![unicef logo - for every child]

INDIA Country Office

Education + OR + Thematic Report

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Expression of Thanks

UNICEF acknowledges and appreciates the support of government partners, corporates, major donors, foundations, individuals, and UNICEF National Committees for their contributions that enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect children's rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. We take this opportunity to thank all our partners for their commitment and trust in UNICEF.

UNICEF India would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all our donors who continued to support us or even scaled-up their support during the challenging year of 2022. UNICEF and partners reached millions of children, adolescents, and youth with targeted messages and interventions on addressing all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect, which would not have been possible without the generous funding received.

Thanks to the support, UNICEF continued its mission to meet the needs and support the fulfilment of the right to education of the most vulnerable children, their families and communities as per the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2018-2022 under UNICEF Global Education Strategy 'Every Child Learns' and in alignment with the Government of India national development agenda and National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the India UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

Thematic or flexible funding against the Country Programme for UNICEF's education interventions is crucial as it provides us with greater flexibility to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable children, particularly in emergencies and dynamic socio-political development context in which UNICEF India works.

We once again, take this opportunity to thank all our partners for their commitment and trust in UNICEF India.

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Cover Photo: 14 – years – old Malikanu Gopal took life skill training, and she learned the importance of Inclusion, participation, empathy, and communication ©UNICEF/UN0772013/Kolari

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADE	Adolescent Development and Empowerment
AFCs	Adolescent-friendly Centres
AWWs	Anganwadi Workers
BEPC	Bihar Education Project Council
BSG	Bharat Scouts and Guides
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCES	Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSSP	Comprehensive School Safety Programme
CwD	Children with Disabilities
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EdWG	Education Working Group
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
FLS	Foundational Literacy Study
FLW	Frontline Workers
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
J&K	Jammu & Kashmir
KINDLE	Knowledge and Information Network on Digital Learning and Education
LEADS	Life Education and Development Support
MoE	Ministry of Education
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NAS	National Achievement Survey
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NECCEP	National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy
NEP	National Education Policy
NIPUN	National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy

OoSC	Out-of-School Children	
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution	
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication	
SC	Scheduled Castes	
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal	
SHG	Self-help Group	
SMC	School Management Committee	
SmSA	Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan	
SOP	Standard Pperating Procedures	
ST	Scheduled Tribes	
U-DISE	United District Information System for Education	
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences	
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework	
WEF	World Economic Forum	

Executive Summary

By mid-2022 all schools and early childhood development (ECD) centres had reopened after one of the longest school closures since 2020, impacting the learning and retention of 286 million school-aged children in India.[1] The pandemic exacerbated the achievement gap and widened the learning loss of children, particularly the most vulnerable in India. The sudden transition to online learning, combined with the challenges of remote instruction, contributed to issues of accessibility in remote and vulnerable areas and has affected students' educational outcomes and future prospects.

In an effort to respond to the challenges caused by the disruption of learning and to continue to address more systemic bottlenecks hampering quality of learning in India, UNICEF provided technical support at the national and state level. The efforts helped to strengthen the government's capacity to improve the delivery of education in line with the three key priority areas of UNICEF education workplan:

1. early childhood education
2. out-of-school children
3. quality of teaching learning focusing on the continuity of learning and the safe reopening of schools.

Flexible thematic funds were critical in responding to the emerging needs of children during the pandemic and the immediate aftermath. Due to the availability of these funds, UNICEF India was able to address and mitigate the impact of learning loss, UNICEF in collaboration with government and partners supported the education system in **learning recovery programmes and back to school campaigns reaching 5.74 million children** (48 per cent girls) across nine states. More than **5 million parents, children, and adolescents reached with 'back to school' communication campaign in 14 states.** Among school management committees (SMCs), capacity development had been initiated in most states to support safe, inclusive learning environment at home and schools, engaging with volunteers, parents on continuity of education. UNICEF continued to support state governments to implement a ***comprehensive school safety programme*** (CSSP) to provide safe and protective learning environment in 10 states.

In line with the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2018-2022 Education priorities, **UNICEF pursued its effort to generate evidence to inform education policies and planning at national and state levels**. Technical support was provided to conduct a gender and equity-based analysis based on data generated by the educational management information system (EMIS) and the National Achievement Survey (NAS) in preparation of education annual plans in 15 states.

As the lead technical partner on assessment for the Ministry of Education (MoE), UNICEF also invested in generating evidence on the foundational literacy and numeracy status of children for the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Mission to strengthen efforts for foundational literacy and numeracy. UNICEF supported by bringing their technical expertise in the design and implementation of the Foundational Learning Study (FLS) assessing 86,000 students in 10,000 schools across 28 states and 8 union territories. The assessment was conducted in the 20 languages that are used as mediums of instruction in India.

UNICEF and partners continued to provide guidance to the government on the development of protocol for the safe reopening of early childhood development (ECD) Centres and organize enrolment campaigns to ensure the safe return of young children to learning, and to further strengthen access to quality early childhood education (ECE). This was done collaboratively, in convergence between the departments of school education and women and child development to

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[1] Global Monitoring of School Closures caused by COVID-19 Pandemic – Dashboards – COVID-19 Response (unesco.org). School closures have impacted 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary education and 28 million children who were attending pre-school education in anganwadi centres.

ensure continuum of learning between age 3 to 8 years. Complementing this, 10 million preschoolers (50 per cent girls) benefitted from UNICEF's initiatives to help caregivers, including fathers, to encourage the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children.

As a result, more than 400,000 ECD workers and field supervisors from nine states received capacity development through an online ECE course developed by UNICEF, in multiple languages, thus improving learning experience for more than 7.2 million children enrolled in ECD Centres. Additionally, more than 50,000 primary school teachers were capacitated to provide academic support to ECD workers based within school premises in three states. UNICEF facilitated the identification and tracking of out-of-school children and mainstreamed 754,593 out-of-school children (51 per cent girls) including 2,447 children with disabilities (CWD) to formal education in the most vulnerable areas across 11 states in the country.

In 2022, 39.8 million adolescents (50 per cent girls) had the opportunity to access an online career portal and offline materials in English and eight other Indian languages, to explore and identify future opportunities for work and education in 15 states. In collaboration with state governments, UNICEF supported the development of 21st century skills programmes including coding, financial literacy, and self-esteem from which 1.1 million adolescents benefitted. UNICEF is ensuring life skills programmes are embedded in the current curriculum and 1,236 teachers (41 per cent female) have been trained on life skills impacting learning and skilling for 151,487 adolescents (50 per cent girls) in five states. Building on life skills, measurement tools have been developed to build students' ability in apply life skills through their learning.

