



Impact Assessment

Smile Foundation: Back to School Program

Introduction

In India, there is a systematic variation in the quality of education across socio-economic groups, urban and rural populations, and geographical locations. Rural areas are particularly affected, with most students attending government-run or aided schools through non-government organizations. These schools face multiple challenges, such as a shortage of teachers, poor teaching quality, and inadequate infrastructure. This results in low participation rates, high dropout rates, and poor learning outcomes. According to the ASER report of 2018, only 44% of fifth-grade children from government schools were able to read second-grade textbooks compared to 65.1% of private school students. Furthermore, only 22.7% of fifth-grade students from government schools were able to conduct simple two-digit divisions, compared to 39.8% of students from private schools. The study also found that government schools have only 3.8 teachers on average, compared to 7.8 in private schools.¹

The poor learning outcomes in government schools are a result of low attendance and enrollment rates due to both demand and supply-side barriers. The demand-side barriers include low priority given to education by parents and child labor to face low-income challenges. The supply-side barriers include a lack of understanding of concepts, poor physical school infrastructure, and geographical distance from homes. To improve learning outcomes, the policy should focus on addressing both these issues, with a significant focus on investing in school development.

In India, there are around 10.32 lakh government schools facing infrastructure deficits, with a lack of furniture, electricity, toilets, water tanks, computers, internet facility, and playgrounds. The school buildings are also sometimes dilapidated, making it not only unfriendly but also risky for children to pursue their education. The lack of investment in school infrastructure is visible, with weak structures, a lack of classrooms and benches, chipped paintings, leakages, dysfunctional electricity setups, a lack of toilets, a lack of water dispensers, a lack of playgrounds, etc. The effect of these infrastructure challenges is observed in all students but has a disproportionate impact on certain groups such as girls and physically disabled students.

¹Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), Government of India Ministry of Education, 2020-21

As a result, public funds are needed to improve the education sector, but the share of education in the union budget has been unable to cater to the immense needs of the sector.

About Smile Foundation’s Back to School Program

Considering these challenges, the smile foundation initiated the Back-to-School Program, wherein, the primary aim was to retain children in school after Covid-19 pandemic. Apart from demand side intervention by engaging with students and parents, the program also focused on supply side interventions.

Within the supply side interventions, it developed the school infrastructures— such as water stations, smart classes, solar panels etc. to make the school environment conducive for learning. There was also an element of teacher’s capacity building to improve the teacher’s pedagogy for better learning outcomes.

In all, the broad objectives of the program were as follows,

- ✓ To improve the enrolment, attention, and retention rate of the students.
- ✓ To improve the learning outcomes of children
- ✓ To create a conducive learning environment through appropriate infrastructure and education support
- ✓ Teachers` capacity building for sustainability
- ✓ Strengthen the stakeholders for active management and support to schools.

The program was spread across Siddharth Nagar and Shravasti district of Uttar Pradesh. It catered to a total of 51 schools, of which 15 were from Shravasti and others were from Siddharth Nagar. The total beneficiary, i.e., student coverage was 9290 students.

Assessment methodology, stakeholder identification and sampling

To map the impact of Back to School on students and teachers, the study adopted both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques with the engagement of stakeholders. The key stakeholders identified were students, teachers, parents, smile foundation’s and ABSL AMC CSR officials. The students participated in survey questionnaire, while others engaged in key informant interviews.

The key results from survey-based study are mapped and intersected with qualitative tools to connect the varied changes across interventions. The sampling across each stakeholder is as follows,

Stakeholders	Sample	Data Collection Tool
Direct Beneficiaries- Students	75	Semi-Structured Interview (survey)
Teachers	15	In-depth Interview
Parents	15	In-depth Interview
Implementing partner	2	In-depth Interview
Aditya Birla CSR Team	2	In-depth Interview

Locations	Total schools	Total students	Sampled schools	Sampled students
Shravasti	15	1791	4	24
Siddharth Nagar - old schools	21	5813	4	28
Siddharth Nagar - new schools	15	1686	4	24
Total	51	9290	12	76

#	Locations	Schools	Infrastructure provided
1	Shravasti- new schools	Ps Bhagwanpur	Solar Panel, E-classroom
2	Shravasti- new schools	Ps Laxman Nagar	Solar Panel, E-classroom
3	Shravasti- new schools	Ps Meeramau	Solar Panel, E-classroom
4	Shravasti- new schools	Ps Prahalada	Solar Panel, E-classroom
5	Siddharth Nagar - old schools	Composite Upper Primary School, Golhara	Drinking water (water purifier), one girl's toilet, solar panel, E-classroom, benches
6	Siddharth Nagar - old schools	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalay, Khuniyaw	Drinking water, solar panel, E-classroom, cupboards
7	Siddharth Nagar - old schools	Upper Primary School, Mahadev Ghuruhu	Drinking water (water purifier), solar panels, E-classroom
8	Siddharth Nagar - old schools	Composite Upper Primary School, Rudruliya	Drinking water (water purifier), solar panel, E-classroom, benches
9	Siddharth Nagar - new schools	Purva Madhyamik Vidyalay, Churihari	Solar Panel, E-classroom
10	Siddharth Nagar - new schools	Upper Primary School, Pipari	Solar panel, E-classroom, benches
11	Siddharth Nagar - new schools	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalay, Bansi	Solar Panel, E-classroom
12	Siddharth Nagar - new schools	Composite Upper Primary School, Sirsiya	Solar Panel, E-classroom

Primary Research Findings

In accordance to the name of the project "Improving Quality of Education and enhancing the learning levels of children", the objective of the project is to ensure improved and consistent access to quality education to children coming from adverse socioeconomic circumstances. The project aimed to achieve its objective by strengthening the various stakeholders involved in school education, including the children themselves, while also addressing any gaps in the school's infrastructure that could have a direct or indirect impact on the students' learning experiences.

I. Demographic profiles of the respondents

Out of the 12 schools chosen for data collection, an effort was made to maintain gender distribution and equality by randomly selecting respondents from each school. As a result, 58.54% of the total respondents were female students, while 41.56% were male students, and this gender balance was evident in the majority of the sampled schools.

The students who participated in the study came from families with an average of five members, which often included two or more children as well as the students' grandparents. According to the survey, 83.12% of the students reported having at least one female sibling, highlighting the pressing need for effective education in the area, as girls and adolescents often face more obstacles to education as compared to boys. The rationale behind the need for educating girl children also stems from the fact that if one girl child receives a proper education, the positive impacts of it can be comprehended by her parents. Consequently, they may also be more inclined to support education for other girls in the household.

The project has been implemented in three types of schools: primary schools, upper primary schools, and composite schools. Based on the age distribution of students across these three categories, the majority of respondents (67.53%) fall within the 11-13 age group.

