTech products at home is high for low-income communities

Our efforts are aimed at addressing the aforementioned barriers to assist continued Foundational Learning at home for children through technology.

## TOP PARENT

Top Parent serves children aged 3-8 years and is a step toward bridging the digital divide to some extent as it comprises Hindi language content that is culturally relevant to a large populace. One of the ideas behind developing the app was to encourage learning using the ubiquitous smartphone, challenging the popular perception that smartphones are not meant for learning



In April 2020, we launched Top Parent, a free-of-cost app, which equips parents with the tools to help their children acquire foundational skills using Hindi as the language of instruction. Top Parent has three apps within it to help children make sense of letters and numbers in engaging and interactive ways. The app was officially launched by the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Recognizing its value, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath, endorsed the solution by including it as part of his five-pronged strategy for learning at home. The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Shri Jai Ram Thakur, and the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Sushil Kumar Modi, have also endorsed the solution. Additionally, the State Governments of Haryana and Chhattisgarh have endorsed Top Parent.

Our assessment of the EdTech landscape in India revealed a lack of appropriate learning resources for children aged 3-8 years. Top Parent serves this age group and is a step toward bridging the digital divide to some extent as it comprises Hindi language content that is culturally relevant to a large populace.





One of the ideas behind developing the app was to encourage learning using the ubiquitous smartphone, challenging the popular perception that smartphones are not meant for learning. The app encourages parents to be more involved in the learning journey of their children, which as evidence indicates, has a positive impact on children's learning.

The three children's learning apps included in Top Parent were selected on the basis of an exhaustive analysis of the EdTech landscape in India and the efficacy these particular apps demonstrated in other developing countries similar to India. We engaged extensively with all three of them – Math Masti, Chimple, and Read Along. Math Masti is a contextualized version of KitKit School, a US-based app that helps children learn independently regardless of their knowledge or skill. KitKit School won the Global Learning XPRIZE in 2019, in a competition organized by XPRIZE, a non-profit organization that had set-up a \$15 million fund challenging teams from across the world to develop open source, scalable learning softwares. The app aims to improve children's numeracy skills while also helping parents keep track of their child's progress. CSF supported contextualization of the app to make it more relevant to children and parents in India by adapting it to Hindi and making it accessible on smartphones. Chimple was one of the five finalists in the Global Learning XPRIZE. It enables children to learn reading, writing and mathematics using explorative games and stories. We worked with the Bengaluru-based EdTech startup behind Chimple to develop the app. A Google product, Read Along is a reading-tutor app that helps primary grade children improve their reading skills. With its text-to-speech and speech recognition technology, the app detects whether the child is able to successfully read any given passage and also provides feedback to the child. As children progress in the app they are presented with word games that win them in-app rewards and badges to motivate them. We provided Read Along with technical and distribution support.





**TicTacLearn is an online video-learning library of 10,000 videos for Mathematics and Science in five languages – Hindi, English, Telugu, Odiya and Marathi. It includes curriculum-aligned content for students in Grades 1 to 10**

## TICTACLEARN

To address the dearth of high-quality content in vernacular languages that is also pedagogically sound and available for free, we created TicTacLearn with support from Google.org. TicTacLearn is an online video-learning library of 10,000 videos for Mathematics and Science in five languages – Hindi, English, Telugu, Odiya and Marathi. It includes curriculum-aligned content for students in Grades 1 to 10. The videos are animated, making the learning experience engaging for children.



These videos are accessible for free on YouTube as well as on Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), the Ministry of Human Resource Development's (MHRD's) primary digital initiative to make curriculum-aligned e-content available to school children for free. They can also be accessed on the app using Quick Response (QR) codes provided in textbooks. The states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have started linking TicTacLearn content to QR codes in textbooks.

## DIKSHA

Launched in 2017, DIKSHA is a flagship educational technology initiative of the MHRD. CSF has been supporting both the central and state governments in implementing DIKSHA across the country.



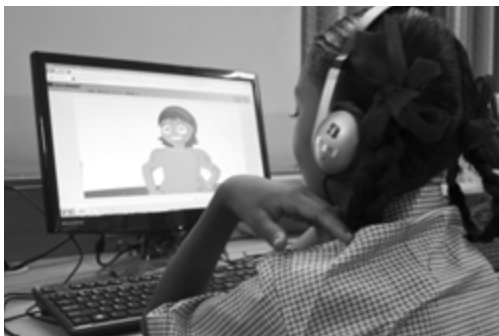
One of the most popular use-cases of DIKSHA is that of energized textbooks. DIKSHA has enabled participating states to print regular school textbooks with QR codes. These QR codes can be placed at chapter or topic level. On scanning these QR codes via the DIKSHA app, students and teachers can access relevant digital content. More than 30 states/ UTs have moved to using energized textbooks and over 500 million such textbooks are being printed for the coming academic year. Over the last 18 months, the DIKSHA app has seen more than 7 million downloads and more than 120 million content plays.

CSF is working closely with the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu for DIKSHA implementation. In these states, CSF has supported PMUs to work on content improvement and outreach programs. They also work on data analytics and program planning to improve the adoption, engagement and impact of DIKSHA initiatives.

## 2.1.2. EDTECH SOLUTIONS FOR SCALING UP IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

While EdTech resources are necessary to enable continued learning for students at home and across environments, they can be equally useful in providing much needed access to high-quality content and solutions to transform the classroom experience. Recognizing this, we supported the contextualization of three EdTech apps scheduled to scale-up in government schools across Andhra Pradesh – Mindspark, Convegenius and Funtoot. All three of these apps are Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL) solutions – software solutions that tailor teaching instructions to the exact learning levels of each child. There is encouraging evidence from across the world on the impact of PAL solutions on learning outcomes. As part of our contextualization agreements with the developers of the three apps, some key changes to be incorporated in their products include: creating a Telugu version of the apps; integrating the text-to-speech or bilingual feature; and simplifying the user interface/ user experience (UI/ UX) and teacher dashboards to facilitate ease-of-use.

## 2.2 Generating Evidence on EdTech in India



**The EdTech Lab endeavors to support the education ecosystem in making informed decisions around the selection, deployment and scaling of EdTech solutions to maximize potential**

Little evidence exists on the quality, usability and efficacy of EdTech products. This poses a significant impediment to governments, academic institutions, teachers and children trying to select a solution that fits their purpose.

### 2.2.1. EDTECH LAB

The EdTech Lab was conceptualized in 2018 to identify EdTech products and evaluate their potential to be contextualized and implemented at a large scale. By generating credible evidence on EdTech solutions using high-standard benchmarks, the EdTech Lab endeavors to support the education ecosystem in making informed decisions around the selection, deployment and scaling of EdTech solutions to maximize potential.

