



Building a Strong Response to the Need and Perspective of Out-of-School Children in the State of Haryana

**A paper co-authored by Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad
and Humana People to People India.**

FOREWORD

India has committed to prioritize progress and bring quality education to each and every one. In this effort of providing access to quality education to every member of society, the RTE came into effect in 2009. In compliance with the law, Haryana was one of the first few States to define rules and regulations as well as plans to implement it.

Haryana is committed to provide basic schooling facility to all the children. Over the past decades, many educational initiatives were started in the State, integrating Out-of-School Children (OoSC) into the main education system. However, the task became challenging every year as the number of children not going to school did not reduce. Being a State of opportunities, Haryana witnesses many migrant families for short or long stay. This has become a demanding challenge to resolve.

In the National Education Policy 2020, a special emphasis has been given to the issues related to OoSC in the country in Chapter 3. Many of the children dropped out before the completion of 12th grade at National level.

Not enrolling children in school or school children dropping-out is usually a process rather than a decision. It is this process that took a major attention of the State. The Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad (HSSPP) plans a detailed work before implementing the programme of 'Special Training of OoSC' in the State which includes a combination of roles and responsibilities of various stake holders. This led to the inclusion of capacities from within state and outside agencies to bring a systemic approach to this programme. This led to the inclusion of Civil Society Organisations who were committed to the cause. Finally, in 2016, Haryana decided to adopt a well-curated Programme, called the 'Kadam Step-Up Programme', for successful mainstreaming of OoSC in age appropriate grades.

The dynamics for integrating children in the schools metamorphosed when children were prepared before their age appropriate entry in the classrooms. The results over the years have manifested the importance of this preparedness, as the children who now enter the schools have less or no learning gaps, and this remarkably reduced the school drop-out rate.

The journey of the Programme of 'Special Training of OoSC' in Haryana from 2016 to 2022 has been captured in this paper. It is with immense pleasure that I share this report on how Haryana took up the challenge of bringing the OoSC into the schools and has been largely successful in accomplishing its objectives. Our future lies in the hands of our young children and with colossal pride we see that every little foot that marches to the school gets the best ever education.

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Abstract

The main idea behind writing this academic paper is to bring forth the efforts made and activities done in the area of mainstreaming of out-of-school children in the State of Haryana along with a focus on how a partnership between a State and Civil Society Organisations can lead to resolving the issue of out-of-school children by carefully addressing it, efficiently working out collaborative solutions, effectively delegating roles and work load, effortlessly reaching out to all stakeholders, meticulously meeting challenges all along, attentively learning lessons from the challenges and successfully reaching the goals for a wide impact.

Initially between 2010 and 2015, simple enrollment drives were carried out in Haryana to bring children who were not enrolled in the schools, however, limited and scattered number of Special Training Centres failed to give the desired results. To bring more cohesiveness to this drive in the State in 2016, the Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad decided and then, sought assistance from a long term Civil Society Organisation partner, Humana People to People India, to provide a proposal for a bridge education programme. The idea was to develop and launch a comprehensive programme, aligned with Samagra Shiksha rules for Special Training Centres, to integrate the population of children, who were either school drop-outs or had never been to a school, into the formal school system in the State. This bridge programme, called the Kadam programme, after its step by step design, was created by Humana and supported by its partner, Educate a Child. The Kadam programme aims to provide foundational learning to children and bring about their holistic development before successfully integrating them into formal schools. The toolkit of the programme not only benefits the children who are enrolled but also the teachers/ education volunteers to implement the programme methodically.

The overall figures from the programme, so far, are encouraging. From the academic sessions 2016-17 to 2021-22, the programme has enrolled 108,543 children in Special Training Centres, out of which 69,189 have completed the programme and are permanently enrolled in their age appropriate primary school grades.

The progressive pages in this paper will help the reader to get a detailed understanding of how the entire out-of-school children project was planned and executed in Haryana with good results, despite many challenges that came in the way. This paper will also serve as a guide for other states to follow and take up a plan ensuring all children are enrolled in school after bridging their learning gaps, so that no child remains out of school in the coming future.

1. Rationale

The challenge of the presence of out-of-school children in the country has been widely recognised by the Ministry of Education (MoE), erstwhile, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), and the State Education departments. With the Right to Education^[1] (RTE) Act of 2009 and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) now, Samagra Shiksha^[2], each and every child in the country needs to attend school in the age group of 6 – 14 years.

Box 1.1. The Right to Education Act

The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009**, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022^[1]). <https://dse.education.gov.in/rte>

Box 1.2. Samagra Shiksha Scheme

The **Samagra Shiksha** scheme, erstwhile, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, presently, is an integrated scheme for school education covering the entire gamut from pre-school to class XII. The scheme treats school education as a continuum and is in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal for Education^[3] (SDG-4). The scheme not only provides support for the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 but has also been aligned with the recommendations of National Education Policy^[4] (NEP) 2020. The scheme aims to ensure that all children have access to quality education with an equitable and inclusive classroom environment which should take care of their diverse background, multilingual needs, different academic abilities and make them active participants in the learning process. The scheme has been extended for a period of five years i.e., from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022^[2]). <https://dse.education.gov.in/samagra-shiksha>; The United Nations. (2022^[3]). <https://www.sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>; Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022^[4]). https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

Box 1.3. Sustainable Development Goal 4

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Agenda is “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”. It comprises of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are indivisible and encompass economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) is the education goal. It aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

Source: The United Nations. (2022^[3]). <https://www.sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>

Box 1.4. National Education Policy 2020

Chapter 3 – **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** with its strong aim to ‘Curtailing Dropout Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education’ at All Levels, envisions one of the primary goals of the schooling system is to ensure that children are enrolled in and are attending school. It will be a top priority to bring the OoSC children back into the educational fold as early as possible, and to prevent further students from dropping out, with a goal to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in preschool to secondary level by 2030.

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022_[4]). https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

This working paper analyses a programme on the out-of-school children_[5] (OoSC) conducted in the state of Haryana. The main objective of this paper is to showcase a successful bridge education programme run in the State. The paper intends to present the background of OoSC in Haryana, national policies guiding the State, key problems and challenges that come from the societal barriers and operational short comings, genesis and development of the Kadam - Haryana OoSC programme. It also describes the processes of its operation on the ground, data collected by the project over the length of five years to highlight the programme’s impact, how the State specifically addressed COVID-19 while implementing the programme during the trying times in 2020-21, major finding as well as the proposed solutions/ changes to make the programme better, all along the way.

Box 1.5. Definition of Out-of-School Children

According to Ministry of Education (MoE), India, a child 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”.

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022_[5]). https://www.education.gov.in/en/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/OoSC.pdf

To effectively implement the OoSC programme in partnership with the State of Haryana and its department of school education, Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad_[6] (HSSPP), Humana People to People India (HPPI), a Civil Society Organisation (CSO), had extended its support from 2014 to the present along with another CSO, Anubhuti which joined the good practice in the State in 2019. The paper intensively manifests the journey of the intended programme over the years and its measureable success and impact in the following years. This paper endeavours to exhibit how the difficult challenge of OoSC can be overcome with support, trust, systemic approach and an overall positive outlook.

2. Situational analysis of out-of-school children in Haryana

India is close to universal enrollment for the age group 6-14, with the percentage of children enrolled in school at 96% or above for six years in a row. Nationally, the percentage of out-of-school children (age group 6-14) remains at 3.3%. In some states, the proportion of out-of-school girls (age group 11-14) remains greater than 8%. In Haryana, the percentage of children who are out of school in the age group of 6-14 remains at 1.6% and this increases to 2.7% for the age group 11-14. For girls aged 11-14 years, the percentage rises to 3.3% (ASER, 2014, p. 81)^[7].

2.1. Situational review of out-of-school children in Haryana

The survey on district-wise distribution of OoSC in Haryana as per the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2014, p.141) revealed that the highest proportion, 9.8%, is from Mewat, Panchkula (2.2 %), Yamunanagar (1.9%) and Gurgaon (1.8 %). Hence, the gap between the proportion of OoSC in Mewat and other districts is very wide.