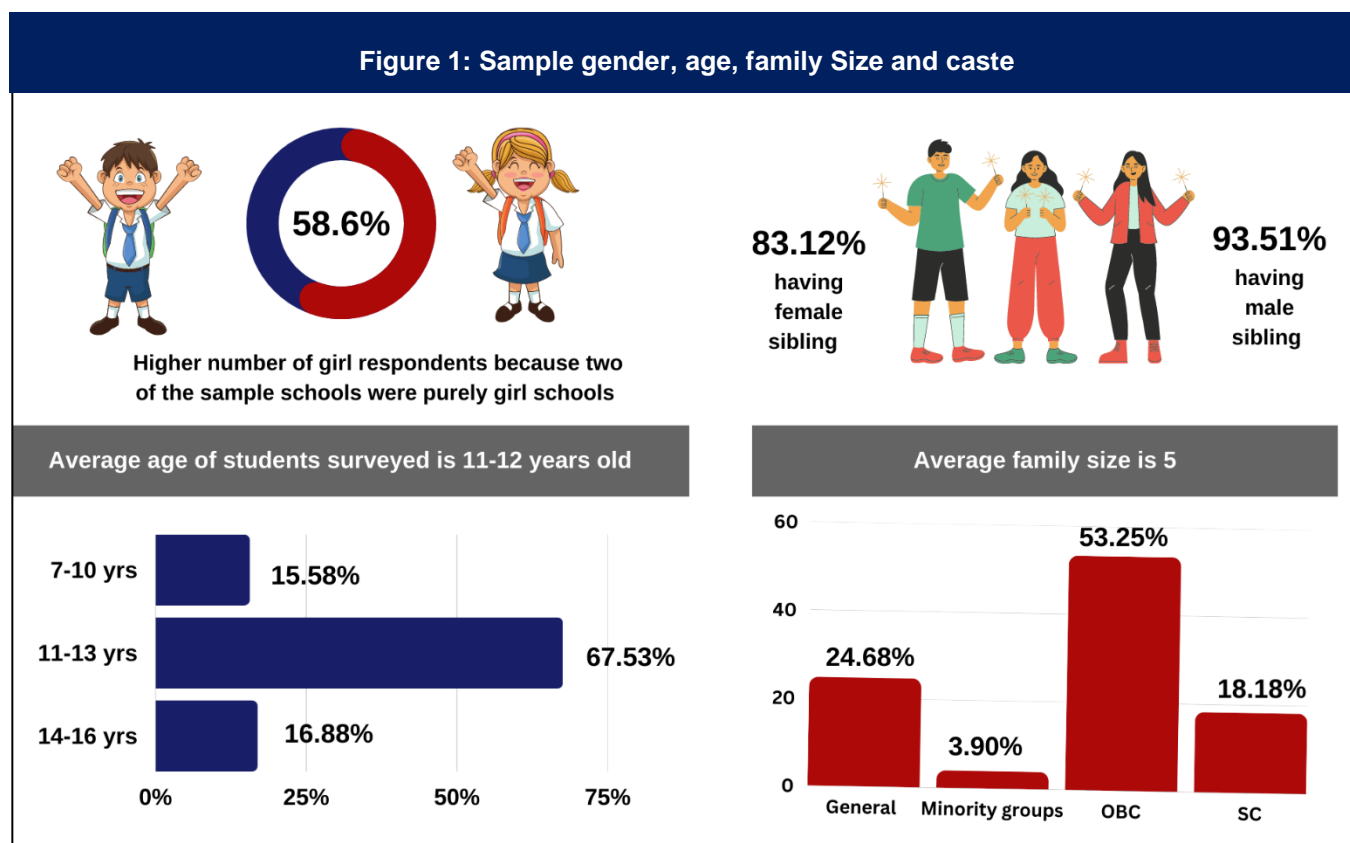
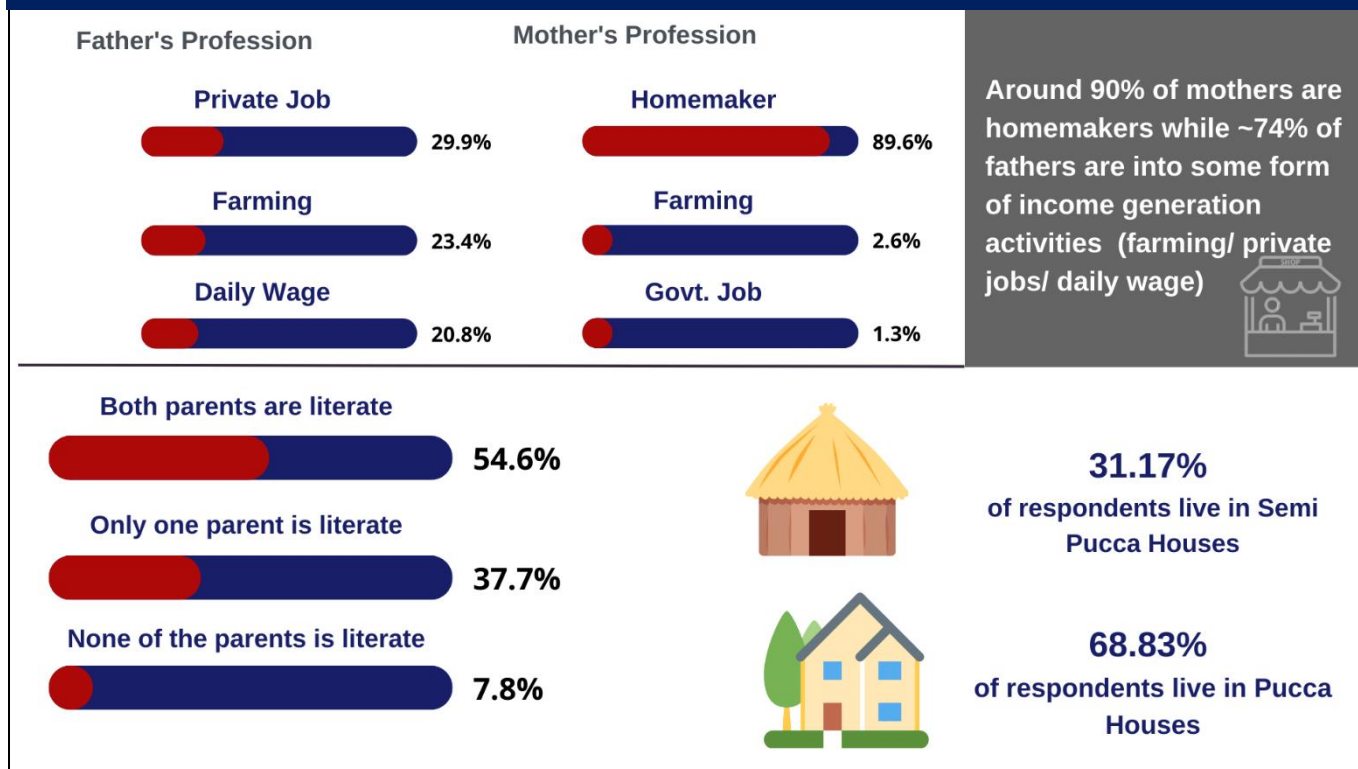


Figure 2: Sample's parents' profession, literacy and house condition



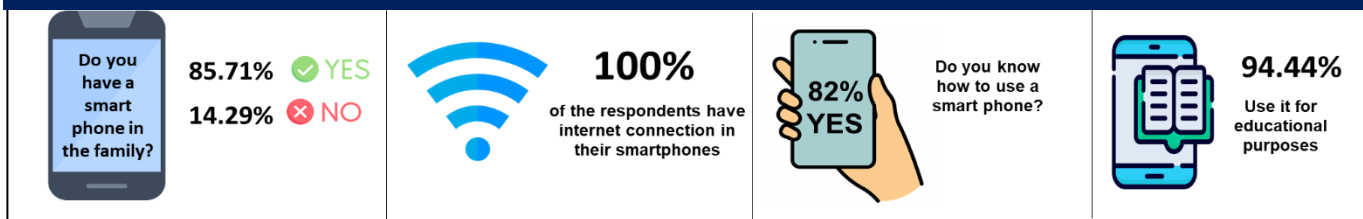
In India, education plays a vital role in breaking down caste barriers, making it crucial to provide education to marginalized communities in the country's most populated state. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the survey results showed that 53.25% of the respondents belonged to the Other Backward Classes. This indicates that the project has achieved social inclusion by reaching out to schools that are attended by students from all social categories, including a higher concentration of students from marginalized backgrounds.

The intention of a family to provide school-based education to their children is directly influenced by the family's socio-economic status and the educational background of the parents. As per the responses received, the majority of the mothers (89.61%) are homemakers, while nearly 74% of the fathers are engaged in daily-wage earning jobs, such as private jobs, farming, or labor work. This suggests that in most families, fathers are the primary breadwinners. With regards to the educational background of the families, 54.55% of the student respondents reported that both their parents are literate, while only 7.79% of the students belong to the first generation of learners.