One of the priorities of the EdTech Lab was to evaluate solutions for Hindi and Mathematics in the K-8 segment. We undertook a rigorous landscaping exercise, concluding that little over 4,600 EdTech solutions exist in India. However, barely 10% of the solutions met our selection criteria. Of these, we short-listed 12 products to kickstart our evaluation. In partnership with IDinsight, we ran rapid process evaluations on these products to assess their usage,



EdTech Lab Report:  
<https://bit.ly/2QRQyiW>



engagement patterns and their potential for scalability. The evaluations encompassed surveys and interviews of 1,500 students, teachers, headmasters and parents across 10 states, as well as product-use data from over 17,000 students and 3,900 schools across the country. The products were also assessed for pedagogy, product UI/ UX and technical support. The results from the EdTech Lab laid the foundation for our approach on EdTech integration. We found that these products were not designed for low-income students and lacked quality vernacular content and navigation. Very few had resources that help children acquire foundational skills that are critical to ensure improved learning as children progress in their academic journey.

An EdTech revolution depends on the scalability of varied solutions. But scalability is complicated by many factors: lack of adequate hardware in schools, teachers not being trained to use these solutions effectively, and a sense of fear when it comes to using technology. The EdTech Lab report discusses these challenges in detail and includes useful insights for researchers, funders, implementers and governments. The evaluation tools will soon be made public and can be useful for companies looking to evaluate their products.

The EdTech Lab also became the link between demand and supply for two products as we decided to support their contextualization and worked with State Governments to scale them up. These contextualized products were embedded in 80-100 pilot schools in Andhra Pradesh to facilitate a deeper understanding of the requisites for implementing them at scale.

## 2.2.2. EDTECH EVALUATION INDEX

Very few evaluations of EdTech solutions have been conducted in India so far, and standardized tools or benchmarks to assess their efficacy do not exist. Decision-making on EdTech remains difficult and information asymmetry is high, highlighting a critical gap that needs urgent attention. Such information, if available, would be invaluable in terms of its potential to: help governments procure and implement the right solutions; guide parents on which tools and resources best suit their children given their learning levels; assist teachers in making their classes more engaging and thereby contribute meaningfully to their professional development.

CSF has engaged the expertise of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, to create an EdTech Product Evaluation Index. IIT Bombay will set out standards for quality EdTech in India and assess a range of EdTech products against these standards. They will publish unbiased and rigorous reviews, and their insights will be used to reduce information asymmetry and support more effective decision-making around EdTech adoption in the ecosystem.

## 2.3 Government Partnerships and Large-Scale Adoption in Schools



### We support state governments in:

- **Assessing the state's infrastructural readiness to embrace EdTech**
- **Providing assistance in procuring quality software solutions, supporting their implementation, and evaluating their efficacy**
- **Undertaking course-correction**

We provide technical and project management support to government stakeholders to expand the scope of scalable, sustainable and impactful EdTech solutions in India. We have assisted the MHRD, NCERT, CBSE and state governments on for several different projects.

Our support to state governments ranges from assessing the state's infrastructural readiness to embrace EdTech, to providing assistance in procuring quality software solutions, supporting their implementation, evaluating their efficacy and undertaking course-correction.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with the State Government of Andhra Pradesh to procure and implement PAL solutions at scale. The state government was inspired to undertake this project after the MHRD released a guidance note on it. Schools in six out of the state's 13 districts have already benefited from it. We will assess the efficacy of PAL solutions, perform course-correction work and attempt to arrive at a scalable model of implementation. Andhra Pradesh will soon become the first state in India to implement PAL solutions at such a large scale.

The State Government of Madhya Pradesh has also expressed a keen interest in scaling up PAL solutions across the state. We are supporting the state in identifying and procuring the software solutions most applicable to their local context.

Based on our ongoing engagements with state governments, we aim to create public goods that can be scaled up in other states and adapted to contextual requirements. Prime examples include: the PAL playbook which documents the software procurement process followed by the State Government of Andhra Pradesh; and a program design toolkit which lays out the design to implement PAL solutions at state-level and includes resources such as templates, letters and presentations to support easy roll-out. Additionally, we will continue to provide technical support to other states by analyzing their infrastructural readiness and helping them identify and scale suitable solutions.



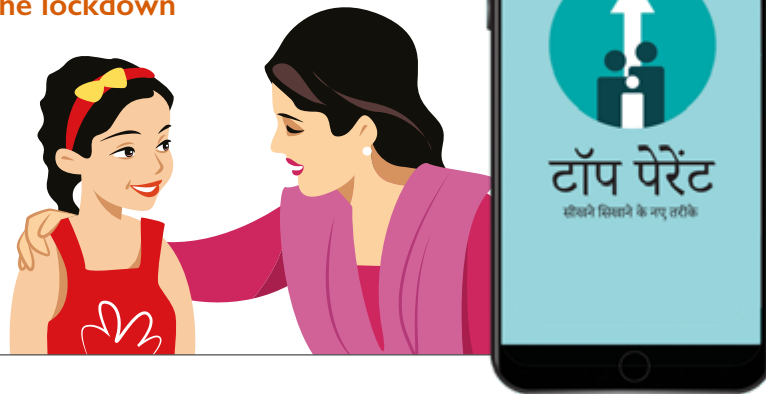
## Covid-19 and EdTech

The unprecedented disruption in school education caused by Covid-19 has affected over 250 million students and more than 9 million teachers in India. Leveraging EdTech solutions became crucial to ensure continued learning at home.

The sudden and prolonged closure of schools in India placed the country in a sputnik moment, where we had to redouble our efforts as a nation to ensure that the decades of work undertaken toward achieving universal school enrolment did not go to waste. The crisis was in some ways a stepping stone for the proliferation of EdTech solutions, as the absence of face-to-face classroom instruction led everyone from the government(s), to schools, teachers and parents to engage children constructively at home via different mediums and platforms in an attempt to minimize the learning losses that children may incur due to the long interlude in their regular school routines.

In response to the situation, we accelerated the roll-out of EdTech solutions we were developing.