Factors that lead to drop out and OoSC in Haryana

- **Economic factors:** Households in the lower expenditure quintiles have a much larger proportion of children who are out of school among all social groups (both advantaged and disadvantaged). A study by UNICEF and UIS (2014)^[8] points out that one of the main reasons for children in the younger age group (6 to 10 years) to remain out of school is delayed entry in school (at 7 or 8 years). This may be due to challenges in school access, lack of pre-primary education or socio-cultural norms. The study by Rao and Mohanty (2004)^[9] reveals that the school attendance varies directly with the economic condition of the family.
- **Home environment:** Inconvenient situations of the households, lack of support from family members, unemployment of parents and shared responsibility of household work are some of the limitations that keep children out of school. UNICEF and UIS (2014) reported that parents who are illiterate and poor may not perceive much gain from continuing their daughters' education, or they may not be able to sustain their efforts to send them to school. Under any kind of financial strain, girls are the first to be taken out of school. As they grow older, girls in rural areas are more likely to be engaged in household chores and looking after younger sibling(s) to free their parents for income generating work. Many adolescent boys also migrate to towns to pursue livelihood opportunities while those in the village find their studies disrupted by seasonal demands of work. Hence, the issue of child labour becomes more critical for children in this age group.
- **Socio-cultural and religious factors:** The percentage of OoSC among Muslims (8.15%) is higher than those among Schedule Castes (2.94%) and Schedule Tribes, which again are higher than among the "Others" (the more advantaged caste groups). (Source: U-DISE 2014-15: Flash Statistics)^[10] On the other hand, in the 11 to 13 years age group, while some children may never have been to school, a significant proportion may have enrolled in school earlier, but they have dropped out as they faced an increasing number of barriers with age. Children are likely to take on more adult roles as they grow older in terms of work inside and outside

their homes and upper primary schools are often more difficult to access. The proportion of OoSC depends largely on area related barriers arising from differential access and different cultural norms and are very likely to change over time (De, A. and Mehra, S.C. , 2016)^[11]. The analysis of the issues related to out-of-school children by UNICEF and UIS, 2014 also shows that the proportions of OoSC among Muslims are higher than those among SCs and STs, which again are higher than among the “Others” (which includes the more advantaged caste groups).

- **Gender:** Gender disparity in Haryana is apparent from the UDISE data. The girls drop-out ratio at primary and upper primary school levels is 0.63 percent and 3.25 percent, respectively, as compared to boys dropout rate of 0.22 and 1.97 at primary and upper primary levels respectively (Source: U-DISE 2014-15: Flash Statistics). According to Upendranath (1995^[12]), Indian education has been experiencing high incidence of dropout at middle level (6th to 8th grades) and this is more for girls than boys. Rao and Mohanty (2004) concluded that the gender differentials in school enrolment and school attendance persist in all the states.
- **Disability:** In 2014-15, the proportion of children with special needs (CWSN) enrolled in Haryana were 0.82 per cent at the primary level and 0.91 percentage at upper primary level as compared to a relatively higher proportion in all states, which was 1.2 at primary and 1.12 at upper primary level, respectively (Source: U-DISE 2014-15: Flash Statistics).
- **Migration:** When parents migrate for several months at a stretch for work, their children who accompany them (who may or may not be working with them) are likely to find it difficult to attend school on a regular basis. With the need for transfer certificates, residence certificates and other such formalities, people find the entire educational system burdensome. A study by Majumder (2011^[13]) has found low enrolment and active schooling levels among migrant children.
- **Lack of learning:** When a child lags behind in learning levels corresponding to his/ her age appropriateness, the progression to learning is hampered. When the parents of children are not made aware to their child’s learning or when the parents are not regularly mobilised, they too lose interest in school and its activities and abstain from motivating their children to attend school regularly.

The pandemic has further resulted in severe learning loss that has affected many of these students, some of whom have lost as much as a year’s worth of learning. The National Sample Survey Organisation, (NSSO 2017-18^[14]) household survey puts the number of OoSC in India (6-17 years) at 32,200,000. After the first wave of the pandemic, this number was expected to double. The second wave far exacerbated these existing problems. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) reported that OoSC in the 6-14 years age-group increased from 4% to 5.5% between the 2018 and 2020 ASER surveys, this number has come down slightly to 4.9% in the 2021 edition. (ASER, 2021^[15])

A survey conducted by the Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojana Parishad (Saini, 2021^[16]) identified 29,097 schoolchildren (aged 7 to 14 years) across the state who had quit studies due to various reasons. According to the survey conducted, from February 22 to March 15, 2021, most of the dropout children come from two major categories, one is that of migrant labourers, and second are those who come from economically weaker sections of the society. Nuh has the maximum dropouts (8,671).

Mahendragarh is the only district with no dropouts. The HSSPP has begun efforts to bring these children back to mainstream education by establishing 1,164 special training centres (STCs) across the state. Their parents will also be motivated to continue sending their children to the STCs and later schools for further education, sources say.

A government survey conducted (Tiwari, 2022^[17]) found 17,500 children, aged between seven and 14 years, to be out of school. These students are in addition to the 29,000 children who were found to be out of school during the survey conducted in August 2021.

2.2. Challenges to the implementation of policies

“There is seldom one single reason for a child or adolescent to drop out of school. Instead, this is a process shaped by many factors that interact in ways that are both complex and dynamic. These factors can relate not only to individual and family characteristics or circumstances, but also to factors at school, community and national level. These can span weaknesses in school environments and practices, in education and social welfare systems, in broader social policies for youth and employment, and in social norms – including gender norms that can work against education. When children and adolescents drop out, it is often the result of “individual and family circumstances that structures and systems are unable to respond to or address appropriately” (UNICEF, 2017^[18]).

2.2.1. Social barriers

In most of the districts of Haryana, migration comes as a concern. The State sees a major chunk of people coming for work from other parts of India for a few months in a year (known as ‘seasonal year’). The children of these migrants have either never been to a school as a result of their families’ migration or they become school dropouts as their regular attendance is jeopardized. For a few months, the parents of these children do not want to go through the efforts of enrolling them in schools only to remove them when they move back to their home towns.

In the case of children of migrant households, school attendance is less and the dropout rate is more at higher age groups as compared to the children of other household categories. This is because the girls are required to help their mother at home and the boys do domestic and outside work in the absence of the father and sometimes migrate with the father to work in cities (Agasty, 2016^[19]). Bakker et al. (2009^[20]) found that children of migrant households, no matter whether they move with their parents or are left behind, are at an increased risk of interruption of schooling and poor academic performance and are vulnerable to child labour.

Here, a need comes for standardisation of the school registration process and certification which can easily identify the last school records of these children and easily help them to continue their schooling later on in another place.

In many countries, girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school as girls living in non-affected countries. The reasons are many. Barriers to girls’ education like poverty, child marriage and gender-based violence vary among countries and communities. Poor families often favour boys when investing in education (UNICEF, 2022^[21]).

In some districts, social barriers include that of gender and religion when girls and boys are not sent to a school due to religious sentiments. Sometimes, the boys are sent to local religious centres to attain religion-based learning while the girls are not seen as worthy of any formal learning. In Nuh, such social sentiments have played a large role in children to stay out of school.

Many children who are out of school come from families who have themselves never been to school. In other cases, it is the father of the child who is out to earn a living, spending many months away from home at a stretch, and the mothers are unaware of schools around their area or any such facility available. For such parents, a simple ignorance or unawareness of the fact that schooling is free of cost is also an issue. Sometimes, these parents are embarrassed (for their economic and literacy status) and do not know how to approach school authorities. Their lack of confidence prevents them from building trust. This, in turn prevents their children from learning.

2.2.2. Operational shortcomings

An STC away from a school not only seems detached from school but, also, may not hold the trust of either the child or the parent as compared to the one that operates in the school premises. A child who attends STC located in a school compound feels more included and confident in the school activities. Hence, having an STC inside a school works better.