The education and professional level of the parents play a crucial part in determining the execution of a education program and its sustainable impact. Though more than 50% of the respondent families stays in Pucca houses, majority of the parents of the respondent children are involved in manual labor jobs that provide daily wages. 38.54% of the respondents' fathers work as daily wage laborers, whereas 31.25% of them work as farmers. As for the respondents' mothers, 41.67% of the students mentioned that their mothers are homemakers, and 40.63% stated that their mothers are involved in the profession of shopkeeping.



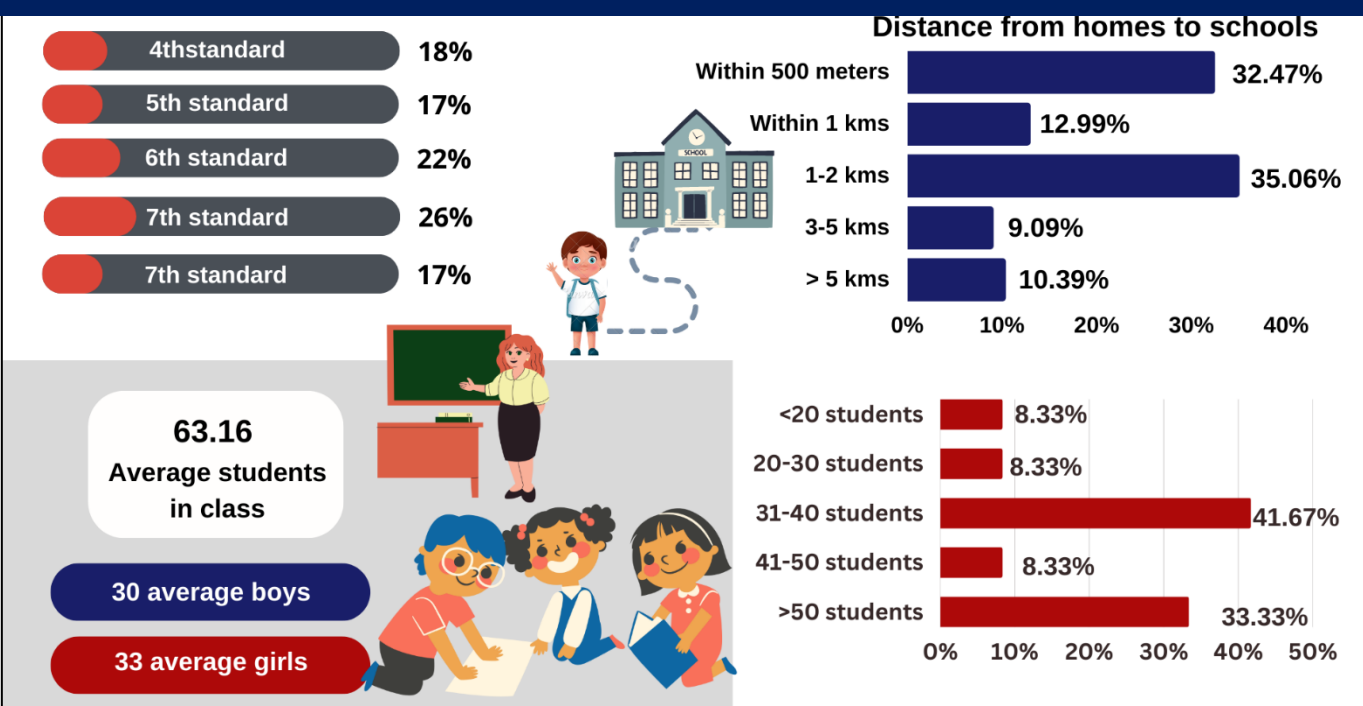
Figure 3: Penetration and usage of smart phones among sampled beneficiaries



In order to understand the level of digital influence on the lives of school-going students in India during the pandemic, it is crucial to evaluate the prevalence and adoption of digital technologies. The use of mobile phones has become widespread across the globe, even in remote and underdeveloped areas. Mobile phones have become an essential means of communication, accessing information. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the education sector worldwide, with schools and universities shutting down to prevent the spread of the virus. In response to this, many educational institutions have turned to remote learning to continue providing education to students. Mobile phones have played a crucial role in facilitating remote learning, particularly in areas where access to laptops or desktop computers is limited. The survey found that approximately 82% of respondents across all age groups reported using smartphones, with 94.44% of them using it for educational purposes. This underscores the widespread availability of smartphones among school-going children in the community. Even the students and teachers were of the common opinion that the use of mobile phones for education has become increasingly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they have provided a means of continuing education despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, the idea of students having mobile phones was often viewed negatively. However, this perception has shifted in light of the pandemic, as mobile phones have become essential tools for continuing education. Nowadays, students are encouraged to use their mobile phones as a means of acquiring knowledge, while also ensuring that they use them responsibly and do not misuse them."

Figure 4: Education background of sampled students



To consider the location of schools as a component of the project implementation plan's demography, it is essential to factor in the proximity of schools to the respective communities or children's homes, which significantly impacts accessibility to education. While distance from schools is not the only factor that contributes to student dropout rates, it can be a significant one. Schools that are located closer to students' homes may be better able to support student success by reducing transportation barriers, promoting community engagement, and creating a safer and more supportive learning environment. Out of the respondents, 35.06% stated that their school is located within 1-2 kilometers from their home, while 32.47% reported that their school is located within 500 meters from their home.



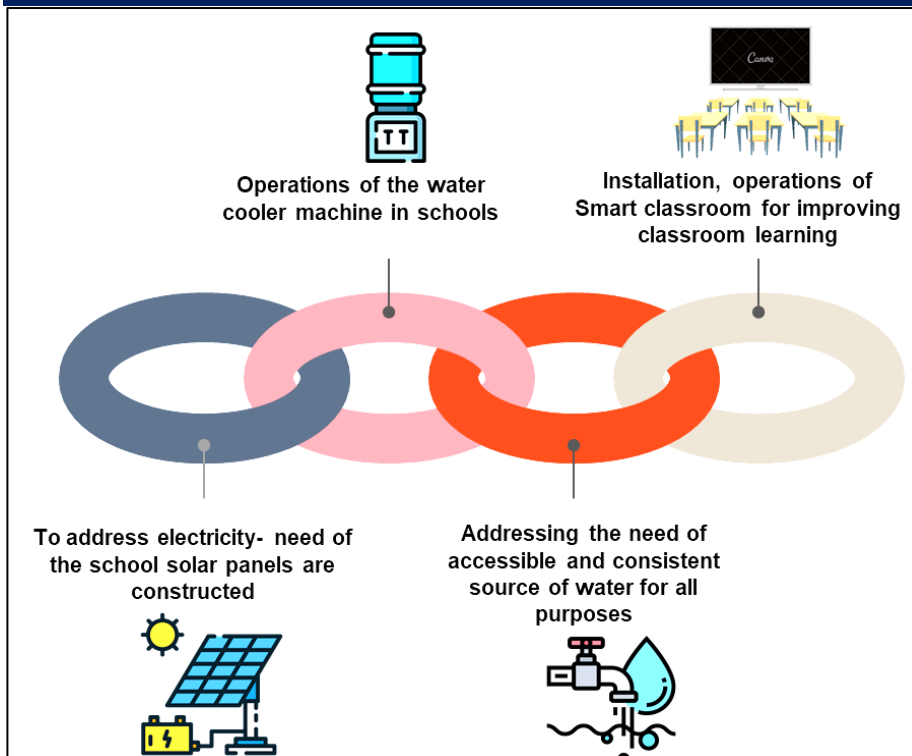
The Right to Education Act 2009 stipulates a pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1, indicating that an average of 30 students should be present in a classroom. However, based on the student responses, the average number of students in a classroom is around 63, with approximately 42% of the respondents reporting a student capacity of 31-40 students. Moreover, 33.33% of the respondents mentioned that there are more than 50 students in their classroom. Nonetheless, this data suggests that schools have very low dropout rates, as evident from the responses of the students during data collection. Out of all the respondents, only one child had dropped out, but the student later re-enrolled in the same school after the teachers consistently reached out to the parents to encourage attendance.