**Top Parent was in its last leg of development when the novel coronavirus outbreak happened in India. We sped up our work and launched the app in early April for parents and children to benefit from it during the lockdown**

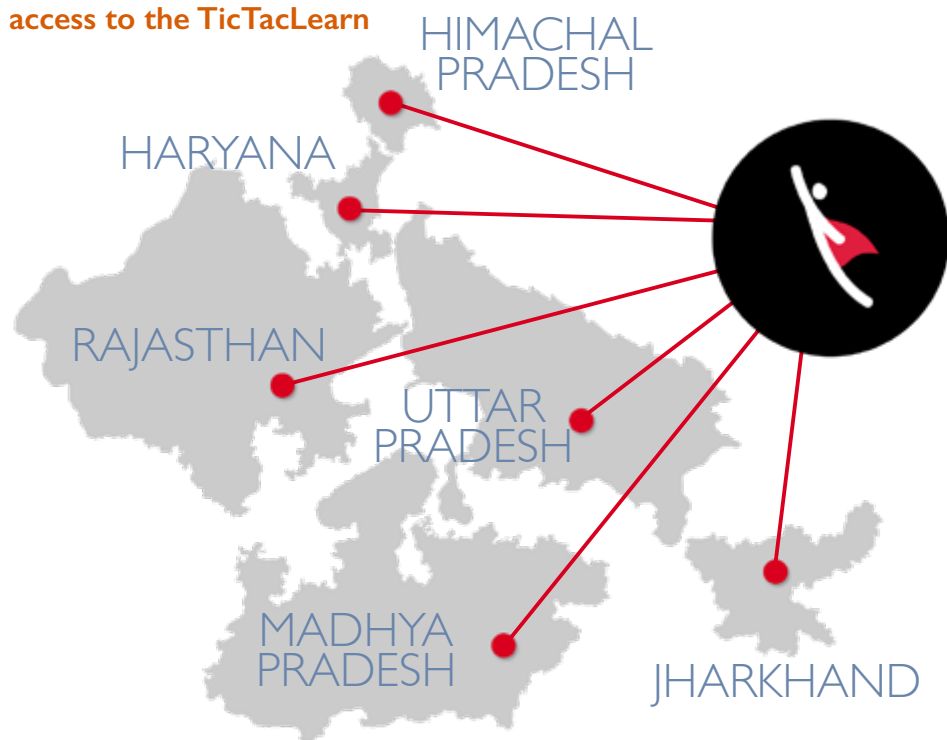


Top Parent was in its last leg of development when the novel coronavirus outbreak happened in India. We sped up our work and launched the app in early April for parents and children to benefit from it during the lockdown. We also reached out to state governments and partnered with the telecom provider Vodafone to expand the reach of the app. As mentioned earlier, the State Governments of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh endorsed the app.

We also expedited the production of videos under TicTacLearn. Several state governments responded to the crisis by launching digital programs ranging from YouTube channels to microsites and we provided them with access to the TicTacLearn video library:

1. The states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan used the videos on their YouTube channels DigiLEP, DigiSATH, and SMILE, respectively, for Grades 1-5
2. The states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana created microsites and embedded the videos on Har Ghar Pathshala, Mission Prerna and Ghar se Padhao, respectively
3. The videos are also being broadcast on Doordarshan in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Haryana

**We also expedited the production of videos under TicTacLearn. Several state governments responded to the crisis by launching digital programs ranging from YouTube channels to microsites and we provided them with access to the TicTacLearn video library**



Another catalytic solution we created was a repository, which declutters and catalogues digital resources freely available in India. The India EdTech repository – accessible at <https://indiaedtech.org/en/> – includes over 100 resources meant for students and teachers. These resources cater to learning needs spanning the K-12 segment, IIT test preparations, and language learning. Importantly, the resources listed cumulatively include over 12 instructional Indian languages.

**Visit EdTech Repository:**  
<https://indiaedtech.org/en/>





**Luis Crouch**

*Chief Technical Officer, RTI's International Development Group  
Board Member, CSF*

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## Institutionalizing Systemic Change by Creating Demand-Supply Synergies

The Central Square Foundation and I were introduced to each other by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which partners with CSF on Foundational Learning. I am so very glad that this happened, because CSF is one of the most exciting institutions I've ever been associated with. Only in one or two other institutions that I know of is there the same thirst for knowledge and improvement, the same approach to impact using tough metrics. Also, I had never had the privilege of working in India before, and for someone interested in social and economic development, that was a big gap. I have been impressed with how complete CSF's approaches are, in each of their chosen areas of impact. I myself am most professionally familiar with Foundational Learning and I think I have been best-positioned to advise and work with them on that part of their agenda. The EdTech and private schools priorities are also of interest to me, even if I can't help as much in those areas. I want to take the opportunity to share what features of their agenda in the three impact areas I think are most notable, important, or refreshing amongst philanthropies, NGOs, and in comparison to governments.

Since I am an economist, I tend to reason in terms of supply and demand. Working on those is relatively easy and is the first reaction, and also how most people think and do. But there is also the “marketplace” where supply and demand meet. In this case we are not talking about a physical marketplace, of course, but a marketplace of ideas and policies. Without an effective marketplace, one can push on the supply side and on the demand side, but the efforts will not meet and will tend not to sustain.

One thing I like about CSF is that they recognise that no matter how capable, hard-working or innovative, no transformation is complete and sustainable without a system-wide adoption by the government. Even with regard to private schools there are certain systemic functions for which they need to work with the government. Thus, taking into account the impact of their ideas on the government, and working with the system are key and CSF recognizes this and also does it really well.

But what's the supply side and demand side? To simplify, supply side is when NGOs offer innovations or ideas that the government may or may not take. Demand side is when the government asks for ideas and takes them up if they work or sometimes even if they don't work.

CSF is committed to increasing the supply of clever and scalable ideas. For instance, improved techniques for Foundational Learning (such as pedagogy that is structured and direct, yet very active and oriented at the child), or EdTech solutions that are contextual, vernacular and pedagogy-driven. They also insist on supplying ideas that are effective, and evidence-based. On the demand side, CSF, unlike many other philanthropies, dedicatedly partners with the government on demonstrating solutions and provides support in creating system aligned interventions.

But I suppose where CSF really distinguishes itself is in noting that shaping the marketplace of ideas, identifying supply side partners and matching those with the demand side is the key to long-term sustainability. It is this trade in ideas and innovations that can bring institutionalised reform for the longer term. This approach also counts in EdTech and private schooling where markets most of the time are semi-private, or even completely private. Even these markets can benefit from what economists call "market-shaping," namely making sure that they operate transparently and efficiently.

In short, I am so happy that CSF and I found each other. It is one of the institutions I am honored to work with as a capstone towards the end of my career.



A large group of schoolboys in white shirts and grey trousers are standing in front of a school building. A large tree with green leaves is on the left side of the building. The boys are standing in rows, and some are looking towards the camera. A blue backpack is on the ground in the foreground.