The duration of the bridge programme that each child undertakes cannot be ascertained if the time period for an STC is limited. Hence, children need time in the bridge course according to their learning needs. Each individual child has a different requirement which is either based on how much learning gaps he/ she has and how much time he/ she will take to bridge these learning gaps. The programme's flexibility to include all such needs is pertinent to good results. An STC, hence, may be able to accommodate children for programmes that can be carried on for 3 to 6 to 9 months, to some times, even next academic session to successfully bridge their learning gaps. This means if they enroll late in an academic session they might be participating in an STC over two academic sessions. Hence, the duration of an STC needed to be made flexible as enrollment of children happens throughout the year.

The primary school teachers who are entrusted with the identifying and mainstreaming of OoSC are often over burdened with their regular school work. For them to take out time for OoSC seems next to impossible. Hence, there comes a need for recruitment of education volunteers (EVs) who can manage the STCs and take charge of the OoSC programme with support from the school and its staff.

The role of an EV is not limited to providing bridge education to children enrolled in their centre. They need to reach out to the community, time and again, to not only mobilise them but to update them regularly on the learning progression of the children. This helps to make the parents of the children and other members of the community an inherent part of the programme to gain better attendance of children in the centres and win their trust in the programme to, in turn, achieve best results. Hence, the EV takes up the role of a teacher, facilitator, social worker and source of motivation for all stakeholders in the programme.

To carry out the vast scale of requirements and to have enough time for all the necessary activities, an EV needs to be paid well. Less stipend may result in dissatisfaction, loss of interest and passion in their jobs.

Many times, it has been found even though all necessary work is completed, the delay of printed books in reaching the STCs withholds the programme from making a start. Accountability for all such impediments can provide a boost for EVs and the programme.

The bridge course used by the EVs in the STCs need to be methodically carried out with such tools and techniques ingrained, which makes the task of the EVs easy. Regular monitoring and mentoring sessions are needed for successful implementation of the programme.

An initial training of EVs is important to prepare them for their desired roles. The initial training needs to be detailed and well facilitated to make EVs understand the requirements of the programme. Apart from this, continuous trainings are effective for regular updating and mentoring.

Box 2.1. Special Training for Out-of-School Children

According to RTE Act, Clause 4 - Special provisions for children not admitted to, or who have not completed, elementary education. The child above six years of age shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age and in order to be at par with others, have a right to receive **Special Training**.

Interventional strategies for Special Training_[22], MHRD, lays out the guidelines to administer Special Training:

Special Training (ST) for 6- 14 years - ST is a critical component under the RTE Act with a medium-term vision. It should be approached not merely as a time-bound interim initiative, but as a mechanism to make the schooling system responsive to the needs of children from diverse back grounds. The ST has to be preceded by enrollment in a regular neighbourhood school. As far as possible the ST should be conducted within regular school premises. This not only improves monitoring and supervision of the ST, but also creates aspirations of mainstreaming in the children. [Para 5.1 / 6.6.1 (i), (ii)]

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. (2013_[22]). https://www.education.gov.in/en/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/OoSC.pdf; Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022_[11]). <https://dse.education.gov.in/rte>; Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2022_[51]). https://www.education.gov.in/en/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/OoSC.pdf; NCERT (2005_[23]). National Curriculum Framework, 2005: <https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/nc-framework/nf2005-english.pdf>

3. Conceptualisation and project initiation

3.1. Initial thought process

Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad (HSSPP) is a society registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860, which is primarily responsible to implement Samagra Shiksha in Haryana. Samagra Shiksha, an integrated scheme on school education, envisages the ‘school’ as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels. The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to senior secondary stage in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education.

With the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, RTE 2010 Act, that grants fundamental right to every child between the age group of 6 to 14 years to avail full time elementary education in a formal school, OoSC is a harsh reality for it remains a constant challenge for the states of India. The states must reach out to children, who have either never been to school or have dropped out for some reason from the schools, and bring them into the system of formal education. In Haryana, the challenge of bringing OoSC into mainstream education had been present for many years. Although, Haryana had conducted a few intervention activities that targeted OoSC in some districts or blocks, the state had not collectively thought of resolving the problem before.

The sporadic learning centres for OoSC, though had been involved to mainstream those who were not enrolled in schools, failed to bring reasonable results. As a result, the State decided to de-operationalise the scattered OoSC programmes which were carried out from 2010 to 2015. In the beginning of 2016, HSSPP, with its aim to secure universal access to elementary education to all children, perceived the vastness of the OoSC issue and held talks within the department on finding best steps to integrate all children in formal schools. To make an OoSC programme work best and collectively in the whole state, two broad highlights emerged. Firstly, it would be a combination of leadership, strategies, efforts and resources that need to be involved to make a programme work effectively in the entire State. Secondly, there was a need of a robust programme model that could not only be feasible from the operational point of view at the ground level but also bring a systemic approach to the programme as a whole.

An entire thought process pertaining to running of the programme was unfurled. For the age-appropriate mainstreaming of OoSC, it was considered important that both governmental and non-governmental agencies in the State join hands and, together, formulate extensive plans. The requirements were multifold. Prior to enrolling children in formal schools, they were first needed to be provided Special Training on being admitted to STCs, which had been established specifically for their mainstreaming in the formal system. This is a significant step towards the preparation of OoSC, as STCs provide the complete mainstreaming support to children through an accelerated curriculum. The bridge course needed to consolidate the foundational learning of the children and provide holistic development to children to address their cognitive, social and emotional skills. Despite all the facilities provided, STCs had not been able to achieve the real objective of their establishment for two reasons. Firstly, they were often neglected and/or treated as an added burden for the primary schools. Secondly, the formalistic system of SSA which follows the 3 to 6 to 9 months cycle of learning programme was not suitable for the child’s need and required more flexibility. Even after integrating children in age-appropriate classes, there was a need to monitor them for their retention in schools. Minute details were, thus, worked out for a definite plan of action.

3.2. Support from Civil Society Organisation

After the initial brainstorming and conceptualisation of the ideas, clarity was brought from within the State education department, and the former, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) for Education in the State decided to move forward with the OoSC programme. The Department of Elementary Education, HSSPP, called for suggestions from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) regarding the role they could play in supporting the State in identifying OoSC and mainstreaming them. From among a few others, Humana People to People India (HPPI), a CSO playing a vital role in the development sector, including the development and implementation of activity based programmes in elementary education and teacher training, was identified by the HSSPP to achieve its objective. HPPI had been working in the state since 2011 in the area of teacher education in some districts in the State and had, later on, worked in conducting a few STCs for integrating OoSC in a few selected locations from 2014.

To assist HSSPP in the journey of the OoSC programme, HPPI presented and suggested the adoption of its innovative Kadam - A Step Up Programme, which could be implemented through its Step-Up Centres for OoSC. Having secured a grant from the Education Above All Foundation through their Educate a Child^[24] (EAC) Programme, HPPI entered into a partnership with the State to identify and mainstream 30,000 OoSC over a period of 3 years, with EAC providing co-funding up to 50% of the project cost. Hence, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between HSSPP and HPPI in October 2016 to begin a new way forward towards achieving universal access to elementary education for all children.

The collaboration between the HSSPP and HPPI was defined with a specific scope of work for each. This was a vital part of the programme's success, as there are no financial obligations/ direct payments between the two parties. The operational model included HSSPP paying for the EVs appointed in the programme and other operational costs directly through the District offices. The training workshops for the EVs is organised by HSSPP, where the training is provided jointly by teams of HSSPP and HPPI. The soft copy of the Kadam toolkit is provided by HPPI to HSSPP for it to decide the printing volumes of the toolkits on need basis. HPPI pays for its own cost through third party donors and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) donations.

The initiative was later developed into a programme plan for the out-of-school children, and was included in the annual work plan submitted to the MoE (then, MHRD) for partial funding from the ministry, and finally, was launched in 2016 for an initial phase of three years. The programme was later extended for one more term in 2019 for yet another three years, till 2022. Three academic sessions were covered in Phase 1 of the programme and while the Phase 2 of the programme was planned on similar lines, with the emergence of the global pandemic, COVID-19, and many restrictions that were imposed hence after, a reassuring figure of successful mainstreaming of the children has already been achieved; with all the stakeholders exercising their best to reach the desired goal by the project completion in 2022.