UNICEF is taking on a critical, convening role in a sector that has seen a rapid increase in the number of agencies supporting education. UNICEF brought together agencies with common beliefs and values in the effort to scale support for ECE and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), to reduce duplication, and to maximize the use of funds to improve results for children. UNICEF invested in system strengthening with the government at the national and state level, which was essential for scaling up reach and to ensure the sustainability of actions for the most vulnerable children.

UNICEF will continue its collaboration with the Government of India and other sector partners to ensure continuous access to quality learning specifically for the most vulnerable children under the new India Country Programme 2023-2027. Thematic funds are essential for UNICEF India to be able to reach the most vulnerable children.

Strategic Context

Prior to the pandemic, children, including adolescents, in India were experiencing a learning crisis – they were not learning or acquiring skills for life, work, or sustained development. This was further exacerbated by the almost two-year closure of all ECD Centres and schools impacting the learning and development of 286 million girls and boys aged 3 to18 years.[2]

Although India has a rich policy environment with the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (NECCEP) 2013, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, its implementation has been challenged by social norms, financing, and capacities of the system to fully enable access to and the delivery of quality education (learning and skills) services from pre-primary to upper secondary, particularly during the pandemic. Public spending in India on education remains below recommended levels of the NEP 2020, which states the need for public investment in education to be 6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). India has consistently fallen short of this level – in the fiscal year 2018-2019, public expenditure on education was only 4.3 per cent of GDP[3].

In addition, due to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, 62 per cent of surveyed households discontinued their child's education, with 67 per cent in rural and 55 per cent in urban areas, increasing the number of out-of-school children and the percentage of girls and boys dropping out due to early marriage or to work, respectively.[4] Gender and socio-cultural barriers continue to pose barriers for children especially among the SC, ST, migrant, and Muslim minorities.

Across India, many schools are unable to provide safe learning environments due to crises like the pandemic, natural disasters, limited capacity to provide mental health support and protect children from violence, as well as not being inclusive of all children, especially those with disabilities. Too often girls and boys discontinue school due to gender specific reasons – for example, girls to marry and boys to work which the pandemic has exacerbated.

While the NEP 2020 recognizes the crucial role of teachers in fulfilling a child's right to quality education, more efforts are needed to address quality, accountability, and governance within the sector. The workforce of teacher has a deficit of over 1 million teachers[5] in certain education levels and subjects such as early childhood education, special education, physical education, music, arts, and curricular streams of vocational education.[6] The lack of education sector staff extends to cluster, block and district offices of education and state councils of educational research, teaching, and the district institutions of education and training. This prevents sufficient academic and professional support to teachers.

Furthermore, the system is further handicapped by the lack of equipment and adequate facilities within schools, including working computer and science labs. The shortage of qualified and subject specialized teachers is a key factor hampering the learning of children and their transition to secondary education. On the other hand, the curriculum lacks relevance and diversity, needs to address gender and diversity responsiveness, as well as life skills and climate change. There is also a

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[2]Global Monitoring of School Closures caused by COVID-19 Pandemic – Dashboards – Covid-19 Response (unesco.org) School closures have impacted 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary education and 28 million children who were attending pre-school education in anganwadi centres.

[3] Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education 2016-17 to 2018-19, Ministry of Education. (https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/budget_expenditure.pdf).

[4] Save the Children India. A Generation at Stake. 2020 REPORT_COVID_corrected (savethechildren.in).

[5] U-DISE+, 2020-21.

[6] UNESCO. No Teacher, No Class. State of the Education Report for India, 2021 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379115.

mismatch between classroom situations that are largely multi-grade, and the instructional design and professional development programmes designed for mono-grade teaching and learning.

During COVID-19, teachers felt that integrating technology in education is time-consuming, which is linked to their lack of professional skills in using technology in the teaching and learning process. Only 20 per cent of teachers reported receiving orientation on delivering education digitally and 84 per cent reporting that they faced challenges delivering education digitally. Despite teachers using smartphones as their primary EdTech tool during the pandemic, most teachers lacked the requisite devices to deliver education digitally.[7]

Financial constraints and the poor economic background of families are among key factors that lead to dropouts from elementary schools, combined with difficulty in following the curriculum as well as a fear of failing. Children accessing government schools often come from families facing economic difficulties and the uncertainty of family income forces them to work and, in some cases, to migrate (seasonally/long term), which throws them out of the schooling system. Work and marriage are prioritised over education as parents see little value in sending their children to school.

The Status of Children and Learning

The pandemic heightened the learning crisis with most children at primary level having lost or forgotten basic mathematical and language skills.[8] By November 2021, only more than a third of students in grades 3, 5 and 8 achieved targeted performance levels across all subjects. Learning levels declined as children progressed to higher grades and especially among children from SC and ST communities.[9] The lingering impact of even five months of school closure results in an immediate loss of 0.6 years (about 7 months) of schooling adjusted for quality, bringing the effective learning that a student can achieve down from 7.9 years to 7.3 years.[10]

During the pandemic, only 60 per cent of students reported accessing some form of remote learning, while only 45 per cent and 57 per cent for SC and ST children, respectively. Amongst students accessing remote learning, 80 per cent reported to be learning less or significantly less than in school. Over a third of primary students (as perceived by their parents) and half of the students in secondary school reported mental health as an issue due to the pandemic.[11] Poor learning and skill development can also contribute to children and adolescent feeling unprepared for life. Only less than half of graduates were found employable.[12]

While most children are enrolled in pre-primary and primary schools (3-10 years), the net enrolment rates dropped after grade 5 and grade 8, reaching only 52.5 per cent (52.4 per cent girls) at the secondary level and to 34.7 per cent (35.6 per cent girls) at the higher secondary level.[13] Only 51 per cent of children (51 per cent girls) entering grade 1 have pre-school education. With regards to their pre-school education, 34.5 per cent children (33.7 per cent girls) transitioned from school-based pre-school whereas 16.6 per cent children (17.3 per cent girls) shifted from anganwadi centres (AWCs).

