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IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY OF THE ASSAM STATE INITIATIVE: ADDRESSING CONCERNS OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ASSAM



Study entrusted by
CML - Tata Trusts



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Note to the Readers

This programme was implemented during the peak period of the pandemic and appraisal has to be made in view of the context

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List of Abbreviations

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
ASI	Assam State Initiative
BPF	Best Practices Foundation
CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviews
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CML	Centre for Microfinance & Livelihood
CSD	Council For Social Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DISE	District Information System for Education
EFs	Education Facilitators
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
JMECT	Jubayer Masud Educational and Charitable Trust
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyayas
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question
MDM	Mid-Day Meal
MGs	Mothers' Groups
MIS	Management Information System
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
NEI	North-East India
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRLM	National Rural Livelihoods Mission
NSS	National Sample Survey
OBC	Other Backward Caste

OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
OoS	Out of School
RSTC	Residential Special Training centre
RTE	Right to Education
SC	Schedule Caste
SHG	Self Help Group
SMCs	School Management Committees
ST	Schedule Tribe
TLM	Teaching-Learning Materials
ToR	Terms of Reference
UDISE	Unified District Information System for Education
UEE	Universalisation of Elementary Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The North-East India (NEI) is a distinct region in the Indian sub-continent which is characterised by significant inter and intra-state variations in the prevalence of out-of-school children (OOSC), with Assam having the highest share of such children. To address the dropout issue in Assam and to improve the quality of the ecosystem of elementary education in the state, the Centre for Microfinances and Livelihood (CML), an associate organisation of Tata Trusts implemented an Education Programme called, the Assam State Initiative (ASI). The major interventions of ASI undertaken in the four districts of Baksa, Bongaigaon, Goalpara and Nalbari included i) camps for OOSC; ii) remedial support for children in schools; iii) strengthening of school management committees (SMCs) and Mothers' Groups (MGs) and iv) capacity building of teachers.

It was warranted that an impact assessment of the ASI is carried out to evaluate the outcome of the programme and in this context, the present report is an evaluation of the ASI that was entrusted to the Council for Social Development (CSD) by the CML - Tata Trusts. The Impact Assessment Study verifies the extent to which the intended objectives of ASI have been met. The primary survey was conducted in four blocks of the selected districts and covered a sample of 743 households, apart from interviewing the teachers, children, government officials, SMC/MG members, Education Facilitators (EFs) and coordinators of ASI. The study highlights the performances of ASI and suggests measures to enhance the future course of ASI intervention.

KEY FINDINGS

The ASI has reached its objectives and targets in almost all the key interventions areas, despite the period of intervention being the heyday of the pandemic. The key findings related to specific interventions are as follows:

Motivational Camps

- *Motivation Camps:* A total of about 38 motivation camps were organised against the target of 36 camps and about 1237 OOSC were brought to the camp, against the target of 1200 children. Camps conducted in residential schools were beneficial to migrating families; however, it has not been resumed yet in the post-COVID-19 period.
- *Beneficiaries of Camp:* The major beneficiaries of the motivation camp were poor children, migrating children, children from tribal communities, minority children and working children, who had either dropped out from school or were irregular to schools, indicating extensive coverage of children facing multi-dimensional challenges.
- *Duration of Camps:* It has been the expectation of both parents and children that the camps should function for more period of time to help the children with the basics.

- *Participation in Motivation Camps:* Though about 1237 children had participated in the camp, some of the working children could not continue the motivational camps beyond 2-3 days, as the family lost the income generated by the children and hence discontinued the camp.
- *Major Attractions to Children in the Camp:* The major attractions to children in the camps were i) adoption of play-way method and child-friendly approach; ii) good quality food; iii) transportation facility to attend camp; iv) provision of free incentives such as uniform, bags, colouring kits, and shoes; and v) the fun and sports activities.
- *Challenges in attending camps:* Though the motivation camp was able to reduce the dropout rate in the intervention districts, it could not influence the rigid mind-set of some of the parents, and the major reasons were out-migration of families for work, poverty level of family, and engagement of children in household chores (for girls) and income generating activities (for boys).

Remedial Programme

- *Outreach of Remedial Programme:* Remedial support was offered to about 5850 children and a high proportion of children were covered in Bongaigaon (35.3%), followed by Goalpara (32.3%), Baksa (23.5%) and Nalbari (8.8%). The outreach of the remedial programme is noticeable from the regular attendance rate of students (90%), which highlights that the ASI programme attained its target of at least retaining 75 per cent of the enrolled children in the school education system.
- *Duration:* Interview with teachers, parents, students and Education Facilitators (EFs) highlighted that the remedial class during regular school hours on alternate days affected the continuity of both remedial and regular classes and regular remedial support beyond school hours even for a shorter duration would have been more impactful.
- *EFs of Remedial Class:* The effectiveness of the remedial programme varied depending upon the educational qualification, efficiency and motivation level of the EFs. Lack of EFs for a longer period of time, affected the learning levels of children, highlighting the need to keep a pool of EFs handy for immediate appointment.
- *Major Attraction of Remedial class:* Adoption of child-friendly approach, play-way method, use of teaching-learning materials (TLMs), art and craft, storytelling, library books, etc. were a major attraction to children that made the learning process joyful.
- *Focus on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN):* Focus on FLN for both primary and upper primary students is an apt strategy to ensure minimum level of learning. At the same time, to ensure long-term sustainability and continuity of children in schools beyond the intervention period, they should be made to enjoy their grade-specific curriculum, which are also designed to meet the FLN of children.
- *Maintenance of Child Portfolio and Worksheets:* Maintenance of child portfolio and weekly worksheets serves as a useful mechanism to track the progress of children and also to adopt different strategies to improve the learning levels of children. However, the upkeep of records was not uniform across all intervention schools. In schools with passionate EFs, more worksheets were worked out and portfolio was systematically

maintained, whereas in other schools, the worksheets were quite scarce and portfolio was not available for all children.

- *Maintenance of FLN Sheets:* Except for 1-2 schools, in every school, the FLN sheets were available on the walls of the remedial class, which recorded the progress levels of children in different competencies in language and mathematics. In some of the schools, the record for 2-3 children was missing, indicating the irregular attendance of children in the schools. The same FLN sheets could be customised to track the learning levels of children in grade-specific competencies.
- *Continuity in Learning:* Continuity in learning levels were hampered, when children who were identified as weak in studies had to attend remedial class on one day and the regular grade-specific class on the other day. To avoid the disturbance in routine, some children resorted to the practice of attending schools only on alternate days.
- *Sensitivity towards Remedial Class Children:* Children attending the remedial classes are handled with empathy and sympathy and are taught in a friendly way by the EFs. Despite the sensitivity adopted, frequently referring to these children as those from the camp, slow learners, remedial children, etc. during regular school hours instils a belief in children and teachers that these children are weak in studies.

SMC Strengthening Initiatives

- *Participation in Orientation Sessions:* The orientation sessions that was conducted once a year for the SMC and MG members has oriented about 500 members in 2020-21 and more than 1000 members and parents in the subsequent years, indicating the achievement of target under ASI. The increased participation rate over the years, demonstrates the interest generated amidst the communities on school development activities. However, it would still need few more years of intervention to instil the sense of ownership among community over the schools.
- *Training Content:* During FGD, the SMC/MG members expressed that the discussion was on key aspects such as (i) engagement in school development plans; (ii) setting up of kitchen garden; (iii) overseeing maintenance of child portfolio; (iii) monitoring school activities, attendance, MDM; (iv) home visit to counsel parents, and so on.
- *Handholding Support in Quarterly Meetings:* Regular handholding support by the ASI team during quarterly meetings was instrumental in generating the interest of SMCs/MGs on school related activities, regulating their attendance and also in promoting the awareness of members on their roles and responsibilities.
- *Participation in Quarterly Meetings:* The field survey in about 15 schools indicates that the participation rate was more than 80 per cent in most of the schools, while in 2-3 schools it was about 50 per cent.
- *Benefit of SMC/MG Training:* In Bongaigaon, it was reported in one of the schools that the attendance rate of children had increased after the SMCs took responsibilities for school management. In Goalpara, it was reported that the community members had provided free bamboos to the schools for building the infrastructure of the school and had also helped children to manage the kitchen garden. Though increased activities of SMCs/MGs were

visible in few schools, it is yet to take the form where ownership of community over the schools is felt.

- *Activities of SMCs Post-Training:* ASI support has contributed in increasing the participation rate of members in meetings and they are even aware of their roles. Repair of school infrastructure, monitoring of attendance and MDM were undertaken by some SMCs/MGs. Though vibrant engagement of community in school management could not be noted in all schools, it gives a sense that the repeated intervention with members under ASI would gradually promote community ownership.

Capacity Building Initiatives for Teachers

- *Teacher Training Workshop:* The teacher training workshop conducted in 2022-23 seemed more structured and systematic in comparison to the workshops that were conducted in the previous two years. While some teachers exhibited a high level of motivation to participate and learn from the workshop, some of the teachers were indifferent to the training.
- *Participation of Teachers:* The ASI intervention had successfully achieved its target of reaching about 200 teachers by 2021-22 only and in fact made a total coverage of 317 teachers in the last 2-3 years. A maximum number of teachers have been covered in Bongaigaon (151), followed by Goalpara (93), Baksa (44) and Nalbari (29).
- *Content of Teacher Training Workshop:* The training in the current year focused on the FLN and library activities, while the previous two trainings focused on aspects related to preparing and using TLMs, creating a bond with students, and concerns and issues related to children. Some of the teachers during training stated that the training was helpful to shift the focus from rote learning to activity-based learning.
- *Benefits of the Workshop to Teachers:* The training was well-received by the teachers and usage of TLMs by some of the teachers is a major change amidst the teachers post-training.
- *Activities of Teachers Post-Training:* In few schools, use of audio-visual mode to make learning joyful for the children was reported by the teachers. However, the results of the study emphasise that the capability for changing the pedagogy of teaching from rote learning to activity based was less than average in all the surveyed schools.

Learning Levels of Children

- *Improved Learning Levels of Students:* About 82.5 per cent of the children reported that the remedial programme had improved their learning levels. While 80 per cent of the children could read a simple paragraph, 75 per cent could correctly do subtraction or division. The results show that in the study area, the ability of language reading is comparatively better than maths/numeracy. District wise analysis suggests that the learning level of children is comparatively poor in the Goalpara district.
- *Learning through camps and remedial classes:* The qualitative survey highlights that the children enjoyed the learning process in motivational camps and remedial classes. The EFs had played a great role in making the learning experience of children enjoyable.

- *Correlation of basic amenities and learning:* Having access to better amenities (like pakka house) and comfort of life is associated with greater regularity in school attendance and better language and maths learning levels. Having access to smart phones is seen to be associated with better language skills.
- *Difference based on Gender and Religion:* It was found that the Muslim students have particularly shown to have higher maths vulnerability compared to other socio-religious groups. Girl students have also shown higher maths vulnerability compared to the boys.

Children's Retention Level in Schools Post ASI Intervention

- *Drop-out scenario post intervention:* The programme has achieved considerable success vis-à-vis the targets. Almost none of the students from the 2nd batch have yet dropped out. Some of the students are to an extent irregular in attendance (and they run the risk of dropping out again), but nearly 90 per cent of the enrolled students are fairly regular in school attendance.
- *Parental preference:* The survey results have shown the positive impact of parents' favourable opinion on child's education. Father's opinion particularly is an important factor in irregular attendance to school. It came to the light that in household where father is not alive or gives importance to education; the dropout rate is quite low.
- *Economic status and retention rate:* Poor economic status is seen to be associated with higher learning vulnerability and irregularity in school attendance. Moreover, missing classes (particularly due to seasonal work or migration), and not getting time to study due to various work done at home are two prominent barriers to learning.
- *Gender differentiation:* Both girls and boys face irregularity and become victims of dropout from education. However, reasons vary for both the gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings discussed above, the following suggestions have been made to enhance the future course of ASI intervention:

- *Continued Intervention in Vulnerable Districts:* While scaling up the intervention in all districts, special attention should be laid on vulnerable districts (high migration rates). Since better amenities and comfort of life enables better learning and children's retention, the children coming from under-privileged background should continue to receive special attention, as undertaken under ASI.
- *Intervention in Residential Schools:* Both the motivation camps and remedial programmes in residential schools should be resumed, as it is highly beneficial to prevent dropout rate during the period of seasonal out-migration.
- *Advocacy for Conditional Cash Transfer:* Conditional cash transfers for households that ensure retention of their children in school till 18 years will be helpful to tackle the rigid

mind set of parents. Advocacy with Government of Assam can be undertaken to launch a programme similar to *Kanyashree¹ Prakalpa* of West Bengal.

- *Remedial Classes beyond School Hours:* One to two hours of remedial support, before or after school hours with emphasis on grade-specific competencies and FLN is helpful to ensure continuity of both remedial and regular remedial class, ensure sustainability beyond intervention period, provide the opportunity to all children and prevent labelling of children as slow learners.
- *Grade-specific FLN Sheets:* FLN content and worksheets should be customised based on grade-specific textbooks, as the textbooks designed by the Government, based on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) also focuses on age-appropriate FLN.
- *Regular Monitoring of Child Portfolio:* Regular monitoring of child portfolio would be helpful to track the effectiveness of the remedial programme and the progress in learning levels of children.
- *Approach for Joyful Learning:* Child-friendly approach and use of play-way methods and other methods that promote learning experience joyful should be continued and also taken to the regular classrooms too. Supervised mixed-group activities can be an excellent levelling tactic for group learning and memory.
- *Assessment Practice:* Apart from baseline and endline assessment with simple but graded tool, oral test and fundamental reading and writing can be made part of regular assessment. Baseline should be completed annually for each batch using a straightforward but graded method (such as how it has been used in this study). It is important to identify each child's weaknesses and strengths in order to arrange them into smaller groups for graded remedial classes.
- *Pool of EFs:* A pool of qualified and motivated facilitators should be made available to ensure that interventions are not affected in the absence of EFs.
- *Promotion of Community Ownership:* Continued intervention with SMCs/MGs with handholding support to members for few more years will promote community ownership.
- *Incentivisation of Best Performing EFs, SMCs & Teachers:* Every year, best performing EFs, teachers and SMCs of the intervention schools or other schools of the intervention districts can be awarded in appreciation of their performance and to boost the zeal of other SMCs/teachers.
- *Convergence for School related Activities:* Seasonal cultivation can be adopted in the kitchen garden to ensure continuous production of vegetables/fruits. To promote ownership of everyone towards schools, community can procure seeds from agricultural departments, get the help of MGREGA workers to maintain kitchen garden.
- *Leadership Training to Motivated Teachers:* Leadership training to highly motivated teachers should be conducted, as they act as change makers in the schools and only through such teachers, sustainability of the ASI intervention even beyond project period can be ensured.

¹ Kanyashree Prakalpa is a scheme implemented by Government of West Bengal since 2013. It is a conditional cash transfer scheme with the aim to improve the overall wellbeing of adolescent girls (13-18 years) by incentivising their education to ensure transition of girls into higher education and delaying the marriage age of girls till they complete 18 years of age. In the case of Assam, such programme can be launched for both boys and girls, which is helpful to prevent child labour and child marriage.

1

Introduction

1.1. The Context

Whereas the developed countries achieved universalization of primary education (i.e. 100 per cent enrolment of children) some years back, many of the world's developing countries are far from achieving this goal. Across the globe, a large part of out-of-school (OoS) children (who have either never enrolled, or enrolled in the past and dropped out of the system before completing the entire school education) belongs to South Asia, and because of its large school-age population, the vast majority of OoS children in South Asia live in India (UNICEF, 2014).

In India, even though the progress in the universalization of elementary education has been impressive, quite a few major challenges remain (Tilak 2020, p. 1), including the quality of education and children's retention after elementary education. As reviewed by Mitra (2020), existing literature suggests that the major determinants of the education and retention of children are socio-economic and demographic, community/social infrastructure, teachers, and school-infrastructure-related factors. Further, Mitra and Agarwal (2020) argue that one of the main reasons behind the dropout of children is the lack of public investment, as parents with no-or-little education and low income often become helplessly short-sighted, and do not realize the long-term benefits of investing in the education of their children. India is a large country with vast socio-economic and spatial variations, and the trend of drop-out among children also has spatial variability.

North-East India (NEI) is a distinct region in the country with unique characteristics of difficult geographical terrain, ethnic and cultural diversities, frequent natural calamities, conflict, and violence. The educational development of NEI is often praised for its high literacy rate. Except for those of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the literacy rates of the other states are much higher than the national average (Pankaj et al., 2021, p. 4). But at the same time, the region is also characterized by significant inter and intra-state variations in the

prevalence of OoS children, with Assam having the highest share of such children. Compared to the all-India scenario the dropout rate is higher for Assam at every level starting from primary to secondary (table 1).

Table 1.1: Gender-wise drop-out rate at different levels of education in Assam (India)

State/Country	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Drop Out Rate			Drop Out Rate			Drop Out Rate		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
Assam	5.17	6.84	6.02	7.61	10.1	8.82	20.66	19.78	20.25
India	1.35	1.55	1.45	3.31	2.74	3.02	12.25	12.96	12.61

Source: DISE 2019

Ruma Dey (2016) argued that among the north-eastern states of India although school enrolment increased over the years, the progress in learning outcomes has not been adequate. This is reflected in the ASER report (2018) also, which shows that a substantially lower percentage of children in Assam can read and do division (table 2).

Table 1.2: Percentage of children able to read and do division (maths), 2014-2018

Indicators	India			Assam		
	2014	2016	2018	2014	2016	2018
Percentage of children in government schools in Std V who can read Std II level text	42.2	41.7	44.2	30.6	32.2	33.5
Percentage of children in government schools in Std V who can do division	20.7	21.1	22.7	9.0	9.1	14.4

Source: ASER report 2018

On top of it, COVID-19 has further deteriorated children's retention and learning level across the country. Poornima et al. (2022) found that the pandemic has resulted in the loss of livelihood and a sharp rise in unemployment, forcing some children to drop out of school and contribute to family income, and family care. The authors also highlighted that parents felt that their children's learning was severely hampered, as they had forgotten the basics and were not able to construct basic sentences. Children's learning was not commensurate with their grades; the learning pace has become poor and some children also lost interest in studies, as reported by 35 per cent of the parents. The Azim Premji Foundation study (2021) also highlighted that in the academic year during the pandemic, there has been a regression instead of progression in the children's learning.

In the above-mentioned background, Centre for Microfinance & Livelihood (CML) is doing some interventions since September 2019 with support from Tata Trusts through their Assam State Initiative (ASI) programme on education. The interventions are aimed to address several identified issues in elementary education in Assam, like (a) incidence of

children dropping out from school and getting engaged in work (b) lack of inbuilt remedial support system in government schools (c) lack of awareness among the community towards retaining the children in school till completion of the cycle of elementary education.

The overall aim of the initiative is to improve the quality of the ecosystem of elementary education in the targeted geographies by implementing the programme, apart from taking up research and advocacy work, to bring about lasting changes across the state. The proposed programme aims to create a safety net for OOS children; these include never enrolled, dropouts, and children lagging behind in terms of grade-specific competencies that could be potential dropouts. The program sought to bring in 1,200 OOS children to foundation camps, mainstream them in schools and provide remedial support to around 5,000 children including those mainstreamed from the camp along with some other children with slow progress in the targeted schools. Making School Management Committees (SMCs) functional is an integral part of the interventions. SMC was expected to be constituted in every intervention school which did not have it.

The main objectives of the CML programme

- ❖ Reduction in drop-outs by 25% within selected blocks.
- ❖ Ensuring retention of 75% of the 5,000 targeted children through remedial support in school.
- ❖ Undertaking a foundational course with 1,200 children through camps.
- ❖ Mainstreaming 1,200 drop-out and never-enrolled children in school, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) and Residential Special Training centre (RSTC).
- ❖ Schooling and learning improvement among 5,000 children (including mainstreamed, irregular and children with slow progress).
- ❖ Strengthening of Community Platforms/groups (School Management Committees (SMC) and Mothers' groups) in the targeted areas.
- ❖ Capacity Building of 200 teachers from KGBVs, RSTCs and Government Schools towards improved pedagogy in remedial teaching.
- ❖ A detailed research report which will deepen our understanding of the issue of drop-out in the region and help develop an effective advocacy plan. Documentation of best practices on 1) identification of out of school children, 2) offering bridge course, 3) mainstreaming of out of school children, 4) preventing further drop out by focusing on motivation and remediation, and 5) SMC work / community mobilisation.

The programme involving Education Department, communities, CML and Tata Trusts as the key stakeholders have been implemented in four districts namely Goalpara, Bogaigaon, Baksa, and Nalbari, including total 5,850 children. The programmes were rolled out with local organizations viz. Ajagar Social Circle in Goalpara, Gramya Vikash Mancha in Nalbari and Baksa and Jubayer Masud Educational and Charitable Trust in Bogaigaon. However, CML

took over the programs and started direct implementation, in the wake of the decision made by the Trusts that the Associate Organisation should implement programs directly. Though Covid-19 severely affected the interventions, CML could carry out most of the activities. Almost all of the direct programme targets have been achieved. Hence, the present study tried to fulfill some of the existing gaps in the design and implementation of ASI education and recommends possible solutions to address them.

1.2. Objectives

The present study, commissioned by CML an associate of Tata Trusts to the Council for Social Development, assesses the impact of the ASI on the education of the children. The study aims to shed light on some of the innovative measures and practices adopted by the facilitators² of CML in targeting out of school children (OoSC) in foundation camps and mainstreaming them into regular schools. It also attempts to highlight the measures adopted towards community ownership of SMCs over schools and capacity building of teachers on remedial support. In this regards, the specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Quantify the achievement on each of the program objective, using primary and secondary data, and report the same
2. Measure activity, output, outcome & impact indicators for the implementation period of this intervention and analyse the overall program performance
3. Identify the critical gaps in the design and implementation of the program, if any, and suggest ways and means to address them
4. Provide strategic suggestions for gaining scale & sustainability through next phase
5. Ascertain a threshold for the interventions (in terms of percentage of schools or villages) which will be large enough to address the issue of drop out/ out of school children in a sustainable manner and bring about systemic changes in Assam.