4. Methodology and approach

4.1. About the Kadam programme

The Kadam – A Step Up Programme was adopted by the State of Haryana as a remedial programme to close the learning gaps of the target children so that their age appropriate mainstreaming could be done. It was essential that a robust learning foundation be provided to these children that would help in their retention in the schools.

The programme's pedagogy and methodology are based on the national frameworks, and hence, proved to greatly enhance the children's learning levels. Kadam had been developed in such a way that it integrates real-life skills in the children along with fostering formal learning skills to help children to develop many qualities early in life. It is a blend of cognitive development through enhancement of subject-based competencies and development of social skills through hands-on experiences in Thematic Learning. To address both the domains, the programme has been designed as an amalgamation of 10 Steps and 11 Theme headlines. Both the components are complementary and delivered concurrently. 10 Steps comprise 540 competencies in four subject areas of English, Hindi, Mathematics and Environmental Science, and the Thematic Learning comprises one theme headline for each month in the programme. The Steps and Themes are in alignment with the guidelines of the National Council of Educational Training and Research^[25] (NCERT) and have been horizontally and vertically mapped with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005.

To address the varied age and learning levels within the STC, foundational skills of primary school level are organised in 10 Steps. Two Steps cover one school grade; hence, 10 Steps cover grades 1-5 of the primary school. The 10 Steps are listed as a progressive organisation of competencies to be developed in languages, mathematics and environmental awareness. Once the child enrolled in the STC achieves the learning level of a Step, he/she progresses to the next. After the completion of every two consecutive Steps (one book), a test is taken before proceeding to the next book.

It was important that the entry and the exit points for each child in the STC are obtained and recorded. The entry point is obtained by the baseline assessment. The exit point (or the point when the child can be integrated in school grade) is decided as per the age of the child. The mandatory number of Steps to be cleared to close the learning gap of the child is determined accordingly. The entire learning programme is based on personalised learning and includes self-assessment by the child at regular intervals.

The toolkit for the OoSC programme consists of books and tools meant for children and teachers/EVs of the STCs. There are:

- **Step Books with Meri Checklist** – a set of five learning books, of which one book is given to each child in the programme at one time. Each book contains the Meri Checklist, a grade-wise list of competencies fundamental to cover the important concepts of the grade that is covered in that book.
- **My Progress Book** – for each child, to record his/ her personal details and know the learning level of the child at the beginning of the programme, and also to determine his/ her progress at the end of the programme.
- **Tracking my Progress (TmP) card** – given to each child to mark his/her weekly progress

that is made in each subject of the learning book.

- **Tracking our Progress (ToP) chart** – one for each class, this chart is placed on the class wall for the children to mark their individual progress in each subject of their learning books.
- **Theme Book** – given to the teacher/ EV to conduct theme-based activities.
- **Survey Book** – for the teachers to identify the OoSC and record their details of their enrollment in the programme.
- **Teacher/ Accelerator's Register** – for the teacher/ accelerator in the programme to record information on each child in the programme, his/ her progress and the activities he/ she is involved in.

A few other highlights of the programme hold an edge over the other ‘conventional’ study centres in which the thrust is on accelerated remedial learning. In contrast, the Kadam STCs emphasise is on holistic learning as a part of the bridge course. Peer interaction and learning in small groups of three, called trios, is an essential element of the Kadam STC. Real-life learning experiences are gained with activities based on the planned themes for each month. Self-assessment of learning is done by children on a regular basis with the help of ingrained tools and techniques in the programme, which helps them to drive their own learning progress. The STC teacher/ EV takes a flexible role, which is more of a guide or a facilitator to the children in the centre. Involvement of parents and members of community is done on regular basis, making them an inseparable part of the entire learning process. A regular Management Information System (MIS) is maintained and shared with all the stakeholders; it gives a glimpse of the learning process and its outcomes to all. Kadam has been appreciated and accepted by the state at all levels, district, block and school, as a hands-on bridge programme that works well on the ground.

4.2. Description of the steps of implementation in a session

The implementation work for the programme begins long before the identification of OoSC. Several processes and paperwork/ letters are involved in the initial stages of the programme implementation. In the beginning, the State Project Director (SPD) office asks for conducting the household survey for identifying OoSC from the District Project Coordinators (DPCs) to obtain a projection number of OoSC for special training (ST). For this, the SPD office requires the achievements of the present number of OoSC who are enrolled and to know the number of the mainstreamed OoSC in current session. On the basis of the projected number of the OoSC, the State shares Annual work plan & budget (AWP&B) with the MHRD who then provides budget to the State according to number of children identified in the survey for upcoming academic session.

The SPD office then prepares guidelines to implement the programme in districts and delegates the responsibilities of different staff involved in this programme. Facility of mid-day meal is also an integral part of the guidelines.

The SPD office makes arrangements to print the required number of Kadam tool-kits according to the number of OoSC found in the survey. The tool-kit is printed by the printer identified by the State after the soft copy of all the material is obtained from the partner organisation.

Next comes the identification of the government school teachers for the programme or, as in most of the times, the recruitment process of the EVs for the STCs. The SPD office sends instructions to DPCs to start the process of collecting the desired documents of EVs before scheduling the interviews. In

the meantime, the SPD office prepares a financial approval letter for DPCs and allocates budget to them.

The concerned DPCs consult representatives from partner organisation that work in their districts to select the number of EVs through an interview process and allocate them STCs. DPCs send instruction letter along with selected list of EVs to concerned Block Education Office (BEO) and asks to share same list with selected schools for arranging the training programme in the schools.

DPC invites meeting of BEOs and school heads and partner organisation to orient the entire plan and decide the steps on conducting the programme for training of OoSC and to ensure support to EVs in the programme implementation. At the same time, the DPCs share the responsibilities of all stakeholders in the programme implementation. The DPCs invite the resources from the block level as well as the partner organisation to impart training of the EVs to equip them with specifications of the special training programme for OoSC.

After the training of the EVs, the Kadam Coordinators assign responsibilities to the EVs as structured in the Kadam programme. This may include, for example, selecting the head teacher from among themselves and forming teacher councils of ten EVs each. The EVs are asked to mobilise OoSC who were found in survey to start their training at the designated STCs. This is accomplished by visiting the community, contacting parents and mobilising them to send their children to the STC. A list of such children is prepared and sent to the school head for verification and approval. Once the approval is done, the names of the verified children are recorded in the attendance registers and they are enrolled in the bridge programme. The records of these children are maintained on the online State portal PRABANDH_[26] as well as on the other online platform of the partner organisation.

The DPCs receive numbers of all enrolled OoSC in their respective districts from different blocks. They consolidate the list and make arrangements to buy necessary material for the enrolled children as per the State approved budget. Such materials may include stationery, teaching learning materials (TLMs), mats, uniforms and other supportive material. The delivery of these materials is ensure to the designated STCs.

Meanwhile, the EVs conduct the baseline assessment to ascertain the learning level of each child enrolled in their STC and to place them at a suitable Step (grade) to start their training. They organise the children in trios to ensure peer learning takes place as they work in their own groups. With the baseline test results, the EVs know the learning level of each child and can determine their exit level for age appropriate mainstreaming. They provide Kadam study material (Step Book, My Progress Book) and facilitate in learning. The children begin learning with the help of their Step Books, adding their achievements in the Meri Checklist provided in the Step Book, and also fill their progress of competencies in the TmP card and ToP chart. In this way, the children keep assessing themselves as their learning progresses.

All the children in the STC are involved in monthly theme learning and EVs supports them to scale out their skills through theme based activities. The idea is that the children can learn life skills, social and emotional skills while they undergo formal learning. Every Saturday is assigned for theme based learning and the last Saturday of the month is celebrated as ‘Children’s Day’. On this day, the parents of the children and community members are invited to the school for an event organised by the children in which they showcase their learning over the previous month. In the last week of the month, a day is assigned for a Parent Teacher Meeting (PTM) in which parents are invited and meet with a productive agenda. Both Children’s Day and PTM are integral components of the programme that help to merge the gap between school and community.