### 3. AFFORDABLE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Data for Demand

Enabling Environment for Private Schools



**Nearly 50% of India's school-going children attend private schools. The growth of the private school sector is being driven by aspirational parents from low- and middle-income backgrounds. 70% of students enrolled in private schools pay monthly fees of less than ₹ 1,000**



The remarkable rise of private schools is an important yet little-discussed aspect of the Indian education system. Nearly half of the country's children (around 120 million students) attend private schools. And contrary to popular perception, this student population is not drawn just from high-income families. In fact, the recent proliferation of private schools in India has been powered by demand from low- and middle-income families across states (70% of students enrolled in private schools pay monthly fees less than ₹ 1,000). However, the quality of learning in private schools leaves much to be desired. The ASER 2018 report shows that 43% of all students in rural private schools cannot read basic text. While private schools outperform government schools in terms of raw test scores, the learning gap narrows after adjusting for the socio-economic background of students. But crucially, this comparable quality of learning is delivered at one-third the per-pupil expense of government schools, making private schools much more cost-effective.

Given the significant scale of private schools, we believe it is necessary to find ways to improve student learning, while at the same time encourage innovation and ease operational constraints in the sector for medium- to long-term improvement. We believe that market forces need to drive quality of education provision and spur innovation with the aim of improved learning outcomes.



**Data for Demand**



**Enabling Environment for Private Schools**

### 3.1 Data for Demand



**We need to empower parents to make informed school choices by providing them with reliable and timely data on learning outcomes in schools**

We set up a workstream focused on providing ‘Data for Demand’ last year, with the aim of reducing information asymmetry in the market by making available reliable and timely data on learning outcomes pertaining to every child and school. Without such data, it is hard for parents to make a reliable comparative assessment of their child’s school with neighboring schools that charge similar fees.

Our team pioneered tablet-based census assessments to conduct a pilot for reliable, large-scale assessments in Andhra Pradesh’s Prakasam district in 2019 for nearly 35,000 students in Grade 4 across government and private schools. This large-scale tablet-based assessment, the first of its kind in India, was conducted over ten days with the help of government staff, including cluster resource persons and officials from the District Education Office. As the Education Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, was keen on ensuring data reliability, we facilitated an evaluation to study the reliability of tablet-based assessments. Prof. Abhijeet Singh, Assistant Professor of Economics at the Stockholm School of Economics, evaluated the reliability of the tablet-based test through a randomized control trial experiment wherein some schools were tested on paper and some using tablets. A re-test conducted in the schools found that tablet-based assessments were more reliable while grades from paper-based assessments were inflated by 20%. Since the tablet-based assessment data was found to be more reliable, we developed report cards for parents and schools and conducted field prototypes in Prakasam district to gather user feedback. We also worked with the Assessment Cell, SCERT, to develop an assessment plan, create items for English, Mathematics and Telugu, and organized a workshop on Item Response Theory (IRT) to build capacity on assessments and item analysis. Due to changes in the state leadership, we were not able to scale up the tablet-based assessment in Andhra Pradesh. However, our team has developed a solution suite from this exercise, along with a set of public goods for state governments to conduct reliable tablet-based census assessments, monitor implementation and disseminate data to improve learning quality in schools. We are looking to conduct assessments in other states in 2020-21 and disseminate this information to parents and schools to address the information asymmetry in the market.

## 3.2 Enabling Environment for Private Schools



**Our flagship State of the Sector Report on Private Schools in India aims to build recognition for the fact that improvements in the private school system are essential to achieve quality learning outcomes for all children**

Private schools constitute an under-researched sector and are often poorly understood because of their highly fragmented and heterogeneous nature. Data on private schools and research mapping of the sectoral landscape exists in various forms, but not in a centralized and interconnected form that is accessible to policymakers and other stakeholders. Further, voices from the ground need greater amplification, and more research is required on the impact of regulations on the future of the sector.

To make data and information on the private school sector easily accessible, we developed the flagship State of the Sector Report on Private Schools in India in partnership with Omidyar Network India. This report aims to build recognition of the fact that improvements in the private school system are essential to achieve quality learning outcomes for all children, and eventually to secure socio-economic gains for the country. The report helps develop an understanding of the private school sector by focusing on the sector's scale, and the challenges it faces. The report also analyses ways to overcome these challenges with the aim of improving student learning in private schools. It studies local and international models that have succeeded on this front and can inspire India's private school sector.

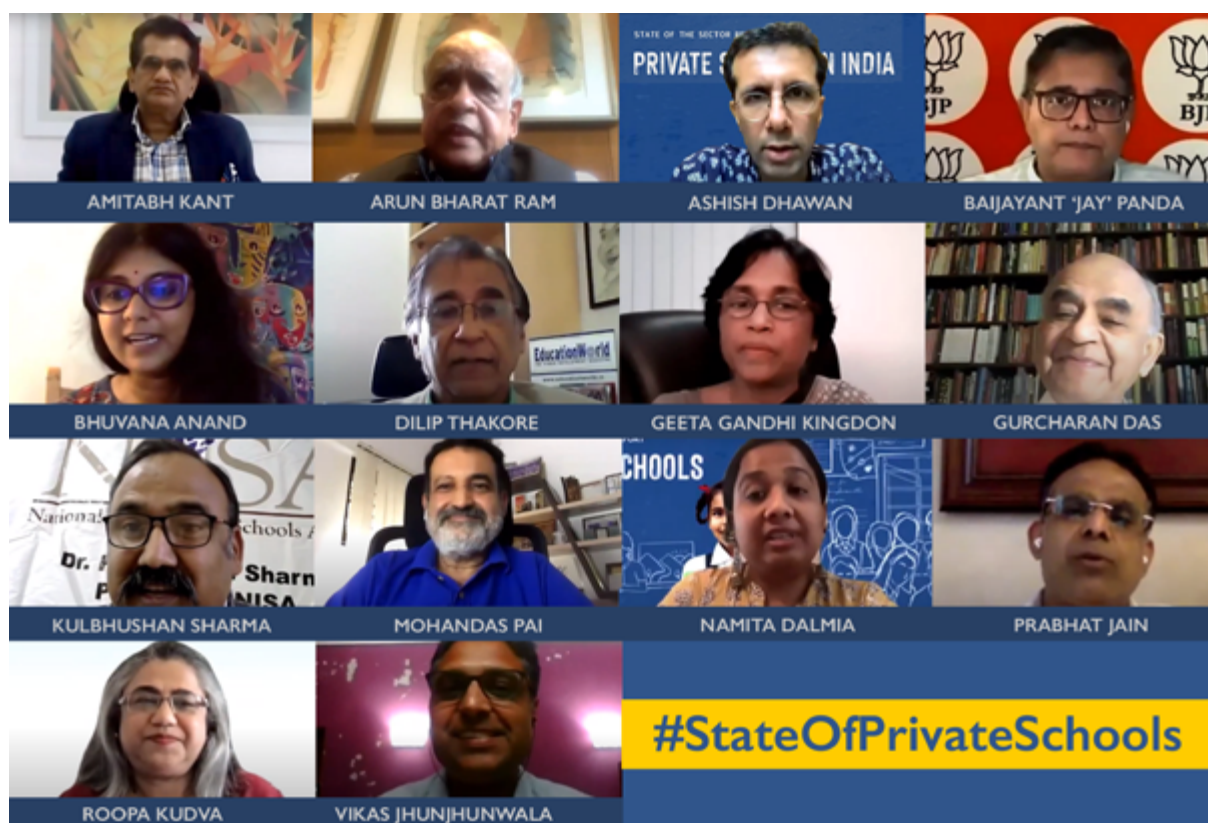
**The report helps develop an understanding of the private school sector by focusing on the sector's scale and challenges, and highlighting reform pathways based on evidence of successful international and local models**