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[7] *Status Report: Government and Private Schools During COVID-19', Oxfam India, 2020 (https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Status per cent20report per cent20Government per cent20and per cent20private per cent20schools per cent20during per cent20COVID per cent20- per cent2019.pdf)*

[8] Azim Premji University. Loss of Learning during the Pandemic. February 2021 Field_Studies_Loss_of_Learning_during_the_Pandemic.f1622994202.pdf (azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in)

[9] Ministry of Education India, National Survey Assessment 2021 NAS-NCERT (schooleduinfo.in)

[10] World Bank: Press release 18 June 2020 COVID-19 Could Lead to Permanent Loss in Learning and Trillions of Dollars in Lost Earnings (worldbank.org)

[11] UNICEF. Rapid Assessment of Learning During School Closures in the Context of COVID-19. 2021 Untitled-2 (unicef.org)

[12] India Skills Report 2021 ISR_Report_2021.pdf (wheebox.com)

[13] U-DISE +, 2020-21 (NER)

The percentage of children who have attended pre-school varies from state to state from below 10 per cent to above 90 per cent.[14]

Village: Jaher, Block: Mandar, District: Ranchi, State: Jharkhand, Country: India 24th December 2022 – Anganwadi Worker Nagina Devi recites a poem with action to the students at the anganwadi centre. ©UNICEF/UN0777423/Viswanathan

The retention rate for girls at primary and elementary levels since 2011-2012 has been higher than that of boys and the average. While retention at the elementary (to grade 8) and secondary level (to grade 10) increased since 2013,[15] for children from vulnerable groups such as SC, ST, and Muslim communities, retention is below the average at elementary and secondary levels.[16]

Approximately 32.2 million children, aged 6-17 years, were out of school, of which a higher percentage are children between 14 to 17 years (26.2 per cent) – the percentage of girls (28.0 per cent) is higher compared to boys (24.4. per cent). Furthermore, higher out-of-school rates were found among children from disadvantaged groups – SC (30.2 per cent), ST (37.7 per cent) and Muslim children (36.1 per cent).[17]

Among out-of-school children, CWDs are overrepresented, making up almost one-third of them. Less than 1 per cent of all children enrolled at the primary level have disabilities[18]. Of the 5.6 million CWDs in the 0 to 14 age group, most reside in rural areas (72 per cent) and are either excluded (particularly girls) from or participate only marginally in education.[19] Community and family members have limited knowledge, lack skills and the confidence to engage with schools and understand the education system or the bandwidth to support learning. They are unable to make the system work for them and their children, especially if they are illiterate.

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[14] U-DISE+, 2020-21

[15] Ibid

[16] U-DISE+, 2019-20

[17] NFHS-5, 2019-21

[18] U-DISE+, 2020-21

[19] UNESCO. N for Nose State of Education Report 2019: Children with Disabilities N for Nose: State of the Education Report for India 2019: Children with disabilities (unesco.org)

Results Achieved in the Sector

UNICEF India Country Programme Document (CPD) priority areas in the education sector include *early childhood education*, *out-of-school children*, *quality of teaching and learning* are aligned to the NEP 2020. In 2022, UNICEF continued adjusting to harmonize its interventions with the NEP and strategically addressed learning needs and inequities caused by the pandemic, thus, ensuring every child, especially the most vulnerable, have access to quality learning in line with UNICEF Global Education Strategy and SDG 4.

By leveraging its strategic presence and nurturing a solid and sustainable partnership with the government for decades, UNICEF's financial and technical contribution was crucial towards the fulfilment of a child's right to education in India. As a result, UNICEF successfully expedited its support to the government and its response to learning recovery needs in India.

In alignment with UNICEF Global Education strategy '*Every Child Learn'*, UNICEF India's overall outcome focused on promoting learning for every girl and boy in India. This was outlined in the programme's overall outcome as:

Outcome statement: **Girls and boys, particularly the most disadvantaged, participate in quality education with learning outcomes at grade-appropriate levels**.

By mid-2022, all schools and ECD Centres had reopened after one of the longest school closures that occurred globally. This impacted results, especially for learning proficiency and among out-of-school children. UNICEF in collaboration with the MoE, partners, and state government counterparts, pursued technical and financial investments and reached 5.74 million children (48 per cent girls) who benefitted from the learning recovery programmes to mitigate the learning loss that occurred due to the extended school closures. Nearly 10 million preschoolers (50 per cent girls) benefited from parents receiving supportive parenting resources. Further on, 39.8 million students (50 per cent girls) were able to access career information in 15 states, 1.1 million adolescent students benefitted from the life-skills and emotional well-being programmes, 754,593 out-of-school children (51 per cent girls) including 2,447 CWDs were identified and transitioned to formal education. UNICEF supported in establishing the first baseline study for the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) mission and established the benchmark for reading with comprehension in 20 languages.

UNICEF's contribution was framed within five outputs. Three of the outputs form the pillars of the programme that are aimed at promoting *early childhood education*, *reaching out-of-school children*, and *enhancing education quality and learning*. The other two outputs focused on supporting *evidence-based policies and planning,* and *demand generation* that cut across the three areas.

Output 1: National and state governments have increased the capacity for coordination and evidence-based policies, planning, implementation, and monitoring for equitable, inclusive and risk informed quality education.

Output 2: National and state governments have increased capacity to ensure age and developmentally appropriate pre-primary education for school readiness.

Output 3: Government and partners have increased capacity to deliver gender-responsive and equitable, flexible, inclusive quality elementary education for out-of-school girls and boys.

Output 4: Government and partners have enhanced the capacity to deliver quality education for improved learning outcomes for children in elementary education.

Output 5: Government and partners have enhanced the capacity to generate demand for quality education through advocacy, sustained behaviour change and social protection.

An activity session at the CFS/ARC Centre at Baagwan Mohallah in the interiors of Dal Lake.
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Output 1: Policy and Planning for Equitable Quality of Education

UNICEF's continuously engaged with the state and district functionaries and advocated with senior education functionaries based on the equity-based analysis of state data. This has helped in the preparation of differential plans within the overall context of the state, resulting in the leveraging of state funds and approval of budgets for the implementation of critical education interventions. As a result, UNICEF supported 15 state education departments to utilize gender and equity-based analysis of the educational management information system (EMIS) and National Achievement Survey (NAS) data to better inform and improve education sector annual plans. The advocacy work from UNICEF helped to leverage the state budget for the implementation and monitoring of equity-focused, quality education programmes in 11 districts with low gender parity and in the various regions of Rajasthan and West Bengal respectively.

UNICEF's technical collaboration with state governments has been instrumental in the development of programme guidelines, implementation strategies and road maps. Furthermore, it has contributed to the preparation of the state curriculum frameworks and the drafting of the state education policy. For example, in West Bengal, UNICEF support led to the draft of the State Education Policy, a guiding document for the education system in the state. In Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Assam, state councils of education, research and training, prepared state position papers and the curriculum framework, in Jharkhand, the teacher needs assessment study led to the preparation of a roadmap for the professional development of teachers in the state, while in Karnataka, a student achievement tracking system was established to enable evidence-based decision-making for educational functionaries in the state.

UNICEF technically supported the national and state governments to design and conduct the national Foundational Learning Study (FLS). The results of this study set the baseline for the NIPUN mission but also helped in establishing benchmarks for 20 languages, and numeracy, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.1.1 (education proficiency levels). UNICEF's contribution led to building a robust learning assessment data and evidence system to address the learning crisis

and help guide education reforms. UNICEF was the technical partner for the MoE and National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in the development of assessment frameworks, sampling design, psychometric analysis of the FLS, as well as the design, roll out, and preparation of national and state analytical reports and dissemination.