Once a child completes 2 Steps or one grade, the EV conducts a grade-end test as provided in the My Progress Book. On the basis of the result of this test, the EV measures the learning level of the child and decides if child can move to the next step if he/she needs some support before going further. An end-line test is conducted once the child obtains the desired learning level and is ready to be mainstreamed into age appropriate grade. Once this confirmation is given, the EV proceeds with the mainstreaming process by submitting the progress report of the child and all the necessary support documents to the school head. In this way, the child is mainstreamed into his/ her age appropriate grade in the school.

At the end of each month, the EVs prepare their own attendance and the attendance record of the enrolled children. They then present these records to the school head for approval, with a request to send it to concerned BEO or DPC office. This, in turn, helps them to claim their honorarium and submit the record of the enrolled children in their STCs. The DPC releases honorarium of the EVs upon receiving their monthly attendance and that of the enrolled children in their STCs. The DPCs prepare their own monthly report based on this information and submit it to the SPD office.

After the successful mainstreaming of children into their age appropriate grades, the EVs are required to track retention of these children. This is accomplished via monthly follow ups for the next six months.

The Survey for the next academic session is done during winter vacations with the help of EVs and the government school teachers. It is then submitted in the DPC office. The DPC office compiles the survey and sends it to the state office to repeat the cycle.

4.3. Brief overview of project implementation from 2016 to 2021

Coordination among state and district authorities in support of programme implementation

The special training programme for the OoSC is successful in the State because of the keen interest and endless efforts on the part of the State authorities at all levels – state, district, block and school, which helped the authorities in the implementation of the training programme for the OoSC in Haryana in the best possible way.

Timely conducting of household surveys in an appropriate and clear guiding format helped the State to make projection plans. It also provided enough time to add, improvise and taking timely actions in AWP&B. District authorities take active initiatives in conducting door-to-door household survey to search OoSC and making compilation reports.

To favour better programme implementation, a brief, yet, explanatory administrative cum financial approval letter with a proper bifurcation of the budget is sent to all district project coordinators (DPCs). The letter showcases the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the programme, explains how to ensure active participation of all and how to add to the production force in the programme.

The State level authorities used their skillsets to assure better participation at all levels by coordinating with district level authorities and representatives of the partner organisation in the implementation of programme. State Associate Consultant for OoSC played an active role by contacting all district authorities through a WhatsApp group and, by connecting individually through phone call. Based on regular and effective communication with district authorities, the Consultant circulated letters and other correspondence to resolve time to time issues that occurred during the course of the

implementation of the programme.

A special focus has been given to provide midday meals to enrolled OoSC in STCs which was mentioned regularly in the administrative approval letter. When the schools remained closed and online/ home instructions were provided to the children, a dry ration instead of cooked meals was provided to the families of the children on regular basis.

Uniforms and basic stationery were provided to enrolled children boosted interest among children and their parents and played a big role in maintaining good attendance records of OoSC in STCs.

The state authorities also tried to get support from other related departments like The Woman and Child Development^[27] (WCD) department for girls between 11-14 years of age who are enrolled in STCs. At the district level, the DPCs were asked to share the list of such girls with the district office of WCD department so that they can be supported with the department's schemes.

The Role of each participant mentioned in the administrative letter was visible in practice in field while implementing the programme. DPCs and Assistant Project Coordinators (APCs) were active in monitoring and mentoring. Assistant block resource coordinators (ABRCs) were also in the field to support EVs. Representatives of the partner organisation also supported in the field to address and resolve issues and to motivate EVs and parents.

The role of EVs in this bridge programme has been crucial. The honest and dedicated disposition of the EVs helped to engage children in the programme and support them during the learning process. It also worked to involve parents in the course. Many times, EVs had to make home visits to families of the enrolled children. This ultimately helped in establishing a good rapport with the parents and strong connection between the school and community.

A good reporting system was established by the partner organisation to update HSSPP on monthly and quarterly basis. Both partners, HSSPP and HPPI, fulfilled their roles to make the programme a huge success at all junctions. This included, for example, during the deployment of eligible and interested EVs to train OoSC in STCs, conducting EVs induction training on Kadam's pedagogy and methodology, conducting individual baseline assessment of each enrolled child, carrying out theme-based activities, etc. The State was furnished with correct and proper information by the district authorities and the partner organisation on regular basis, hence, enabling it to share its achievement report with the Education Department of the government of India and MoE.

4.4. The Kadam programme during COVID-19

The academic session 2020-21: An unprecedented year

The measures taken by the National and State Governments to control the spread of COVID-19 implied the closing of the government primary schools on 19th March 2020 until June 2021, to protect children from the pandemic. Nevertheless, the efforts of the State Government and HPPI still managed to reach out 16,798 children in 16 districts of Haryana in the academic session 2020-21. This was accomplished by defining standard operational procedures (SOPs) for the Kadam STCs often in smaller units inside or outside the government school premises. In addition to provide more time to the children to bridge their learning gaps, the management graciously provided an extension to the programme's EVs until June. As a result, 22,004 OoSC could be mainstreamed in formal schools (7,777 children from those who were carried over from the previous session and 14,227

OoSC from those enrolled in the current session). 2,571 children who were enrolled in the year, left the programme midway, before they could be mainstreamed; this was primarily due to family migration during the pandemic.

A Survey to identify OoSC for the next academic session 2021-22 was conducted in January 2021, but due to another lockdown in March 2021, many migrants had moved back to their home towns. Hence, the children who were identified and reported in survey done in January 2021 were not found physically at their places. The HSSPP directed the DPCs to conduct another survey to search for new OoSC. In this survey, 18,616 children were reported as out of schools in 17 districts, and based on this figure, 736 special training centres were suggested to be established to work with the identified children. All of this was the result of the administrative cum financial approval letter sent by the SPD. With stringent guidelines and SOPs followed, the new academic session was held during the risk period of the pandemic. The EVs were asked to form micro groups of children (up to 5 to 7 children) according to the physical presence of children in a given area. In this way, the entire STC could be broken into 4 to 5 groups and the EVs could lend support to, at least, 2 groups each day for three hours of study time. While at some places, it was possible for the EVs to give online coaching, at other places, they resorted to home instructions. Masks, hand sanitizers and mats for sitting were provided to the EVs to conduct their classes, the budget for these activities had been previously sent and approved by the DPCs. During this time, EVs also played active role to sensitise people to adopt proper protecting behaviour for the pandemic. In the same academic session, APCs were asked to help mainstream children by assisting with Aadhar^[28] UIDs as many children of migrant families did not have their Aadhar cards. Hence, efforts came from nearly all quarters of the state to take on the responsibility of running the programme together.

5. Impact achieved

This section describes the impact of the Kadam programme for the OoSC wherein the implementation task was undertaken by HSSPP with support from HPPI. The section also elaborates on the assessment of the beneficiaries, taken from a sample size. Apart from describing the overall project figures and some major learnings in the programme, the section depicts the key findings on the basis of three broad parameters, namely :

- Enrollment in STCs;
- Dropout in STCs;
- Learning achievement; and
- Mainstreamed children

5.1. Overall figures of the academic sessions since programme inception

Overall scenario

From 2016 until June 2022, the Kadam programme has enrolled over 108,543 out-of-school children in STCs, out of which about 69,189 (63.7%) children completed the programme and got mainstreamed in schools across 21 districts of Haryana.

In 2019, a survey conducted across 188 schools, covering more than 4,000 mainstreamed children, indicated that around 89% of them have been retained in their age-appropriate classes.