**Visit Report Homepage:**  
<https://bit.ly/2F0eSNt>







**Amitabh Kant, the CEO of NITI Aayog, released the report and delivered the keynote address at a digital event. Baijayant 'Jay' Panda, National Vice President & Spokesperson of BJP, and Mohandas Pai, Chairman, Manipal Global Education, were among other key speakers at the event**

The report was launched by Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog at an online event in July 2020. The other key speakers at the event were Mohandas Pai, Chairman, Manipal Global Education; Baijayant Panda, National Vice President and Spokesperson, Bharatiya Janata Party; Gurcharan Das, Author and former CEO, Procter & Gamble India; and Roopa Kudva, Managing Director, Omidyar Network India. The panel discussions, moderated by Ashish Dhawan, Founder, CSF, and Dilip Thakore, Co-Founder, Education World, provided a platform for sharing insights by eminent experts including Arun Bharat Ram, Chairman, SRF Limited; Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, Chair, Education Economics and International Development at UCL Institute of Education; Prabhat Jain, Co-Founder, Pathways World School; Kulbhushan Sharma, President, National Independent Schools Alliance; Bhuvana Anand, Director, Centre for Civil Society; and Vikas Jhunjhunwala, Founder, Sunshine Schools.

The digital launch event was a platform for government officials, academia, policymakers, educators, media, private school leaders and associations, and entrepreneurs to engage in discussions on the private school sector's scale, learning outcomes and regulatory issues. CSF will also disseminate key findings of this report at the state-level to draw the attention of state governments towards improving learning outcomes in private schools.

In a country where nearly 40% of the children studying in private unaided schools come from the poorest 60% of the population, the private school sector contributes ₹ 1.75 lakh crore to the economy. However, in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, low-fee private school operators have lost out on revenues (student fees). For students enrolled in these schools, the need for home-learning using EdTech to substitute in-school learning has become critical. However, solutions need to recognize existing constraints in access to devices and data.

Philanthropists and impact investing capital could play a vital role in providing low-cost products and services for private schools at the bottom of the pyramid, as well as in building parental demand for quality learning. The report of the state of Indian private schools seeks to equip all stakeholders with data and analysis that is critical to understand the workings of the sector.

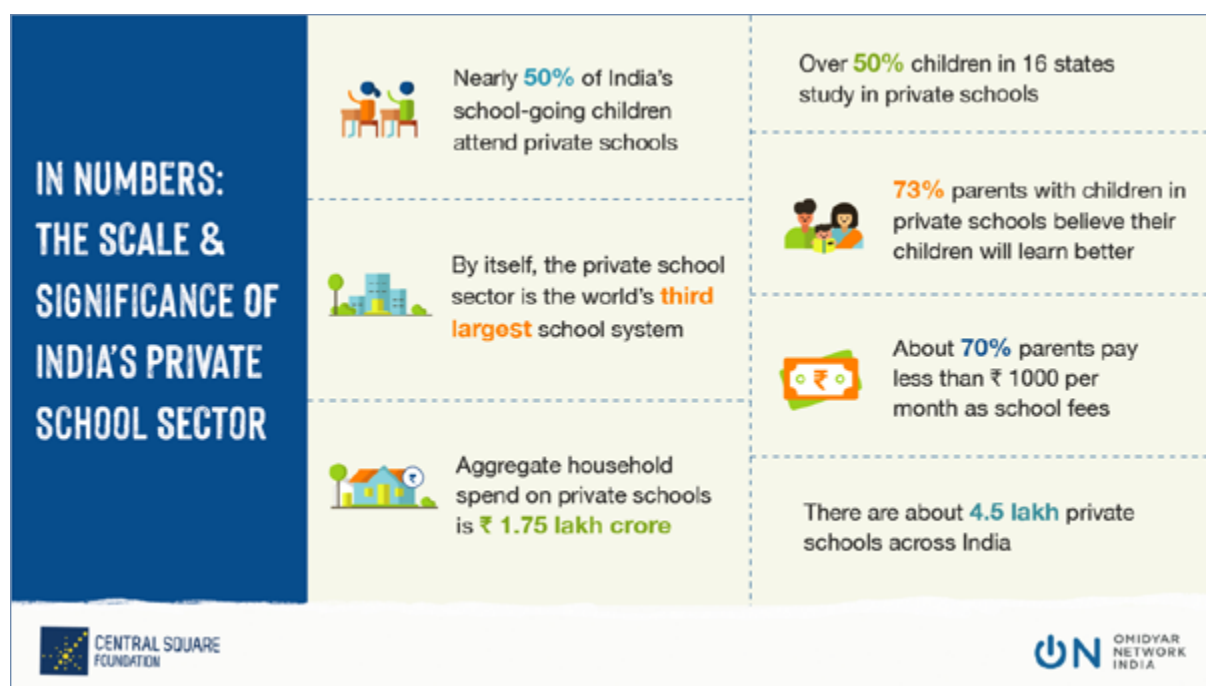
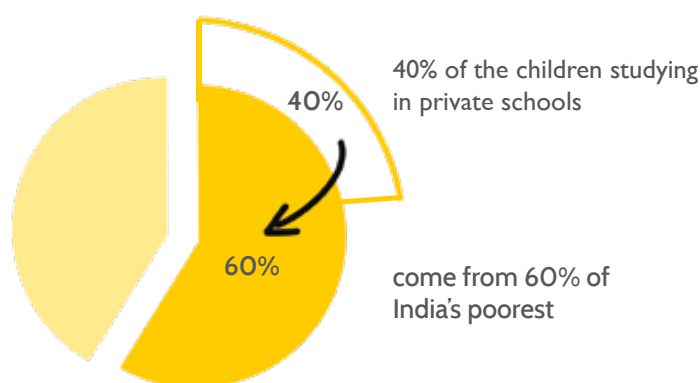