Technical support was provided to state governments to develop guidance documents, modules, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and courses which resulted in the roll out of the comprehensive school safety programme (CSSP). The intervention provided a safe and protective learning environment in 10 states. For example, in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), Rajasthan, and West Bengal, around 3,221 (34 per cent female) state and district resource groups were capacitated to anchor the roll out of CSSP. In Odisha, elements of school safety have been integrated in textbooks from grade 3 to grade 8 across 50,000 schools, and in Gujarat the development of e-learning course on CSSP has reached 54,647 school safety focal point teachers across the state. UNICEF's continued advocacy with environmental education focus group members of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) led to the integration of climate change points into position papers of national curriculum framework, and in Uttar Pradesh a climate change convention was organized that saw the participation of 6,000 children (40 per cent girls) to understand the voice of children and address issues of climate change.

UNICEF has discussed the gender and equity-based analysis of EMIS and NAS with state and district Samagra Shiksha functionaries during the preparation of the annual education sector plans. The discussions and presentations with senior education and bureaucrats has helped in advocating for the incorporation of critical interventions in the plans and leveraging of state funds.

UNICEF is one of the knowledge partners for the MoE in support of the Education Working Group (EdWG) at the G20 India Presidency. In this reporting period UNICEF partnered with the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies to conduct a review and mapping of programmes and schemes of various ministries and departments that work on providing education for children. Once finalized, the report could help in advocating for improved inter-ministerial collaboration and convergence of schemes and budget allocations for children.

Output 2: National and state governments have increased capacity to ensure age and developmentally appropriate pre-primary education for school readiness.

ECD Centres reopened after the unprecedented closure for two years during the pandemic. UNICEF, along with partners, supported states in developing protocols for the safe reopening of Centres, and to organize enrolment campaigns to assure the safety of children as they return to the Centre. The capacity building programmes have renewed focus on ECE activities and are benefiting more than 7.2 million children enrolled in these Centres. More than 400,000 ECD workers and field supervisors from Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal enrolled for an online ECE course developed by UNICEF in multiple languages (Hindi, English, Assamese, Odia, Marathi). In four states, UNICEF supported the capacity development of 656 (90 per cent women) child development services officials to build institutional capacities for better support to ECE at the Centres. In Gujarat, 1.5 million children (50 per cent girls) in 53,029 ECD Centres benefitted from the capacity development. With UNICEF support, 0.5 million ECD Centres were reopened in Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal and ready for the children.

The Centres hosted monthly ECE day celebrations and conducted regular counselling sessions for parents at ECD Centres. Caregivers including fathers of more than 10 million preschoolers (50 per cent girls) were supported to promote physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children. In Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and West Bengal; a responsive parenting package was developed by UNICEF and launched for state-wide implementation. 1,640 resource persons (80 per cent women) have been capacitated by UNICEF including an online course, who further trained 2,659 field supervisors and 256,000 ECD workers. In Gujarat and Odisha, UNICEF supported the

development of digital calendars to guide parents and to help them adopt positive parenting practices across the academic year.

UNICEF continued its advocacy, and efforts to facilitate convergence between the departments of school education, and women and child development. The goal was to ensure the inclusion of the UNICEF recommendations to improve the access and quality of ECE in NEP 2020. This resulted in a multi-year plan for strengthening services in ECD Centres that are located in school premises, setting up of new pre-school classes in schools in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jammu Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Officials from both departments have been jointly reviewing the curriculum and learning material to ensure a quality ECE programme across learning platforms. This has also ensured a learning continuum for children from age 3 to 8 years.

UNICEF has supported the capacity building of more than 50,000 primary school teachers in Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Rajasthan, who provide academic support to frontline workers (FLWs) of ECD Centres located within school premises. Nearly $3.5 million was leveraged to develop and print learning materials, improve the infrastructure of ECD Centres, and to ensure the continuous capacity building of key functionaries.

UNICEF has brought onboard ECE experts and technical agencies to support the capacity building for the implementation of the recommendations of the NEP 2020, programmes for the strengthening of ECE in ECD Centres and pre-school classes in schools. UNICEF, as a member of the National Early Childhood Care and Education taskforce, formed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, provided inputs to the recommendations of the task force to improve the quality of ECE programme in ECD Centres.

An MoU has been signed between UNICEF and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), to develop a six-month certificate programme on ECE, as recommended by NEP 2020. Course materials are being developed by national experts and will include the online ECE course developed by UNICEF. Expected to be launched within 2023, the programme will be offered in a distance mode, through the study Centres of IGNOU across the country. The certificate programme will be available for ECD workers and pre-school teachers in various regional languages.

Output 3: Government and partners have increased capacity to deliver gender responsive and equitable, flexible, inclusive quality elementary education for out-of-school girls and boys.

UNICEF invested in strengthening school education departments' systems for the effective identification and mainstreaming of out-of-school children (OoSC) in the most vulnerable areas in 11 states (Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal). A total of 754,593 OoSC (51 per cent girls) and four transgender children, and 2,447 CWDs, were identified and referred to formal education. Among the overall children identified, 375,628 (168,179 girls and 207,449 boys) joined formal entry programmes. Investments were also made in capacity development at the school and community level, and on expediting processes, and data collection for identification of OoSC.

As a result, 20,665 teachers, 57,585 volunteers (included adolescents), and 19,764 school and panchayat representatives were capacitated on reaching out and identification of OoSC within the most vulnerable urban, rural, and tribal communities, on mainstreaming and retention of children, and the activation of special training programmes as bridge course. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, access to flexible learning opportunities were expanded for 5,370 OoSC (2,573 girls, 2,797 boys) enrolled in basic technology/vocational Centres, and for 1,559 OoSC (803 girls, 756 boys) who were attending only religious education were enrolled into primary schools and registered at the madrasas. UNICEF also devised and supported the education of school departments in Uttar

Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, J&K, and Jharkhand to use automatized systems for easier data collection and support the mainstreaming OoSC into formal education.

An initial investment has already been made in 150 pilot schools in Uttar Pradesh, to initiate a paper-based early warning system to identify children at risk of dropping-out and could potentially benefit more than 15,000 children (50 per cent girls). The initiative will be upscaled in 134,000 schools in the next academic year, based on the results and recommendations from the pilot data being processed. UNICEF supported school education departments to enhance the system for the identification of CWDs, within the overall initiative of identifying OoSC, and to ensure that they are transitioned into schools. In Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, 2,447 CWDs (45 per cent girls), were referred to formal education (home and school-based). Here, UNICEF developed six orientation modules on inclusive education, identification and understanding the spectrum of disabilities, and trained 291 (39 per cent female) special educators, primary teachers, and district coordinators.