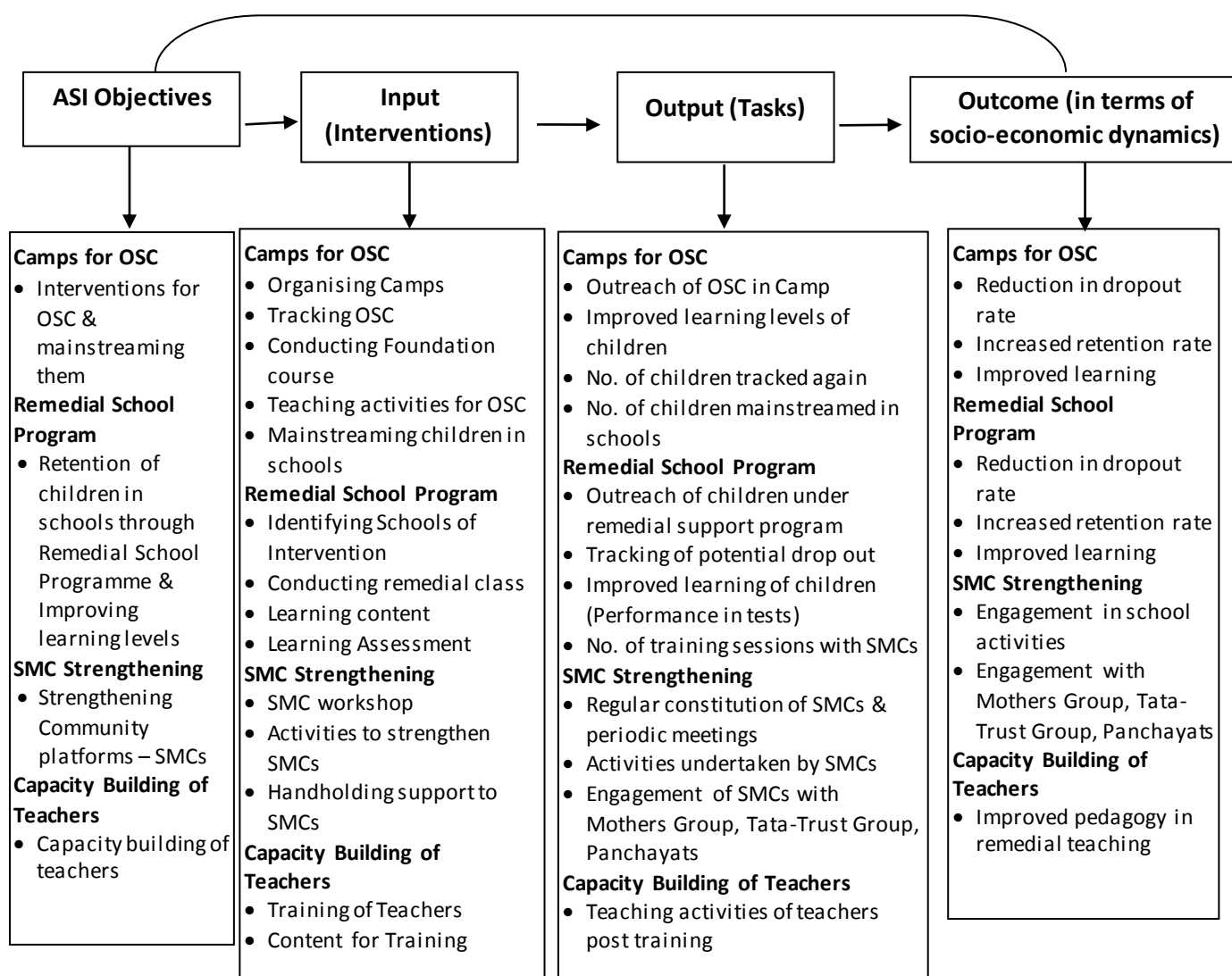
1.3. Work Approach

Impact Assessment Framework

A framework plays a crucial role to provide a holistic approach to the entire study. Based on the objectives established for this study, an Impact Assessment Framework is developed, which guides the evaluation and assessment of the ASI interventions. The Impact Assessment Framework serves as a roadmap for an effective impact analysis, which is as follows:

² Person engaged by CML to implement their interventions at the ground level.

Impact Assessment Framework



Based on the framework highlighted above, performance of ASI-Education is assessed on aspects related to 1) Interventions for OoSC through camps; 2) Intervention for mainstreamed children and slow learners through remedial school program; 3) Learning Assessment of Children; 4) Strengthening of SMCs; and 5) Capacity Building of teachers.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. Research Design

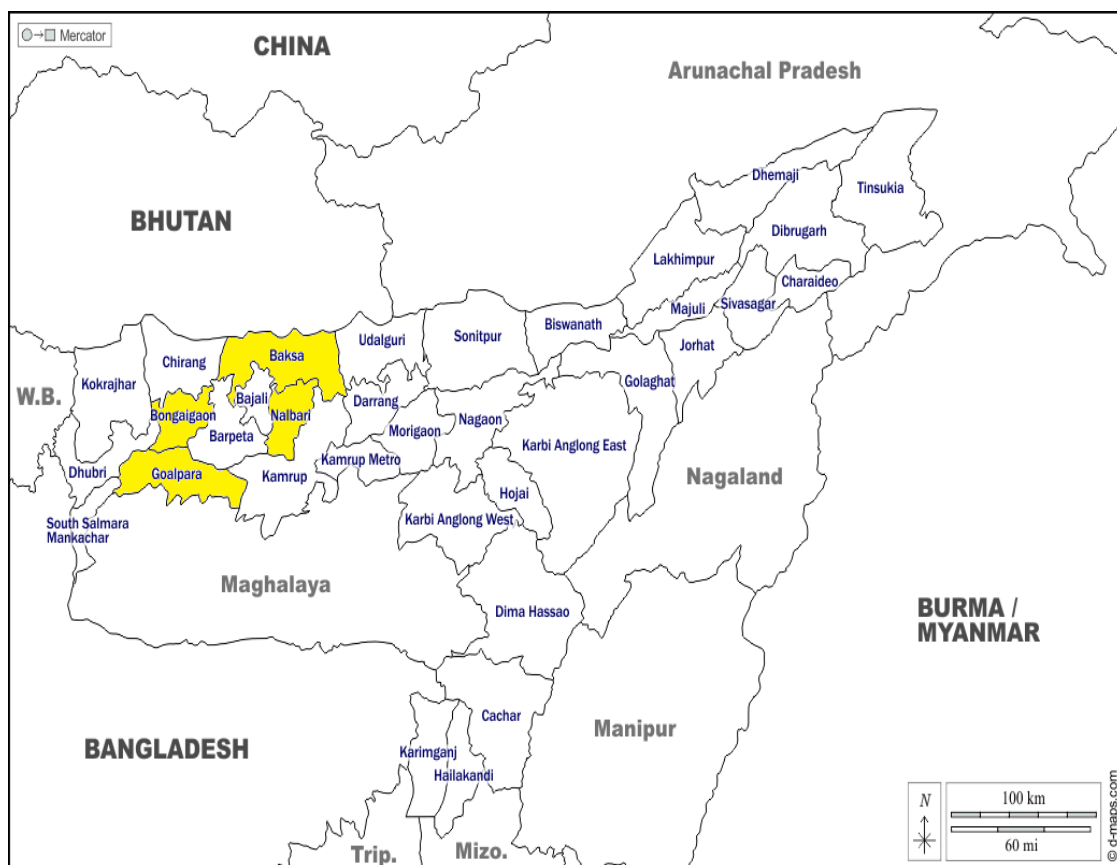
The study derives its data from primary and secondary sources and a mixed method research design has been used for collecting qualitative and quantitative information. For collecting primary data in the study area, both structured and semi structured survey schedules, and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with parents, children, facilitators, SMC

members and Mother’s Group. Children were also engaged in learning assessment to capture their behaviours and perspective towards assessment tool. Assessment of learning levels of the children through non participatory approach in two schools per block was also done by CSD researchers. The fieldwork for the study was conducted in February 2023. The quantitative primary data (child-household questionnaire) was collected through Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) and analysed in the statistical software package-SPSS and advance excel, whereas the researchers manually did the qualitative, narrative and non-participatory analysis. The details about the study area and the sample size covered in the study are presented in the following sub-sections.

1.4.2. Study Area

This study was conducted in four districts of Assam namely: Goalpara, Bogaigaon, Baksa, and Nalbari in which the intervention of CML-Tata Trust has been implemented (Figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1: Surveyed Districts in Assam



1.4.3. Sample Size

The study was conducted in four blocks across selected districts in the state.³ Using a coded child-household⁴ survey tool, we surveyed 175 parents and child from the same family in which 100 were from the first batch and 75 were from the second batch from each of the four districts. The team visited four schools in each district except in Tamulpur block of Baksa district where interviews with head teachers were conducted. FGDs with children of third, fourth and fifth grades were also conducted in the schools across the surveyed locations to capture their experiences in the motivational camps and their perception towards remedial classes. Learning assessment was also assessed during FGDs using open ended questionnaire. In-depth interviews with the government educational officer in Bongaigaon district and facilitators were also conducted using structured and semi-structured questionnaires to understand the nuances behind child drop out and OOSC and the measures adopted in handling these issues.

The data and information were complemented through FGDs) with various stakeholders such as school management committees (SMCs), Mother’s group, and parents. The detailed sample size of the respondents is presented in in Table 3, whereas the tools designed for data collection (both quantitative and qualitative) have been attached as Annexed.

Table 1.3: Sample Size and survey instruments canvassed for Primary Data Collection

Sample	Unit	Total Sample Size	Survey Instruments
Districts	4 districts in Assam	4 districts	*****
Blocks	1-2 blocks/district	5 blocks	*****
Villages	2-3 villages/block	24 villages	*****
Household & Parents (Children)	175/district	700* households	Structured household Schedule for quantitative survey
Schools	4 in every district except Baksa (3)	15 schools	Semi-structured interview with head teacher
		15 FGDs with teachers	FGD with teachers who attended training of CML
		14 FGDs with children	FGD with children attending remedial class
		10 facilitators of remedial program	Semi-Structured interview with Facilitators
SMCs/Mothers Group in the schools	1 per school	14 SMCs	Unstructured interview with SMC members and mother’ groups
FGD with Children in	1 per district	3 FDG with	FGD with children of motivational camps

³ CML - an associate of Tata Trust is directly working with the out of school children (OoSC) and engaged with the school, community, SMC, Mother’s group and system-level interventions in the state.

⁴ Both parent and child from the same family were interviewed through a coded child-household schedule using smart phones by the surveyors.

the villages	children including 3 rd , 4 th and 5 th grades	and remedial classes in the villages
Government officials (Education Department)	1 BEO at Bongaigaon	Semi-Structured interview with official

Note: * interviewed 743 Households

. As per Table 1.4 there were about 743 households surveyed in the selected four districts. A maximum of 106 households from Batch I was found in Goalpara district. On the other hand, in Bongaigaon, it was noted that the sample interviewed (92) was found to be more in the year 2021-22.

Batch	Interviewed	Districts				
		Baksa	Bongaigaon	Goalpara	Nalbari	Total
2020-21	Both child & parents	105 (55.9%)	97 (51.3 %)	106 (57.0 %)	100 (55.6 %)	408 (54.9 %)
2021-22	Both child & parents	83 (44.1 %)	92 (48.7 %)	80 (48.7 %)	80 (44.4 %)	335 (45.1 %)
Total		188 (100 %)	189 (100 %)	186 (100 %)	180 (100 %)	743 (100 %)

Source: Survey, 2023. *Note:* HH - households

Table 1.5 represents the households' characteristics by their occupation, social category and religion.

		Percentage distribution				
		Baksa	Bongaigaon	Goalpara	Nalbari	Total
Major Occupation of Household	Self-employed in agri.	19	66	88	63	236
	Self-employed in non-agri.	53	20	10	36	119
	Regular wage/salary earning	11	8	4	6	29
	casual labour in agri.	19	15	24	12	70
	Casual labour in non-agri.	68	72	25	46	211
	Other	18	8	35	17	78
	Total		188	189	186	180
Social category	Schedule Tribe	51	4	169	2	226
	Schedule Caste	21	27	14	8	70
	Other backward class	53	0	0	16	69
	General	63	158	3	154	378
	Total	188	189	186	180	743
Religion	Hindu	133	22	57	69	281
	Islam	55	167	1	111	334
	Christian	0	0	128	0	128
	Total	188	189	186	180	743

Source: Survey, 2023.

The occupational status of the households is also one of the key determinants for sending children to schools. Hill, Samson & Dasgupta (2011)⁵ assert that schooling has not always

⁵ Hill et.al. (2011): Expanding the School Market in India: Parental Choice and the Reproduction of Social Inequality, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Pg. 98-105

been a free choice. It is mediated by the socio-economic conditions of the household. Out of the total sample of 743 households, 236 (31.76 %) were self-employed in agriculture, followed by a sample of 221 (28.40 %) households working as casual labour (non-agricultural). There were few household who were engaged in *Beedi*⁶ *Karkhanna*⁷, tea stalls, tea garden and this proportion is high in Goalpara district. Overall the proportion of regular wage/salary earning was relatively low 29 (4 %) in almost every surveyed districts.

In terms of social category of the households, it can be noted that in the surveyed districts, most of the households belonged to general category (378), followed by Schedule Tribe (226). A substantial number of scheduled tribe (ST) households were found in Goalpara (169) and Baksa (51). In Baksa district, the OBC households were more in number than the other social groups.

On the whole, there were about 334 households who belonged to Islam religion, followed by Hindus. A substantial proportion of Islam households were found in Bongaigaon (167) followed by Nalbari (111). Only in Goalpara, Christian population were surveyed (128).

1.5. Limitation of the study

Despite having a well-thought research design and methodology, the study faced the following limitations:

1. Despite making attempts, we could manage to meet the block educational officers of only one district of Bongaigaon, other officials were busy in Gunotsav during the time of field visit.
2. We interviewed children of motivational camps and also parents of those whose children were in motivational and attending remedial classes in the schools, to capture their perspective regarding their stay in the camps and views and feedback on the remedial class. But as there is no motivational camp currently running in any district during the study period, the team was not able to visit or monitor the camps personally.
3. We mostly visited only those schools where the CML- Tata Trusts team had its interventions. However, in the study area, other NGOs and CSOs like Azim Premji Foundation, Pratham and Agha Khan Foundation are also working. Their interventions were not captured to do some kind of comparative analyses.

⁶ an inexpensive cigarette

⁷ Factory

4. In the surveyed area - all four districts, the incidents of child labour, child marriage have been found to be high during interviews and informal discussion. In fact, during the fieldwork, we found few children working in agriculture land and on tea stalls. Few school going aged girls were seen at home taking care of their siblings and animals (pig/ goat/buffalo). During an informal discussion it was found that there are still cases of drop out and child marriage. However, given the sensitivity of the issues, we were not allowed to interview any such children on the site in any of the district surveyed.

1.6. Structure of the Report

The entire report consists of six chapters. The introductory chapter presents the context of the study, objectives, approach, and methodology. Chapter 2 throws light on the status of education in Assam through literature review, Chapter 3 presents an analysis of ASI related to motivational camps, remedial programme, SMC strengthening initiatives, capacity building training of the teachers and overall performance assessment the initiative. Chapter 4 discusses the impact of intervention on children's learning by highlighting what worked and what more to be done in the future. Chapter 5 explores the retention rate post CML intervention and suggests scaling up solution for the next phase. The concluding Chapter 6 summarizes the findings, provides ways and means to address the gaps in the design and implementations of ASI education and recommendations for the key stakeholders.

2

Status of Education in Assam

2.1 Introduction

Based on the existing literature and secondary data sources, this chapter provides the macro picture of the status of education in Assam. This chapter not only provides a base to understand the micro findings of our four-district study in the following chapters, but also justifies the suggested threshold level for up-scaling CML intervention in next phase in a sustainable manner. Based on the existing literature, some of the key issues of education in Assam are discussed in the following subsections.

2.2 Low Retention Rate and Learning among Children in Assam

Low retention rate

Despite a remarkable progress of school education in Assam, it still remains as one of the educationally backward states in the country (CML, 2021). According to District Information System for Education (DISE) data of the academic year 2021-22, almost all districts in Assam have dropout rates more than national average (table 2.1).

Table 2.1: District Wise Dropout Rates at Different Levels in Assam

Districts	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Drop Out Rate			Drop Out Rate			Drop Out Rate		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
India	1.4	1.6	1.5	3.3	2.7	3.0	12.3	13.0	12.6
Assam	5.2	6.8	6.0	7.6	10.1	8.8	20.7	19.8	20.3
Bajali	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Baksa	49.2	49.1	49.1	47.3	47.2	47.3	55.8	53.6	54.8
Barpeta	15.8	18.5	17.2	22.6	27.2	24.8	34.7	32.8	33.8
Biswanath	4.5	6.7	5.6	5.5	8.5	7.0	25.7	26.5	26.1
Bongaigaon	3.1	3.5	3.3	6.9	10.3	8.5	32.8	28.8	30.9
Cachar	2.3	3.5	2.9	4.4	6.6	5.5	21.6	20.9	21.2
Charaideo	3.8	4.3	4.0	5.2	6.8	6.0	9.4	18.4	13.7
Chirang	3.2	4.3	3.8	1.8	4.0	2.9	19.2	15.9	17.6

Darrang	6.2	9.9	8.0	9.4	12.0	10.6	22.0	18.8	20.5
Dhemaji	7.7	7.3	7.5	8.4	7.6	8.0	10.6	13.3	12.0
Dhubri	5.7	7.7	6.7	11.5	14.7	13.0	25.5	19.7	22.9
Dibrugarh	5.9	6.2	6.1	6.7	7.9	7.3	17.3	17.6	17.4
Dima hasao	4.9	7.4	6.2	7.8	4.2	6.1	14.1	19.8	16.8
Goalpara	6.4	10.3	8.4	10.0	13.7	11.7	25.9	25.4	25.7
Golaghat	4.8	4.5	4.6	5.5	7.0	6.3	22.2	19.2	20.8
Hailakandi	7.8	9.4	8.6	7.5	10.4	8.9	19.4	19.1	19.3
Hojai	2.1	1.4	1.7	4.7	7.6	6.0	29.3	32.4	30.6
Jorhat	2.1	2.5	2.3	4.5	6.0	5.2	15.3	15.0	15.2
Kamrup-Metro	2.5	1.9	2.2	1.0	2.3	1.7	6.2	6.5	6.3
Kamrup-Rural	5.3	8.2	6.8	10.0	12.3	11.1	27.8	28.2	28.0
Karbi Angling	8.0	10.1	9.1	7.9	9.2	8.5	16.4	17.1	16.7
Karimganj	6.0	9.3	7.7	9.6	15.3	12.2	26.4	26.8	26.5
Kokrajhar	6.7	7.2	7.0	6.4	8.4	7.4	16.5	16.6	16.5
Lakhimpur	4.1	4.1	4.1	6.3	7.9	7.1	11.9	12.3	12.1
Majuli	4.3	5.0	4.7	8.7	7.5	8.0	11.2	12.5	11.8
Morigaon	3.1	6.6	4.8	5.5	10.8	8.0	24.3	26.3	25.2
Nagaon	5.5	8.0	6.7	11.2	16.3	13.5	22.9	20.8	22.0
Nalbari	5.8	7.8	6.8	6.6	7.6	7.1	15.1	13.6	14.4
Sibsagar	0.1	2.3	1.2	4.8	4.0	4.4	14.4	13.1	13.8
Sonitpur	4.8	5.6	5.2	5.2	10.2	7.6	28.5	27.5	28.1
South Salmara- Mankachar	17.1	22.4	19.8	21.6	23.5	22.4	32.6	26.9	30.2
Tamulpur	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tinsukia	4.2	5.2	4.7	4.9	8.1	6.5	18.1	21.6	19.8
Udalguri	4.7	4.4	4.6	3.5	5.3	4.4	6.9	10.8	8.7
West Karbi Anglong	7.7	8.8	8.3	6.3	7.7	7.0	30.1	30.8	30.4

Source: DISE 2021-22

Low learning level

The latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (Rural) (2023) highlights that among the children in Standard III, 7.8 per cent cannot even recognize one digit number, whereas 35 per cent cannot recognize three digit numbers; 32.8 per cent cannot do subtraction; 21.1 per cent can do subtraction but cannot do division; and only 3.3 per cent can do division. Regarding English language, three out of every four students in the age group of 5 to 16

cannot read simple sentences. The report also emphasized that gender gap in learning ability has increased between 2018 and 2022.

Worsening of the educational situation due to COVID-19

A probable reason might be potential impacts of COVID-19 on education. ASER (2023) brings to light that the percentage of children in standard III in government schools in Assam, who can read standard II level texts declined below 2012 level. From 10.4 per cent in 2012, it went up to 14.4 per cent in 2018, but again came down to 10.1 per cent in 2022. According to Boruah (2020), the potential impacts of COVID-19 on children's education in Assam are numerous. Assam is a state where most of the people live in rural areas and are not aware of the digital platforms. Most of the children do not have smart phones or laptops to get online education during school closure. Due to lockdown students had lost about seven months of their academic year, which further increased their learning gap.

2.3 Government Measures to Address Low Retention rate and Learning

In order to improve retention rate and the quality of both elementary and secondary school education, the Government of Assam has implemented a series of programmes and schemes. Some of the significant measures include: provision of free incentives such as textbooks and uniforms; scholarships to meritorious BPL students, disabled students and girls; distribution of free bicycles to BPL girls; waiving of admission fees in higher secondary schools and colleges for poor students; establishment of new schools in tea garden areas (availability of limited high schools in the tea-garden areas forced a large number of students to leave schools midway); and tele-education through virtual classrooms, amongst other measures. CML (2021) presents in detail the recent policy initiatives for school education in Assam.

Despite the efforts of the government since independence to improve Assam's educational system and despite the progress made, inequality in educational opportunities and achievements among different sections and region is still a major challenge. Hoque (2018) emphasizes that the reasons do not lie just in the present social or political system but have its historical roots too. Many children in Assam live in remote areas that are difficult to access, making it challenging for them to attend school regularly. Due to difficult geographical terrain many schools in Assam lack proper infrastructure including classrooms, desks, chairs, and basic facilities such as (separate) toilets, clean drinking water, and electricity. Further, Assam has a diverse population, and many children speak different languages. This can make

it difficult for them to learn in a language that is not their mother tongue. The state also has a history of conflict and instability, which disrupt education and make it difficult for children to attend school regularly. It is important therefore to understand the wide variety of reasons that potentially force, demotivate or discourage students from pursuing education in particular.