The relevance of project intervention in specific locations is determined by the demographic characteristics. In the subsequent analysis, we aim to evaluate the program's impact on the primary beneficiaries, i.e., the students, along with other stakeholders.

II. Infrastructural developments in the school and its impact

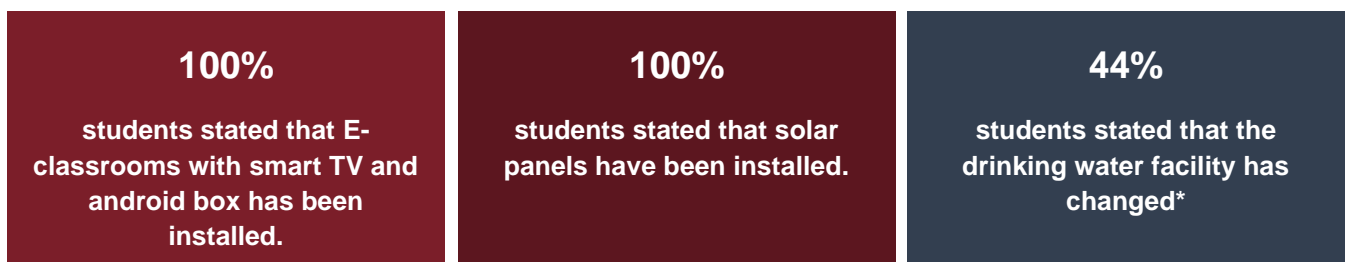
Basic infrastructure requirements are essential for schools, particularly those in rural areas. Without adequate infrastructure, students may not have access to basic facilities necessary for their well-being and academic success. Examples of necessary infrastructure in schools include clean drinking water, functioning toilets, classrooms with appropriate lighting and ventilation etc. Lack of basic infrastructure in schools can create significant barriers to education, leading to poor academic performance, increased absenteeism, and higher dropout rates. Inadequate infrastructure can also impact the safety and health of students and teachers, making it more difficult to create a conducive learning environment. Therefore, addressing the infrastructure needs of schools, especially those in rural areas, is essential for promoting educational access and equity.

Figure 5: Key infrastructure developments



Interactions with students highlight that the program has identified and addressed certain infrastructural needs in schools with the goal of bridging gaps in basic needs while also improving the quality of teaching tools and equipment. Basic needs such as water cooler stations, better drinking water facilities, and improved toilets were prioritized, along with infrastructural developments such as the installation of solar panels, batteries, Smart TVs, and android boxes. An analysis of student responses during the field visit revealed that the impact of these basic needs and infrastructural developments should be viewed as complementary to each other, as together they contribute towards the intended outcome of the project.

Based on the response of the students, the percentage of the infrastructural changes are provided below,



*Responses only from schools where drinking water facilities were provided

The change in drinking water facility suggests any kind of improvement in water facility through availability of water coolers and water stations.

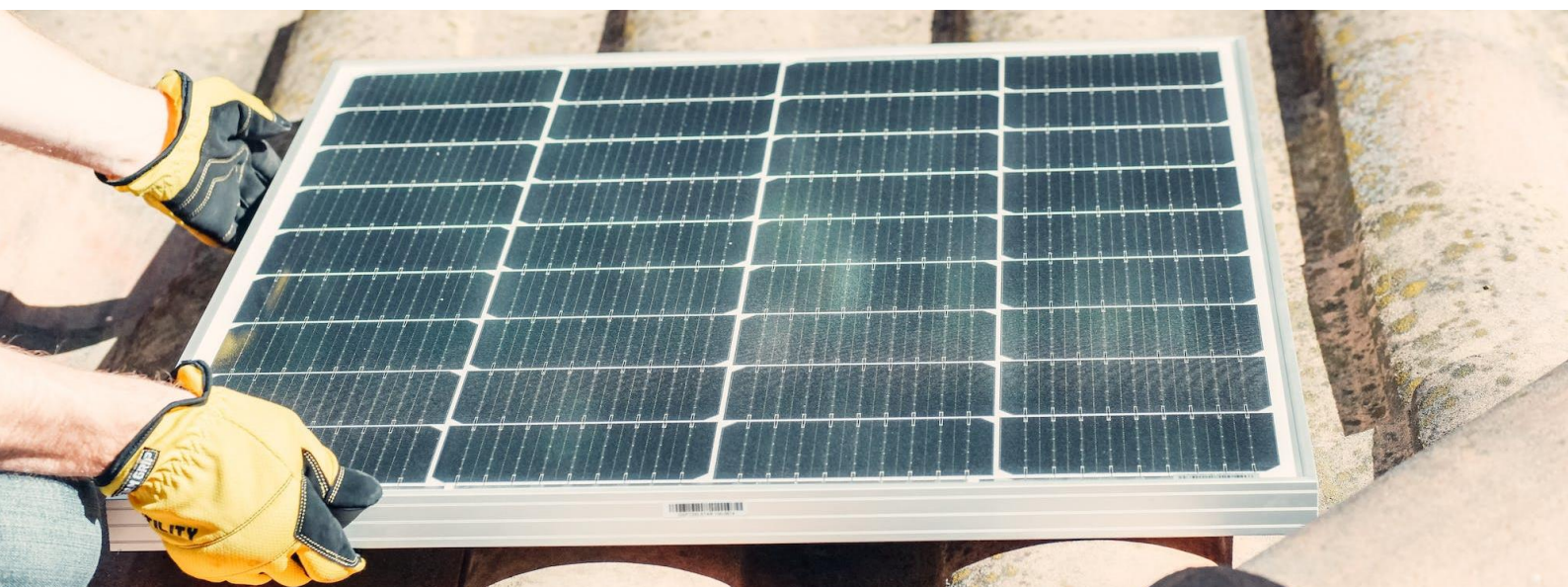
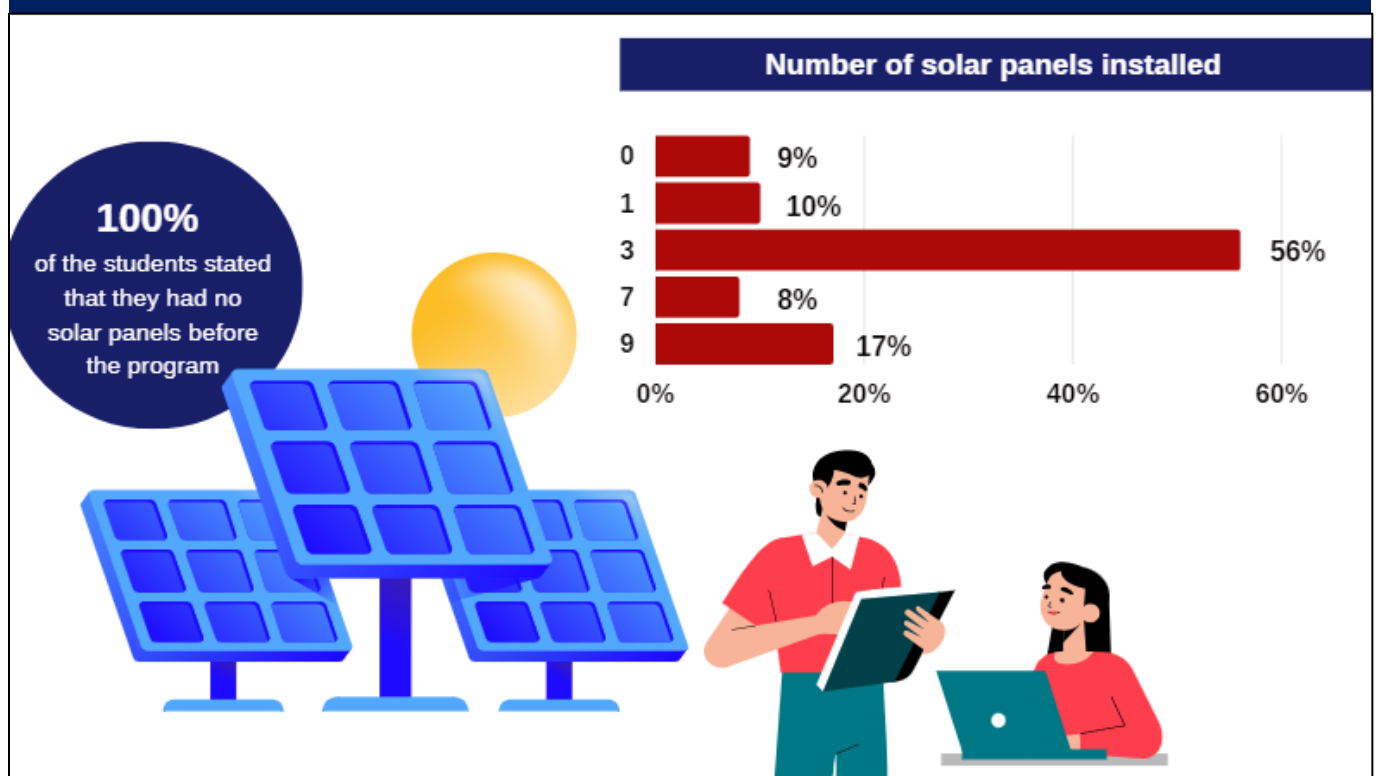
The next section focuses on student's perception in regards to these infrastructural developments.