A total of 360 children (36 per cent girls) with severe, sometimes multiple, disabilities, received home-based education including activities for daily living – 136 of them transitioned to school-based education. Furthermore, 133 master trainers and 160,739 teachers were capacitated on accessibility audit through the MoE digital learning platform Diksha. In Gujarat, UNICEF and the school education department conducted a pilot accessibility audit of 20 schools across 10 districts using a School Audit Toolkit and Standard Operating Procedures, and orientation trainings are ongoing for 400 master trainers for the same. UNICEF leveraged the school education department resources to ensure the roll-out of trainings for schoolteachers and raise awareness on barrier-free access to schools for CWDs. The School Audit Toolkit and Standard Operation Procedures are now integrated in the plans for construction and refurbishment of 20,000 schools, under the Mission Schools of Excellence that was launched in Gujarat.

Maharashtra, Gadchiroli , India - JULY 05, 2022 : Kumari Uma Mudurwar , headmaster, pictured while teaching students using activity-based learning approach © UNICEF/UN0685078/Magray

Output 4: Government and partners have enhanced capacity to deliver quality education for improved learning outcomes for children in elementary education.

Due to COVID-19, students enrolled in grade 1 came with no previous pre-school experience. To address this, UNICEF supported the government in four states to develop a 12-week school readiness curriculum, teacher guide and learning materials that would benefit all 0.8 million

students (49 per cent girls). To strengthen the transition from pre-school to early primary grades, UNICEF is supporting the capacity building of 326 teachers (37 per cent women) in three states to demonstrate curriculum transition from pre-school to early primary grades and demonstrate mother-tongue based approach to foundational learning. Learnings from these pilot schools will be scaled up across the states.

In Chhattisgarh, UNICEF leveraged the development and printing of learning materials for children in local tribal languages, in Maharashtra multi-lingual school libraries were established in 1,204 schools reaching 60,000 children (49 per cent girls). To strengthen supportive supervision for foundational learning, 8,041 academic resource persons (30 per cent women) in two states were capacitated to improve learning in 0.3 million schools.

UNICEF also invested in empowering adolescents to make decisions about their future and reached 39.8 million students (50 per cent girls) with access to career information through an online portal and developed offline materials in English and eight Indian languages for 15 states. A career guidance course was developed for teachers in Hindi and English so they can support students with the appropriate guidance, 163,513 (40 per cent female) teachers have been trained to date.

A total of 52.85 million students (48.2 per cent girls) were capacitated on life skills through face-to-face and UNiLearn platform (an online national learning and knowledge sharing platform. Hosts dynamic education, skills, and other content from different states in India and from other countries) across eight states. UNICEF was able to position the online course on life skill education within the curriculum and pedagogy for students from grades 9 to 12. Life skills measurement tools were developed for elementary and secondary levels in Hindi, Gujarati, and Assamese to track the development of competencies. Financial literacy modules were implemented in West Bengal and Bihar, reaching 40,000 girls, while 1,500 children (47 per cent girls) in J&K benefited from a coding programme, which is currently being showcased as a model to integrate coding into learning and skilling across other states. In collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), 3,817 teachers (37 per cent female) in eight states were capacitated to constructively use technology in their teaching.

Students of C.J. Kothari High School at the Life Skill outdoor class. © UNICEF/UN0771903/Kolari

Output 5: Government and partners have enhanced capacity to generate demand for quality education through advocacy, sustained behaviour change and social protection.

Following the school reopening, UNICEF supported 14 state governments to implement the state-specific social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategies for 'back to school'. The campaign reached more than five million parents, children and adolescents through community leaders, teachers, self-help group (SHG) members, faith-based leaders, and community radio stations in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Telangana, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh.

In Assam, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan, UNICEF supported the implementation of responsive parenting programmes, using the *Parvarish ke Champion* (Champions of Upbringing) package, building capacity of the state departments and the anganwadi workers (AWWs).

The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) based intervention, Dular (Caress), enhanced knowledge and skills among 90,000 caregivers (57 per cent mothers, 30 per cent fathers and 13 per cent other family members) on social and emotional well-being, early learning, and the behaviour management of children in the aspirational districts of Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. The intervention, currently being assessed for scale, is also being trans-created to Kannada, Bodo, Odia, Telegu, Avadhi, and Ho, for roll out in Karnataka, Odisha, and Assam.

Investments have been pursued to enhance the role of SMCs in three states where more than 800,000 SMCs were trained. In Jharkhand, 35,000 SMCs understand their role, responsibilities, and participation in school management. In Uttar Pradesh, nearly two million SMC members and teachers were sensitized using the Janpahal (public Initiative) Training Module, and 270,000 SMC members, engaged the community on positive parenting in 881 blocks. In Rajasthan, the SMCs focused on their role to create safe, inclusive learning environments at home and school, to engage with volunteers and parents on the importance of continuity of education, strengthened using a capacity enhancement kit (handbook and seven films), and a feedback mechanism. A trained resource pool (166 Key Resource Persons with 34 per cent being women) initiated the capacity-building cascade to reach 400,000 members.

States strengthened their reach to the most marginalized groups, to support children as schools reopened. In Assam, the Brahmaputra community radio station engaged the vulnerable population of 30 mainland and riverine villages, and 72 tea gardens, on parenting and early learning. Adolescent friendly centres (AFCs), set up in 151 tea gardens, engaged 25,381 adolescents (87 per cent girls) using educational games on continuing education, posters and infographics on career counseling, and life skills education. In Madhya Pradesh, volunteers from institutions and organisations such Jan Abhiyan Parishad, Bharat Scouts and Guides (BSG), universities, and local SHGs engaged approximately 150,000 parents to support learning at home. In Chhattisgarh, 50,000 community members and 28,000 SMC and panchayati raj institution (PRI) members in three districts were engaged to promote age-appropriate learning at home. A state-level coalition of 210 community-based organizations in Gujarat facilitated awareness on improving learning levels, the importance of early childhood development, positive parenting, mental health, adolescent confidence, and awareness on gender stereotyping at the district and block levels. In Maharashtra, a back-to-school initiative in 100 schools, used multiple strategies to engage parents to help them make gains against the learning loss. Volunteers supported parents, mostly mothers, by forming learning groups to coach the children.

To achieve results under the outcome, UNICEF partnered with the government at the national and state-levels as this is essential for reach and sustainability of actions for children. Government partners at the national and state level include the MoE, Department of School Education and Literacy, Samagra Shiksha, and other government agencies, including the NSCERT, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), as well as the NITI Aayog, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of Minority Affairs, and IGNOU. UNICEF also convened with partners working

on issues like FLN, ECE and SBCC. UNICEF supported the formation a multi-stakeholder consultation group on digital learning and FLN called Knowledge and Information Network on Digital Learning and Education (KINDLE), in collaboration with the World Economic Forum (WEF) and YuWaah (GenU).