2.4 Poverty-Migration-Violation of Child Rights: The Nexus of Barriers to Education

Poverty

Poverty is a significant barrier to education in Assam (Sarma, 1993; Singh Kro, 2017; Saikia, 2020; Gogoi, 2020; CML, 2021). Many families cannot afford the expenses associated with schooling, such as tuition fees, textbooks, uniforms, and transportation, as they struggle to make ends meet . Children from poor families may also be forced to work to help support their families, which can prevent them from attending school regularly or completing their education. Furthermore, poverty often leads to poor health and nutrition, which can have a significant impact on a child's ability to learn. Malnutrition can lead to stunted growth, cognitive impairment, and poor academic performance. Children living in poverty are also more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and trauma, which can impact their ability to learn and succeed in school. Majority of Assam's districts are entirely dependent on agriculture, but due to low productivity from a variety of causes, such as floods, and improper use of technology and strategy those are among the most underdeveloped and listed under the Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme (BRGF).

Migration

Migration in Assam is a complex issue that has various social, economic, and political dimensions (Bharali, 2020). According to the author, despite Assam being known for its vast natural resources and biodiversity the state faces the challenge of lack of employment opportunities. Therefore, many people from rural areas of Assam migrate to urban areas in search of better employment opportunities, particularly in the informal sector. This migration is also driven by poverty, lack of education, and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas. Another factor that contributes to the migration of labourer families in Assam is ethnic conflict and violence. Assam has a complex demographic profile, with various ethnic groups and communities living in the state. The ethnic tensions and conflicts often result in violence,

leading to displacement and migration of families. Climate change is also a factor that contributes to migration in Assam. The state is prone to natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and erosion. Climate change has exacerbated the frequency and severity of these disasters, leading to displacement and migration of families.

Violations of various child rights

The rights of children are seen to be violated in a number of ways such as child trafficking, child labour, child pornography, child prostitution, child marriage, child kidnapping, and discrimination against children on the basis of caste, creed, religion, tribe, or indigenous background, and so on (Kalita, 2018).

Child labour: The problem of child labour is very common in the entire state of Assam. Thousands of children are working both in rural and urban areas. Since the state of Assam is predominantly agrarian; the children have to help their parents in the fields and farms. However, the majority of children working in rural areas are mainly concentrated in agricultural activities. According to Census, the number of child labourers in Assam increased from 2.4 Lakhs in 1971 to 3.4 Lakhs in 2011. There is an increase in the menace of child labour in the state despite several constitutional provisions as well as legal enactments for the abolition of child labour (Kalita, 2018; Saikia, 2020). Child labourers in Assam are mostly engaged in cultivation, construction works, tea gardens, jewellery, quarries, brick kiln industries, motor-garage and workshops, cottage industries, other small industries, and domestic works (Ahmed, 2019). A large number of children in Assam work in brick kiln industries along with their parents. The children are also employed as agricultural labourers along with the adult family members. They are also used as bonded or as contractual labourers. Young girls take care of younger siblings in many poor households. The children in rural areas are often engaged in large numbers in the cottage industries, such as, silk weaving and carpet making, which force them to stay in cramped and dark interiors for long hours (Saikia, 2020).

Child marriage: Child marriage is another issue in Assam (Sonawane, 2020). There has been a continuous increase in victims of child marriage in Assam, from 115 in 2019 to 162 in 2021 (State Fact Sheet, 2022). As per the census 2011, in Assam 2.6 lakh children were married off before the attainment of the legal age of marriage, which constituted approximately 2 per cent of all married children in the country. However, NCRB data suggests that cases of only 416 children were registered in the state under the prohibition of Child Marriage Act during 2019-

21 (State Fact Sheet, 2022). The NFHS-5 (2019-2021) data states that 32 per cent of women in Assam in the 20-24 age bracket were underage at the time of marriage and that 12 per cent of them were either pregnant or had already become mothers (Reddy & Suresh, 2023).

Child Trafficking: In Assam, of the total victims of trafficking, 47 per cent were children, which are higher than the national average of 44 per cent (State Fact Sheet, 2022). The total number of victims of child trafficking in Assam increased from 80 in 2019 (56 girls and 24 boys) to 215 (151 girls and 64 boys) in 2021. Girls constituted 70 per cent of the total trafficked children in 2021 (State Fact Sheet, 2022).

Right to education: Although Assam's educational system has undergone a number of notable improvements ever since independence, the state has to go long way to attain Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). For instance, the children of tea garden and tribal communities that live and work on Assam's vast tea estates have had restricted access to higher education, low enrolment rates, and high drop-out rates for decades in the tea-garden districts and the same holds true for the communities living in Hilly and Char areas. Furthermore, the high enrolment rate has not translated into high attendance rates and there are challenges associated high absenteeism among students and even low attendance rates among teachers (Goswami, 2020). Shortage of qualified teachers and their low level of training and motivation, lack of teaching aids, dysfunctional infrastructure of the schools, lack of vocational or career oriented courses for students in building the human capital are some of the major supply side constraints (Sing Kro, 2017; Hoque, 2018; Goswami, 2020).

Gender norms aggravating the barriers

According to BPF (2022), the majority of the adolescent girls and women have acknowledged the economic constraints and difficulties they face, and they emphasised their desire to be economically independent. According to them they are often dictated by various norms and restrictions on mobility, for their good 'futures'. Even though mothers understand their daughters (they act as the patriarchal agent), they still control them owing to societal standards, conventions, and control. "*Homajor niyom toh manibo lagibo*" as the older women cohort opined. They recognise that they (and also male members) restrict their daughter's mobilities far more than they do to their sons, and that there is immense patriarchal surveillance on girls' movements (BPF, 2022).

2.5 Way Forward

In the above mentioned background it is important therefore to understand the wide variety of reasons that potentially force, demotivate or discourage students from pursuing education in particular, and practices in the school and classroom. This study intends to meet this purpose and make an assessment of the impact by the ASI in enrolment and retention in schools in both the rural and urban areas of Assam, addressing the concerns towards OOSC in Assam.

At the same time, in order to delve into the reasons for dropouts, outreaching the OoSC in foundational camps and mainstreaming them, outreaching them with the help of remedial school programme, improving educational quality in Assam, capacity building of teachers in the mainstream and remedial education programmes, and to address the issues highlighted above, viz., enrolment, retention, transition, quality of learning, and so on, this study intends to find out the reasons, impacts, and solutions.

3

ASSESSMENT OF THE ASSAM STATE INITIATIVE (ASI)

3.1 Introduction

As discussed earlier, the aim of ASI is to create a safety net for out-of-school children (OOSC)⁸ and improve the quality of the ecosystem of elementary education in the targeted geographies. In this regard, this chapter makes an assessment of the four major initiatives of ASI and presents a comparative picture of the achievements in the four districts. In addition, it also presents the field findings based on the survey carried out in the Tamulpur block of Baksa, Srijangram and Tapattari blocks of Bongaigaon, Balijana block of Goalpara and Ghograpar block of Nalbari district.

3.2 Overview of Assam State Initiative (ASI)

Coverage of ASI

In terms of coverage, the programme has been implemented in such districts and blocks, where there is substantial proportion of school dropouts and is majorly populated by the scheduled tribes (STs) and Muslim minorities.

In comparison to the other three districts, Bongaigaon has the highest proportion of dropout rate, out-migration rate and had larger share of Muslim population. Nalbari also had substantial share of Muslim minorities. While Goalpara was highly inhabited by tribal people such as Rabha, Bodo and Garo, Baksa district had the domination of Bodo, Assamese, Nepali, Rabha and Adivasis. Poverty was a major challenge in all these districts and Nalbari is a flood-prone area. Due to the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of these districts, dropout was a major issue and during FGD with the community, the chief reasons cited for dropout included poverty, child labour, child marriage and child trafficking. Cases of child trafficking to Bhutan, Bangladesh and Arunachal Pradesh were reported by the parents in Baksa.

⁸ A child of 6-14 years of age will be considered out of school if he / she has never been enrolled in an elementary school or if after enrolment has been absent from school without prior intimation for reasons of absence for a period of 45 days or more (GoI, 2009).

Years	Districts	No. of villages covered	No. of schools	Children of Motivation Camps	Remedial Class Children			SMC Strengthening				Capacity Building of Teachers	
					Slow learners	Children mainstreamed from Camps	Total	Orientation Workshop	Schools covered	No. of Participants		Workshop	Teacher Participants
										SMC	MG		
2022-23 [#]	Baksa	48	22	0	0	0	0	22	22	254	198	0	0
	Bongaigaon	63	30	0	0	0	0	30	30	356	350	1	29
	Goalpara	44	30	0	0	0	0	30	30	300	308	1	30
	Nalbari	12	8	0	0	0	0	8	8	101	69	0	0
	Total	167	90	0	0	0	0	90	90	1011	925	2	59
2021-22	Baksa	48	22	112	346	112	458	22	22	266	216	1	14
	Bongaigaon	63	30	120	547	120	667	30	30	356	533	2	43
	Goalpara	44	30	120	540	120	660	30	30	415	297	2	29
	Nalbari	12	8	43	132	43	175	7	7	85	77	1	10
	Total	167	90	395	1565	395	1960	89	89	1122	1123	6	96
2020-2021	Baksa	67	42	227	374	227	601	23	23	42	93	1	30
	Bongaigaon	41	30	123	664	123	787	30	30	200	180	2	79
	Goalpara	81	47	128	659	128	787	30	30	250	221	2	34
	Nalbari	15	10	66	122	66	188	7	7	14	29	1	19
	Total	204	120	544	1819	544	2363	90	90	506	523	6	162
2019-20	Baksa	24	32	96	221	96	317	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Bongaigaon	29	29	86	523	87	609	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Goalpara	20	21	86	361	86	447	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Nalbari	10	11	30	124	30	154	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	83	93	298	1229	298	1527	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	Baksa	***	***	435	941	435	1376	67	23	562	507	2	44
	Bongaigaon	***	***	329	1734	329	2063	90	30	912	1063	5	151
	Goalpara	***	***	334	1560	334	1894	90	30	965	826	5	93
	Nalbari	***	***	139	378	139	517	22	7	200	175	2	29
	Total	***	***	1237	4613	1237	5850	269	90	2639	2571	14	317

Source: Prepared by CSD based on data shared by CML.

Note: In 2020-21, though the intervention schools were only 90, the data highlights 120 schools, which also includes the other schools in which the camp children were mainstreamed during the COVID-19 and post pandemic times. # Children supported were continued from previous year.

As reported by the community members in Bongaigaon, migration is a common problem faced in this area, wherein children migrate along with parents, when they go for brick kiln related work or other seasonal agricultural work. Learning of children is severely hampered as some children drop out, while majority resort to long absenteeism. Considering the ground reality on the scenario of dropout in these districts, it can be stated that the ASI had commenced its intervention in the priority areas, where violation of child rights and dropout cases were quite common.

In Baksa, ASI has been implemented in the blocks of Dhamdhama, Nagrijuli and Tamulpur and in Bongaigaon, the blocks of Srijangram and Tapattari have been covered. The blocks of Balijana, Jaleswar and Lakhipur in Goalpara district and the Ghograpar block of Nalbari district have been targeted. Almost all these blocks have the same set of socio-economic characteristics that has been reported for their respective districts. Though the target of ASI was to cover about 121 villages, the programme has exceeded the number in terms of coverage of villages and on the whole, the intervention was implemented in about 90 schools. Apart from the schools that were targeted in 2019-20, schools with better performance were dropped and replaced with other new schools in the subsequent years, as reported by the programme coordinators of ASI.

While the target of ASI was to run motivational camps for about 1,220 OOSC, the programme exceeded its target and reached more number of children (see Table 3.1). Similarly, in terms of coverage of children in the remedial programme, the ASI crossed its target of 5,000 and reached 5,850 students. Though the programme could not take substantial measure in strengthening the SMCs/MGs or in capacitating the teachers in the first year of intervention, in the subsequent years, orientation workshop for the SMCs/MGs and training workshop for the teachers on remedial teaching was organised by the programmes and more than 1,000 SMC/MG members and more than 200 teachers had participated in the workshops.

Box 3.1: Mission Sanjog Campaign: To Bring Back Children to School Post-COVID-19

During November 2020, campaign called 'Mission Sanjog' was started in all the programme areas, in order to bring back children to schools after the prolonged period of school closure post-COVID-19. The kind of activities undertaken during the campaign, include the following:

- *Distribution of leaflets in Assamese, Bodo & Garo in the SMC, MG, Community meetings and other gatherings;*
- *Display of Banners in Assamese, Bodo & Garo across the project areas (180 areas);*
- *Home visits to those houses, where children failed to turn up even after reopening;*
- *Two Community rallies in Bongaigaon on the campaign;*
- *Meeting with SMCs & MGs on the learning loss in children post COVID-19 and how parents can support them*

Source: CML-Tata Trusts Annual Report, 2021

With respect to coverage in terms of numbers, it can be stated that the programme has reached its target, which is visible from the numbers of children, community members and teachers who had benefitted from the intervention. The forthcoming sections of this chapter, makes an in-depth analysis of these interventions, by throwing light on the various facilitating and hindering factors in implementing the programme and in reaching the target group.

3.3 Assessment of the Interventions under ASI

This section presents the field findings with respect to the four major interventions of the ASI, viz. functioning of motivation camps, remedial support programme, SMC strengthening initiative and capacity building of teachers. While a detailed analysis will be made of these four initiatives, it will also give a glimpse of the other interventions undertaken, and present the key insights shared by the Programme Coordinators, Education Facilitators (EFs), head teachers, teachers, members of SMC and MG, local community leaders, parents, students and educational officials during interviews and discussion.

3.3.1 Motivational Camps

Since the basic objective of the programme was to reduce the incidence of children dropping out from school, the key intervention that was planned under ASI was to organise a motivation camp or foundation camp for drop out children, so as to stimulate the interest of children towards studies and later mainstream them in regular schools. The following section discusses the measures undertaken by CML and the outcome of such measures and the facilitating and hindering factors with respect to the intervention of camps for out-of-school children.

Inputs

Various measures were undertaken by CML such as outreach measures to bring children to the camp, running of camps in intervention areas, and offering support to children by way of food and refreshments, transportation facilities and other incentives and so on. The other components in design and delivery of the camps were also worked out, wherein focus was laid on the duration, timing, content and teaching activities to be followed in the camps and the details are as follows:

Outreach measures

Measures such as collection of drop-out lists from schools, verification of the same through community meetings, door-to-door surveys, rallies in the villages and regular visits to

convince parents were the chief measures that played a key role in tracking OOSC. During field survey, about 90 per cent of the parents in Baksa and Nalbari stated that the counselling provided by EFs motivated them to send their wards to schools. In Bongaigaon and Goalpara, 77.3 per cent and 70.4 per cent of the parents reported that the counselling provided boosted their interest in their ward's education (see Table 3.2). During 2020, after the prolonged school closure, a campaign was also organised by ASI team to bring back children to school, which was helpful to stimulate the willingness of students and address their fears in getting back to school.

Motivational Camps

During the period of intervention, a total of about 38 motivation camps were organised against the target of 36 camps. While 8 camps were organised in 2019-20, in the next two years, 17 and 13 camps were organised with about an intake of 278 children, 544 and 395 children in the three years. The target of children in the camps had been the highest in Baksa district and the lowest in Nalbari district (see Table 3.2).

Camps in Residential Schools: Before COVID-19, the camps were also organised in residential schools which was very much beneficial to the children, where the focus was laid on the holistic development of children, wherein, they were engaged in physical exercises and cleaning of campus and rooms in the morning, learning activities during day-time and also participated in skill development and personality development sessions. However, post-COVID-19, such camps in residential schools has not been resumed yet.

Duration of Camp: Across the four districts, the camp was majorly held for 15 days and in some locations, it was held for 10 days and was mostly organised in the schools of intervention from 9 am to 4 pm. During FGD with parents and children, a request was placed to increase the duration of motivation camps.

Major Attractions to Children in the Camp: To stimulate the interest of children towards studies, various incentives were provided and transport arrangements were also made for pick-up and drop-back. The major attractions to children in the camps, as revealed by them during FGDs were i) good quality food; ii) the provision of free incentives such as uniform, bags, colouring kits, geometry box and shoes; and iii) the fun and sports activities provided in the camps. Some showed interest in attending the camp, as their friends were attending the same.

Content & Activities of the Camp: There were three kinds of activities that were focused upon in the motivation camps which included fun activities, learning activities and sports and in delivering the same, a child-friendly approach was used. The content and activities of the camps were on: i) ensuring regular attendance of children during camps; ii) developing inter-personal communication skills among students; iii) conducting activities for team building and developing self-confidence; iv) developing a good rapport of EF with children; v) getting children acquainted to school norms, foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) and some important life skills; vi) inculcating positive ambition for students; and vii) preparedness for enrolling in school (CML-Tata Trusts, 2021). In line with the design of the programme, various activities were conducted for children in the camps. Mostly, play-way methods and activities such as origami, art & craft, film screening, sports activity, dance, music, exposure visit to local museums, drama by local resource, learning related activities such as identification of alphabets, words and numbers, attractive books, decoration on walls and storytelling activities etc. were undertaken for the children. The children during FGDs, with fond memories, recollected the activities that they enjoyed in the foundation camp.

Table 3.2: Details of Motivation Camps

District	Blocks	Children who attended Motivational Camps (Nos.)						Children Mainstream ed (overall) (Nos.)	Validation from Field (%)		
		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total		Children enrolled & attending	Camp boosted children's confidence / interest	Counselling boosted parents' interest in child's education
Baksa	Dhamdhama	42	64	30	10	126	136	136	100.00	65.96	90.96
	Nagrijuli	28	64	32	2	122	124	124			
	Tamulpur	26	99	50	0	175	175	175			
Bongaigaon	Srijangram	0	0	26	0	26	26	26	96.83 [#]	63.49	77.25
	Tapattari	86	123	94	20	283	303	303			
Goalpara	Balijana	56	57	14	0	127	127	127	100.00	69.89	70.43
	Jaleswar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
	Lakhipur	30	71	106	0	207	207	207			
Nalbari	Ghograpar	30	66	43	0	139	139	139	100.00	80.00	91.67
Total		298	544	395	32	1205	1237	1237	99.19	69.72	82.50

Source: Based on data shared by CML and Field Survey.

Note#: In Bongaigaon, 2 per cent of the children, were currently enrolled, but not attending schools, while remaining one per cent were neither enrolled nor attending the schools

Output

Beneficiaries of Camp: The major beneficiaries of the motivation camp were poor children, migrating children, children from tribal communities, who had either dropped out from school or were irregular to schools, and working children. It could be noted that the ASI has made extensive coverage of children who faced multi-dimensional challenges and lived in vulnerable conditions.

Participation in Motivation Camps: On an average, about 40 children attended the motivation camps. In total, there were about 1,237 children who participated in the camp (see Table 3.2). Though regular attendance of all children on all 15 days could not be ensured, still the EFs made it a point to bring back children. At the same time, there are instances, where few children could not continue the motivation camps beyond 2-3 days, as the family lost the income generated by the children and wanted their children to get back to work (revealed during FGDs with parents and interview with EFs). On the whole, against the target of 1,200 children, the motivation camp could reach about 1,237 OOSC, of which 32 children were never-enrolled children.

Mainstreaming of Camp Children

The data of CML reveals that almost all the children who attended the camps were mainstreamed in regular schools (see Table 3.2). The EFs provided various kinds of support to mainstream the camp children in regular schools. Community leaders were taken along to persuade parents to send their wards to school and they also helped children in processing their certificates such as transfer certificates, and caste certificates. Despite the positive outcome, the motivation camp could not influence some of the parents, and the major reason cited for not sending the children to camp included out-migration of families for work, the poverty level of family, and engagement of children in household chores (for girls) and income generating activities (for boys). The major challenge was the rigid mind-set of parents.

Some children in Gawakuchi village of Tamulpur block, Baksa dropped from the camp after attending for three

Box 3.2: Education Facilitators were instrumental in bringing back child from Arunachal Pradesh

A Muslim girl child was forcefully sent to Arunachal Pradesh to work as domestic help. During home visit, the parents were threatened that complaint will be filed against them. The child was thus brought back and now the child is studying in class VI.

days. Disinterest of parents was a major issue. In one of the villages in Tamulpur, Baksa, a girl child of 14 years was out of school. She had a step mother and did not have a good bonding with her. The EFs visited the house several times and tried convincing her step mother. However, she said, “if she is sent to school, who will take care of the household work and who will bring back my child from school?” With so much of difficulty, the EFs enrolled her in a KGBV. However, later they found out that she was withdrawn from the school and was sent to Tamil Nadu for work.

Outcome

Children who are enrolled and attending Schools

The field survey carried out in the four intervention districts of Assam, verified whether the children with whom ASI team had their interventions were continuing school. The sample survey depicts that all the children surveyed in Baksa, Goalpara and Nalbari were enrolled and attending the schools. In Bongaigaon, 3 per cent of the children reported of not attending the schools, of which, 2 per cent were currently enrolled, but not attending the schools; while the remaining one per cent was not enrolled and not attending too.

Camps boosted Confidence/Interest Level of Children

The children also reported that the camp has boosted their interest or confidence in studies and this was reported by 80 per cent of the surveyed children in Nalbari and 70 per cent in Goalpara. In Baksa and Bongaigaon, nearly 66 per cent and 64 per cent of the children affirmed the same.

The overall outcome of the motivation camp was that it was able to reduce the dropout rate in the intervention districts. In almost all the four districts in general and the district of Bongaigaon and Goalpara, out-migration was a major challenge which affected the education of children and children had to drop out of school in order to contribute to the household income in the case of boys and take care of household chores in case of girls. Through the motivation camp of the ASI intervention, and regular visits to meet the parents, the EFs were able to influence the parents and reduce the dropout rate. However, changing the mind-set of parents was a major challenge that was faced by the facilitators. During FGD with parents in Jhalpara village, Tapattari block, Bongaigaon, a parent stated, “if we send our children to the camps and schools, who will earn for the family?” Similarly, a parent in Padmapara village of

Tamulpur block, Baksa, stated that their son attended the camp for two days. But later, he had to drop from the camp, as it affected the income of the family.