Fig 3: Children studying in private unaided schools





**Dhir Jhingran**

*Founder Director, Language and Learning Foundation (LLF)*

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## Investing in Capabilities of Social Sector Startups to Create a Sustained Supply of Thematic Expertise on Foundational Literacy

LLF's symbiotic and synergistic relationship with CSF started to take shape exactly five years ago when we received our first grant from CSF in May 2015. LLF was founded in February 2015 and it will not be an exaggeration to say that CSF's financial and strategic support in the initial years was the most crucial input that helped us stand on our feet. The Foundation was our first benefactor, like it has been for several social sector start-ups working to transform school education in India. Ashish Dhawan had faith in me, and he supported the idea of an organization focused on professional development programs for foundational literacy.

LLF has greatly benefitted from regular interactions with CSF's Non-Profit Partnerships team in reviewing and repositioning our strategies from time-to-time and in getting introduced to other potential donors. Both the Non-Profit Partnerships and Classroom Instruction Practice (CIP) teams have helped us reflect on our classroom observation and monitoring tools, supported process studies that can help redesign program components and introduced us to the work of their other partners which we could learn from. CSF also supported LLF by taking the bold step of underwriting the risk in the first ever Development Impact Bond implemented in India through CSR funding for improving early learning outcomes in seven districts of Haryana. The annual EduSquare conferences and some thematic workshops have been really useful in learning from other partners. Recently, CSF's early warning and guidance in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis has been instrumental in getting us to start thinking differently about the future.

I took up the role of an Advisor to CSF when the foundation began to shift its focus towards Foundational Learning in early 2018. Through long sessions with the CIP team, we were able to identify first principles for early learning, especially early language and literacy and multilingual education. It was really satisfying for me to be able to contribute to a larger effort of ensuring Foundational Learning for all children. This evolved into a synergistic partnership with LLF contributing through the development of early learning guidelines

(in collaboration with UNICEF) as well as its work on multilingual education. The partnership has given LLF scope to be engaged with CSF's Foundational Learning programs in Gujarat, and more recently in Uttar Pradesh.

I have been a Foundational Learning evangelist for almost two decades now, promoting early learning and multilingual education in my interactions with state education leadership and conducting orientation programs of SCERT and DIET faculty and teachers in several states. As Mission Director, SSA, I implemented what was probably the first state-led primary school reading program in the country in about 10,000 schools in Assam in the early 2000s and I have always been a strong advocate for attempting transformative change at scale in collaboration with state governments. Therefore, CSF's approach for ensuring FLN (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy) by partnering and supporting the state governments in institutionalizing change at a system level made me believe in their vision and strategy. In the past two years, CSF has been instrumental in forging alliances with several state governments for implementing high quality FLN programs at scale and roping in partners like LLF, Akshara and Room to Read to lead the academic strand of work. CSF has been able to take the goal of ensuring FLN to a whole new level by convincing several state governments to initiate comprehensive FLN programs with clearly articulated goals and strategies. With the approval of the NEP 2020, and the National Mission for FLN already announced, these are exciting times for LLF to get the opportunity to collaborate with CSF and contribute to the realization of this crucial agenda.



A group of five young girls, likely of South Asian descent, are sitting together on the floor, focused on reading their books. They are wearing school uniforms consisting of white short-sleeved shirts and dark blue or purple sleeveless dresses or jumpers. The girl on the far left is looking down at her book with a slight smile. The girl next to her is also looking down. The girl in the center is looking down. The girl on the right is looking down. The girl on the far right is looking down. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall atmosphere is one of quiet concentration and learning.

## 4. NON-PROFIT PARTNERSHIPS

Supporting Partner NPOs

Non-Profit Partnerships in 2019-2020

**We partner with non-profit organizations that work to enhance the quality of K-12 education for low-income communities and to support them as they develop organizational and programmatic capabilities, so as to enable them to effectively contribute to system reform**



We believe that reforms in our schooling system will be led by high-performing non-profits driving innovation in the sector. This is evidenced by the fact that central and state governments are actively seeking to partner with non-profits to enhance learning outcomes.

We partner with non-profit organizations (NPOs) who work to enhance the quality of K-12 education for low-income communities and to support them as they develop organizational and programmatic capabilities, so as to enable them to effectively contribute to system reform.

Our partner organizations work across our key focus areas (FLN, EdTech, private schools) and at the intersection of our three approaches (raising awareness, supply shaping and demonstration) to achieve impact.

Over time, CSF has supported more than 40 not-for-profit organizations. In the financial year 2019-2020, we worked with a total of 19 partners.



**Supporting Partner NPOs**



**Non-Profit Partnerships  
in 2019-2020**



## 53 4.1 Supporting Partner NPOs



**Based on our unique vantage point in the education ecosystem, we provide technical and programmatic support to our non-profit partners to enable them to amplify and accelerate their impact**

### ORGANIZATION CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (OCAF) TO BUILD A STRONG ORGANIZATION

Strategy

Systems for Learning

Structures

Staffing

Solution

Scale

Sustainability

Stakeholder Engagement

We work very closely with all our partners to design, vet and implement impactful programs. Based on our unique vantage point in the education ecosystem, we also provide technical and programmatic support to our partners to enable them to amplify and accelerate their impact. Further, we work with them to diagnose key gaps at an organizational level and address them together with a view to improving organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

We have developed a well-defined Organizational Capability Assessment Framework (OCAF), which we use to diagnose critical inputs that go into building a strong organization. Some of these aspects include strategy, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, governance structures, staffing, and fundraising.

We ensure continuous learning, exchange of ideas, and meaningful collaboration with each of our partners. EduSquare is one such platform.

**EduSquare:** EduSquare is CSF's flagship bi-annual, one-day event, conducted with our non-profit partners to promote learning and collaboration. In 2019-2020, we hosted the first event in February and the second in October.

In February 2019, all organizations received personalized feedback on their strategy from experts such as Namita Dalmia (Omidyar Network), Priyanka Anand Chadha (Dasra), Aakash Sethi (Quest Alliance) and Eshwara Venkat (Ashoka University). CSF Advisor Ashok Chadha discussed ways to improve operational efficiency, while Akanksha Bapna (EvalDesign) shared her insights on how young organizations should approach M&E. The day culminated with a peer-learning session on presenting an impactful elevator pitch.