UNICEF also leads and coordinates the UN Results group on quality education. With the support of members from UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UN WOMEN, and UNV, the five-years (2023-2027) UNSDCF was endorsed by the Ministry of Education and NITI Aayog. UNICEF also collaborated with UNESCO on the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister's Conference sub-regional meeting and Transforming Education Summit, and UNOICT on digital learning.

In addition, UNICEF has continued to collaborate with multiple national and local civil society organisations (CSOs) such as Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Pratham Education Foundation, Nalanda, Vedic Society, Life Education and Development Support (LEADS), Room to Read, Foundation for Education and Development, Young Lives, Aasman Foundation, Nalandaway Foundation, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Pi Jam Foundation, Vikramshila Education Resource Society, and Vigyan Ashram.

Madhuri Banra (4 years) at anganwadi Kendra in Galubasa village, West Singhum, Jharkhand. Children are engaged with colorful books and toys at the Centre. © UNICEF/UN0707804/Katragadd

Financial Analysis

Thematic funds have substantially contributed to ensure access to continuous and flexible learning, and the learning recovery phase in the post-pandemic period. In line with 2022 investment in education, UNICEF technically and financially supported the MoE, Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and relevant government counterparts at the national and state level, to strengthen the delivery of education services while advocating for more qualitative, consistent, and inclusive learning across different age cohorts.

The thematic contribution helped UNICEF to leverage the discussion on the equity agenda for children accessing quality education during and after the pandemic, and to position the organization as a reliable technical partner of the MoE in the implementation of NEP 2020. Thematic funds also

contributed towards learning recovery post-pandemic for children, teachers, parents, and government agencies across 17 states in India.

Table 1: 2022 Planned Budget by Thematic Sector (in US Dollars)

Programme Component	Funding Type	Planned Budget
Education	RR	4,575,894
	ORR	5,388,937
Total Budget		**9,964,831**

Table 2: Country-level Thematic Contributions to Thematic Pool Received in 2022 (in US Dollars)

Thematic Pool	Donors	Grant Reference	Contribution Amount	Programmable Amount
Education	UNICEF-India	SC2299340005	123,667	117,778
Education	French Committee for UNICEF	SC2299340033	266,399	253,713
Education	UNICEF-India	SC2299340051	271,601	258,668
Education	French Committee for UNICEF	SC2299340052	916,078	872,455
Education	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	SC2299340053	11,628	11,074
Grand Total			**1,589,373**	**1,513,688**

Table 3: 2022 Expenses by Key Results Areas (in US Dollars)

Result Areas	Regular Resources	Other Resources - Regular	Other Resources - Emergency	All Programme Accounts
32-01 Access to quality learning opportunities	1,831,925	3,180,091	1,256,378	6,268,395
32-02 Learning, skills, participation, and engagement	4,072,633	1,792,997	957,853	6,823,483
36-03 Cross-sectoral - Social and behaviour change	137,706	106,150	116,498	360,354
Grand Total	**6,042,264**	**5,079,238**	**2,330,729**	**13,452,232**

Table 4: 2022 Thematic Expenses by Results Area (in US Dollars)

Result Areas	Other Resources - Regular	Other Resources - Emergency	All Programme Accounts
32-01 Access to quality learning opportunities	642,213	696,911	1,339,124
32-02 Learning, skills, participation and engagement	1,200,318	439,407	1,639,725
36-03 Cross-sectoral - Social and behaviour change	16,027	0	16,027
Grand Total	**1,858,558**	**1,136,318**	**2,994,876**

Table 5: Expenses by Specific Intervention Codes (in US Dollars)

Specific Intervention Areas	Expense
32-01-02 Provision of parental education for school readiness (including in temporary learning spaces)	181
32-01-04 Provision of (formal and non-formal) secondary education (including in temporary learning spaces, includes general and TVET)	13,094
32-01-07 System strengthening - inclusive education for other vulnerable children poorest quintile, ethnic/linguistic minorities, migrant children, non-citizens/undocumented children etc.	1,079,850
32-01-08 System strengthening - risk informed programming, including climate, resilience, disaster, conflict, and emergency preparedness	156,918
32-01-10 System strengthening - gender-responsive access (excluding SRGBV)	21,028
32-01-11 Other activities for equitable access to quality education e.g. school feeding, school grants	199
32-01-12 System strengthening - Evidence based education sector planning	1,235,259
32-01-13 Education humanitarian cluster/humanitarian sector coordination	23
32-01-14 System strengthening - Education management information system (does not include learning assessment system)	871,400
32-01-15 School Related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV)	128,683
32-01-16 United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) Secretariat	57
32-01-17 System strengthening - early learning / pre-primary policy, leadership, and budget	212,070
32-01-18 System strengthening - early learning / pre-primary standards and governance	119,649
32-01-19 System strengthening - early learning / pre-primary teaching and learning environment (including curriculum and material design)	991,843
32-01-23 System strengthening - Education sector coordination, SDG 4, etc.	38,152
32-01-99 Technical assistance - Equitable access to quality education	1,399,988
32-02-01 Provision or procurement of early-learning / pre-primary education learning materials	2,364
32-02-06 Digital learning materials and ICT in education	81,958
32-02-07 Provision of early learning / pre-primary education teacher training	-3,032
32-02-08 Provision of primary education teacher training	166,929
32-02-09 Provision of secondary (general and TVET) education teacher training	35,691
32-02-10 Provision of multiple-levels (or alternative pathways of education) teacher training	24,220
32-02-12 Provision of training of school communities e.g. parent teacher associations, school management committees	3,806
32-02-13 Provision of training of other education staff excluding teachers (e.g. inspectors, district, ministry staff, etc.)	9,368
32-02-14 System strengthening - curricula and learning materials design (excluding early-learning / pre-primary)	2,247,296
32-02-15 System strengthening - learning assessment systems	1,032,173
32-02-16 System strengthening - mother tongue / multilingual education	1,701
32-02-17 System strengthening - teacher development, management, and support	1,732,740
32-02-18 System strengthening - Student and community participation and social accountability, e.g. school management committees	182,564
32-02-19 System strengthening - gender-responsive teaching and learning (excluding SRGBV)	82,325
32-02-98 Technical assistance - Learning outcomes	1,223,380
36-03-02 Capacity and Skills Development for social and behaviour change	9,150
36-03-99 Technical assistance - Cross-sectoral social and behaviour change	351,204
Grand Total	**13,452,232**

Future Work Plan

In 2023, UNICEF Education programme will begin a new Country Programme 2023-2027, and work in close collaboration with the government and other partners to achieve results for children including adolescents, continue to address bottlenecks compounding the inequities in educational access and learning, with a continuous focus on shaping policy and practice. Overall, UNICEF will engage in system strengthening, leveraging its position at the state and national level and its convening power, to bring diverse stakeholders and invest in partnerships and alliances to enable the delivery of equitable and quality education services to all children including adolescents, especially from the most vulnerable communities. The programme is focused on addressing the issues and challenges faced by them, especially linked to the impact on education due to the pandemic.