Despite such attitude of the parents, some parents also reported that the motivational camps were helpful, as children could learn something, even before joining the regular school. A parent in Padmapara village of Tamulpur, Baksa district stated that, since children were in motivation camps, they were tension-free about the food and safety of children. In Arara village of Ghograpar, Nalbari, a parent stated that, “though her child was not interested in studies before attending the motivation camp, she has developed interest now and has been forcing the parents to enrol her in regular school”.

3.3.2 Remedial Programmes

The ASI also focused on providing remedial support to the children in schools, both to the children mainstreamed from the motivation camp and also the slow learners, so as to ensure basic minimum learning and improve their learning levels. This section of the chapter discusses various measures that were implemented in the remedial programme and the positive and negative aspect of this initiative, which would be helpful to identify the gaps and plan a revised strategy.

Input

In order to deliver the remedial programmes in the schools, as a first step, rapport was established with the schools for delivering the remedial programme. Permission to work in the schools of the targeted areas was obtained from the officials concerned of the education department and every EF was given about 2 schools, and on alternate days, the 45 EFs managed the remedial programme. The various initiatives undertaken under the remedial programme are as follows:

Components of Remedial Programme

Duration: The remedial programme was implemented for about a year and children identified for the remedial class in the intervention schools are provided support on alternate days and it functioned during the regular school hours from 9.00 am to 2.30 pm for upper primary schools and from 9.00 am to 12.00 pm for the lower primary schools. However, the intervention during regular school hours rather than serving as remedial support in supplementing regular learning of children had supplanted regular learning. Remedial support, pre or post-school hours even for a shorter duration of 2 hours could also facilitate

the regular learning of children, as carried out by the Tata Trusts in other states (Karnataka). Even the teachers, children and EFs during the survey stated that classes for only three days per week on alternate days affected the continuity and expressed that regular remedial class would be more impactful.

Table 3.3: Opinion of Parents on Duration of Remedial Class

District	Suggestions for ASI Team
Baksa	Guwakuchi: Regular class for a week by the facilitators is needed Three-days session is disturbing student's schedule. Class appropriate remedial class for subjects is needed Padmapara: Classes for more duration and regular classes for a week is needed; No facilitator in the school for a long time and should be appointed soon
Bongaigaon	Jharpara: Regular remedial classes with more facilitators are needed Ghoramara: use of digital equipment in remedial classes should be promoted
Goalpara	Kongkera: Regular remedial classes are needed Raikona: Need different language teachers, Garo medium content is needed, regular classes for a week is needed
Nalbari	Arara: There should be regular remedial classes Belamari: Fixed duration of classes is needed. Rotational class is disturbing the routine of children

Source: Field Survey.

Remedial Support in Residential Schools: It was highlighted during the survey that remedial support was provided in residential schools like KGBVs and RSTCs before COVID-19, which was very much helpful for the children of the migrating families. However, with the closure of schools due to COVID-19, the remedial support in such residential schools also came to an end and has not been resumed yet. Remedial classes in residential schools should be resumed so that the dropout of children who migrate for seasonal work can be prevented.

Teaching Content in Remedial Class: In the remedial programme, the EFs focused on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) and the EFs took guidance from a handbook given by CML for teaching mathematics and language. Emphasis was laid on the identification of letters, words and numbers. Once the children were familiar with the basics, they were also taught to read and write words, frame sentences and small paragraphs and also do basic mathematical operations like addition, subtraction and division. In the year 2021-22, the process of weekly evaluation of children through worksheets and preparation of student display board was also introduced in order to track and enhance the learning levels of children. The process of group interaction and using the words said by children in different activities has been continued in all schools to improve the Foundational Literacy. This process is expected to help children in relating the verbal sound with the letters and enhance their grasp on the basic language skills viz. translating the sound into written letters (Tata

Trusts, 2022). Despite various such measures, the performance of children varied based on the role of EFs and their educational qualifications and motivation level.

Method of Teaching: The focus of the remedial class was to ensure FLN and in imparting the same, a child-friendly approach is followed by the EFs in the school. The EFs adopted play-way method and also prepared their own teaching-learning materials (TLMs) for teaching language and mathematics in order to make the learning process joyful and attractive to the children. The practice adopted by the EFs in remedial classes has been a major source of joy for the children as stated by children during FGDs. The same approach should be explored for making regular classroom lessons interesting to children to facilitate learning in age-appropriate grades.



Box 3.3: Play-way Method breaks barriers between Teachers and Students

The focus on activity-based learning with a child centric pedagogy has been instrumental in bringing the change in the attitudes of students, and teachers too. “Earlier, the children were afraid to ask questions but play way method of teaching is helping to break down barriers between teacher and students.

Activities under Remedial Camp: The activities undertaken for children in remedial class include cleaning the classroom, prayer, learning activities, drawing, revision on alphabets, class-wise grouping and teaching and occasional usage of school books for reading and writing. Weekly worksheets or distribution of worksheets twice per month were followed in the majority of the intervention schools to track the progress of children. However, a review of the child portfolio during the survey highlighted that not all schools had properly maintained the weekly worksheets, which might be due to irregular attendance of children. Similarly, wherever, the EFs were found to be educationally qualified with a passion for the intervention, more worksheets were worked out and were systematically maintained too. In other schools with no EFs or EFs with low motivation level, the worksheets were quite scarce. In schools with highly motivated EFs, the work sheets for children below class V reveal activities related to words, letters, numeracy etc., while for classes VII and VIII,

activities in the worksheets were related to poems, paragraph writing, etc. In other schools, more or less, the same kind of activities was given to children of various grades.

Output

Participation in Remedial Camps: On average, about 30 children participated in the remedial programme, and it included both slow learners identified by school teachers and children who were mainstreamed from the camps. Children from classes II to VIII participated in the remedial class and a separate classroom was provided to the remedial class children. Even the regular school children expressed their interest to participate in the remedial class.

Outreach of Remedial Programme

In terms of student outreach, the programme exceeded its target of 5000 children and reached about 5850 children. In the year 2019-20, while about 1527 children were offered remedial support, in the next two years, the support was extended to about 2363 and 1960 children, respectively (see Table 3.4). A high proportion of children were offered remedial support in Bongaigaon (35.3%), followed by Goalpara (32.3%), Baksa (23.5%) and Nalbari (8.8%). The outreach of the remedial programme is noticeable from the regular attendance rate of students (90%), which highlights that the ASI programme attained its target of at least retaining 75 per cent of the enrolled children in the school education system.

Table 3.4: Details of Remedial Support Programme

District	Blocks	Children who attended Remedial Programme (in Nos.)				Validation from Field (%)				
		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total	Regular attendance [^]	Remedial class improved my learning*	Language Skill#	Maths Skill\$	Do not understand what is taught in school
Baksa	Dhamdhama	95	213	137	445	95.74	90.96	97.1	83.8	3.19
	Nagrijuli	104	131	102	337					
	Tamulpur	118	257	219	594					
Bongaigaon	Srijangram	0	27	51	78	83.60	77.25	82.5	76.3	20.11
	Tapattari	609	760	616	1985					
Goalpara	Balijana	308	349	409	1066	86.87	70.43	46.2	57.6	1.61
	Jaleswar	0	56	0	56					
	Lakhipur	139	382	251	772					
Nalbari	Ghograpar	154	188	175	517	96.11	91.67	94.0	82.0	6.67
Total		1527	2363	1960	5850	89.77	82.50	79.7	74.8	7.94

Source: Based on data shared by CML and Field Survey.

Note: ^ Children with more than 8 months of attendance; * Perception of Children on remedial class; # children who could can read paragraph; \$ children who could correctly do division or subtraction

Regular attendance of Children

The outreach of the remedial programme is also discernible from the regular attendance rate of students (90%), which highlights the interest that was stimulated in children through the remedial programme. At the same time, irregular attendance was also reported by about 10 per cent of the children, and the irregularity in attendance was reported to be about 16 per cent in Bongaigaon and Goalpara, whereas, it was about 4 per cent in Baksa and Nalbari. When schools were visited by the survey team, in some of the schools, it was noted that the attendance rate of remedial class children was quite low. When enquired, it was stated by the teachers and EFs that the parents do not give importance for education and children are carried along for work, whenever they get to work in the brick kilns. In Nalbari, children reported of skipping schools, when they get to load and unload tractors during school hours. The children are also absent for any small festivals and cultural programmes and it was reported that some children do not attend school, even during ‘full or no-moon days’.

Outcome

Benefit of the Remedial Programme

From the opinion of teachers, it could be noted that the remedial programme was of immense benefit both to the children and the teachers. Teachers reported of increased attendance rate and improvement in learning levels.

Table 3.5: Opinion of Teachers on Remedial Programme

Districts	Response of Teachers
Baksa	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baralkuchi: Improvement in learning after the use of play-way method and student attendance rate has increased• Guwakuchi: Development in foundational learning of children and reduction in dropout rate• Padmapara: Students have developed interest in studies and improved their learning levels and children enjoyed the class taught in their mother tongue (Bodo) and other games and drawing activities
Bongaigaon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Badhaipara: Has helped children to address the learning gap created after COVID-19 school closure• Ghoramara: Education is made interesting through play-way method and children enjoyed the classes taught through mobile phones and videos, learning through TLMs for letters, words, fruits, body parts, etc. and also dance, singing, poem and story-telling activities• Jhalpara: Children enjoy the class, as they get individual attention and learn through group learning and they also enjoy language and maths class and also story-telling activities• Shimlabari: Children enjoyed peer group learning and fluency in language has improved and basics in maths has been strengthened
Goalpara	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bodahpur: Useful to slow learners, especially to learn English, language and maths; Recently, there are no dropouts, however, irregular attendance is there• Hatigaon: Learning level of children on language and maths has improved and there is reduction in dropout level• Kongkera: children enjoyed the class taught in their mother tongue (Garo)• Raikona: Useful for children who came from the motivation camps and the children enjoy

	learning, reading, writing and playing
Nalbari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arara: More attendance in remedial class compared to regular class and they enjoyed play-way methods, dance, art and craft, and activities related to identification of letters, fruits, numbers, etc. • Banbhag Batahghila: Attendance rate has improved and since, many teachers are untrained here, we also learn a lot from the EF. • Bhelamari: Improvement in reading, writing and speaking ability and enjoyed activities related to kitchen garden, sports, dance, singing, etc. • Rangaphali: Children have developed interest in studies

Source: Based on Field Survey.

In Baksa and Nalbari, it was reported that the remedial programme has reduced the dropout rate in the schools and the students have developed interest in studies. In Bongaigaon, it was stated that the remedial programme was helpful to address the learning gap and children enjoyed the play-way method and learning through games, story-telling, etc. In Goalpara, it was reported that the programme was beneficial in improving the performance of children in language and children had enjoyed when they were taught in mother tongue.

Learning levels of Children

The field findings highlight that a major proportion (82.5%) of the children, reported of improvement in the learning levels after attending the remedial programme. While this was reported by about 90 per cent of the children in Baksa and Nalbari, the corresponding proportion in Bongaigaon and Goalpara was about 77 and 70 per cent. About 80 per cent of the children could read a simple paragraph and about 75 per cent could correctly do division or subtraction. About 97 per cent of the children in Baksa could read a paragraph, while this proportion was 46 per cent in Goalpara. The reason for such low reporting in Goalpara may be due to the presence of mixed tribal communities in the school such as Rabha and Garo, who had their own language and culture; but could not be facilitated by Assamese speaking school teachers who do not understand their language. Due to poor foundation on the language skills, the performance in language was comparatively low in Goalpara. On the other hand, numeracy skills of children in terms of ability to correctly do division or subtraction were still better in Goalpara (57.6%). In Baksa, about 84 per cent could do basic calculations and the corresponding proportion was 76 per cent in Bongaigaon. In Bongaigaon, about 20 per cent of the children also reported that they were not able to understand what was taught in school. This was again due to the low importance given to the education of children and in particular, the girl child is not allowed to continue beyond class VIII and is married off at a young age.

Focus on FLN: Establishing the focus on FLN is a helpful strategy to build the basic learning levels of the children. However, focusing on FLN based on approach of CML alone during regular school hours for all grades from class II to class VIII, may not ensure long term sustainability, as the learning experience of children in remedial classes is disconnected from the regular class experience. Rather, focusing on FLN, based on the age-appropriate textbooks for children with additional activities of book reading, story-telling, etc. would be beneficial to sustain interest in studies. If not, children may again tend to dropout, once the remedial support comes to an end. For instance, a class III child and a class VII child is taught the same content, as they are regarded as children who are struggling with the basics and with this approach, a class VII child cannot be placed in low proficiency levels for a long term. If children are found to be weak in grade-specific proficiencies, a short term FLN support of 1-2 months can be provided, beyond which focus should be on FLN related to grade-specific competencies.

Foundational Numeracy Progress Tracking Chart
 Assam State Initiative - Education
 Centre for Microfinance & Livelihood, Guwahati-781006
 School: Halbi Gurus, H. S.

Sl. No.	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1	Ashim, Baksa																					
2	Chandana, Baksa																					
3	Harshita, Baksa																					
4	Harshita, Baksa																					
5	Harshita, Baksa																					
6	Harshita, Baksa																					
7	Harshita, Baksa																					
8	Harshita, Baksa																					
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22	Harshita, Baksa																					
23	Harshita, Baksa																					
24	Harshita, Baksa																					
25	Harshita, Baksa																					

PORTFOLIO WORKSHEET
 Name: Purnima K. J. Roll No: 0070
 Class: IV Subject: Maths School: Baksa, L.S. School
 Sl. No.: 2 Date: 9/3/2022

English at school
 twenty snappers went to school
 but made a noisy group
 twenty little ants of green white
 + twenty ants of white and clean white
 were most to be seen. said they
 if first we meet sitting together
 that & its how we keep the rule
 when we forgets go to school
 beagles

→ Twenty ants so white and clean.

Multiplication problems:
 $2 \times 2 = 4$, $2 \times 3 = 6$, $2 \times 4 = 8$, $2 \times 5 = 10$, $2 \times 6 = 12$, $2 \times 7 = 14$, $2 \times 8 = 16$, $2 \times 9 = 18$, $2 \times 10 = 20$
 $3 \times 2 = 6$, $3 \times 3 = 9$, $3 \times 4 = 12$, $3 \times 5 = 15$, $3 \times 6 = 18$, $3 \times 7 = 21$, $3 \times 8 = 24$, $3 \times 9 = 27$, $3 \times 10 = 30$
 $4 \times 2 = 8$, $4 \times 3 = 12$, $4 \times 4 = 16$, $4 \times 5 = 20$, $4 \times 6 = 24$, $4 \times 7 = 28$, $4 \times 8 = 32$, $4 \times 9 = 36$, $4 \times 10 = 40$
 $5 \times 2 = 10$, $5 \times 3 = 15$, $5 \times 4 = 20$, $5 \times 5 = 25$, $5 \times 6 = 30$, $5 \times 7 = 35$, $5 \times 8 = 40$, $5 \times 9 = 45$, $5 \times 10 = 50$
 $6 \times 2 = 12$, $6 \times 3 = 18$, $6 \times 4 = 24$, $6 \times 5 = 30$, $6 \times 6 = 36$, $6 \times 7 = 42$, $6 \times 8 = 48$, $6 \times 9 = 54$, $6 \times 10 = 60$
 $7 \times 2 = 14$, $7 \times 3 = 21$, $7 \times 4 = 28$, $7 \times 5 = 35$, $7 \times 6 = 42$, $7 \times 7 = 49$, $7 \times 8 = 56$, $7 \times 9 = 63$, $7 \times 10 = 70$
 $8 \times 2 = 16$, $8 \times 3 = 24$, $8 \times 4 = 32$, $8 \times 5 = 40$, $8 \times 6 = 48$, $8 \times 7 = 56$, $8 \times 8 = 64$, $8 \times 9 = 72$, $8 \times 10 = 80$
 $9 \times 2 = 18$, $9 \times 3 = 27$, $9 \times 4 = 36$, $9 \times 5 = 45$, $9 \times 6 = 54$, $9 \times 7 = 63$, $9 \times 8 = 72$, $9 \times 9 = 81$, $9 \times 10 = 90$
 $10 \times 2 = 20$, $10 \times 3 = 30$, $10 \times 4 = 40$, $10 \times 5 = 50$, $10 \times 6 = 60$, $10 \times 7 = 70$, $10 \times 8 = 80$, $10 \times 9 = 90$, $10 \times 10 = 100$

Portfolio Worksheet
 Name: Purnima K. J.
 Class: IV Subject: Maths
 Sl. No.: 2 Date: 9/3/2022

Multiplication problems:
 $2 \times 2 = 4$, $2 \times 3 = 6$, $2 \times 4 = 8$, $2 \times 5 = 10$, $2 \times 6 = 12$, $2 \times 7 = 14$, $2 \times 8 = 16$, $2 \times 9 = 18$, $2 \times 10 = 20$
 $3 \times 2 = 6$, $3 \times 3 = 9$, $3 \times 4 = 12$, $3 \times 5 = 15$, $3 \times 6 = 18$, $3 \times 7 = 21$, $3 \times 8 = 24$, $3 \times 9 = 27$, $3 \times 10 = 30$
 $4 \times 2 = 8$, $4 \times 3 = 12$, $4 \times 4 = 16$, $4 \times 5 = 20$, $4 \times 6 = 24$, $4 \times 7 = 28$, $4 \times 8 = 32$, $4 \times 9 = 36$, $4 \times 10 = 40$
 $5 \times 2 = 10$, $5 \times 3 = 15$, $5 \times 4 = 20$, $5 \times 5 = 25$, $5 \times 6 = 30$, $5 \times 7 = 35$, $5 \times 8 = 40$, $5 \times 9 = 45$, $5 \times 10 = 50$
 $6 \times 2 = 12$, $6 \times 3 = 18$, $6 \times 4 = 24$, $6 \times 5 = 30$, $6 \times 6 = 36$, $6 \times 7 = 42$, $6 \times 8 = 48$, $6 \times 9 = 54$, $6 \times 10 = 60$
 $7 \times 2 = 14$, $7 \times 3 = 21$, $7 \times 4 = 28$, $7 \times 5 = 35$, $7 \times 6 = 42$, $7 \times 7 = 49$, $7 \times 8 = 56$, $7 \times 9 = 63$, $7 \times 10 = 70$
 $8 \times 2 = 16$, $8 \times 3 = 24$, $8 \times 4 = 32$, $8 \times 5 = 40$, $8 \times 6 = 48$, $8 \times 7 = 56$, $8 \times 8 = 64$, $8 \times 9 = 72$, $8 \times 10 = 80$
 $9 \times 2 = 18$, $9 \times 3 = 27$, $9 \times 4 = 36$, $9 \times 5 = 45$, $9 \times 6 = 54$, $9 \times 7 = 63$, $9 \times 8 = 72$, $9 \times 9 = 81$, $9 \times 10 = 90$
 $10 \times 2 = 20$, $10 \times 3 = 30$, $10 \times 4 = 40$, $10 \times 5 = 50$, $10 \times 6 = 60$, $10 \times 7 = 70$, $10 \times 8 = 80$, $10 \times 9 = 90$, $10 \times 10 = 100$

Maintenance of Child Portfolio: Maintenance of a child portfolio serves as a useful mechanism to track the progress of children and also to adopt different strategies to improve the learning levels of children. However, in the surveyed schools, only a few schools had neatly maintained the portfolio for all children with lot of worksheets. In the majority of the schools, the portfolio was not maintained for all children. For instance, in one of the surveyed schools in Baksa, on record, there are about 25 children, but during the school visit, the portfolio was available only for 14 children. Regular monitoring of the child portfolio would be helpful to track the effectiveness of the remedial programme and the progress in the learning levels of children.

Maintenance of FLN Tracking chart: Except for 1-2 schools, in every school, the FLN tracking chart were available on the walls of the remedial class, which recorded the progress levels of children in different competencies in language and mathematics. In some of the schools, the record for 2-3 children was missing, indicating the irregular attendance of children in the schools. The same FLN tracking chart could be customised to track the learning levels of children in grade-specific lessons.

Continuity in Learning: While the children who were identified as weak children in studies were offered the remedial class, the same set of weak children, have been expected to balance the regular age-appropriate class and the remedial class on alternate days. For instance, if a remedial programme child of class 4 attends remedial class on Monday, where the focus is laid on FLN, the next day, the same child has to attend a maths or science class of regular teachers who follow the school syllabus and on every alternate day, the children has to shuttle from remedial to regular class. That way, the children miss the continuity in both classes.

Sensitivity towards Remedial Class Children: The remedial programme uses child-friendly approach and children are handled with empathy and sympathy and are taught in a friendly way by the EFs. Even the children reported that the teachers in remedial class talk sweetly and patiently explain the concept again and again. However, when remedial class children throughout the year have to attend the remedial programme during regular school hours on alternate days, it instils a feeling both among the children and the teachers that these children are weak in studies and they struggle with the basics. In the long term such belief in children gets deeply rooted in them. Despite the sensitivity adopted by the remedial programme, frequently referring to these children as children from the camp, slow learners, etc. during regular school hours creates an impression. Conducting the remedial programme beyond school hours will provide the opportunity for all the children to decide whether they would like to attend remedial classes and constant referring on a day-to-day basis would be avoided.

On the whole, it can be stated that the remedial class has made a positive contribution in terms of showcasing better retention rates and improvement in learning levels of children, wherein, 90 per cent of the children were regularly attending the schools and about 75 per cent could exhibit their skills both in language and mathematics.

3.3.3 SMC strengthening Initiatives

One of the objectives of ASI was also to strengthen the community and promote their involvement in school activities, so that they are in a position to take ownership of schools. The following section discusses the measures undertaken under ASI and the outcome of such measures with respect to strengthening of members of SMCs and MGs.