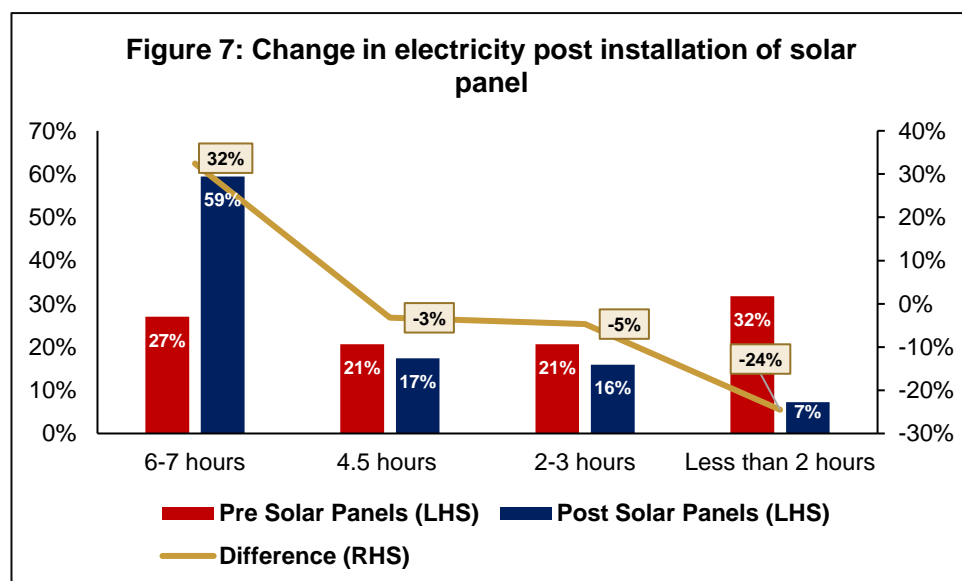
A. Solar Panels

Solar panels are cost effective and sustainable ways to generate electricity independently for any institution or building and the school is no exception to the lot. For remote locations where electricity accessibility and consistency are challenging in India, solar energy has proved to be a great source of clean energy that is cost-effective for the school administration, reduces pollution and decreases carbon footprint. Understanding that the specific school locations and the schools battle with fluctuating electric supply and sometimes prolonged hours of no electricity, solar panels were proposed to be part of the infrastructural development as part of the programmatic implementation. Around 56% of the respondents mentioned that at least 3 solar panels were installed in their school followed by 17% students who said that around 9 solar panels were installed. The students revealed awareness on the workings of solar panels and cited the need for batteries and invertors for smooth usage.

Figure 6: Student's on Solar Panel Installation

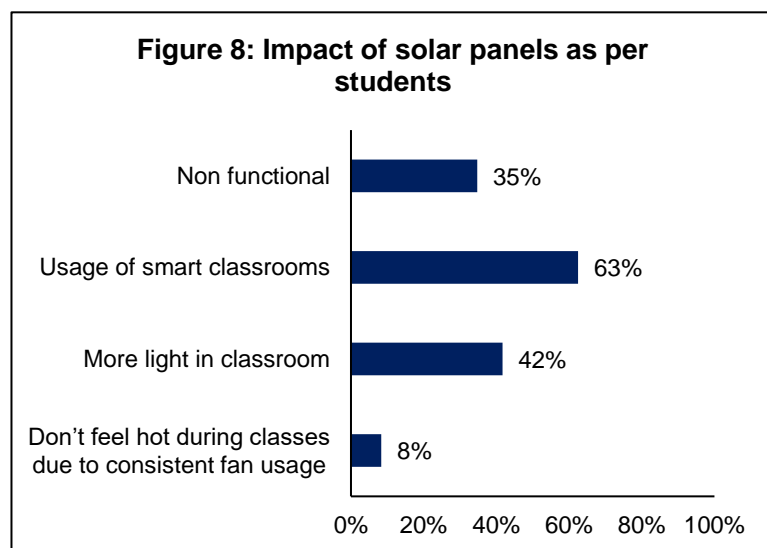


The following chart showcases the status of the solar panels in the respective sampled schools.



When the students were enquired on the change in electricity in school post installation of solar panels, a clear improvement was observed in the hours of electricity provided. Around 59% of students stated that the school has 6-7 hours of electricity, i.e., consistently during the school hours, in contrast to only 27% students, who stated that schools had 6-7 hours of electricity prior to installation of solar panels. This reveals an increase of whopping 32%.

The schools receiving electricity for less than 2 hours have also fallen substantially (24%) from pre to post solar panel installation. This also reveals the impact of solar panels in facilitating electricity to schools.



According to the students, solar panels have had the most significant impact on the usage of smart classrooms, with 63% of them stating it as the biggest benefit.

However, it is to be noted that some schools did face challenges in maintenance of solar panels resulting in dysfunctional systems. This reduced the effectiveness of the utilization. These schools were Composite Upper Primary School- Golhara, Composite Upper Primary School- Rudruliya, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya- Khuniyaw and Upper Primary School, Mahadev- Ghuruhu. It is to be noted that all of these schools were part of the old interventions.