UNICEF's 2023-2027 Education Programme will be framed against the new education outcomes aimed at 'ensuring equitable access and participation of children, including adolescents, especially the most vulnerable in quality gender responsive learning and skill development opportunities within a safe inclusive learning environment by 2027'.

Table 6: Planned Budget for 2023

Programme Component	Funding Type	Planned Budget	Funded Budget	Shortfall
Education	RR	3,846,659	3,846,659	0
	ORR	9,350,622	6,627,142	2,723,480
Total Budget		13,197,281	10,473,801	2,723,480

The programme will work across four outputs areas, aimed at strengthening the education system to deliver quality of education but also engaging the community to support children's learning. The key output areas of focus will cover,

1. generating evidence to inform planning and policies including school safety and emergency preparedness measures to deliver quality inclusive gender-responsive education;
2. increase government and partners' capacity to provide equitable access to quality gender-responsive learning and skills for children aged 3-18 years within a safe inclusive environment (outputs 2 for the age cohort 3-10 and output 3 for the age cohort 11-18 years old children) and
3. increase parents' knowledge and skills of caregivers and communities to demand quality learning in schools and support learning at home, especially for girls.

Across all its work, UNICEF will employ the following key change strategies:

Enhanced data analysis and usage, to inform system strengthening and improve education service delivery: UNICEF will continue to invest in strengthening systems to improve the delivery of education services across different departments, to ensure that they 'leave no one behind'. The intervention will focus on all children in school and learning and ensure that the sector planning and implementation is inclusive, gender responsive and more resilient and responsive to risk and emergency. Efforts will focus on generating evidence on children and education, capturing good practices, identifying gaps to raise awareness and inform decision making, policy formation and programming, especially for children from vulnerable groups.

Sustainable future for and through learning: mainstream and leverage gender transformation, children with disabilities and climate change environmental sustainability across the education system: UNICEF will work on supporting actions for classroom transactions and curriculum, to address gender norms, and change how girls, boys, as well as children with non-binary identities see

themselves (by peers, by parents, men, women, and teachers) – empowering them to engage with the world.

Specific focus will be given to mainstreaming CWD – to ensure education programming and advocacy includes CWD, to make the most vulnerable 'visible' within the education system and facilitate their access and retention throughout the school cycle.

Priority will be also given to climate change and environmental sustainability (CCES), to improve awareness and boost action at the policy level and the school level to better empower children, including adolescents through green skills, address climate change's impact on education, and to make schools and learning safer and more resilient.

Leverage partnerships, convergence, collaboration, and plan advocacy for change on both the demand and supply side of the education ecosystem: UNICEF will collaborate with public sector, private sector, and academia to expand and leverage for greater impact and reach; leveraging their partners and initiatives, especially in relation to skilling, school to work transition, and career guidance.

UNICEF will coordinate with other UNICEF programmes especially through the overarching programming on ECD and adolescent development and empowerment (ADE), building alignment and synergy, especially regarding school-based and AWC-based interventions, to generate maximum results for children.

Further investments will be made to support community and caregiver engagement, and social and behaviour change that could affect change related to the local demand and support for education at home and in school.

At the system level, UNICEF will facilitate ministerial, inter-departmental engagement and collaboration under the framework of the NEP, enhancing engagement in overlapping areas of responsibilities for example early childhood care and education and adolescent education. Also, collaboration with departments responsible for specific vulnerable groups of children such as tribal affairs, minority affairs and social welfare.

Students of Dantivada model school at the STEM lab. © UNICEF/UN0772010/Kolari

Digital transformation in teaching and learning: Leverage EdTech to make education more inclusive and in line with children's educational needs, including digital skills and STEM. There will be particular focus on girls and the most vulnerable children, measures to enhance classroom interaction through a hybrid approach of teaching and learning, support the enhancement of the digital education ecosystem linked to national and state government initiatives (including internet connectivity and devices for teaching and learning). UNICEF will shift its approach by engaging with multiple actors including civil society, non-government organisations, multi-lateral agencies, private sector agencies, and academia to convene and leverage for maximum results for the children and to improve the government's capacity to deliver quality services. Based on the local context, UNICEF will also prioritize and ensure a systemic change in expanding and improving education service delivery for the most vulnerable children, for their holistic development.

Annexure 1: Human Interest Stories

Financial Literacy- A Tool to Empower Adolescents Girls in Bihar

The financial literacy programme in implemented among adolescent girl groups in Bihar was aimed at empowering girls to make an informed decision about finances in day-to-day life. A total of 42,966 girls and 1,454 boys were empowered through this activity in select villages and schools from 26 districts. Through this programme, girls were enabled to be independent and operate their own bank accounts and understand bank terminology and processes. The programme also helped the participants to express themselves,

Training program on Financial Literacy for Adolescents girls

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PATNA: A three-day training of State Master Trainers on Financial Literacy Program for Adolescents was jointly organized by Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC) and UNICEF from 22-24 August in Patna. A total of 119 participants including 65 secondary level government school teachers, 30 Madrasa teachers and 24 representatives of CSO partners (Pratham, Nari Gunjan, Save the Children, Mashaal and Action Aid) were trained in two batches by the resource persons of Vikramshila, a Kolkata-based NGO. Talking about the overall framework and objectives of the training, Pushpa Joshi, Education Specialist, UNICEF Bihar said that adolescent empowerment is one of the key priorities across all sectors in Bihar. Generally, young people struggle in finding opportunities that match their aspirations. COVID-19 has further increased the challenge due to disruption in education, school drop-outs and early marriages. In this context, financial literacy is a significant area where adolescents need to be engaged to develop 21st century skills. Through this training, the participants have been trained on various aspects of financial literacy. The trained State Master Trainers (SMTs) will further train 650 Secondary/Sr. Secondary school teachers in 13 BEPC-supported minority districts and 608 Madrasa teachers in 2 districts. An individual SMT will impart financial literacy to 40 girls each in 650 schools through a mandatory course duration of 20-hours thus covering around 26,000 girl adolescents studying in class 9 to 12. Similarly, 40 adolescents, especially the girls will be trained in each of 608 Madrasas thereby covering around 24,000 adolescents.