Inputs

In order to strengthen the SMC/MG members, support was offered under ASI through various ways, such as conducting orientation workshop once a year and providing handholding support to SMCs/MGs to conduct regular meetings and come up with fruitful measures with respect to school development activities. Some of these measures are discussed as follows:

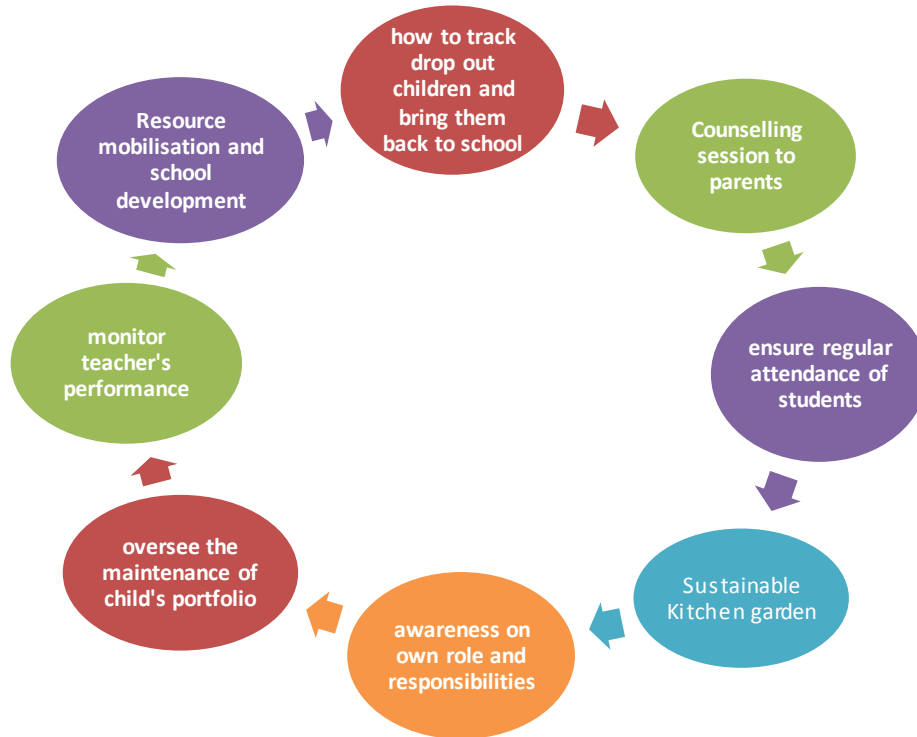
Orientation Sessions for SMCs/MGs

Orientation sessions were organised within the intervention schools for the SMCs/MGs and the SMC and MG members were briefed on the interventions undertaken under ASI and how the community members can play an active role in school development activities. It also focused on strengthening the SMC/MG members on different key topics related to school management.

Content of the Session

The training content of ASI aimed at equipping the members of SMC and mother's group with the basic knowledge and skills to address drop out issues in a sustainable manner. During the survey, the members expressed their perception on the content of training. The discussion was on key aspects such as (i) setting up of kitchen garden; (ii) overseeing maintenance of child portfolio; (iii) involving children with student-activity display board; (iv) FLN; (v) home visit to counsel parents, etc. as highlighted by the SMC/MG members during FGDs.

Figure 3.1: Content of Orientation Session



Source: Prepared by CSD.

Some of the SMC/MG members also highlighted that the session focused on school development activities, addressing concerns related to dropout issues and bringing back children to the schools, their roles and responsibilities, components related to school environment, education of children and irregularity in attendance. However, except for a handful of members, majority were not able to express their views on the content of training. In some schools, it was reported that, since the current SMC is a recently constituted group, they had not previously attended the training.

Handholding support in Quarterly Meetings

In order to promote the community ownership of schools and to ensure that the periodic meetings are regularly convened by the members in the schools; and they take fruitful measures on school development activities, handholding support was provided by the EFs to the SMC and MG members. The EFs were paired and were given the responsibility to conduct the quarterly SMC and MG meetings in about 4-5 schools.

Table 3.6: Handholding Support to SMCs/MGs during Quarterly Meetings		
District	Schools	Support offered by ASI Team
Baksa	Guwakuchi LP School	Tracking dropout children and convincing parents to send them back to school
	Padmapara LP School	Tracking dropout children and convincing parents to send them back to school
Bongaigaon	Bhadaipara Behulapara LP School	Discussion on dropout issue
	Jharpara Bapuji Girls ME School	Orientation to take responsibility to bring own children and neighbours' children to school
	2 No.Ghoramara LP School	Orientation to track dropout children, migrated children and address child marriage issue through counselling of parents
	2 No.Shimlabari LP School	Group discussion with parents and teachers
Goalpara	Hatigaon High School	Training during quarterly meeting; issues of dropout
	Kongkera Garo ME School	Group discussion with parents and teachers
	Raikona ME School	Awareness session with members on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting awareness camps in village to reduce dropout • Resource mobilisation • Education awareness programme
Nalbari	2 No.Arara LP School	Education awareness programme, improving school environment, developing kitchen garden
	Banbhag Bataghila LP School	Group discussion with parents and teachers
	2 No.Rangaphali UP School	Improving educational outcome

Source: Prepared by CSD, based on Field Survey.

In such meetings, apart from the SMC & MG members, village head, parents and teachers also actively participated. Such engagement of the ASI team in the quarterly meetings was instrumental in generating the interest of SMCs/MGs on school related activities, regulating their attendance and also to promote the awareness of members on their own roles and responsibilities.

Table 3.7: Details of Orientation Sessions for the SMC members and Mother's Group

Table 3.7: Details of Orientation Sessions for the SMC members and Mother's Group																
District	Blocks	No. of SMCs/ MGs that were oriented	Duration/ Day	2020-2021				2021-22				2022-23				
				No. of Participants		Schools with 70% attendance in quarterly meetings	No. of SMCs/ MGs that were oriented	Duration/ No. of Participants		Schools with 70% attendance in quarterly meetings	No. of SMCs/ MGs that were oriented	Duration/ Day	No. of Participants		Schools with 70% attendance in quarterly meetings	
				SMC	MG			SMC	MG				SMC	MG		
Baksa	Dhamdhama	7	1	10	32	7	6	1	75	72	6	6	2	77	71	6
	Nagrijuli	5	1	10	18	5	5	1	65	57	5	5	2	69	56	5
	Tamulpur	11	1	22	43	11	11	1	126	87	11	11	2	109	71	11
Bongaigaon	Srijangram	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	28	29	2
	Tapattari	30	1	200	180	30	30	1	356	533	30	28	2	328	321	28
Goalpara	Balijana	18	1	155	123	18	18	1	234	170	18	18	2	155	162	18
	Jaleswar	0		0		0	3	1	38	39	3	3	2	34	47	3
	Lakhipur	12	1	95	98	12	9	1	143	88	9	9	2	111	99	9
Nalbari	Ghograpar	7	1	14	29	7	7	1	85	77	7	8	2	101	69	8
Total		90	1 day	506	523	90	89	1 Day	1122	1123	89	90	2 Day	1012	925	90

Source: Based on data shared by CML.

Output

Number of Sessions conducted

In the first year of intervention (2019-20), the programme could not organise any orientation session for the SMCs/MGs. However, in the next 2 years, orientation session was organised for a day for the SMCs/MGs in all the intervention schools, and in 2022-23, orientation was provided for two days.

Number of Participants

In 2020-21, around 500 members and parents had participated in the orientation session conducted for the SMC and MG members. In 2021-22 and 2022-23, more than 1,000 people (including members and parents) in each of these years had participated in the orientation session. The increase in participation rates of the parents and the SMC/MG members in the subsequent years, indicates the interest that the ASI intervention could generate amidst the community members. During the FGD with the SMCs and MGs, only 4-5 members in most of the schools reported of participating in the orientation session. In about 1-2 schools, it was stated that the members were newly constituted and hence they did not participate in the orientation session.

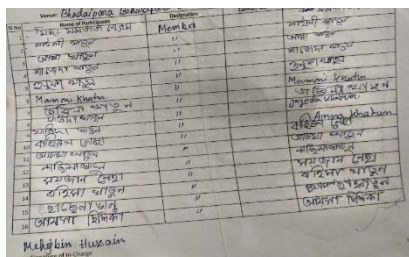
Number of Quarterly Meetings, Participation Rate & Issues Discussed

The ASI team had facilitated about 4 quarterly meetings of the SMCs/MGs in the schools of intervention and this was affirmed by the SMC/MG members in most of the surveyed schools. On an average, the meeting spread across 2-3 hours on an average and the participation rate varied. The participation rate was more than 80 per cent in most of the schools, while in few schools, it was about 50 per cent (see Table 3.7).

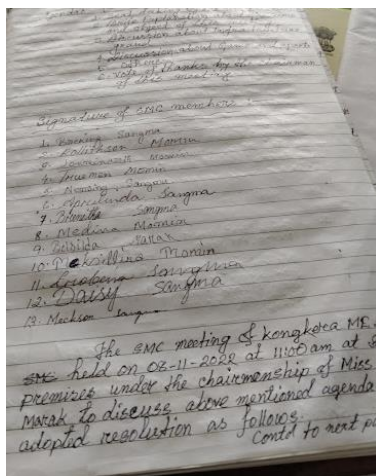
During field visit, while some schools were able to show the details of participation, in most of the schools the school register on SMC was not presented to the survey team to show the number of participants, the details of discussion and the resolutions that were passed. In one of the schools that showed the register, it was observed that till the previous meetings the records were maintained and was intact. However, for the last meeting that was shown as being convened, except for the date of meeting, no further details were available, which creates the suspicion that the details are filled by the teachers at a later stage and signs are obtained from parents, whenever they make a visit to the schools (See Box 3.4).

Box 3.4: Validation of SMC Register

School B: Resolution in previous meetings



School B: Missing content in current meeting



School B: Missing content in current meeting

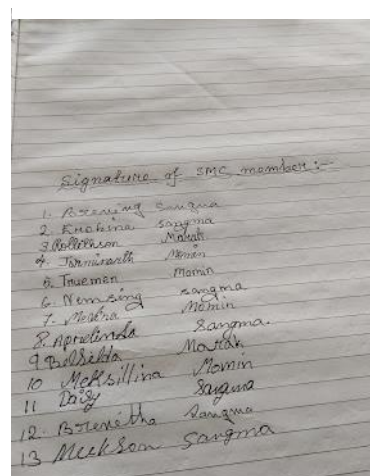


Table 3.8: Participation in Quarterly Meetings and Points of Discussion

District	Schools	No. of quarterly meetings facilitated by ASI	Duration	Participation in last meeting	Participation Rate (%)	Points of Discussion
Baksa	Guwakuchi LP School	1	2 hours	14	87.5	Education awareness campaign
	Padmapara LP School	4	4 hours	13	81.25	Safety of Girls; Nutrition of children; school cleanliness
Bongaigaon	Bhadaipara Behulapara LP School	4	2 hours	12	75.00	
	Jharpara Bapuji Girls ME School	4	2 hours	NA	NA	General issues; learning in remedial class
	2 No.Ghoramara LP School	3	3 hours	13	81.25	Kitchen garden, cleanliness, improving education
	2 No.Simlabari LP School	4		8	50.00	
Goalpara	Hatigaon High School	4	2-3 hours	8	50.00	
	Kongkera Garo ME School	4	2-3 hours	15	93.75	School Uniform, Material for construction, language teachers
	Raikona ME School	4	2-3 hours	18	100.00	Child marriage, child labour, child trafficking
Nalbari	2 No.Arara LP School	4	2 hours	12	75.00	Education awareness programme; remedial class
	Banbhag Bataghila LP School	4	2 hours	12	75.00	
	Madhya Belamari LP School	4	3 hours	16	100.00	School infrastructure (toilet repair & water quality), uniform purchase, purchase of desk, bench, sports equipment
	2 No.Rangaphali UP School	4	2 hours	9	56.25	

Source: Prepared by CSD, based on Field Survey.

Note: NA - not available (data not provided by School head/SMC members during survey).

It was stated that various aspects related to school development were discussed in the quarterly meetings, right from maintenance of kitchen garden to monitoring of teachers' attendance, need for hiring language teachers, and school infrastructure. Maintenance of school

Box 3.5: Performance of SMCs/MGs in Quarterly Meetings

There seems to be improvement in the participation level of SMC and mothers' group members after the intervention of ASI. In the quarterly meetings, the Education Facilitator ensures that the members of SMC/MG participate in the meeting. The discussions are held on school environment, education of children, irregular attendance of children and monitoring of MDM. The members also showed their involvement in activities related to kitchen garden and mobilising of children. In the last meeting, there was a discussion on teacher shortage and the need to make home visits. Some of the SMC members also provided bamboo dustbins for the school.

- Interview with a schoolteacher in Goalpara

infrastructure such as school toilets, drinking water, purchase of sports equipment, uniforms, etc. and cleanliness of schools was frequently taken up issues in SMCs. Kitchen garden was the most attractive initiative, both for the SMCs and the children; however during field visit, in most of the schools, the kitchen gardens had dried up in the winter season. At the same time, during the interviews, it was noted that only the president of the SMCs were vocal and most of the other members were not able to express about the activities undertaken by the SMC or MG for school development.

Outcome

Benefits to SMCs

The SMC members and mothers' group during FGD informed that the orientation session and the involvement of EFs in quarterly meetings were beneficial to them in various ways. The common benefit as stated by the parents were that they had understood the importance of education



and they are able to convince the other parents on sending their children to schools, rather than marrying them off at younger age, or sending them for work.

In Hatigaon village, Goalpara district, the SMC members stated that they try to participate in the SMC meetings on a regular basis and also monitor that both children and teachers attend school on a regular basis.

Table 3.9: Benefits of the Training to SMCs

District	Schools	Benefits stated by Members
Baksa	Padmapara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring children to motivation camp and teach them
Bongaigaon	Bhadaipara Behulapara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learnt about the importance of parents being in touch with school activities
	Jharpara Bapuji Girls ME School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness on importance of education; Ways to address child marriage, child trafficking, child labour
	2 No.Ghoramara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor regular attendance of teachers and ensure school cleanliness
	2 No.Simlabari LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance of parents being in touch with school activities
Goalpara	Hatigaon High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular participation in SMC; ensuring regular attendance
	Kongkera Garo ME School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on child labour, child marriage, dropout, issue, importance of education
	Raikona ME School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness level of members on importance of education, reducing dropout, child labour, child marriage
Nalbari	2 No.Arara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness on improving school infrastructure, reducing dropout and promoting awareness of parents on importance of education
	Banbhag Bataghila LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learnt about the importance of parents being in touch with school activities
	Madhya Belamari LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular convening of SMC meeting post training; ensure regular attendance of teachers
	2 No.Rangaphali UP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on child labour, child marriage, dropout, issue, importance of education

Source: Prepared by CSD, based on Field Survey.

In Nalbari, in one of the schools, the parents stated that they understood that their involvement in school related activities is very much helpful to improve the performance of school and also the children. Such handholding support of SMCs till the time the community takes ownership on their own is important.

Activities of SMCs/MGs Post Training

Though, active engagement of the SMCs/MGs was not visible in most of the schools, in some schools, they were found to be quite active. In Bongaigaon, it was reported in one of the schools that the attendance rate of children had increased after the SMCs took responsibilities for school management. In Goalpara, it was reported that the community members had provided free bamboos to the schools for building the infrastructure of the school and had also helped children to manage the kitchen garden.



Table 3.10: Activities of SMC Post Training

District	Schools	Activities post Training
Baksa	Guwakuchi LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly attend SMC meeting; promote awareness on superstitious beliefs, awareness on how to reduce drop out, time to time guidance to parents in the community on how to handle their children
	Padmapara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor school cleanliness, created additional room for school
Bongaigaon	Bhadaipara Behulapara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to participate in meetings regularly
	Jharpara Bapuji Girls ME School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with teachers on how to teach; motivate parents to send children to school
	2 No.Ghoramara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor attendance of teachers; check MDM quality & monitor cleanliness while cooking; Educational awareness camps for parents; involve children in making school environment better
	2 No.Shimlabari LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask community support for resource mobilisation
Goalpara	Hatigaon High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School infrastructure, academic progress of children
	Kongkera Garo ME School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss issues related to education of children
	Raikona ME School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend monthly meeting Home visit when students are absent, awareness sessions for parents about importance of education, child marriage and child trafficking
Nalbari	2 No.Arara LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of kitchen garden; promote educational awareness of parents; monitor MDM, school cleanliness Participate along with ASI team to counsel parents on dropout issue
	Banbhag Bataghila LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss issues related to school; engage in kitchen garden
	Madhya Belamari LP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of toilet, and tank for drinking water with RO facility, maintaining kitchen garden; check MDM; conduct door-to-door visit to discuss school development plan
	2 No.Rangaphali UP School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to make good planning and execution of activities

Source: Prepared by CSD, based on Field Survey.

In one of the schools in Goalpara district, the members were quite active in regularising the attendance of teachers and also in tracking the children who had irregular attendance. The SMCs/MGs in Nalbari district was also found to be active, and their involvement was visible in the activities such as, home visit, maintaining and sustaining kitchen garden, monitoring the portfolio of children, school cleanliness, monitoring teacher's attendance, ensuring school infrastructure and checking the quality of MDM every day. In Bongaigaon, it was reported that the topic of discussion post-training was on child marriage, child labour, nutrition of children and promoting awareness level of parents. In Goalpara, members also reported of taking part in repairing school assets, anti-tobacco awareness, etc. Despite

Box 3.6: Functioning of SMC

The training of CML for SMC members has made changes in the functioning of SMCs. Everything in this school has improved from how it used to be earlier. The committee members now ensure the regular attendance of teachers, monitor that classes are conducted properly, engage in regular follow up to bring back the drop out children to school and take part in school development plans. The members now are aware of their role and responsibilities towards improving education and overall environment of the school.

- SMC President of a school in Tapattari, Bongaigoan

the constant engagement of the EFs in providing handholding support to SMCs/MGs, though in some schools, involvement of the community in school management activities is visible, in the majority of the schools, community engagement is not vibrant. With repeated intervention, community ownership can be gradually promoted.

3.3.4 Capacity Building of Teachers

Under ASI, teacher training sessions were conducted, so that it can bring about change in the individual teachers and improve his/her performance. The aim of ASI behind the capacity building initiative of teachers was to increase the knowledge and skills of the teachers, so that they are able to provide remedial support to children by adopting teaching practices that are enjoyed by children.

Input

Teacher Training Workshop

In the first year 2019-20, there was no intervention for capacity building of teachers, while in 2020-21 and 2021-22, six one-day workshops each was conducted in the month of September. In 2020-21, due to lock down, face-to-face training was not possible and many online meetings were held with teachers on how to prepare e-content. In the current year, 2022-23, the capacity building workshop was delivered as a two-days training programme. In comparison to the previous two workshops, the workshop conducted in the year 2022-23 was more structured and systematic.

The training was conducted in a central location of the four districts, and about 1-2 teachers from the intervention schools across the district participated in the training. In order to attend the training workshop, travel allowance (TA), lunch and refreshments were provided to the teachers. However, as reported by the EFs, there was lack of motivation on the part of some of the teachers to attend the workshop. They hardly attended the workshop for 1-2 hours, signed the register, collected the TA and left the training venue. At the same time, there were self-motivated teachers too, who showed interest in learning from the workshop. During interview with teachers, it was reported in one of the schools in Balijana, Goalpara that a teacher of their school attended the workshop, but the teacher is retired now and none of the other teachers are aware of what was taught to her and nor was there a discussion on briefing other teachers on applying what was taught. But vaguely, they knew that, training was on play way method.

Component of Teacher Training Workshop – Duration and Content

In 2020-21 and 2021-22, the programme was implemented as a one-day training programme and in 2022-23, it was implemented as a two-day workshop. On an average, the duration of the programme was for about 5-6 hours from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. The meetings are also attended by the district officials of Samagra Siksha.

Figure 3.2: Content of Teacher Training



Source: Prepared by CSD, based on Field Survey.

In the first two years of training, the focus was mostly on giving orientation to the teachers on issues related to the problems faced by children, probable causes of dropout due to the pandemic and the steps that are to be taken by teachers to bring them back to school and ensure regular attendance of children. The training also focused on the ways to prepare and use teaching learning materials (TLMs), develop bond with children and engage with them through activities. In the year 2022-23, the 2-days workshop focused on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and library activities, in addition to the other components that were covered in the previous years.

A teacher who attended the training stated that the ASI training was helpful to shift the attention of teachers from rote learning to activity based learning, and help students to meet their challenges, and solve real life problems. It was also stated by few teachers that the training immensely benefitted them and improved their confidence level, their efficiency and effectiveness. However, in some of the schools the survey team could not meet the trained teachers, as they got retired. It was also reported by the EFs that some of the teachers, did not

take the training seriously and they just showed their attendance of participation and left the training venue.

Output

Number of Workshops Conducted

As highlighted earlier, in the first year (2019-20), no training workshop was conducted for the teachers. In the subsequent years, 2 workshops were conducted for the teachers in Bongaigaon and Goalpara in 2 different locations and one workshop per year was conducted in Baksa and Nalbari. In 2022-23, while one workshop each was conducted in Bongaigaon and Goalpara, no workshop has been scheduled yet in Baksa and Nalbari to train the teachers. In Bongaigaon and Goalpara, teachers of about 30 schools were provided the training, while in Baksa and Nalbari, teacher of 22 schools and 7 schools were respectively provided the training (see Table 3.11).

Number of Teachers Trained

It can be stated that the ASI had successfully achieved its target of reaching about 200 teachers by 2021-22 only and in fact made a total coverage of 317 teachers in the last 2-3 years.

Table 3.11: Details of Capacity Building Workshop for Teachers (in Numbers)						
District	Years	No. of Workshops	Duration/ Day	Duration	No. of Schools covered	No. of Teachers who Participated
Baksa	2020-21	1	1	5 hours	22	30
	2021-22	1	1	5 hours	14	14
	2022-23	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	2	1 Day	5 hours	22	44
Bongaigaon	2020-21	2	1	5 hours	30	79
	2021-22	2	1	5 hours	30	43
	2022-23	1	2	5 hours	29	29
	Total	5	1 Day; 2 Days	5 hours	30	151
Goalpara	2020-21	2	1	5 hours	30	34
	2021-22	2	1	5 hours	29	29
	2022-23	1	2	5 hours	30	30
	Total	5	1 Day; 2 Days	5 hours	30	93
Nalbari	2020-21	1	1	5 hours	7	19
	2021-22	1	1	5 hours	7	10
	2022-23	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	2	1 Day	5 hours	7	29
Total	2020-21	6	1	5 hours	89	162
	2021-22	6	1	5 hours	80	96
	2022-23	2	2	5 hours	59	59
GRAND TOTAL		14	1 Day; 2 Days	5 hours	89	317

Source: Based on Data provided by CML and Field Survey.