In the October 2019 edition, Anant Bhagwati, Priyanka Anand Chadha and their colleagues from Dasra's capacity-building team facilitated a workshop on building an aspirational vision and a repeatable model for scale. Also, in preparation for the fundraising season, Alpana Tandon and Anushree Parekh from Samhita led a session on the current landscape for corporate funding and how organizations can strategize to make the most of it.



EduSquare, CSF's flagship bi-annual, one-day event, aims to promote learning and collaboration



## 4.3 Here's an overview of our Non-Profit Partnerships in 2019-2020

### PARTNERS



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सीखने सिखाने के नए तरीके

#### Top Parent App

### HIGHLIGHTS

We are supporting the Top Parent team in driving adoption and engagement of EdTech solutions for Foundational Learning with low-income households through a parent facing smartphone app. Top Parent not only aims to increase parental awareness on EdTech usage, but also encourages downloading and engaging with three curated apps (Read Along by Google, Math Masti and Chimple).

#### EdTech B2G Government Relations

We are working closely with a senior B2G consultant who will lead EdTech projects with state governments. We plan to provide public goods and technical support in the first two quarters of 2020-2021, and also support states in designing and implementing EdTech projects, going forward.

#### B2C Information Provision

We are working with an entrepreneur to develop and test an organizational strategy to provide assessment-based school quality information to parents in low-fee private schools. The process involves rapid prototypes and pilots within urban micro-markets to identify a scalable, reliable and effective approach.

#### School-to-Work Transition for Girls

We are working on a project specifically focused on effective school-to-work transition for girls to improve the poor female labor force participation rates in India. We plan to execute pilots on both the supply side (i.e., working with girls in secondary schools) and the demand side (i.e., working with employers) to build an effective and scalable program.

## PARTNERS

## HIGHLIGHTS



**Language and Learning Foundation (LLF)** employs a systems approach and works with state governments to shape classroom practice and learning outcomes around early language and literacy in a holistic manner

With CSF support, LLF has built a holistic early literacy program around three pillars – school demonstrations, capacity building of teachers and teacher educators, and systemic reform at the state-level.

The organization has scaled its literacy programs across five states – Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat. In some states it has done so directly, and in others it has done so as part of coalitions.

LLF has also generated evidence on the effectiveness of their program. For instance, in Haryana in 2019-2020, 70% of all Grade 2 students were reportedly able to read more than 20 words per minute, 84% of the students were able to respond orally to three out of five questions asked in a comprehensible manner, and 75% of the students were able to write sentences based on a picture given in the assessment.



**Madhi Foundation** works to improve Foundational Learning outcomes for children in public schools through robust TLM, teacher training and tracking

Madhi's flagship program is the Foundational Learning Improvement Programme (FLIP), a technology-enabled initiative to improve learning outcomes among children in Tamil Nadu by using the 3Ts – Teaching Learning Materials, Training and Tracking.

In 2019-2020, Madhi implemented their intervention across two districts in Tamil Nadu, and worked as a state partner to scale up their intervention to 30 districts.

Key accomplishments centered around tracking and school coverage by BRTEs, with over 9,000 BRTE observations completed on the TNVN app, and a 2X increase in the average number of schools observed by BRTEs (September 2019 to March 2020).

## PARTNERS

## HIGHLIGHTS



**Chimple** is a gamified, personalized and adaptive learning system which guides a child from absolutely no knowledge of the alphabet to a stage where the child can read to learn and perform basic arithmetic

Chimple got its start in the XPRIZE competition, where children who used only Chimple had 15% gains in Reading Comprehension and 30% gains in two-digit addition against a 4% gain and 11% gain, respectively, for in-school children.

Since then, with CSF support, Chimple has developed a B2B and a B2C version of their app, with the former operational in 10 BMC schools in Mumbai and the latter having close to 20,000 downloads.



**The Teacher App** is leading online in-service teacher training in the country by creating high quality interactive, digital content which can be accessed by any teacher on a smartphone anywhere, anytime, at zero cost

With support from CSF, The Teacher App built high quality digital courses across the domains of early literacy, early numeracy and pedagogy of early learning. These 45 mins–1 hour courses were distributed in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, and adoption trends were observed to strengthen delivery strategies. This content is now available on DIKSHA and is being percolated down to all teachers by the state leadership in Uttar Pradesh (using state machinery) and Madhya Pradesh (through CM Rise) as core professional development content.

The Teacher App content saw a substantive increase in teacher adoption during Covid-19.



**321 Foundation** provides individualized support to each teacher and contextualized curriculum to students to drive better learning outcomes

With CSF's guidance in the last few years, 321 has built a very strong early years program that has shown tremendous results in low-income private schools. For instance, in Grade 1, 63% of all students under the 321 intervention were able to read a 20-word paragraph successfully, whereas only 25% in the control group were successful. Similarly, in mathematics, with respect to '2 digit–1 digit subtraction', 65% of the intervention students were successful, compared to a success rate of only 20% in the control group.

In 2019-2020, 321 signed on a total of 75 schools across Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad as partners.

## PARTNERS

## HIGHLIGHTS



**Key Education Foundation (Key-Ed)** works with preschool students, teachers and parents to deliver high quality ECE to ensure school readiness of children

The key objective of CSF's partnership with Key-Ed was to increase their program's reach and impact.

In 2019-2020, Key-Ed delivered its program to 49 low-fee private schools in Bengaluru, reaching 182 teachers and approximately 5,000 students. In this program, 100% of the students reached were found to be school-ready as per the school readiness instrument, with students showing an average of 23% improvement from baseline across all seven competencies.

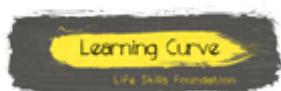
Additionally, Key-Ed also began working with the State Government of Karnataka to set up pre-primary sections in their primary schools across the state.



**Saarthi** empowers parents from low-income communities to provide an environment of excellent early learning to their children at home

In 2019-2020, Saarthi's at-home learning model evolved to include DIY activities and follow-ups with parents through IVR calls and WhatsApp messages. As of 2019-2020, Saarthi serves almost 3,000 parents across 10 communities in Delhi. They have also demonstrated some strong impact indicators – children using Saarthi showed an improvement in literacy by 25% in an internal pre/ post assessment.

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, Saarthi has launched a completely WhatsApp-based home learning program which is showing extremely high traction (>90% response rates from parents) within just a few weeks of its launch.