She further added that the students will be imparted financial literacy during the assembly time and on specific days in schools. In case of Madrasas, Anjuman programme will be used for this purpose. Besides showing a total of 12 self-paced online modules consisting of 15 videos each of 5-10 minutes in Unnayan Classes, facilitators' manual will also be used to educate the girls. Also, the girls would be facilitated the exposure visit to the banks to get the first-hand experience of the banking system to ensure better understanding. The life skills will enable the girls to more effectively meet the challenges and barriers to continued schooling, connect to the banking system and better avail the scholarships besides helping them in effective career planning as well.

News clip published in 'Morning India', Patna on 26th August 2022

showcase their analytical skills, and make a financial plan for the optimal use of their pocket money or money in their piggy bank. Gunjan Kumari from Rampur village, Sheikpura stated, "I learned about banking, budgeting, loans, insurance, savings, and filling forms. Before the training, I had never even heard these terms. I am grateful to Nirmala didi. She taught all of us a great deal about banking. Last time, when I went to the bank to withdraw the money, I did it myself."

The concept of finances and saving has become very popular among girls in Bihar through an initiative of the Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC), Bihar State Madrasa Education Board, and CSO partners with support from UNICEF, Bihar to impart financial literacy among adolescent girls. These girls are minimising their expenses to ensure some personal saving of their own. "We used to spend 10 to 12 rupees daily on wafers, chips, and burgers but now we have stopped eating junk food. I had to persuade my brother and sisters to give up this habit. I want my mother to save money for the uncertain times ahead," said Anita, a resident of Pachna village of Sheikhpura district.

They are gradually learning to deposit their money in bank accounts. "I used to keep coins and whatever I had saved in my piggy bank and waited for it to be filled to the brim, now I have my own bank account," said Pammi Kumari, a class 11 student who lives with her parents and three siblings in Lodipur village, Sheikhpura. Financial literacy training has changed the mindset of the girls and they are now depositing money in their bank accounts. Shivani, a class nine student at Middle School Kajarsot (Sherghati), deposited Rs 500 that she had collectively saved from her pocket money

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and from money that she received from her relatives. This enthusiasm for saving and depositing it in the bank account is not confined to only one school or district. This, in fact, is the scene in all 26 districts that are covered under this programme.

The enthusiasm, again, is not confined to saving and depositing only, these girls are also showing keen interest in using their ATM cards and making digital payments as well. Asha Kumari of Utkramit

Middle School Kajarsot (Sherghati, Gaya) was so enthusiastic that she requested her brother to teach her how to use the ATM card and then she used it on her own without fear or hesitation. Shikhanvi Kumari, a class nine student of Kedia Balika High School, Muzaffarpur, uses her ATM card and also does makes digital payments to purchase groceries and other essential items. Puja Kumari who studies in class 12 at A.M. College, Gaya, helped her mother's friend open a bank account at UCO Bank, Sherghati.

In Bihar adolescent empowerment is one of the key flagship priorities across all the sectors. In continuation to that, to impart financial literacy among adolescent girls in Bihar, especially from marginalised and minority communities, 12 self-paced online modules were developed by UNICEF and partner organization, consisting of 12 videos each that are 5-10 minutes. The facilitators' manual for the off-line module was provided to 131 Volunteers under Udaan program, and 115 volunteers from education CSO partner (Pratham, Nari Gunjan and Mashaal) 543 teachers from Madrasa Board from Kishanganj and Purnia and 650 teachers from selected 13 districts of Bihar.

Using a multi-pronged strategy, 119 state level master trainers were trained at the state level. Subsequently, the training was given to 650 and 540 teachers from BEPC and the madrasa, along with 246 community volunteers to reach last-mile children. The programme was designed to enable adolescent girls to make informed choices about their finances, which empowered 42,966 girls and 1,454 boys in select villages and schools from 26 districts. The girls learned to be independent and operate their own bank accounts, to understand bank terminology and processes, and to help participants express themselves, use their analytical skills, and make a financial plan for the optimal use of their money.

Starting early, starting right - Collaboration Done Right

The UNICEF supported Khushi Ki Chaupal is a collaboration between parents, caregivers, and teachers to improve standards of early childhood care and education. As part of the initiative, fortnightly sessions are held in villages where anganwadi workers (AWWs) guide parents through a set of home-based early childhood education activities. At home, five-year-old Sadhna's voice counted the raw mangoes as her mother fixed the plastic sheet to protect them from the rain. Each time Sadhna fumbled, her mother would gently encourage her, "Tell me the new story you learned," as a giggling Sadhna climbed into her lap to narrate the story of the naughty monkey and the cap-seller. "Sadhna loves to learn and spends most of her time narrating stories and poems to me. She tells me everything that she learns at the anganwadi centre," says Renu, Sadhna's mother and a class 10 dropout herself.

Sadhna's father works in Punjab as a daily-wage migrant worker, leaving his wife and daughter back in Pranpur Newariya village of Shravasti district, Uttar Pradesh. Sadhna had just turned three when she had started going to the anganwadi centre, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced everything into lockdown in March 2020. "Children badly missed the centre during the pandemic. They would often go and stand at the gates of the centre, hoping that it would soon open, and they could learn and play," said Renu.

Despite the lockdown, Renu ensured that learning continued for her daughter during the pandemic and would teach her the basics through YouTube videos. "The anganwadi worker told me last month that she was hosting a Khushi Ki Chaupal (happiness session) for parents. In our village, daughters-in-law do not step out of the house, so I sent Sadhna with her grandmother to the sessions. She is very quick in learning and grasping things. So, whatever she tells me, I facilitate it for her at home," said Renu.

The meetings are hosted in a courtyard with parents of all children enrolled at the anganwadi centre. The parents are oriented about sensitive upbringing and are also told about some home-based activities and how they are to be done. All the AWWs have been given a resource kit including some guidance and material to engage with children and the community. This kit contains an activity

manual book that has all the instructions about how to organize the chaupal. A flipbook is also given along with it which is specially made for parents and contains minute but very important topics.

Sadhna attending the Khushi ki Chaupal (pavilion of joy) with her grandmother © UNICEF

Renu was married at an early age. But she does not want the same fate for her daughter. "My parents did not allow me to study after class 10 and got me married. But I want Sadhna to study and become independent," said Renu determined to give her daughter equal opportunity. Renu is so keen to ensure a good upbringing for Sadhna that despite the family pressures, she did not have her second child early. "I wanted to give time to Sadhna and enjoy her childhood. Now that Sadhna is five years, I will plan my second child," she says.

The anganwadi worker is very happy with Sadhna's progress, "I always motivate people to take parenting tips from Renu. It is because of her attention that Sadhna is a very bright child today," she said.