A maximum number of teachers have been covered in Bongaigaon (151), followed by Goalpara (93), Baksa (44) and Nalbari (29). Similarly, a maximum proportion of the target was achieved in the year 2020-21 (51.1 per cent), which was almost 81 per cent of the targeted 200.

Outcome

The outcome of the training is validated in terms of the benefit that the training had provided the teachers and the teaching activities and practices adopted by the teachers post-training. The findings in this direction are derived based on the field survey conducted in 15 schools across the 4 districts and the interview with about 15 teachers.

Benefits of the Workshop to Teachers

Based on the interview with the EFs and the teachers, it can be stated that the training workshop has been beneficial to the teachers. The teachers stated of learning many new things from the training workshop. In Baksa, it was reported by the teachers that the training has improved their teaching skills and have learnt the ways to teach via games and building blocks. In Bongaigaon, it was stated by the teachers that they have learnt to use TLMs and further stated that based on the needs and requirements, 2-3 workshops per year should be conducted for the teachers, as it helps the teachers to stay focused.

Table 3.12: Benefits of the Capacity Building Workshop to Teachers

District	School	Capacity Building Training of Teachers
Baksa	Baralkuchi LP School	• Improved the teaching skills of teachers
	Guwakuchi LP School	• Helpful to teachers to clarify the concepts to the students
	Padmapara LP School	• Learnt to handle children in a polite manner and the ways of teaching through games and block activities
Bongaigaon	Bhadaipara Behulapara LP School	• The workshop created awareness among teachers and opened new avenues for improving the learning capacities of children
	Jharpara Bapuji Girls ME School	• Learnt to handle students coming from motivational camps and slow learners; 2-3 need-based training per year from CML would be helpful
	2 No.Ghoramara LP School	• Learnt about preparation of TLMs, and how to work with drop-out children • Workshop focused on resolving issues related to child labour, counselling parents on importance of education
	2 No.Shimlabari LP School	• Encouraged teachers to use good pedagogical practices
Goalpara	Bodahpur High School	• Learnt different ways to encourage students
	Hatigaon High School	• Play-way method of teaching and new techniques to have better connection with children and ensure learning of all
	Kongkera Garo ME School	• Teaching practice in play-way method and preparation of TLMs
	Raikona ME School	• Has led to capacity building of teachers
Nalbari	2 No.Arara LP School	• Learnt new ways of teaching – joyful and play-way methods
	Banbhag Bataghila LP School	• Demonstrated activities on how to teach children
	Madhya Belamari LP School	• Newly learnt skills has led to professional development of teachers
	2 No.Rangaphali UP School	• Taught on how to improve the overall teaching practice

Source: Prepared by CSD, based on Field Survey.

In Goalpara and Nalbari, the teachers mostly stated that they have learnt the play-way method of teaching and are able to encourage students. In Hatigaon, Balijana block of Goalpara, it was reported by the teachers that the library activities and free distribution of books were helpful. It was further stated by the teachers that the training had increased their confidence level to raise issues related to school children.

Overall, the response of the teachers shows that the training was well-received by them. At the same time, the survey also highlighted some concerns, which provides the scope for planning future interventions. For instance, the EFs reported about the low awareness level of the teachers. Though books are provided for the schools, in one of the surveyed schools, neither the teachers were using the books, nor allowed the children to use it, as they felt that regular usage will damage the books. Similarly, it has to be noted that all the teachers who attended the training were not self-motivated. Except for some motivated teachers, who showed keen interest in attending and learning from the workshop, majority had attended the training just to fulfil their obligation of attending the training.

Activities of Teachers post-training

Though the ASI training was well acknowledged by teachers in the surveyed schools, the results of the study emphasise that the capability for changing the pedagogy of teaching from rote learning to activity based was less than average in all the surveyed schools. Even the teachers, who were appreciative of the training, did not report about the practical application of the training that was imparted. While interviewing the children and the parents, it came to light that there was not much change in the teaching activities of teachers post-training. Students during FGDs highlighted that the teaching pattern of the teachers was mostly bookish and boring. However, some of the teachers reported that they have tried adopting new ways of teaching in the post-training period. Before the training, the teachers used to follow only lecture method, based on the text books. Now after the session, some of the teachers are also carrying TLMs to the classroom. The major contribution of the training has been the use of TLMs by the teachers.

Table 3.13: Interventions of Teachers Post-Training

Districts	Response of Teachers
Baksa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baralkuchi: Teachers give extra attention to children, apart from the remedial class provided by CML; Teachers made door-to-door survey and also created awareness amidst parents along with SMCs and CML staff • Padmapara: Teachers make home visit and counsel parents to bring back dropout children
Bongaigaon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghoramara: Teachers make home visit and counsel parents to bring back dropout children; use TLMs and skill development activities for children • Jhalpara: Teachers make door-to-door visit along with SMC members to check dropout children
Goalpara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodahapur: give more attention to slow learners • Hatigaon: use audio-visual modes post-training • Kongkera: use play card methods and TLMs to make learning joyful • Raikona: Engage in Awareness creation & monitor attendance
Nalbari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arara: Though the teachers are asked by EFs to adopt play-way method, they do not adopt different method, as time is not sufficient to complete the syllabus; however, admitted that children do not enjoy lecture method • Bhelamari: Teacher stated of facing difficulty in teaching because of language barrier and stated that they do not make home visits to track children, as they do not have time; Post-training, interaction with children has increased

Source: Prepared by CSD, based on Field Survey.

The survey response on the question of changes in the activities of teachers, post-training was answered only by quite a few teachers. In Baksa, teachers stated of taking part in the door-to-door visit along with SMCs to create awareness among parents on the importance of education and admitted that they are giving extra attention to the children post-training. In Bongaigaon, teachers reported of their participation in door-to-door visit and also use TLMs and conduct skill development activities for the children. In Goalpara, use of TLMs and audio-visual modes to make learning joyful for children was reported by the teachers. However, in Nalbari, the teachers openly admitted that they do not have time to adopt play way methods and they focus on completing the syllabus. At the same time, they admitted that the children were not enjoying lecture method. In one of the schools in Nalbari, it was even admitted that the interaction of the teachers with the children has increased post-training.

The qualitative survey results flagged that the teachers need to be oriented and trained frequently about how and why to switch to activity based learning, so that they can become competent and use these tools to create and sustain the interest of students in studies.

Overall, it can be stated that ASI had made a significant achievement, which is in fact highly commendable, considering the peak period of the pandemic during which it was implemented.

4

Learning of the children of intervention: status and determinants

4.1 Introduction

Education has both intrinsic (knowledge for its own sake) and instrumental values (multiple roles it plays in development: whether individual, community, or even a nation). The instrumental value of education is at the core of the human capital theory advanced by Schultz (1961), arguing that countries with similar inputs get more output because of their investment in education. During 1970s and 1980s, the focus of many developing countries was supply-side policies like construction of schools to improve access to education, aiming enhanced productivity, economic growth, and development. During 1990s the debate shifted towards wider benefits of education. Sen (1999) argued for social interactions and political participation, whereas Delor's commission report (1996) titled 'Learning: The Treasure Within' emphasized on education throughout life based on four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.

Learning improvement being one of the main objectives of CML intervention, this chapter explores the status of learning of the children participated in the intervention, learning related benefits received by them through camps and remedial classes, and socioeconomic determinants of learning.

4.2 Status of Learning of the Children in the Study Area

Although CML conducts regular and annual learning assessments, we conducted a brief assessment of fundamental learning status of children only of the batch 2020-21. The time gap between participation in the intervention by the child and our brief assessment worked as a proxy for learning retention. The implicit assumption is that learning level of the immediate batch (2021-22) is better than the previous batch.

Investigators started asking these questions after the ice breaking session of light interaction and taking consent of the child. Learning related questions were about maths and language

reading of class-three standard, which is basic minimum requirement for further learning of any subject.

First, the child was asked to read out a brief paragraph in their mother tongue. If the child was able to read that, the language test ended there. If the child was unable to read the full paragraph, he or she was asked to read couple of easy sentences. In a similar manner the test ended with a success, otherwise continued for reading words or letters accordingly. Regarding maths, every child was asked to do a simple division and subtraction problem, and the answers were entered. If the child cannot do any of the exercise, he or she was asked to read out a two digit number. The test ended with a success, otherwise continued for reading out a one digit number.

The results show that in the study area the ability of language reading is comparatively better than maths/numeracy. Moreover district wise analysis suggests that the learning level of children is comparatively poor in Goalpara district (table 4.1 and 4.2). Table 4.1 shows that more than 97 per cent of children (102 out of 105 children) in Baksa were able to read entire paragraph in their mother tongue. The scenario is followed by Nalbari, where 94 per cent of children (94 out of 100 children); Bongaigaon, where 83 per cent of children (80 out of 97 children); and Goalpara, where only 46 per cent of children (49 out of 106 children) were able to read entire paragraph in their mother tongue. In Goalpara, a little less than 30 per cent of children (31 out of 106 children) were not able to read anything (not even letters).

Table 4.1: Status of Language Reading of the 2020-21 Batch, by Districts

	Baksa	Bongaigaon	Goalpara	Nalbari	Total
Able to read entire paragraph	102	80	49	94	325
Those who were not able to read entire paragraph, but able to read sentences	1	8	9	4	22
Those who were neither able to read entire paragraph nor sentences, but able to read words	2	3	12	2	19
Those who were neither able to read entire paragraph nor sentences, nor words, but able to read letters	0	4	5	0	9
Not able to read anything	0	2	31	0	33
Total number of participants	105	97	106	100	408

Source: CSD survey 2023

Table 4.2 shows that around 18 per cent of children (18 out of 100 children) in Nalbari; 29 per cent of children (30 out of 105 children) in Baksa; 16 per cent of children (15 out of 97 children) in Bongaigaon; and less than 5 per cent of children (5 out of 106 children) Goalpara did division correctly. Regarding subtraction, around 82 per cent of children (82 out of 100 children) in Nalbari; 81 per cent of children (85 out of 105 children) in Baksa; 76 per cent of children (74 out of 97 children) in Bongaigaon; and nearly 60 per cent of children (61 out of 106 children) Goalpara did it correctly. However, in Goalpara, a little less than 20 per cent of children (20 out of 106 children) were not able to read even one digit number.

Table 4.2: Status of Maths/Numeracy of the 2020-21 Batch, by Districts

	Baksa	Bongaigaon	Goalpara	Nalbari	Total
Did division correctly	30	15	5	18	68
Did subtraction correctly	85	74	61	82	302
Able to read two digit number	103	89	83	100	375
Those who were neither able to do division, nor subtraction, nor read two digit number, but able to read one digit number	1	3	3	0	7
Cannot even read one digit number	1	5	20	0	26

Source: CSD survey 2023

In Goalpara district a significant number of students were unable to read even letter and one digit number. However this insight is difficult to capture with a multiple choice question (MCQ) tool for assessment used by CML. Since there is one correct answer out of the four options, students might resort to guessing or tic-tac-toe technique to tick the right answer. Table 4.3 presents a brief snapshot of the CML learning assessment process captured through non-participatory observation method by the research team.

Table 4.3: Snapshot of the CML Learning Assessment Process

Indicators	Goalpara	Boingaigoan	Baksa	Nalbari
Assessment (in a relaxed manner) or like a formal test?	The process was more like a formal test, but children were relaxed.	The process was more like a formal test.	The process was more like a formal test, but children were relaxed.	The process was more like a formal test, but children were relaxed.
School teachers' involvement during the process	No involvement	No involvement	No involvement	No involvement
Before starting the assessment, were the children informed the purpose of the assignment they are given?	Purpose not informed. But children were briefly explained about the activity.	Purpose not informed. But children were briefly explained about the activity.	Purpose not informed. But children were briefly explained about the activity.	Purpose not informed. But children were briefly explained about the activity.
Children's involvement (one way or two way communication)	Children were interactive.	Children were mostly following the instructions.	Children were interactive.	Children were interactive.
Were children reading the questions, asking doubts (if any), thinking then writing, or just ticking questions?	Mixed group: Some children were asking their doubts, thinking and answering. Some children were answering fast and also looking into sheets of others.	Mixed group: Some children were asking their doubts, thinking and answering. Some children were answering fast and also looking into sheets of others.	Mixed group: Some children were asking their doubts, thinking and answering. Some children were answering fast and also looking into sheets of others.	Mixed group: Some children were asking their doubts, thinking and answering. Some children were answering fast and also looking into sheets of others.
Any discriminatory behaviour with children	No	No	No	No
Outcome of the assessment	Cumulative scores will be entered into the MIS. Results will be communicated with parents.	Cumulative scores will be entered into the MIS. Results will be communicated with parents.	Cumulative scores will be entered into the MIS. Results will be communicated with parents.	Cumulative scores will be entered into the MIS. Results will be communicated with parents.
SWOT analysis of CML's learning assessment				
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Easy for children to follow the learning assessment ✓ Regular assessment with weekly worksheets and once in a year summative assessment ✓ Students are happy and comfortable with facilitators 			
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Limitations of MCQ tool for assessment ✓ Assessment tool was not graded, whereas children were from different grades/classes ✓ Lack of involvement of school teachers. 			

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Baseline with less time consuming, simple but graded tool to capture individual weaknesses and strengths to put children in sub-groups ✓ Oral test, and fundamental reading and writing can be made part of the assessment ✓ Increasing school teachers' involvement
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dropout of children due to socio-economic reasons and migration. ✓ Sustainability of the intervention requires involvement of school teachers ✓ If big learning gaps are not bridged gradually, children will feel comfortable in remedial classes but remain under-confident in age-appropriate classes.

Source: compilation of research team's non-participatory observation's input

4.3 Learning through camps and remedial classes

Almost all households expressed to get benefitted from CML interventions (table 4.4). The table shows benefits from motivational camps to be higher than remedial classes.

Table 4.4: Benefits of Motivational Camps and Remedial Classes on Learning, by Districts (frequency and percentages)

		2020-21					2021-22				
		Baksa	Bongai gaon	Goalp ara	Nalba ri	Tot al	Baksa	Bongai gaon	Goalp ara	Nal bari	Total
Camps boosted child's confidence/ interest	No.	56	60	85	75	276	68	60	45	69	242
	%	53.3	61.9	80.2	75.0	67.6	81.9	65.2	56.3	86.3	72.2
Remedial classes improved learning	No.	66	42	45	62	215	31	51	57	15	154
	%	62.9	43.3	42.5	62.0	52.7	37.3	55.4	71.3	18.8	46.0
Not benefitted	No.	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	%	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: CSD survey 2023

However, CMLs journey of motivational camps was not very smooth initially. Many parents revealed that they were not comfortable in sending their children to motivational camps in the beginning. The major reason was fear of child labour and child trafficking in the region. Initially few parents were not having trust on the CML team; however, with time and more interaction they gained trust and started sending their children to the camps. Children informed that their teachers and parents encouraged them to enrol in the 15-day motivational class to gain a better understanding of school education. Some even highlighted that friends were attending the motivational camp, so they also became interested. The major attractions of the motivational camps as shared by different stakeholders are presented in box 4.1.

Box 4.1: Major Attractions of Motivational Camps

- ✓ Enjoyable environment with good food,
- ✓ Safe and healthy environment from point view of parents,
- ✓ Play way method of teaching for better understanding of alphabets and numeracy
- ✓ Interaction with peers group and teachers
- ✓ Free kits including bags, water bottle, shoes, colours, books, geometry box and others
- ✓ Transport facilities to the camps
- ✓ Enrolment into mainstream schools

FGDs with various stakeholders show that children enjoyed the learning process in motivational camps and remedial classes. Existing literature suggests that enjoyment is an important precondition of learning, and thus we captured what children enjoyed in learning. Primary data shows that teachers play a great role in making learning an enjoyment process. More than 95 per cent children of the batch 2020-21 expressed that they enjoy when:

1. Teachers appreciate when children know the answers,
2. Teachers encourage when children ask relevant questions,
3. Teachers explain something easily/like a story

According to the children teachers in the camps and remedial classes are more co-operative, empathetic and indulged with the students. They keep a personal touch with all of the students.

4.4 Stakeholders' perception regarding learning in motivational camps and remedial classes

4.4.1 Children

Children informed that in the motivational camp they taught mother tongue – Assamese and Garo, basic Mathematics, crafts (like pot making), songs (national anthem, patriotic songs in mother tongue), games etc. Few children informed that they were not interested in studies

earlier. But now in the remedial classes they are enjoying. In Bongaigaon children narrated during an FGD:

“One child had a fight with some of the students and they attacked him and had physical injuries. His parents then decided not to send him to the school. Then the CML officials visited and convinced his parents and made them sent him to the motivational camp and then enrolled to the regular school.”

One girl of class II in Bongaigaon said:

“Earlier I was not able to read in Assamese and not interested to do mathematics also. After joining the remedial class, I am able to read and can add and subtract two digit numbers.”

4.4.2 Parents

Few parents in Goalpara highlighted that the good part of the motivational camps are that there are no assignments for home. So children do not feel stressed out. Some parents in Bongaigaon emphasised that:

“Motivational camps helped the children to learn something before entering into regular school. This is so crucial for illiterate parents like us.”

Parents in Baksa explained that they were free from mind, when their children were in the motivational camps. They also highlighted that they are stress free about the food needs of the child. Few parents in Nalbari informed proudly that their children are able to read letters and do the counting. Even a few of them highlighted that now their children can even go for shopping of vegetables too. One mother mentioned:

“Our girl learnt mobile numbers of both father and mother”

Few parents in Nalbari added that earlier children were not interesting in schooling, studies or learning. After motivational camps, some of them forced parents to get them enrolled into the mainstream schools.

Some parents in Goalpara highlighted that during harvest season, when children miss their schools, they can learn in the remedial classes. Few parents in Bongaigaon emphasised that in the normal class, students are unable to learn much, but remedial classes are helpful for the children to understand better. One parent in Nalbari highlighted:

“Remedial class is helpful for slow learners as it pays attention to all”

Few parents in Nalbari also added that students who have difficulty grasping lessons in a classroom are provided with different strategies like refined practice, clarification, repetition of content, and in some cases, individual attention is given so that the concept gets picked up by the student.

4.4.3 Teachers

Discussing about the children joining school after the motivational camps, a teacher in Bongaigaon mentioned:

“These children are very much interested in learning many things and are ready to engage themselves with their peer groups.”

Teachers in Goalpara mentioned that remedial class reduces the heterogeneity of student learning levels for any given grade. Teachers in Goalpara added:

“Remedial classes are expanding in many places because so many kids faced learning challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

According to a teacher in Goalpara:

“Education Facilitators (EF) act as a major support to the teachers in different ways. Some time, when the teacher is busy with other work, the EF handles the regular class of teacher. When a child of a tribal community who lives in hilly areas and remote location becomes irregular to school, the EFs makes home visit, convinces the parents and brings back child to school. When teachers are unable to teach children from Garo community because of language issue, the EFs from the same community address the problem and teach children”

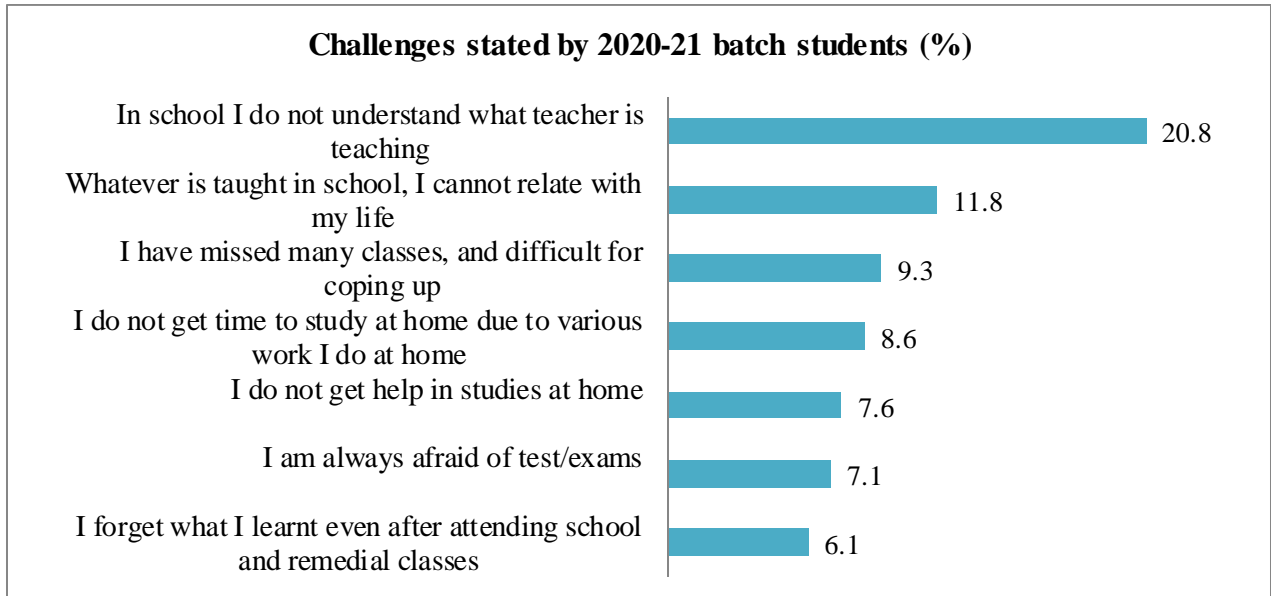
Teachers in Nalbari added that remedial classes offer the possibility of focusing on those students who are lagging behind and teaching at a level that is appropriate for their current level. In all the four districts teachers informed that the remedial classes helped bridge the learning gaps.

4.5 Barriers of learning

Challenges of learning were asked to 2020-21 batch students only. Nearly 21 per cent of children stated that they find it difficult to understand what is being taught in school (figure

4.1). Not able to relate theoretical learning in real life is another challenge told by nearly 12 per cent of the children. This highlights the need for improved pedagogy.

Figure 4.1: Challenges of Learning Stated by 2020-21 Batch Students (%)



Source: CSD survey 2023

Missing classes (particularly due to seasonal work or migration), and not getting time to study due to various work done at home are two other prominent barriers to learning. It shows that CML’s interventions have overcome few challenges but some structural challenges are beyond their purview. In order to get better understanding of those structural barriers, we analyse determinants of learning.