**Learning Curve Life Skills Foundation** builds capacities of school teachers, parents and children from low-income communities to improve their social-emotional skills

In 2019-2020, Learning Curve worked with 42 APS and 51 government schools directly (KGBVs, MPHS, Social Welfare) to deliver their social and emotional learning (SEL) program. Their consolidated reach extended to 25,050 students and 770 teachers across 663 classrooms.

Additionally, their program showed strong outcomes across KGBVs and APS, with a majority of students showing one level improvement in SEL (KGBV: 53%; APS: 69%).



## PARTNERS

## HIGHLIGHTS



**Involve Learning Solutions Foundation (Involve)** works with government schools and affordable private schools to train and mentor senior students (Grade 8 onwards) to teach their juniors

CSF worked with Involve to implement their program in 17 schools across Bengaluru and Chennai in 2019-2020. On average, 17.7% of students showed improvement in mathematics.



**Ahvaan Trust**

Ahvaan Trust is one of CSF's newest partners, and next year, we hope to support them as they scale their ECE and FLN programs across Delhi and Tripura.



**Akshara Foundation** aims to improve the quality of preschool education, foundational reading and math skills in government primary schools

Akshara acts as a technical expert for numeracy to the Gujarat Education Coalition led by CSF to improve early grade learning in the state of Gujarat.



**Sol's ARC** works towards building teacher capability to identify numeracy learning gaps in students and apply inclusive learning solutions to bridge those gaps

Sol's ARC engages with organizations to provide numeracy program frameworks, inclusive learning materials for teachers and students, training to teachers and educators, and M&E support. Some of their current partners include Education Girls, Teach for India, The Teacher App, ATMA and Guardian of Dreams.

Sol's ARC is the technical expert for numeracy on Project Ankur in Madhya Pradesh. They support the CSF team in creation of content for students and teachers, and training in numeracy.

## PARTNERS

## HIGHLIGHTS



**The Education Alliance (TEA)** provides strategic support to state governments in the areas of program and partnership management

TEA helps state education departments work strategically with NGOs to design and deliver programs and sustain those efforts. TEA's programs with the South Delhi Municipal Corporation and Samagra Shiksha-Tamil Nadu benefit 9,00,000 children directly/ indirectly.

CSF leverages TEA's technical expertise for Project Ankur.



**Room to Read (RTR)** works in two specific domains – Literacy and Girls Education

Through its Literacy Program, RTR supports the education system by establishing libraries, conducting training, and publishing local language books to serve India's linguistically diverse population. RTR's Girls' Education Program addresses gender inequality in the education system. Till date, RTR has reached out to over 4.3 million beneficiaries.

RTR's work in Madhya Pradesh began as early as 2005. Currently, RTR implements a comprehensive literacy program in all 2,158 schools across Barwani district.

RTR is the technical partner for literacy on Project Ankur in Madhya Pradesh. The organization provides support in designing contextualized teaching and learning materials and training modules in literacy.

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**Subbu Parameswaran***Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
Learning Curve Life Skills Foundation*

Being part of the CSF portfolio for three years has played a crucial role in our growth. More than just a funder, CSF has become more of a strategic partner – facilitating our thinking around the program, outcome evaluation, and indeed, our strategy to scale. The GA team at CSF has worked with us every step of the way – as our biggest supporter, and strongest critic, all with the express intent of enabling the organization to scale and mature. We have immensely benefited from the depth of understanding and the networks that CSF brings to the education space – every conversation that we have with the CSF team adds to our ability to think differently, and bring stronger impact to our work.

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**Merlia Shaukath***Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
Madhi Foundation*

Our partnership with Central Square Foundation is as old as the organization itself – CSF was quite literally our first funding partner and the journey since has been mutually enriching in many ways. This was in 2016 when CSF itself was still evolving as an organization and I do believe as young teams we were still trying to learn from each other and grow together given that there was great alignment in our vision which stands true even today. CSF has since seen tremendous growth and I think much of it has come not only from them being able to fund and build an impressive portfolio of high performing and highly ambitious organizations

but from CSF's willingness to allow their partner organizations to try, experiment, fail and learn from their mistakes and owing this journey of growing and learning together with their grantee organizations. The greatest benefit for Madhi has been the fact that CSF has allowed us the space and time to learn and evolve on our own and has also supported us in the most unintrusive manner possible whenever we hit a wall and needed to pivot or course correct, either by nudging us in the direction of the solution or by facilitating opportunities to learn from other grantee organizations.

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**Gaurav Singh**

*Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
321 Education Foundation*

CSF has supported us for the long term. This multi-year support has allowed us to make mistakes, iterate and improve our work. A lot of our current success is because of this patient support, which is a very rare thing in the sector. I wish more funders showed this long-term belief and resolve. CSF has a very engaged portfolio team that deeply cares about us as an organization. They have always been available as a thought partner to brainstorm and support us with whatever we need. CSF also has deep connections across the education sector, both nationally and internationally. This means they are able to share with us the latest research, developments and trends which inform our programs and strategy. This allows for a rapid feedback loop which is again rare in a funder-grantee relationship. In their early years, ideas and organizations are very fragile. They need a lot of support and care if they have to survive and thrive. CSF has helped us survive crises and thrive in challenging environments. And for that we are very grateful.





## 5. FINANCIALS

We completed eight years in February this year. In the last eight years, we have supported many organizations and entrepreneurs working in the domain of school education. We have partnered with over 40 organizations – we build deep engagements with them and provide valuable support in areas such as monitoring and evaluation, senior executive hiring, technical knowledge and internal capacity building, fundraising and communications. Our teams are actively involved in policy research and analysis of critical education challenges and solutions from Indian and international contexts. We aim to use our learnings from the on-ground efforts of our partners grantees and our own research efforts to advocate for key reform initiatives and support governments in transforming the education system at the municipal, state and central levels. We have been gradually expanding our support-related work to governments by leading implementation partner ofn several key initiatives.

DETAILS	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	REMARKS
Personnel	10.95	14.32	
Admin Expenses	3.76	3.54	All overheads/ office expenditure
Grants/ Contracts	19.61	39.07	Grants, Project expenditure including travel, consultants
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>34.32</b>	<b>56.92</b>	

(All figures in ₹ crores)

As per income and expenditure statement

Note: Provisional data for 2019-2020

# 64 6. ADVISORY BOARD AND TEAM

## FOUNDER AND CHAIRPERSON

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our gratitude to our partner organizations for contributing photos to our Annual Report:

- Chimple
- Madhi Foundation
- Language and Learning Foundation (LLF)
- Saarthi
- Key Education Foundation (Key-Ed)
- Learning Curve Life Skills Foundation

Photographer: Poshali Goel

Editor: Kavya Bopanna

Design and artwork: **Yellow** Brickroad Media





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