Figure 5.1. Status of children enrolled, mainstreamed, dropped out and undergoing bridge course

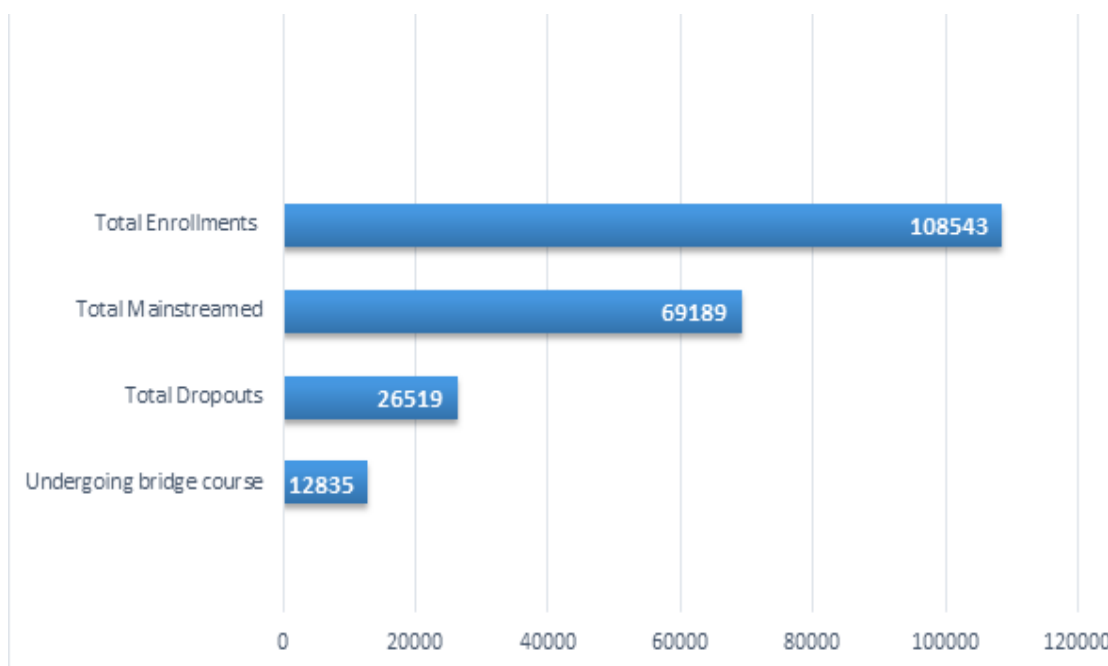


Figure 5.1. depicts the status of enrollment of children in the OoSC programme, those who were mainstreamed, those who are still active and undergoing training and the total number of dropouts from the Kadam centres.

Figure 5.2. Project overview of the overall status of children identified, enrolled and mainstreamed

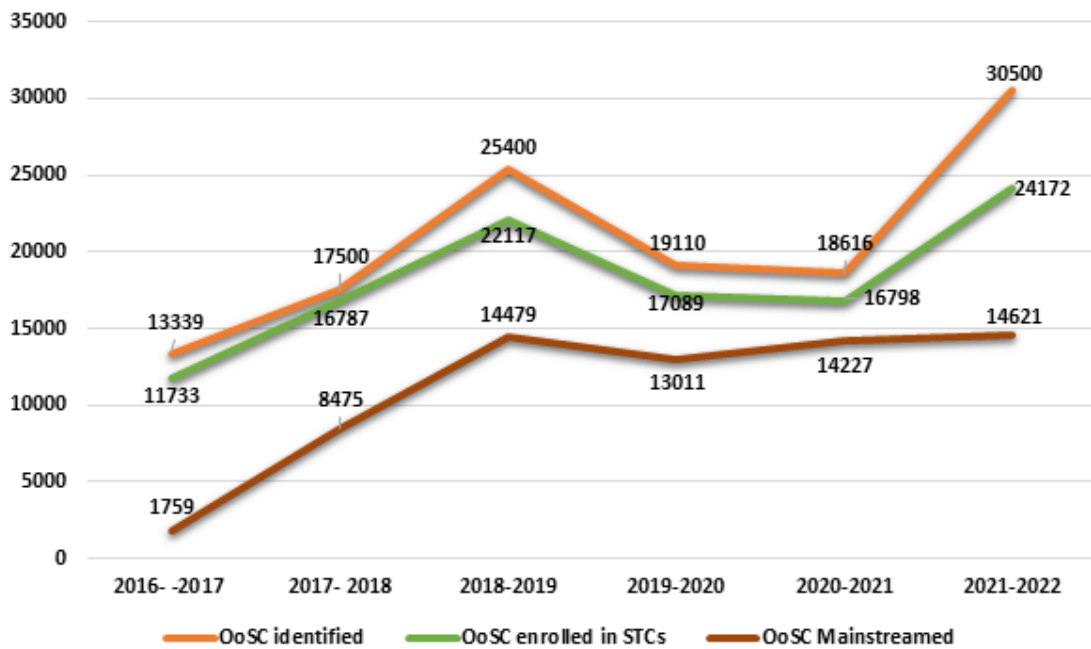


Figure 5.2. indicates the overview of the project since its inception in 2016 until 2022. It gives the overall status of the number of OoSC identified, enrolled in the programme and the children mainstreamed after successful completion of the programme.

Figure 5.3. Project overview of the overall status of the number of districts, teachers and centres

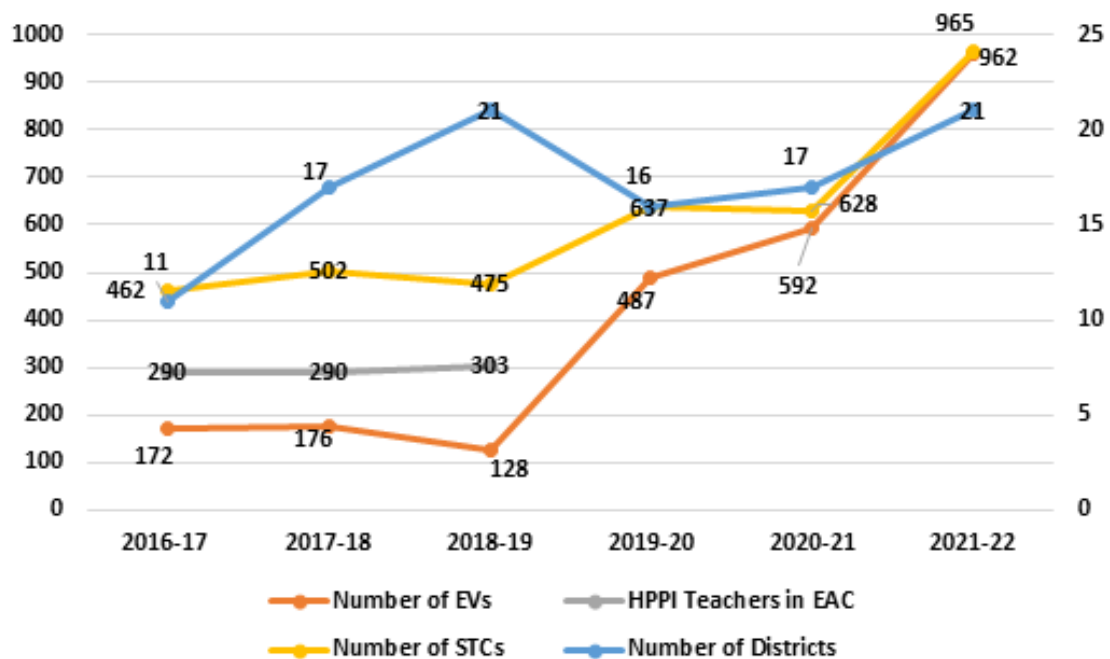


Figure 5.3. indicates the overall status of the number of districts, teachers/EVs and STCs engaged in the project since its inception from 2016 until 2022.

5.2. Key findings

5.2.1. Schooling status of children before intervention

Figure 5.4. Schooling status before intervention

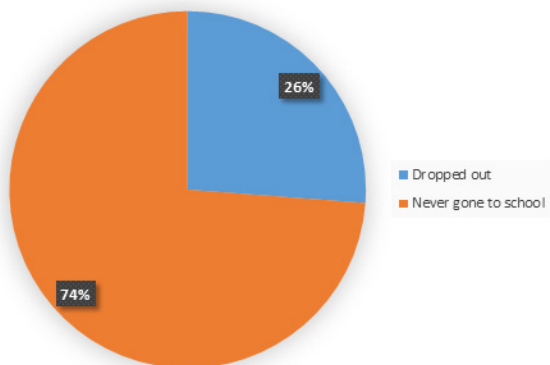


Figure 5.4. indicates that approximately 74% of children had never been to school and approximately 26% dropped out after school enrollment before joining the Kadam STCs.