This reveals concerns on the sustainability of the program in the long run. As a result, the program should develop programmatic elements of maintenance, and care for the infrastructure to ensure long term. These are certain things which can be adopted by the implementation NGO,

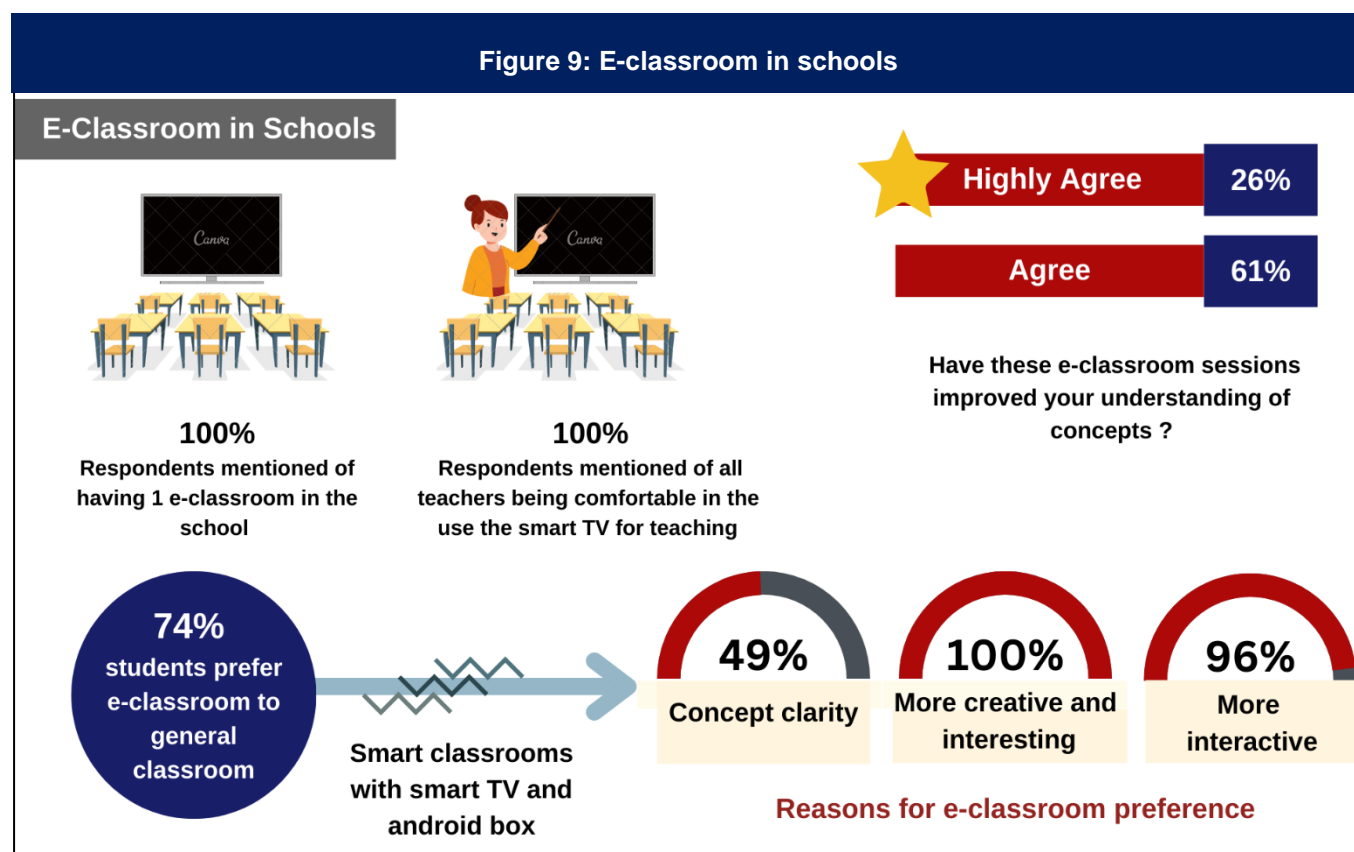
- **Providing training:** It can provide training to school staff on how to properly maintain and care for solar panels. This can include information on cleaning, troubleshooting, and identifying potential issues.
- **Regular monitoring:** It can conduct regular site visits to monitor the condition of the solar panels and identify any issues that need to be addressed.

- **Technical support:** It can provide technical support to schools in the form of troubleshooting and repair services. This can include providing spare parts or arranging for repairs to be done by qualified technicians.
- **Awareness-raising:** It can raise awareness among students and the wider community about the importance of maintaining solar panels and the benefits of renewable energy.
- **Collaborating with local businesses:** It can work with local businesses to provide sponsorship or funding for the maintenance of solar panels in schools. This can help ensure that schools have the resources they need to keep their solar panels in good condition.

By providing these services, it can help schools ensure that their solar panels are well-maintained, functioning properly, and providing the maximum benefit in terms of energy savings and environmental impact.

B. E-classrooms in school and change in teaching style.

Improving accessibility to smart classrooms is a crucial step towards improving education. However, it is important to note that the availability of smart classrooms alone is not sufficient. It is equally important to update teaching methods to ensure that the technology is effectively utilized in improving educational standards. Also, enhancing the quality of teaching methodologies is an essential element in raising educational standards within schools, which has a direct impact on student attendance. When students receive high-quality instruction that is engaging and relevant to their needs, they are more likely to attend classes regularly. Additionally, effective teaching methods can create a positive learning environment that fosters student interest and motivation, leading to improved attendance.



All respondents have suggested that schools should have at least one e-classroom, and they were positive about the fact that teachers are comfortable using these classrooms. While the majority (87%) of the respondents gave positive feedback on the helpfulness of e-classroom sessions in improving their understanding of numerous concepts, a significant portion (26%) highly agreed on the extreme relevance of these classrooms and the benefits derived from them in furthering their understanding. According to a survey, 74% of the students expressed a preference for e-classroom as their favoured teaching method over traditional classroom teaching. This indicates a favourable change in student preferences, which can be attributed to their experience with e-classroom facilities. Students who preferred traditional classroom teaching mentioned that their lack of exposure to e-classroom facilities during school hours was the reason for their preference.

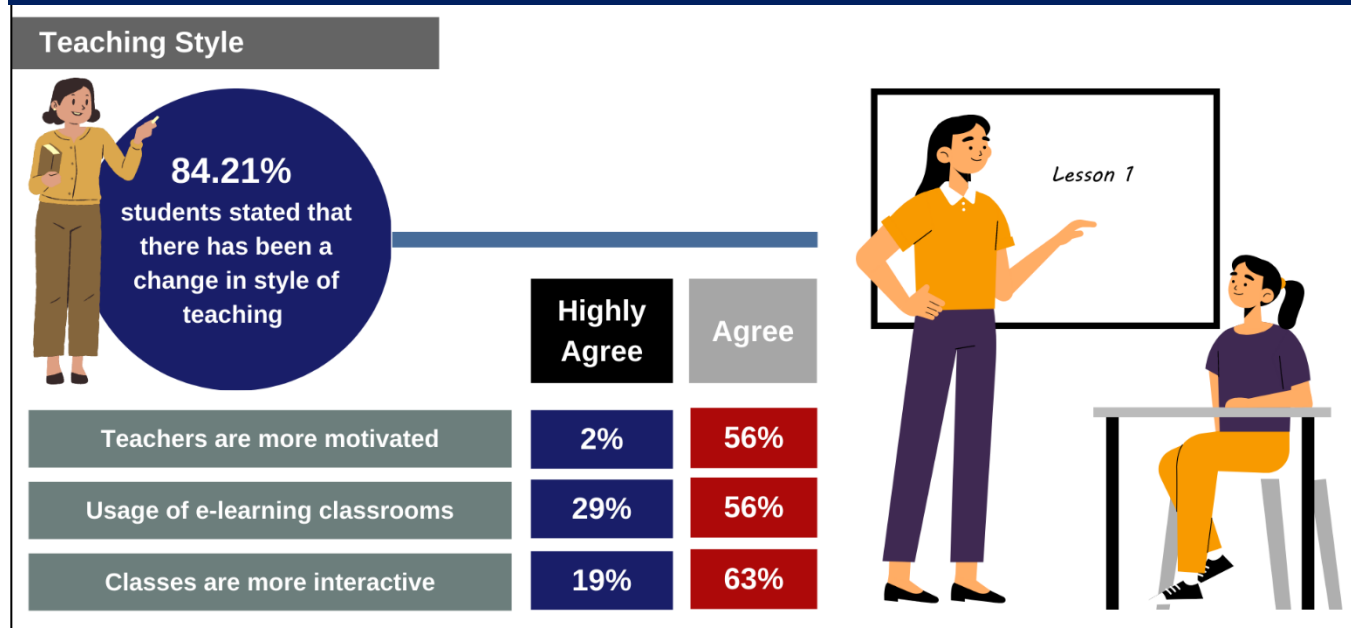


The sampled schools' implementation status of e-classroom facilities is listed below, which correlates with the students' feedback regarding the effectiveness of this teaching method,

