



**Knowledge hub**  
-  
**Collection of best practices**

**Summary of the best practice**

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) \*

Reaching the Unreached - Language Literacy Programme (LLP)

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented \*

India

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to \*

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

#### 4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) \*

UNICEF with implementation partner agency Pratham Books, and Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra

#### 5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. \*

- Reaching the unreached
- Bridging the digital divide
- COVID-19 school closures
- Learning Loss
- Accessibility for learning continuity
- Reading for Joy
- Story books
- School libraries
- School readiness
- Vulnerable populations
- Foundational literacy

#### 6. What makes it a best practice? \*

The Language Literacy Programme (LLP) focuses on the development of school readiness and on the promotion of reading for joy among children. The programme activities have been designed to address the digital divide which has led to the lack of learning opportunities for the most vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 school closures and has succeeded in reaching 60,000 children across 1204 schools in 2 districts of the state.

### **Description of the best practice**

## 7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? \*

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in October of 2020, UNICEF with its partner agency, Pratham Books, supported the State Council of Education and Training, Maharashtra (SCERT) to launch a Reading Campaign for elementary school students. Within 23 weeks of the campaign, 2.5 million children received story books every Saturday in Marathi, Urdu and English. The campaign included dissemination of e-books at the district and school level. In areas where physical travel was possible (based on COVID restrictions and reach by road), teachers managed to reach children without devices/ the internet. However, given the difficult terrain of some district/ blocks (administrative units within districts) in the state, many children remained unreached. Further, as per the UNICEF-supported rapid assessment survey, 36% students did not have access to ANY learning at home during the closures. Most of these students belonged to the most vulnerable socio-economic groups and the lack of access amongst them meant a high risk of school drop-out. The Language Literacy Programme was planned to address this challenge and launched in July 2021.

The programme is currently being implemented in six of the most remote blocks in the Gadchiroli and Nandurbar districts of the state in partnership with Pratham Books, and the state and district education offices. There are two components to the programme- provision of Read @ Home Packs for grades 1 & 2, and a Library Kit for all elementary schools in the selected sites. The programme implementation is supported by District Coordinators and Block Coordinators appointed from the existing government officials. Teachers have been trained in implementing both the components and a baseline and endline assessment has been conducted (the programme has been extended as there were delays in implementation; however, the end line has been conducted as part of the original plan). The programme endline indicated that emergent language learning skills of children improved from 26% at baseline to 52% at the time of endline.

## 8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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The LLP includes 2 components-

- i. Read @ Home
- ii. Library Kit initiative

i. Read @ Home- as a part of the Read @ Home initiative, a book pack with 5 story books was given to all 24,300 students from grades 1 & 2 in the selected schools. The book pack curation focused on providing children high quality printed children's books to develop their interest in reading. The pack also included age-appropriate activities to develop their pre-reading and reading skills, in the form of a workbook. As schools were closed, the packs were to be read at home and activities to be marked by parents. The activities were simple and visual to ensure that parents who may not be literate/ understand the school language, could also help their children. 1 teacher from each of the 1204 schools under this programme, was trained on the implementation and monitoring of this initiative. Currently, teachers are using the book packs with children in school and also supported by community workers appointed to support the teachers with the implementation at home.

ii. Library Kits- all the 1204 under the programme were provided with a library kit that included 100 books in Marathi, Hindi, English, and other local languages, where relevant. The library aims at exposing children to good children's literature and promote the joy of reading through teachers trained in encouraging library use. Around 1300 teachers have been trained on the library component of the LLP.

District level coordinators and block-level coordinators have also been oriented on the implementation and monitoring of the programme. These officials have been instrumental in ensuring that the book packs and library packs are delivered even to the remotest schools in the two intervention districts. A baseline assessment was conducted at the start of the project period to assess children's emergent language skills; another assessment was conducted in February-March 2022 to assess any changes in these skills.

## 9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? \*

The LLP has been closely watched and monitored by the state not only because of the solution it has offered for children who were left behind during the school closures due to the digital divide, but also because of its impact on foundational literacy. The state's education department is in the process of operationalizing the country's new National Education Policy, which focuses on achievement of foundational literacy and numeracy in the next 3-4 years. Presentation of the LLP, which has demonstrated an improvement from 26% to 52% in emergent reading skills of children in grades 1 & 2, has led to an increased interest from the state. UNICEF is now working closely with the state government to integrate the learnings from this project into the state foundation literacy and numeracy strategy.

LLP has also focussed the state's attention on the refurbishment of school libraries and has requested UNICEF to study the current status of libraries in elementary schools and offer recommendations for improvement.

## 10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? \*

Key triggers for transformation:

- i. Response to field needs- as the programme was designed to respond to the field needs, it easily adopted by the local district administration.
- ii. Involvement of teachers and system functionaries- the implementation and monitoring of the programme was through teachers and the district, block coordinators. This helped in quick identification of field challenges and addressal of these issues.
- iii. Provision of good quality children’s literature- the programme appealed to children, some of whom had never before been exposed to story books at their homes or never attended schools before due to the COVID-19 closures.

What worked well?

As the grade 1 & 2 book packs were received by the schools on time and the teachers trained as soon as the books were received, this component has worked well in schools.

What did not work well?

Due to the delays in the transportation of the library kits in some of the remote blocks, where vehicle access is limited, these kits reached schools later than the book packs. Further, teacher trainings on the library kits were delayed due to other government trainings and school reopening orientations organized by the state. To address this, implementation has been extended to July 2022 and community workers appointed to help teachers in the school.

## 11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? \*

The LLP is a best practice due to the following attributes of the programme-

- i. Efficient and effective- the intervention has effectively addressed the issue of access to learning for some of the most vulnerable children living in the remotest blocks of the state in partnership with the Education Department officials.
- ii. Relevance- the project addresses a key concern on access and foundational literacy. Exposure to good quality story books is necessary to instill in children a love for reading, positively impacting their learning and making them life-long readers.
- iii. Measurability and scalability- the programme included a baseline and an endline assessment due to which the model was tested for its impact on learning. All the processes involved the government to ensure sustainability and scalability through the state.

## 12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. \*

This is still work in progress; reports are being finalised