4.6 Determinants of Learning

To understand the socio-economic, and demographic determinants of learning level, we estimated the following ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equation:

$$L = b_0 + \sum_{1}^n b_i X_i$$

Where language learning level, L takes value 0 if a child cannot read the given paragraph and 1 if the child reads it. For maths learning level, L takes value 0 if a child cannot solve the given division and subtraction problems and 1 if the child provides a correct answer for either division or subtraction problem. X are socioeconomic and demographic factors which include sex, class of study, district, economic class, level of indebtedness, economic category in

terms of type of work, socio-religious category, having electricity or not, type of housing, having a smart phone at house or not, and both the parents' opinion about child's education.

Table 4.5 shows the predicted percentage of having weak language learning level (not able to properly read a paragraph), and having weak math learning level (cannot correctly do division and subtraction) among various groups from the regression analysis, whereas, table 4.6 shows the marginal effects of various socioeconomic factors (and their statistical significance) on weak language and maths learning.

Weak language skill does not vary by gender, however weak maths skill does. Gender bias in maths as a subject (i.e. mentality that girls cannot do maths) is perhaps responsible for this gender gap. Compared to boys, girls are weaker in Maths, and the difference is statistically significant at 10 per cent level (table 4.6). Children below class IV are Weaker in language as well as maths compared to children who have completed primary and elementary levels. This makes sense because a class III standard tool was used to check the fundamental knowledge of language and numeracy of children. Among districts, Goalpara has the highest percentage of students with weak language and maths skill. The difference is statistically significant at one per cent level in case of language skills. However, for maths, the difference is not statistically significant.

Poorer students are more vulnerable in terms of both language and maths. In the case of maths the difference between the poorest and the richest is statistically significant at 5 per cent level. For both language and maths the vulnerability declines consistently in every quintile of economic wellness. Levels of indebtedness do not influence weakness in maths, but higher amount of debt to the family increases language vulnerability. The difference is statistically significant at 10 per cent level. Children of wage-earning families are weaker in maths than self-employed households. It is possible that children of self-employed families help their parents in calculations. Muslim children are weaker in maths. Access to electricity (or lack of it) does not influence language or maths skillset. Having pakka houses decline the vulnerability of language or maths. As an indicator of stability and comfort it perhaps create conducive environment at home helping in better learning and its retention. Having a smart phone in the household reduces language related vulnerability. The difference is statistically significant at 10 per cent level. This makes sense as any application on smart phones requires some language skill. Fathers or mother's opinion about education does not influence language or maths related vulnerability of children by statistically significant margin.

Table 4.5: Predicted Percentage of Children with Weak Skills in Language (cannot read paragraph) and Maths (can neither do division nor subtraction) among Various Groups

	Predicted percentages of children with weak language skill	Predicted percentages of children with weak maths skill
Gender		
Male	19.4	21.0
Female	21.2	29.0
Child's completed education		
I-IV	32.5	38.1
V-VIII	9.9	14.3
Above VIII	15.1	19.4
District		
Baksa	8.6	24.6
Bongaigaon	13.4	16.1
Goalpara	44.0	30.5
Nalbari	14.3	29.3
Economic class		
Poorest	37.2	33.0
Poor	22.5	31.2
Middle	16.2	26.7
Well-off	15.2	20.8
Richest	13.1	17.4
Debt		
No debt	19.8	25.6
Up to Rs. 20,000	19.8	17.6
More than Rs. 20,000	35.9	28.7
Economic category of hhd		
Self-employed	18.9	19.8
Wage-earners	21.8	30.6
Socio-religious category		
Upper-castes	17.2	14.9
ST	21.3	29.0
SC	24.8	23.7
OBC	17.3	15.4
Muslim	20.4	28.2
Electricity		
No-electricity	13.3	34.5
Have electricity	21.0	24.4
House type		

Kachcha	21.0	26.5
Semi-kachcha	24.0	26.0
Pakka	11.1	15.8
Smart phones in hhd		
No-smart phone	26.9	29.8
Have smart-phone	18.9	24.2
Father's opinion about education		
Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure	13.2	16.3
Necessary for Employment	21.9	27.6
Necessary for Life	16.4	20.3
Father dead	25.8	26.4
Mother's opinion about education		
Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure	30.6	25.6
Necessary for Employment	18.7	23.3
Necessary for Life	21.4	27.7
Mother dead	27.8	36.0

Source: Analysis based on primary data of CSD survey 2023

Table 4.6: Marginal Effect of Socio-economic and other Determinants of Weak Language and Maths Skill - Results from Regression Analysis

	Weak language skill		Weak maths skill	
	Coefficient	Prob > t	Coefficient	Prob > t
Gender (base=Male)				
Female	0.018	0.579	0.080	0.052
Child's completed education (base=I-IV)				
V-VIII	-0.226	0.000	-0.239	0.000
Above VIII	-0.175	0.000	-0.187	0.028
District (base=Baksa)				
Bongaigaon	0.048	0.379	-0.085	0.194
Goalpara	0.354	0.000	0.059	0.647
Nalbari	0.056	0.188	0.047	0.468
Economic class (base=Poorest)				
Poor	-0.146	0.015	-0.018	0.807
Middle	-0.210	0.002	-0.063	0.414
Well-off	-0.220	0.001	-0.122	0.103
Richest	-0.241	0.000	-0.157	0.040

Debt (base=no debt)				
Up to Rs. 20,000	0.000	0.998	-0.080	0.326
More than Rs. 20,000	0.160	0.057	0.031	0.753
Economic category of hhd (base=Self-employed)				
Wage-earners	0.029	0.409	0.108	0.015
Socio-religious category (base=Upper-castes)				
ST	0.041	0.595	0.141	0.243
SC	0.076	0.316	0.089	0.383
OBC	0.000	0.993	0.005	0.951
Muslim	0.032	0.529	0.133	0.056
Electricity (base=No-electricity)				
Have electricity	0.077	0.191	-0.101	0.227
House type (base=kachcha)				
Semi-kachcha	0.030	0.524	-0.005	0.933
Pakka	-0.099	0.007	-0.107	0.051
Smart phones in hhd (base=No-smart phone)				
Have smart-phone	-0.080	0.093	-0.056	0.306
Father's opinion about education (base=Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure)				
Necessary for Employment	0.088	0.377	0.113	0.311
Necessary for Life	0.032	0.769	0.040	0.743
Father dead	0.126	0.317	0.101	0.474
Mother's opinion about education (base=Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure)				
Necessary for Employment	-0.118	0.391	-0.023	0.873
Necessary for Life	-0.091	0.516	0.021	0.887
Mother dead	-0.028	0.852	0.104	0.566

Source: Analysis based on primary data of CSD survey 2023

5

Post-intervention children’s retention of children in school

5.1 Introduction

Retaining participants of any intervention in a social setting is much difficult Compared to clinical trial or intervention done in a lab setting (Goldberg and Kiernan 2005). Retention rate in social setting requires keeping regular contact, establishing long term personal relationships, understanding the cultural setting and many other sensitive issues (Robinson et al 2007). Mainstreaming OoSC and retaining them in school is a further challenge because different socio-economic factors often push children out of school (Hunt 2020). In this background this chapter elaborates the status of post-intervention dropout of children in the region, socio-economic and other barriers of school attendance, how CML intervention helped in overcoming some of those challenges.

5.2 Status of post-intervention dropout of children in the region

Around 4 per cent (30 households) of the total 774 households approached/reached for the survey were not found as the families have migrated. In one household, parents were located but the child could not be found (migrated for work). So, migration is an issue in these regions (table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Spread of the Quantitative Survey

CML Batch	Both Child & parents found	Both Child and parents not found	Parents found but child not found	Total
2020-21	408	19	1	428
	95.3	4.4	0.2	100.0
2021-22	335	11	0	346
	96.8	3.2	0.0	100.0
Total	743	30	1	774
	96.0	3.9	0.1	100.0

Source: CSD survey 2023

The migrated families (including the household where parents were located but the child migrated for work) were mostly in Bongaigaon and Nalbari (Table 5.2). For Bongaigaon,

proximity to the urban areas is a main reason for out migration. Many children seasonally migrate to other places and miss regular classes. One parent in Bongaigaon highlighted:

“In 2019 our child was in motivational camp, but due to economic problem, dropped from the mainstream school. Our child was lucky to again get an opportunity to be enrolled into the camp, and then enrolled successfully in a regular school. Now our child has been shifted to another Upper Primary School.”

For agriculture dependent families in Nalbari, the reason is different. The areas visited in Nalbari are extremely flood prone. Therefore, distress migration is highly prevalent.

Table 5.2: Location of Migrated Families

District	Freq.	Per cent
Baksa	4	12.9
Bongaigaon	17	54.8
Nalbari	10	32.3
Total	31	100

Source: CSD survey 2023

The main analysis of this report is drawn from the sample of 743 households (where parents as well as the child could be physically located), with 408 and 335 households from the 2020-21 and 2021-22 batches respectively. Migration due to varied socio-economic compulsions is outside the purview of the intervention designed by the CML. Hence, the evaluation of CML’s intervention will be based on those children who along with their families have stayed back in the region.

There are only a few drop outs, that too only from the 2020-21 batch, and none from the 2021-22 batch. Nearly 98.5 per cent of the children in 2020-21 batch and 100 per cent from 2021-22 batch have been attending school during the time of the survey (table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Status of school attendance, by CML batch

		Not currently enrolled & not attending	enrolled in current academic year but not attending	enrolled & currently attending	Total
2020-21	No.	2	4	402	408
	%	0.5	1.0	98.5	100.0
2021-22	No.	0	0	335	335
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
Total	No.	2	4	737	743
	%	0.3	0.5	99.2	100.0

Source: CSD survey 2023

While the CML programme has achieved nearly complete prevention of dropping out, there is still a sizeable section of students who are attending schools irregularly. In the past one

year, 11 per cent children have attended school for eight months or less (7.7 per cent up to four months, including the dropped out, and a further 3.4 per cent have attended more than 4 months up to 8 months) (table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Regularity of school attendance

	Freq.	Per cent
0 to upto 4 months (incl. dropped out)	57	7.7
more than 4 to 8 months	25	3.4
more than 8 months	661	89.0
Total	743	100.0

Source: CSD survey 2023

Primary data shows that the main target of CML intervention of retaining at least 75 per cent of the enrolled students into the school education system is comfortably fulfilled.

5.3 Socio-economic and other determinants of irregularity in school attendance

To understand the socio-economic, and demographic determinants of irregular attendance at school, we estimated the following ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equation:

$$IRR = b_0 + \sum_1^n b_i X_i$$

Where IRR takes value 0 if a child attended school more than 8 months in the past one year and 1 if the child has attended 8 months or less. X are socio-economic and demographic factors which include sex, district, economic class, level of indebtedness, economic category in terms of type of work, socio-religious category, having electricity or not, type of housing, having a smart phone at house or not, and both the parents' opinion about child's education.

Table 5.5 shows the predicted percentage of children going irregularly at school (8 months or less in last year) among various groups from the regression analysis, whereas, table 5.6 shows the marginal effects of various socio-economic factors (and their statistical significance) on irregularity in school attendance. Irregularity in attendance does not vary by gender. Among districts, Bongaigaon has the highest percentage of irregular students. During FGDs it was found that due to close proximity with the urban areas, seasonal and temporary migration of children for work is a common practice in Bongaigaon, which might be a major reason for irregularity.

Poorer students are more irregular. The difference between the poorest and the richest is statistically significant at 10 per cent level (table 5.6). This quantitative finding is substantially corroborated by qualitative insights. In different FGDs with various stakeholders, poverty has been cited as a major reason for school dropouts in all the four districts. Children were not able to study due to poverty. Level of indebtedness do not influence incidence of irregularity. However, indebtedness is a sign of poverty and as indicated above poverty leads to irregularity.

Children of wage-earning families are going to school more regularly than self-employed households. It is possible that the latter place more importance on economic survival of the family compared to children's education. ST's have the highest percentage of irregular students among social groups. Access to electricity (or lack of it) do not influence incidence of irregularity. Those having pakka houses are the least irregular compared to other types of houses. Having a smart phone in the household do not influence incidence of irregularity.

Father's opinion about education is an important determinant of students attending schools regularly. Children, whose fathers think education is unnecessary / are indifferent/ only feels social pressure about it, have the highest incidence of irregular school attendance, even higher than those whose father have died. During fieldwork some parents in Bongaigoan pointed out that if children go to classes, then who will earn for them? They need children help them in earning. One parent from Baksa informed during FGD that their son was in motivational camp for two days, but it affected their income, so dropped going to the camps. Few parents in Goalpara also informed that children have to work in the field during harvest season. Our quantitative findings show that children whose fathers think education is important for larger purpose of life, followed by those who are motivated by employment, have lowest percentage of irregular school goers. Unfortunately, mother's opinion about education doesn't make much difference to school attendance. The gender difference of voice among parents within household is the probable reason why mother's opinion is not important.

Table 5.5: Predicted percentage of children going irregularly at school (8 months or less in last year) among various groups

Indicators	Predicted percentages of irregular students
Gender	
Male	10.4
Female	11.6
District	
Baksa	8.0
Bongaigaon	22.5
Goalpara	7.7
Nalbari	5.6
Economic class	
Poorest	12.4
Poor	13.4
Middle	12.7
Well-off	10.4
Richest	6.1
Debt	
No debt	10.9
Up to Rs. 20,000	12.5
More than Rs. 20,000	12.2
Economic category of the household	
Self-employed	15.8
Wage-earners	6.6
Socio-religious category	
Upper-castes	10.5
ST	17.6
SC	7.2
OBC	6.0
Muslim	8.5
Availability of electricity	
No-electricity	13.0
Have electricity	10.8
House type	
Kachcha	11.0
Semi-kachcha	13.8
Pakka	6.6
Availability of smart phones in the household	
No-smart phone	12.2
Have smart-phone	10.7
Father's opinion about education	
Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure	34.2
Necessary for Employment	12.1
Necessary for Life	2.1
Father is dead	20.3
Mother's opinion about education	
Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure	14.4
Necessary for Employment	10.4
Necessary for Life	12.9
Mother dead	7.7

Source: Analysis based on primary data of CSD survey 2023

Table 5.6: Marginal Effect of Socio-economic and other determinants on becoming irregular at school - results of regression analysis

Indicators	Coefficient	SE	P>t
Gender (base=Male)			
Female	0.013	0.022	0.561
District (base=Baksa)			
Bongaigaon	0.145	0.033	0.000
Goalpara	-0.003	0.043	0.950
Nalbari	-0.024	0.026	0.347
Economic class (base=Poorest)			
Poor	0.010	0.039	0.790
Middle	0.004	0.039	0.928
Well-off	-0.020	0.039	0.605
Richest	-0.063	0.036	0.086
Debt (base=No debt)			
Up to Rs. 20,000	0.016	0.048	0.734
More than Rs. 20,000	0.013	0.052	0.802
Economic category of the household (base=Self-employed)			
Wage-earners	-0.092	0.023	0.000
Socio-religious category (base=Upper-castes)			
ST	0.071	0.047	0.134
SC	-0.033	0.046	0.476
OBC	-0.044	0.035	0.209
Muslim	-0.020	0.034	0.560
Electricity (base=No-electricity)			
Have electricity	-0.022	0.051	0.667
House type (base=kachcha)			
Semi-kachcha	0.028	0.036	0.444
Pakka	-0.044	0.020	0.028
Smart phones in household (base=No-smart phone)			
Have smart-phone	-0.015	0.028	0.592
Father's opinion about education (base=Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure)			
Necessary for Employment	-0.221	0.096	0.022
Necessary for Life	-0.321	0.098	0.001
Father dead	-0.139	0.112	0.216
Mother's opinion about education (base=Unnecessary/indifferent/social pressure)			
Necessary for Employment	-0.040	0.092	0.663
Necessary for Life	-0.015	0.093	0.874
Mother dead	-0.067	0.111	0.547

Source: Analysis based on primary data of CSD survey 2023

Some others reasons were also highlighted during FGDs with different stakeholders. Children informed that health issues of parents are crucial for their school attendance. When parents do not keep well, the elder child in the family gets the responsibility of taking care of younger ones as well as household works. This often leads to permanent dropout if the elder child is a

girl. Some children mentioned they were going with the parents to do work with them in the field and other outside work. Few children in Bongaigaon also informed that their houses are very far from the school. In Goalpara also it was found that schools are located at a distance more than that suggested in the RTE norm. Box 5.1 highlights district specific characteristics and major reasons for dropouts as discussed by different stakeholders during the fieldwork.

Box 5.1 Reasons for Dropouts in Different Districts (qualitative findings)

Goalpara: The villages visited are mostly tribal. Rabha, Boro, Garo and some Hajong are living in the area, but the area is dominated by Garo community. They have their own languages and culture. The problem of illiteracy is acute in this area, especially in the older generation. Widespread inequalities in terms of income and assets were found. The education facilities like school, colleges of these villages are moderate, where higher education facilities are not available. Even the school are little far off only. Major reason of drop out is poverty, child labour, child marriage in this area. There were few cases of migration too.

Boingaigoan: Visited Tapattari block constitute Muslims as the major religious group. The educational level of the district is abysmally low. The main reason behind educational backwardness of Muslims community in this area is poverty due to which children are forced to drop out even in the primary education level. This is particularly true for Muslim girls. Due to poverty, young children are expected to work in small shops (*Biddi karkhanas* and shops), and girls particularly work as domestic help or by looking after their siblings. Even the education for girls is maximum upto class VIII after which they are often married off.

Baksa: The main communities of the District are Boro, Assamese, Nepali, Rabha, and Adibasi. Major women and girls in this area are burdened with household chores. Women majorly work in agricultural activities and making different kinds of handicrafts. Poor health condition is a reason for girls being out of school as they have to take care of mothers. During FGDs with mother groups it was highlighted that a majority of women were not satisfied with the discriminatory attitude of their family. They want to make their daughter educated, so that they do something good in life. In this region, issues related to child violence, child labour and trafficking to Bhutan, Bangladesh were mentioned during informational discussion.

Nalbari: Agriculture is the major source of income in the district of Nalbari. But many people have small business. Issue of child labour, child marriage and even trafficking was highlighted as major reasons behind school dropout.

Parent’s opinion being so important for children’s retention, we found CML’s intervention on parents counselling has worked really well (table 5.7). Box 5.2 highlights the case study of Manjoj, the CML facilitator in Polokata village who made a difference.

Table 5.7: Benefits of motivational camps and remedial classes on learning, by districts

	2020-21					2021-22					
		Baksa	Bongai gaon	Goalp ara	Nalba ri	Tot al	Baksa	Bongai gaon	Goalpa ra	Nal bari	Total
Counselling boosted parents’ interest in child’s education	No.	98	76	76	99	349	73	70	55	66	264
	%	93.3	78.4	71.7	99.0	85.5	88.0	76.1	68.8	82.5	78.8

Source: CSD survey 2023

Box 5.2: Awareness Building and Counselling of Fathers Shifted Their Attention towards their Children’s Education

Polokata village in Baksa district had a major problem of alcoholism. Fathers were less attentive to their children’s education. As a CML facilitator Manoj did regular counselling of many such fathers. It made a difference. Moreover, instead of taking three remedial classes in two schools in alternate days he took six days of remedial classes in both the allotted schools. He arranged remedial classes before and after normal school timings. Children are benefitted with school timings, remedial classes, and increased parents’ attention. It increased their retention rate also.

Teachers in Goalpara informed that due to remedial and motivational classes, cases of dropout have decreased substantially over the last 2–3 years. Teachers in Baksa added that alternative schooling within schools plays a major role in preventing drop-outs and retaining children. Some students drop out of high school because they do not believe they are learning anything useful. So it is important to give individualised attention and be proactive. Teachers in Nalbari also emphasised that remedial classes and motivational camps are important steps in preventing dropouts and retaining students. Based on qualitative findings, box 5.3 presents a snapshot of sustained efforts to bring back dropout children to schools in the study area.

Box 5.3: Sustained Efforts to bring back dropout children to Schools (qualitative findings)

Before 2 years, a dropout girl child was provided intervention in camp and later was mainstreamed in RSTC. However, due to COVID-19, when the RSTCs were shut down and residential school children were sent back home, she could not continue her studies. Though she dropped out again, she was identified again by the Education Facilitators and was provided the support to get admission in school and she has been successfully continuing her studies this year.

- Balijana Block, Goalpara, District

A child called Rabia, was working as a rag picker in Delhi and had dropped out of school during the peak period of COVID-19. Later, when she was identified in the Tapattari block, she was mainstreamed in a Navodya school and the child is in class IV now.

- Tapattari Block, Bongaigaon District

In Rangapani, a boy child called Deepak Lal was not attending school. When the reason was enquired, it came to light that in the previous school that the child attended, he was badly beaten by his classmate and out of the fear that her child would die, his mother prevented him from attending school. Later, after repeated counselling by the Education Facilitators, she agreed to send his son to school and currently the child is doing very well in the school.

- Rangapani, Tapattari Block, Bongaigaon District

Chapatal is a flood-prone area village and river prevents children from coming to school. Three children from this area were brought to the camp and were later mainstreamed in regular schools. However, in between they dropped out and were working in Kerala. The contractors in Kerala who take people for work was approached and was asked to send back the children to Assam. The children are currently in class VIII.

- Education Facilitator of Gawakuchi, Tamulpur, Baksa District

5.4 Projection for Scaling Up to Achieve Systemic Change in Assam

The CML programme showed that the intervention among the dropped-out children and the children with weak learning levels who would have eventually dropped out, have ensured 89 per cent of them going to school regularly (more than 8 months in the last one year). The remaining 11 per cent who are irregular at school are at risk of dropping out. In other words, we can say that out of 100 dropped-out/at risk children who participated in CML's programme, 89 students appear to have continued their school education (i.e., dropout prevented). Through unitary-method calculation, it means that to ensure 100 dropouts are prevented, approximately 113 dropped out / at risk students have to be enrolled in the CML programme.