Sample schools	No of smart classrooms	Frequency of using e-classroom	Subjects taught in e-classroom	Challenges while using the e-classrooms	Challenges explained
Composite Upper Primary school (Golhara)	1	At least one day in week	Science, Math, English	Yes	Shortage of electricity
Composite School (Rudruliya)	1	At least one day in week	Science, Math, English	Yes	Shortage of electricity
Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (Residential)	1	Daily	Math, English, Social sciences	No	NA
Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (Khuniyaw)	1	At least one day in week	Science, Math, English	Yes	Shortage of electricity

P.M.V. School (Churihari)	1	Most days of the week	Science, Math, English, Social sciences	No	NA
Primary School (Pahalada)	1	Daily	Math, English	No	NA
Primary School (Bhagwanpur)	1	At least one day in week	Only poem, stories	No	NA
Primary School (Laxman Nagar)	1	Most days of the week	Science, Math, English	No	NA
Primary School (Meera Mau)	1	Most days of the week	Science, English	No	NA
Upper Primary School (Mahadev Ghurhu)	1	Twice a month	Science, Math, English	Yes	Shortage of electricity
Upper Primary School (Srisiya)	1	Most days of the week	Science, Math, English, Social sciences	Yes	Sound issue in the device
Upper Primary School (Pipari)	1	At least one day in week	Science, Social sciences	No	NA

Figure 10: Teaching style in school



As a result of the introduction of e-classrooms in schools, an essential aspect of the program was to provide teacher training, aimed at enhancing their classroom interactions and teaching methodologies to improve children's learning outcomes. According to the survey, 84.21% of the students have mentioned of changes witnessed in the teaching style post intervention. While 58% of the students noted an increase in teacher motivation, and 82% observed more interactive classroom teaching compared to earlier times. Approximately 85% of the students reported that their teachers are utilizing e-learning classrooms effectively, leading to an increase in their exposure to this mode of learning.

“Smart classrooms can facilitate collaboration and communication between students, enabling them to work together on group projects and assignments. This can help to develop important social and communication skills, while also promoting teamwork and mutual support.”

According to the data presented in the table, and in conjunction with the teacher training initiative, it has been found that approximately 41.67% of respondents reported having at least one smart classroom session per week. However, due to the limited exposure of students to smart classrooms and the limited number of classes, the full potential of this teaching method has not been realized in the program. Nevertheless, the teachers' performance in delivering effective teaching methods based on their capacities has had a positive impact on student learning outcomes.

C. Drinking Water

Within our sample, around 3 old schools had received water purifier—however, none of them are functional at the moment. There is a need for maintenance of such infrastructure support. The NGO can play a role in helping schools maintain water purifier infrastructure by providing training, technical support, and regular monitoring. This can include training school staff on how to properly maintain and care for the water purifiers, conducting site visits to monitor the condition of the infrastructure, and providing technical support for troubleshooting and repairs. The NGO can also raise awareness among students and the wider community about the importance of clean drinking water and collaborate with local businesses to provide sponsorship or funding for maintenance. By working together, the NGO

and schools can ensure that their water purifier infrastructure is well-maintained, functioning properly, and providing safe and clean drinking water for all.

III. Pratibha ki Khoj and other extracurricular activities

Pratibha ki Khoj (Search for Talent/ Talent Search initiative) is one of the unique aspects of the program that focuses on cultivating inherent talents in school children through encouraging them into several extracurricular activities. Talent search activities in schools are of great importance as they help to identify and nurture the skills and abilities of students in various domains. These activities are designed to provide students with the opportunity to showcase their talents, skills, and interests in areas such as academic, sports, music, arts, and other co-curricular activities. Participating in talent search activities can help students to build confidence and self-esteem, as they receive recognition and appreciation for their skills and abilities. This can have a positive impact on their overall personality development.

"Pratibha ki Khoj", one of the very unique aspects of the program, focuses on fostering the innate talents of students by encouraging their participation in various extracurricular activities and also, promoting active learning and encouraging students to explore their interests and passions beyond the classroom. However, based on the responses received, only 7.79% of the students were aware of this initiative, of which approximately 66% participated in science-related activities, and approximately 33% each participated in sports and arts and crafts initiatives. When asked about the frequency of the Pratibha ki Khoj initiative, 50% of the respondents, who were aware of the intervention, stated that it is an annual event, while approximately 33% mentioned that it takes place every six months.

In addition to Pratibha ki khoj, a large number of students who participated in the survey expressed their keen interest in celebrating special days that are actively observed in all sampled schools. About 85-88% of respondents reported that Independence Day and Teacher's Day are celebrated with great enthusiasm in their schools, whereas 62.34% of the children mentioned celebrating Children's Day. Other similar occasions such as Annual Day, Republic Day, Saraswati Puja, and Women's Day were also celebrated by a significant number of students.

During these special days, around 50% respondents revealed that they actively participate in event-based activities, such as singing, dancing, and drama, to celebrate with their peers. On the other hand, 27% of respondents mentioned that they attend school on these respective days but treat the day as a holiday with no classes and spend time with their friends and peers.

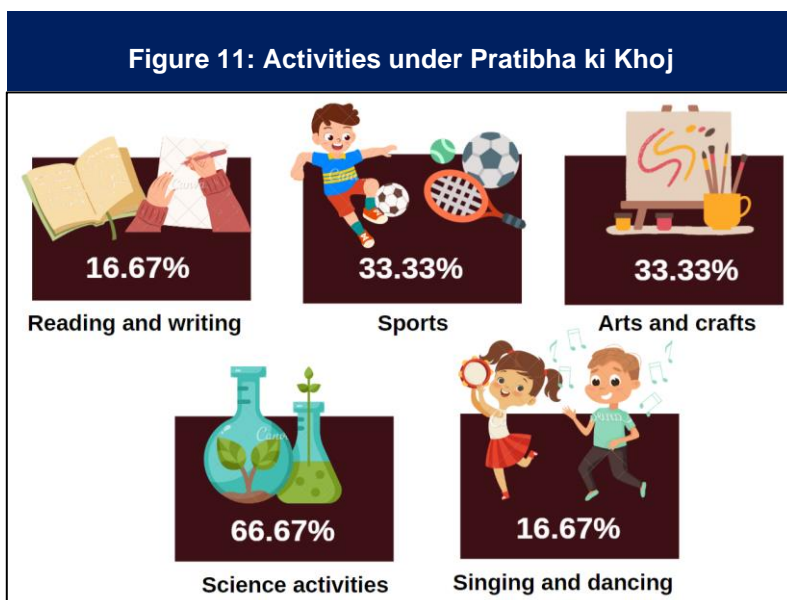


Figure 12: Frequency and benefits of activities under Pratibha ki Khoj

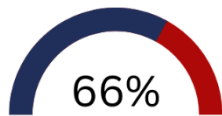
Pratibha ki khoj activities



How often do these activities take place?

100%

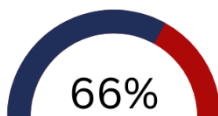
students were satisfied and enjoyed the events



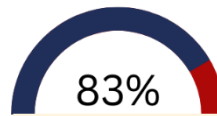
Motivation to attend school



Confidence to participate in school events



Development of peer group



Teamwork



What are the benefits of these activities?