Figure 5.5. Reasons for being out-of-school

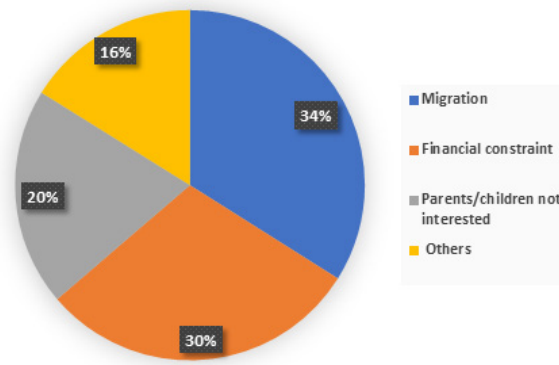


Figure 5.5. elucidates that migration (34%) and family’s low income (30%) were the most cited reasons for children being OoSC.

5.2.2. Profile of children enrolled in Kadam

The gender distribution of the children enrolled in the programme is found to be nearly equal. It has been found that the enrollment of children in the STCs who belonged to lower age groups was more as compared to those belonging to the older age groups. The children in the age group of 6 to 8 years constituted more than 50% of the total enrollment.

Figure 5.6. Age-wise enrollment

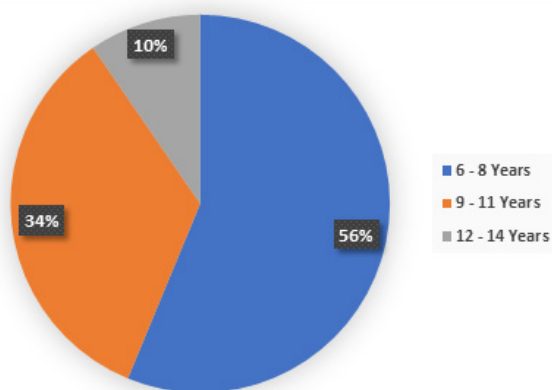


Figure 5.6. indicates that about 56% of children enrolled in Kadam were in the age group of 6 to 8 years, of which 25% children were 7 years old.

Figure 5.7. Gender-wise enrollment

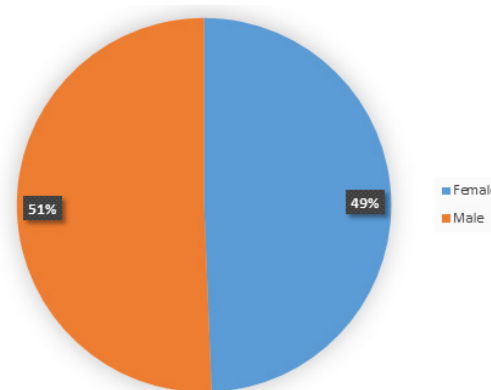


Figure 5.7. shows almost equal representation of boys (51%) and girls (49%) in the programme enrollment.

Uptill June 2022, 26,519 children have dropped out of the Kadam programme. A range of reasons/ circumstances accounted for the children dropping out from the programme. Migration of the children's families being the most cited reason, followed by other reasons.

Figure 5.8. Reasons for dropout from the programme

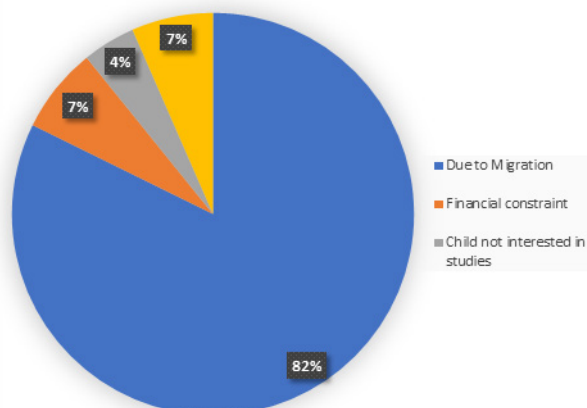


Figure 5.8. indicates the reasons due to which the children did not complete the programme after getting enrolled. Migration was the most cited reason for their dropping out of the programme (83%).

5.2.3. Profile of the mainstreamed children

One of the key indicators to gauge the success of the programme is the number of children mainstreamed at age-appropriate school grades. The Kadam programme has been able to successfully mainstreamed approximately 67,000 children at age-appropriate grades. The sections below show the related key findings on a sample size of approximately 41,000 mainstreamed children.

Figure 5.9. Grade-wise status of mainstreamed children

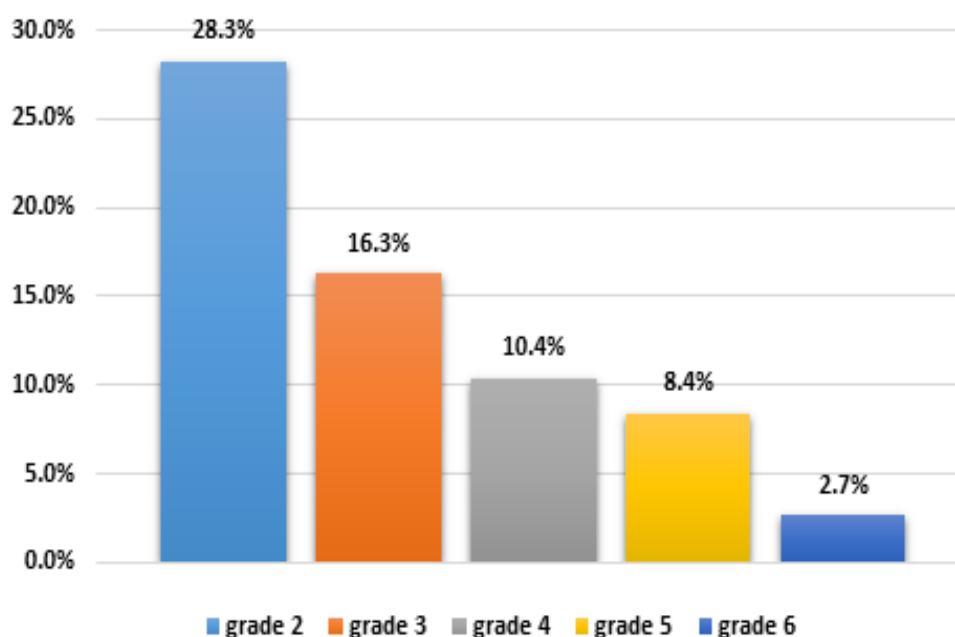


Figure 5.9. indicates that most children were mainstreamed in Grade 2 (approximately 28%) and Grade 3 (approximately 16%)

Figure 5.10. Children mainstreamed - Gender-wise

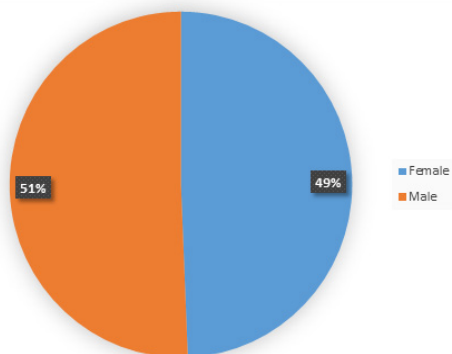


Figure 5.10. shows that there was an almost equal representation of boys (51%) and girls (49%) in successful mainstreaming.

Figure 5.11. Children mainstreamed - Age-wise

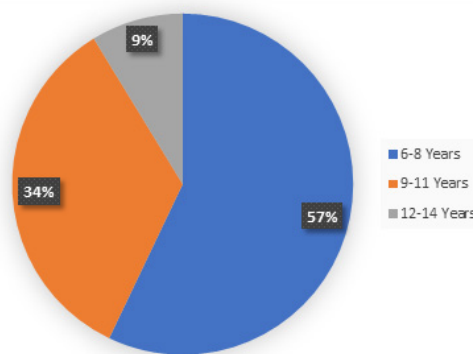


Figure 5.11. indicates that about 57% of children mainstreamed were in the age group of 6 to 8 years.