The UDISE Plus gives us the district-wise number of dropouts (girls and boys, and by education level). Deciding on a targeted threshold of reduction (whether to reduce dropouts by 10 percent, 25 percent, or 50 percent from the current levels), gives us the number of dropouts we would need to prevent. From the success rate of the intervention – i.e., 100 dropouts are prevented by enrolling 113 dropped out / at risk students into the CML programme – we calculate the district-wise number of students that CML intervention need to reach to reduce drop-outs by three alternative thresholds of 10 per cent, 25 per cent, and 50 per cent (Table 5.8, 5.9, & 5.10). The number of dropped out students (district-wise at primary, upper primary, and secondary levels and by sex) sourced from UDISE Plus 2021-22 is provided in annexure table A.1.

Table 5.8: District-wise Target for CML Intervention (dropped out / at risk students) to Reduce Dropout by 10%

Location	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
Bajali	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Baksa	2642	2615	5257	1420	1348	2768	1002	874	1875
Barpeta	1988	2387	4374	1701	1833	3533	1340	1047	2387
Biswanath	209	318	528	138	205	343	371	336	707
Bongaigaon	158	188	347	219	295	514	588	462	1051
Cachar	245	393	639	411	549	960	925	840	1764
Charaideo	92	109	201	75	95	170	74	131	204
Chirang	124	167	291	54	92	146	242	187	430
Darrang	432	702	1134	336	356	692	390	271	661
Dhemaji	357	334	691	234	207	441	179	221	400
Dhubri	801	1108	1909	907	1073	1980	951	618	1569
Dibrugarh	397	439	837	301	332	633	432	402	835
Dima Hasao	62	97	160	60	30	90	64	79	143
Goalpara	523	891	1413	451	544	995	641	491	1132
Golaghat	273	268	541	227	268	496	458	360	817
Hailakandi	415	505	920	195	250	445	230	201	431
Hojai	132	84	216	189	236	425	630	499	1129
Jorhat	79	111	191	173	171	345	273	241	514
Kamrup-Metro	167	133	300	100	155	255	193	197	390
Kamrup-Rural	463	744	1208	508	596	1104	805	752	1557
Karbi Anglong	365	470	835	211	240	451	264	255	519
Karimganj	615	992	1607	520	714	1234	684	536	1220
Kokrajhar	440	485	925	226	293	519	321	326	647
Lakhimpur	284	278	561	302	361	663	311	302	613
Majuli	49	56	105	95	103	198	65	79	145
Morigaon	209	446	655	208	350	559	481	393	873
Nagaon	750	1106	1856	956	1117	2073	863	563	1426
Nalbari	257	356	613	171	187	358	225	183	408
Sibsagar	3	76	80	92	79	171	174	154	328
Sonitpur	346	402	748	224	389	613	650	526	1176
South Salmara-Mankachar	760	1016	1776	485	405	890	238	145	383
Tamulpur	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tinsukia	297	395	692	282	388	669	482	491	973
Udalguri	211	195	406	99	132	232	128	162	290
West Karbi Anglong	174	201	375	77	88	165	217	205	422
Assam	10653	14442	25094	9525	11468	20993	13724	11467	25191

Source: CSD's calculation based on DISE 2021-22 & CSD survey 2023.

Table 5.9: District-wise Target for CML Intervention (dropped out / at risk students) to Reduce Dropout by 25%

Location	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
Bajali	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Baksa	6606	6537	13144	3549	3370	6919	2504	2184	4688
Barpeta	4969	5967	10936	4251	4582	8833	3351	2617	5967
Biswanath	524	796	1319	346	513	859	927	840	1767
Bongaigaon	396	471	866	549	738	1286	1471	1156	2626
Cachar	613	983	1597	1029	1372	2401	2312	2099	4411
Charaideo	230	272	502	188	238	426	185	326	511
Chirang	311	416	727	136	230	365	606	469	1074
Darrang	1081	1755	2836	840	890	1731	975	679	1653
Dhemaji	891	836	1727	585	518	1103	447	554	1001
Dhubri	2003	2770	4772	2269	2681	4950	2378	1544	3922
Dibrugarh	993	1098	2091	752	830	1582	1081	1005	2087
Dima Hasao	156	243	399	150	76	226	160	196	357
Goalpara	1307	2227	3534	1128	1360	2488	1602	1228	2830
Golaghat	682	670	1352	568	671	1239	1144	899	2043
Hailakandi	1038	1262	2300	488	624	1112	574	503	1077
Hojai	329	211	540	472	590	1062	1575	1249	2824
Jorhat	198	279	476	434	428	862	683	603	1286
Kamrup-Metro	418	332	750	249	388	637	482	492	974
Kamrup-Rural	1158	1861	3019	1270	1490	2760	2012	1881	3893
Karbi Anglong	912	1175	2087	528	599	1127	660	637	1297
Karimganj	1538	2479	4017	1300	1786	3086	1709	1341	3050
Kokrajhar	1099	1213	2313	565	732	1297	803	814	1617
Lakhimpur	709	694	1403	755	903	1658	778	755	1533
Majuli	121	140	262	237	258	494	163	198	362
Morigaon	522	1115	1637	521	876	1397	1202	981	2183
Nagaon	1875	2764	4639	2390	2792	5182	2157	1408	3565
Nalbari	642	890	1532	428	467	895	562	459	1021
Sibsagar	8	191	199	230	197	427	434	385	819
Sonitpur	866	1004	1870	560	974	1533	1625	1316	2941
South Salmara-Mankachar	1900	2540	4440	1212	1013	2226	595	362	956
Tamulpur	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tinsukia	743	987	1730	704	969	1673	1204	1228	2432
Udalguri	527	488	1015	248	331	579	319	406	725
West Karbi Anglong	434	503	938	193	220	413	542	512	1054
Assam	26631	36104	62736	23812	28671	52483	34311	28668	62979

Source: CSD's calculation based on DISE 2021-22 & CSD survey 2023.

Table 5.10: District-wise Target for CML Intervention (dropped out / at risk students) to Reduce Dropout by 50%

Location	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
Bajali	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Baksa	13212	13075	26287	7098	6740	13838	5009	4368	9377
Barpeta	9938	11934	21872	8503	9164	17667	6701	5233	11934
Biswanath	1047	1591	2638	691	1026	1717	1854	1680	3534
Bongaigaon	792	941	1733	1097	1475	2572	2941	2312	5253
Cachar	1227	1967	3194	2057	2745	4802	4624	4198	8822
Charaideo	460	544	1004	375	477	852	369	653	1022
Chirang	621	833	1454	271	460	731	1211	937	2148
Darrang	2162	3510	5671	1681	1780	3461	1949	1357	3307
Dhemaji	1783	1672	3454	1170	1037	2206	895	1107	2002
Dhubri	4005	5540	9545	4537	5363	9900	4755	3088	7843
Dibrugarh	1987	2196	4183	1504	1660	3165	2162	2011	4173
Dima Hasao	312	487	798	300	152	452	321	393	713
Goalpara	2614	4453	7067	2256	2720	4976	3204	2457	5661
Golaghat	1363	1340	2703	1137	1342	2478	2288	1798	4085
Hailakandi	2077	2524	4601	976	1249	2225	1149	1005	2154
Hojai	659	422	1081	943	1181	2124	3150	2497	5647
Jorhat	396	557	953	867	856	1723	1367	1206	2572
Kamrup-Metro	835	664	1499	498	775	1274	965	984	1948
Kamrup-Rural	2316	3722	6038	2540	2980	5521	4025	3761	7786
Karbi Anglong	1824	2350	4174	1056	1198	2254	1321	1274	2595
Karimganj	3076	4958	8034	2599	3572	6172	3419	2681	6100
Kokrajhar	2199	2426	4625	1130	1464	2594	1607	1628	3235
Lakhimpur	1419	1388	2806	1510	1805	3315	1556	1510	3065
Majuli	243	280	523	473	515	988	326	397	723
Morigaon	1044	2229	3274	1042	1751	2793	2404	1963	4367
Nagaon	3749	5529	9278	4780	5584	10364	4313	2816	7130
Nalbari	1284	1780	3065	855	934	1789	1124	917	2041
Sibsagar	16	382	398	461	393	854	869	769	1638
Sonitpur	1731	2009	3740	1120	1947	3067	3250	2632	5882
South Salmara-Mankachar	3800	5080	8880	2425	2027	4452	1190	723	1913
Tamulpur	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tinsukia	1487	1974	3460	1408	1938	3346	2408	2456	4863
Udalguri	1054	976	2030	496	662	1158	638	812	1450
West Karbi Anglong	869	1007	1875	387	439	826	1085	1024	2109
Assam	53263	72209	125472	47624	57342	104965	68621	57336	125957

Source: CSD's calculation based on DISE 2021-22 & CSD survey 2023.

6

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter summarises the findings of the study and makes few suggestions from the analyses carried out in the preceding chapters. Section 6.1 presents a summary of the findings, section 6.2 specifies the critical gaps, which is followed by the recommendations in the subsequent section. The recommendations suggested serves as a measure to enhance the future interventions of ASI, while scaling it up to the next level.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

Issues of irregularity/dropout post intervention

- ✓ The program has achieved considerable success vis-à-vis the targets. Almost none of the students from the 2nd batch has yet dropped out. Some of the students are to an extent irregular in attendance (and they run the risk of dropping out again), but nearly 90% of the enrolled students are fairly regular in school attendance.
- ✓ Both girls and boys face irregularity and become victims of dropout in education. However, reasons vary for both genders.
- ✓ Poor economic status is seen to be associated with higher learning vulnerability and irregularity in school attendance. Moreover, missing classes (particularly due to seasonal work or migration), and not getting time to study due to various work done at home are two prominent barriers to learning.
- ✓ A relatively high percentage of the CML participants in Bongaigaon (22.5 per cent) are still not going to school regularly. Data also revealed the issue of outmigration in this district, which could be contributing to the problem.
- ✓ The field survey reveals that almost all the children who were interviewed in Baksa, Goalpara and Nalbari were attending the schools, and only three per cent of the children in Bongaigaon reported not attending the school.
- ✓ The outreach of the remedial programme is noticeable from the regular attendance rate of students (90%), which highlights that the ASI programme attained its target of at least retaining 75 per cent of the enrolled children in the school education system. At the same

time, about 16 per cent of the children in Bongaigaon and Goalpara reported irregular attendance, which was mainly due to their engagement in work during seasonal times.

Beneficiaries of the motivational camps

- ✓ The major beneficiaries of the motivation camp were poor children, migrating children, children from tribal communities, who had either dropped out of school or were irregular to schools, and working children. ASI seems to have made an extensive coverage of children who faced multi-dimensional challenges and lived in vulnerable conditions.
- ✓ The study findings highlight that there is a positive impact of parents' favourable opinion on a child's education. In families where the opinion of the father is favourable towards the education of their children, the regularity of school going children is high.

Measures adopted in reaching OOSC

- ✓ Measures such as a collection of drop-out lists from schools, verification of the same through community meetings, door-to-door surveys, rallies in the villages and regular visits to convince parents played a key role in tracking OOSC. About 90 per cent of the parents in Baksa and Nalbari stated that the counselling provided by EFs motivated them to send their wards to camps and later to the schools.

Measures adopted in retaining children in motivational camps

- ✓ To retain students in the motivational camps, various incentives were provided and transport arrangements were also made to pick up and drop-back children. The major attractions to children in the camps were i) good quality food; ii) the provision of free incentives such as uniforms, bags, colouring kits, and shoes; and iii) the fun and sports activities.
- ✓ Students claimed that they enjoyed motivational camps more than remedial classes as in motivational camps. Activities such as drama, dance, art, and origami classes; learning through play-way methods, songs and cards; and screening of films, etc. were used to stimulate the interest of students towards studies.
- ✓ EFs played a great role in making learning enjoyable. Children found EFs in the camps and remedial classes to be cooperative and empathetic. They use activity-based learning

and kept personal contact with students. The success of a remedial programme depended upon the motivation level and educational qualification of the EF.

Measures towards SMC/MG Strengthening

- ✓ Though active engagement of SMCs/MGs was not visible in all the surveyed schools, a gradual change could be noted. The survey highlights that the SMC/MG members in the Goalpara district were quite active in regularising the attendance of teachers and also in tracking the children who had irregular attendance. The SMCs/MGs in Nalbari was also found to be active, and their involvement was visible in the activities such as home visit, maintaining and sustaining the kitchen garden, monitoring the portfolio of children, school cleanliness, monitoring teacher attendance, ensuring school infrastructure and checking the quality of MDM every day.
- ✓ During the survey, it was highlighted that the attendance rate of children and teachers had improved after the involvement of SMCs/MGs in school activities. In Goalpara, it was reported that the community members had provided free bamboo to the schools for building the infrastructure of the school and had also helped children to manage the kitchen garden.

Capacity Building of teachers

- ✓ The survey results highlight that some teachers exhibited a high level of motivation to participate and learn from the workshop, and some of the teachers were indifferent to the training. In Baksa, the teachers reported that the training has improved their teaching skills and in Bongaigaon, they stated that they have learnt to use TLMs.
- ✓ Though the ASI training was well acknowledged by teachers in the surveyed schools, the results of the study emphasise that the capability for changing the pedagogy of teaching from rote learning to activity based was less than average in all the surveyed schools. Major contribution of ASI training was the use of TLMs by the teachers.

Learning level of students in the camps

- ✓ On the whole, it can be stated that the remedial class has made a positive contribution in terms of improvement in the learning levels of children. The field findings highlight that a major proportion (82.5%) of the children, reported improvement in their learning levels

after attending the remedial programme. While this was reported by about 90 per cent of the children in Baksa and Nalbari, the corresponding proportion in Bongaigaon and Goalpara was 77 and 70 per cent. About 80 per cent of the children could read a simple paragraph and 75 per cent could correctly do subtraction or division.

- ✓ The activities undertaken for children in remedial class include cleaning the classroom, prayer, learning activities, drawing, revision on alphabets, class-wise grouping and teaching and occasional usage of school books for reading and writing. Weekly worksheets or distribution of worksheets twice per month were followed in the majority of the intervention schools to track the progress of children. However, a review of the child portfolio during the survey highlighted that not all schools had properly maintained the weekly worksheets, which might be due to the irregular attendance of children.
- ✓ To track the performance of children and to adopt different strategies to improve their learning levels of children, a child portfolio is maintained. However, in the surveyed schools, only a few schools had neatly maintained the portfolio for all children with a lot of worksheets. In the majority of the schools, the portfolio was not maintained for all children.
- ✓ The ability of language reading is comparatively better than maths/numeracy in the study area. Among the four districts learning level of children is comparatively poor in the Goalpara district.
- ✓ Having access to better amenities (like a pakka house) and comfort of life is associated with greater regularity in school attendance and better language and maths learning levels. Having access to smartphones is seen to be associated with better language skills.
- ✓ Girl students have also shown higher maths vulnerability compared to boys.

6.2 Critical Gaps

- ✓ A baseline with a lengthy, non-graded MCQ tool is a limitation. Moreover, comparing the learning level of different batches of students with a baseline conducted on one batch is also not scientific.
- ✓ The pattern of remedial classes on alternative days and age-appropriate regular schooling in between disturb children's schedules. The issue is highlighted by both parents and children. Irregularity in classes is associated with low levels of learning. Depending on the learning gap from age-appropriate peers, students should be either in regular classes

continuously to quickly bridge the gap, or remedial classes can be conducted daily but outside the regular class timings.

- ✓ If big learning gaps are not bridged gradually, children will feel comfortable in remedial classes but remain under-confident in age-appropriate classes. Children should get an opportunity to move upward in remedial classes of higher level. For elementary education, at least three subgroups of remedial classes should be there.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the insights that emerged from this study, the following actionable recommendations have been suggested to plan for short-term and long-term solutions to key stakeholders, so that the issues of dropout are addressed and children are facilitated with equitable quality education.

- ✓ **Continued Intervention in Vulnerable Districts:** While scaling up the intervention in all districts, special attention should be laid on vulnerable districts (high migration rates). Since better amenities and comfort of life enables better learning and children's retention, the children coming from under-privileged background should continue to receive special attention, as undertaken under ASI.
- ✓ **Intervention in Residential Schools:** Both the motivation camps and remedial programmes in residential schools should be resumed, as it is highly beneficial to prevent dropout rate during the period of seasonal out-migration.
- ✓ **Advocacy for Conditional Cash Transfer:** Conditional cash transfers for households that ensure retention of their children in school till 18 years will be helpful to tackle the rigid mind set of parents. Advocacy with Government of Assam can be undertaken to launch a programme similar to *Kanyashree*⁹ *Prakalpa* of West Bengal.
- ✓ **Remedial Classes beyond School Hours:** One to two hours of remedial support, before or after school hours with emphasis on grade-specific competencies and FLN is helpful to ensure continuity of both remedial and regular remedial class, ensure sustainability beyond intervention period, provide the opportunity to all children and prevent labelling of children as slow learners.

⁹ Kanyashree Prakalpa is a scheme implemented by Government of West Bengal since 2013. It is a conditional cash transfer scheme with the aim to improve the overall wellbeing of adolescent girls (13-18 years) by incentivising their education to ensure transition of girls into higher education and delaying the marriage age of girls till they complete 18 years of age. In the case of Assam, such programme can be launched for both boys and girls, which is helpful to prevent child labour and child marriage.

- ✓ **Grade-specific FLN Sheets:** FLN content and worksheets should be customised based on grade-specific textbooks, as the textbooks designed by the Government, based on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) also focuses on age-appropriate FLN.
- ✓ **Regular Monitoring of Child Portfolio:** Regular monitoring of child portfolio would be helpful to track the effectiveness of the remedial programme and the progress in learning levels of children.
- ✓ **Approach for Joyful Learning:** Child-friendly approach and use of play-way methods and other methods that promote learning experience joyful should be continued and also taken to the regular classrooms too. Supervised mixed-group activities can be an excellent levelling tactic for group learning and memory.
- ✓ **Assessment Practice:** Apart from baseline and endline assessment with simple but graded tool, oral test and fundamental reading and writing can be made part of regular assessment. Baseline should be completed annually for each batch using a straightforward but graded method (such as how it has been used in this study). It is important to identify each child's weaknesses and strengths in order to arrange them into smaller groups for graded remedial classes.
- ✓ **Pool of EFs:** A pool of qualified and motivated facilitators should be made available to ensure that interventions are not affected in the absence of EFs.
- ✓ **Counselling sessions with fathers' groups:** Counselling sessions with fathers' groups to bring about attitude change is an important strategy to improve a child's education.
- ✓ **Language proficiency:** CML facilitators should be given training to be more proficient in dual languages. This will help them accommodate every child coming from different backgrounds.
- ✓ **Promotion of Community Ownership:** Continued intervention with SMCs/MGs with handholding support to members for few more years will promote community ownership.
- ✓ **Incentivisation of Best Performing EFs, SMCs & Teachers:** Every year, best performing EFs, teachers and SMCs of the intervention schools or other schools of the intervention districts can be awarded in appreciation of their performance and to boost the zeal of other SMCs/teachers.
- ✓ **Convergence for School related Activities:** Seasonal cultivation can be adopted in the kitchen garden to ensure continuous production of vegetables/fruits. To promote ownership of everyone towards schools, community can procure seeds from agricultural departments, get the help of MGREGA workers to maintain kitchen garden.

- ✓ **Leadership Training to Motivated Teachers:** Leadership training to highly motivated teachers should be conducted, as they act as change makers in the schools and only through such teachers, sustainability of the ASI intervention even beyond project period can be ensured.

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Annexure

Table A.1: No. of Dropout by Gender and Grade (2021-22)

Location	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall	Girls	Boys	Overall
Bajali	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Baksa	23518	23273	46791	12635	11997	24632	8916	7775	16691
Barpeta	17689	21243	38932	15135	16312	31447	11928	9315	21243
Biswanath	1864	2832	4696	1230	1827	3057	3300	2991	6291
Bongaigaon	1409	1675	3084	1953	2626	4579	5235	4115	9350
Cachar	2184	3501	5685	3662	4886	8548	8230	7473	15703
Charaideo	818	969	1787	668	849	1517	657	1162	1819
Chirang	1106	1482	2588	483	818	1301	2156	1668	3824
Darrang	3848	6247	10095	2992	3169	6161	3470	2416	5886
Dhemaji	3173	2976	6149	2082	1845	3927	1593	1971	3564
Dhubri	7129	9861	16990	8076	9546	17622	8464	5497	13961
Dibrugarh	3536	3909	7445	2678	2955	5633	3849	3579	7428
Dima Hasao	555	866	1421	534	270	804	571	699	1270
Goalpara	4653	7927	12580	4015	4842	8857	5703	4373	10076
Golaghat	2427	2385	4812	2023	2388	4411	4072	3200	7272
Hailakandi	3697	4492	8189	1737	2223	3960	2045	1789	3834
Hojai	1173	751	1924	1679	2102	3781	5607	4445	10052
Jorhat	704	992	1696	1544	1523	3067	2433	2146	4579
Kamrup-Metro	1487	1182	2669	887	1380	2267	1717	1751	3468
Kamrup-Rural	4122	6626	10748	4522	5305	9827	7164	6695	13859
Karbi Anglong	3246	4183	7429	1879	2133	4012	2351	2268	4619
Karimganj	5476	8825	14301	4627	6359	10986	6085	4773	10858
Kokrajhar	3914	4319	8233	2012	2606	4618	2860	2898	5758
Lakhimpur	2525	2470	4995	2688	3213	5901	2769	2687	5456
Majuli	432	499	931	842	917	1759	581	706	1287
Morigaon	1859	3968	5827	1855	3117	4972	4279	3494	7773
Nagaon	6674	9841	16515	8509	9939	18448	7678	5013	12691
Nalbari	2286	3169	5455	1522	1663	3185	2000	1633	3633
Sibsagar	29	680	709	820	700	1520	1546	1369	2915
Sonitpur	3082	3576	6658	1993	3466	5459	5785	4685	10470
South Salmara-Mankachar	6764	9042	15806	4316	3608	7924	2118	1287	3405
Tamulpur	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tinsukia	2646	3513	6159	2507	3449	5956	4286	4371	8657
Udalguri	1876	1738	3614	883	1179	2062	1136	1445	2581
West Karbi Anglong	1546	1792	3338	688	782	1470	1931	1823	3754
Assam	94808	128532	223340	84770	102068	186838	122146	102058	224204
All India	771969	950327	1722296	1562160	1446156	3008316	2640640	3028289	5668929

Source: DISE 2021-22

Glimpses from the Field