IV. Overall Program Impact

Figure 14: Ratings of students on generalized school performance on various indicators

	Highly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Highly disagree
Improvement in student attendance	6%	57%	36%	0%	0%
Increased students' admissions	0%	42%	58%	0%	0%
Improved understanding of concepts	6%	77%	19%	0%	0%
Improved student performance	9%	68%	23%	0%	0%
More inclination to attend school	0%	49%	51%	0%	0%
Decrease in dropouts	1%	31%	61%	8%	0%
Decrease in girl dropouts	0%	27%	3%	4%	2%
Increase community recognition	8%	60%	32%	0%	0%
More fun in learning	10%	74%	16%	0%	0%
Improved teaching quality	0%	45%	55%	0%	0%



Children engaging in art and crafts

V. Discussion with other stakeholders

Interacting with all the stakeholders involved in an intervention is essential to gather relevant insights and feedback that can inform the design and implementation of the program. This approach ensures that the program addresses the specific needs and priorities of the target population, builds ownership and support, and enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention.

During the stakeholder discussion, particularly with the teachers, it became apparent that there were recurring issues within the schools and that the program's effectiveness in addressing them was brought into question.

Teacher training:

- The teachers mentioned that the teacher training has been beneficial last year where at least two teachers from each of the sample school visited the training last year.
- It was conducted for an entire day by the Smile Foundation Team and the training component included improved and interactive teaching techniques for students' better learning and this included training on effective usage of smart classrooms.
- According to all the respondent teachers, the last training took place on December 2022 and the successive training took place on 6th February 2023. Due to the proximity of the two trainings, the impact of the training is yet to be realised among the school children.

Prevailing challenges in the school and its mitigation:

Infrastructural challenges:

- Electricity fluctuations has been a key challenge in majority of the schools and all infrastructural developments under the program – RO electric filter, Smart TV/projector, etc are adversely impacted because of it.
- The solar panels and the batteries are yet to be fully functional in most of the schools because of non-functional batteries and/or other technical challenges. It is due to this reason that independence from external sources of electricity is yet to be achieved fully by the sample schools.
- In some of the schools smart tv and the android boxes has been installed in the month of February whereas in some schools, students could take the benefit of the e-classrooms for only a few months because of technical glitches. The redressal of the technical challenges is yet to be mitigated.

Operational challenges:

- The schools are yet to develop an active and strong School Management Committee.
- The enrolment rate remains the same and though there are no challenges towards dropouts, absenteeism of students in the schools is a persisting problem even today.
- The teachers mentioned that the pupil teacher ratio as mentioned in Right to Education Act is yet to be achieved and that the schools are facing the challenge of sufficient teachers against the number of students available.

Smile Foundation's Back to School Program Scoring as per Scoring Matrix

#	Key Indicators	Maximum score	Minimum score	Score Assigned
Parameter 1- Relevance and Coherence (Weight= 15%)				
1	Need assessment of target community	4	0	3
2	Alignment with ABSL AMC CSR Policy	4	0	4
3	Alignment with MoU	4	0	4
4	Alignment with government priority	4	0	4
5	Alignment with SDGs	4	0	4
Parameter 1 scores (P1)		20	0	19
Weighted score (P1)				2.9
Parameter 2- Efficiency (Weight=20%)				
1	Process of documentation	3	0	3
2	Developed key performance indicators	3	0	2
3	Program data collection	4	0	3
4	Adherence to MoU timelines	3	0	3
5	Quality of program staff	3	1	3
6	Involvement of stakeholders	4	0	2
Parameter 2 scores (P2)		20	0	16
Weighted score (P2)				3.2
Parameter 3- Effectiveness (Weight=25%)				
1	Beneficiary awareness	4	0	3
2	Coverage of marginalized groups	4	0	4
3	Extent of coverage	4	0	4
4	Program level effectiveness (Components differ as per programs) *	8	2	4
Parameter 3 scores (P3)		20	2	15
Weighted score (P3)				3.8
Parameter 4- Impact (Weight=30%)				
1	Program level impact scores (Component differ as per programs) *	25	2	20
Parameter 4 scores (P4)		25	2	20
Weighted score (P4)				6
Parameter 5- Sustainability (Weight=10%)				
1	Beneficiary feedback	3	0	0
2	Internal assessments	3	0	0
3	Exit plan	3	0	1
Parameter 5 scores (P5)				1

Weighted score (P5)			0.1
Total Score			16

The scoring matrix has components of program level effectiveness and program level impact which differ for all programs based on their program objectives and goal. They are assigned on the basis of beneficiary perception. In the current program, they are as follows,

Effectiveness scores	
Completely Effective	1 or 2
Partially Effective	0.5 or 1
Not Effective	0

Impact scores	
Highly Impactful	2
Partially Impactful	1
No Impact	0

#	Key Indicators	Maximum score	Minimum score	Score Assigned
Program level effectiveness				
1	Improved drinking water facility	1	0	1
2	Usage of Solar panels for electricity	2	0	1.5
3	Usage of smart classroom	2	0	1.5
4	Change in teaching quality	1	0	0
5	Increase in school extracurricular activities	1	0	1
6	Increase in participation of school extracurricular activities	1	0	1
Total		8	0	6
Program level impact				
1	Increased admission of students	2	0	1
2	Improvement in attendance of students	2	0	1
3	Increase in electricity supply	2	0	1
4	Improvement in student's understanding of concepts	2	0	2
5	Improvement in student performance	2	0	1
6	Improvement in inclination to go to school	2	0	2
7	Decrease in dropouts	2	0	1
Total		14	0	9

Conclusion and Recommendation

Education plays a crucial role in the development of children and has the potential to lift families out of the cycle of poverty and marginalization. The "Improving Quality of Education and Enhancing the Learning Levels of Children" project aims to improve school education in the community, which will raise education standards for future generations and has the potential to bring positive changes to the lives of rural populations. The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a severe blow to the entire education delivery system in India, with rural school-going children being among the worst affected. Children were forced to drop out of school due to poverty, migration, and the loss of jobs or family members, putting them at risk of child labor or child marriage. In such circumstances, programs like this project are crucial in restoring the continuity of school education and encouraging children to return to school. Infrastructural improvements provide hope and motivation for children to attend school. At the current stage, the project has yet to realize its full potential, but implementing the following recommendations can enhance the impact of the program.

- 1. Development of key criterion for selection of schools:** Based on the discussion with the stakeholders and the observation of the field team, CRISIL has recommended that the school selection criteria be realigned to focus on the immediate and future needs of the school, as well as the presence of other non-profit entities operating in the same space within the school. In some instances, it was noted that in addition to ABCL's CSR program being implemented by Smile Foundation, other NGOs are also working in the same school. As previously mentioned, these schools already face challenges in terms of teaching faculty and managing the programs of multiple NGOs within the same school can pose additional challenges, as reported by the teachers.
- 2. Rightful assessment to close need-based gaps in the schools:** In respect to bring positive learning outcomes from each of the schools under the program, a thorough need gap assessment needs to be redone to understand the key requirement of the schools under the following heads-
 - Immediate or urgent needs
 - Infrastructural needs
 - Status of requirement raised by the school from the government or other funding bodies.

According to the aforementioned criteria, the infrastructural provisions are to be allocated to each school. The rationale for this allocation has been observed in the field. For example, in one school, the smart television has been rendered non-functional due to water leakage from the school's roof, resulting in no e-classrooms being available for an extended period. Hence, such needs should be addressed.

- 3. Effective monitoring and evaluation of infrastructural developments in the schools:** There is a need to develop effective monitoring of program components and development of systems to ensure sustainability of infrastructure as suggested in the solar panel and drinking water section.
- 4. Other recommendations:** The program has higher scope towards scalability and innovation, and these are given below as part of additional recommendations-
 - The strengthening of the school management committee is one of requirements of the project to decrease the burden of deliverables of the teachers. In this respect, the implementation partner of this CSR initiative can conduct conclaves or consortium of SMC of ten or more schools to exchange ideas and innovation towards how effectively they can bring positive change in the schools.
 - Involvement of additional stakeholders like local counsellors, district education department officials, ASHA and Anganwadi workers in their programmatic interventions and also involving them in school events can positively contribute towards an education inclusive atmosphere within the community.