Figure 5.12. Time taken for mainstreaming

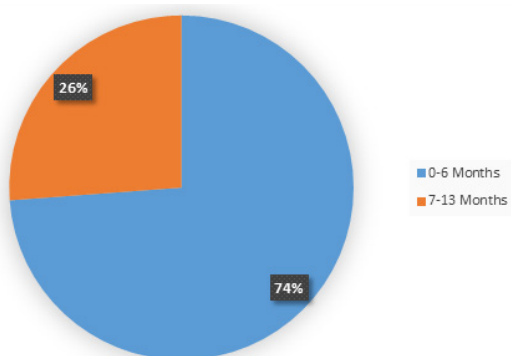


Figure 5.12. shows that 74% of children took 6 months to close their learning gaps for age-appropriate mainstreaming while only.

Figure 5.13. Reasons of dropout post-mainstreaming

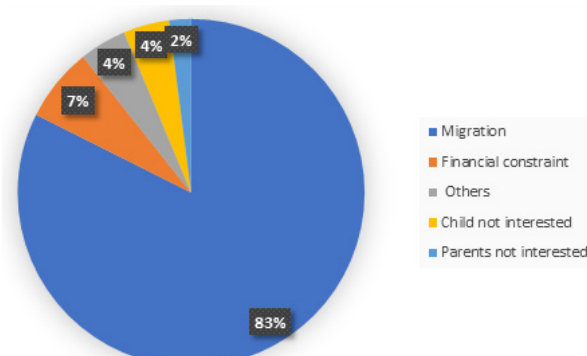


Figure 5.13. indicates that the key reason cited for dropping out post mainstreaming is migration (83%).

5.2.4. Learning progress

After enrollment in the Kadam programme, a baseline assessment of each child is conducted. The baseline assessment determines:

- The initial learning level of the child before the intervention; and
- The Step of the programme from where the child starts

At completion of the programme, each beneficiary undergoes an end-line assessment. The end-line assessment serves as an indicator of :

- The learning progress of each child as a result of the programme intervention; and
- The effectiveness of the programme

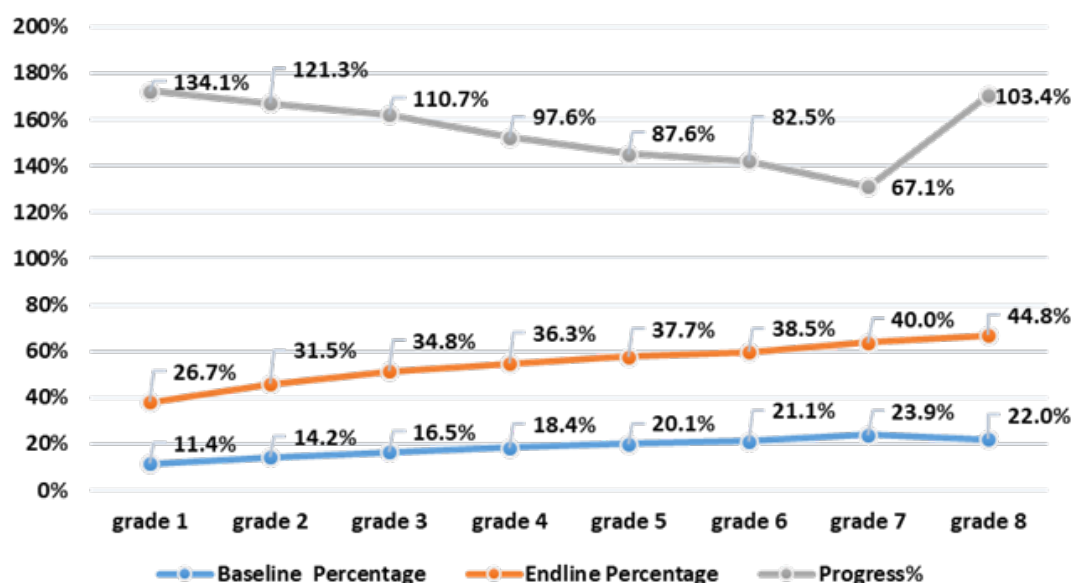
Figure 5.14. Learning progress of the children in the programme

Figure 5.14. depicts the comparison between the average percentage scored by children during baseline and end-line assessments. A substantial progress on the learning level is observed at each grade - grade 1 (134%), grade 2 (121%) and grade 3 (110%).

A detailed learning progress of children in the programme was analysed grade-wise. A comparative analysis of approximately 15,000 children was done in the programme. Table 5.1 and 5.2 depict the percentage of children in age-appropriate learning levels before and after the intervention of the Kadam programme. The tables clearly indicate that the Kadam programme interventions have benefitted children across all age groups to achieve an age-appropriate learning level.

Table 5.1. Age appropriate learning level before intervention

Age (Yrs)	Below Age Appropriate Learning Level	Age Appropriate Learning Level	Above Age-Appropriate Learning Levels
8	96%	4%	0%
9	94%	4%	2%
10	99%	1%	0%
11	97%	2%	0%

Table 5.1. shows the percentage of the children who were not at age-appropriate learning levels before the Kadam intervention, namely, 96% of children of 8 years, 94% of children of 9 years, 99% of children of 10 years and 97% of children of 11 years.

Table 5.2. Age appropriate learning level after intervention

Age (Yrs)	Below Age Appropriate Learning Level	Age Appropriate Learning Level	Above Age-Appropriate Learning Levels
8	1%	76%	22%
9	1%	58%	40%
10	49%	33%	18%
11	51%	34%	15%

Table 5.2. shows that after the Kadam intervention, 76% of children of 8 years, 58% of children of 9 years, 33% of children of 10 years and 34% of children of 11 years were not at age-appropriate learning levels, thereby indicating the percentage of their learning gaps closure as a result of the programme intervention.

6. Best practices

UNICEF works to reduce the number of out-of-school children in South Asia and improve the quality of education from early childhood to adolescence. “High impact interventions are prioritised based on evidence and analysis. UNICEF provides its partners with the tools and a support system needed to strengthen the interventions to improve equitable access to learning, leading to a reduction in the number of OoSC. Technical support is given to pilot and scale up interventions that promote on-time enrollment, reduce drop-out, re-enroll children who had dropped out, and provide alternative pathways to education” (UNICEF, 2022_[29]).

In the United States, a school readiness programme led an example for the smooth school enrollment. “According to a 2014 pilot study, the Kids in Transition to School_[30] (KITS) programme is an example of a school readiness programme that has potential for success. Developed to ‘increase early literacy, social, and self-regulatory skills among children with inadequate school readiness,’ participants in the KITS randomised efficacy trial demonstrated greater improvements in pre-literacy, social/emotional regulation and more positive peer interactions than members of a non-participatory control group” (Pears et al, 2014, p. 431-432)_[31]. “The intervention occurs in two phases: the first phase being the school readiness phase, which occurs over two months, and focuses on preparation for kindergarten; and the second phase being the transition/ maintenance phase, which coincides with the first two months of kindergarten to facilitate a smooth transition. School readiness sessions are structured in a similar manner to kindergarten classes. Sessions in this phase are dedicated to promoting early literacy and socio-emotional skills. Additional parent group sessions are focused toward facilitating parental involvement in child literacy and learning. Early literacy activities include storybook and dramatic activities, letter naming, and poem. Social/emotional skills encouraged include sharing, pro-social reactions to conflict, cooperation, empathy, understanding the concept of fairness, and problem solving” (Pears et al, 2014).

A UNICEF partnered approach to enroll disadvantaged groups was followed to scale and increase school enrollment in Nepal. “Enrollment campaigns targeted toward girls and disadvantaged groups have shown promising results in regions in which education exclusion proved to be a formidable issue. In 2004, UNICEF partnered with organisations in Nepal to launch the Welcome to School initiative in 14 districts to improve enrollment and school retention of girls, low caste children and other disadvantaged groups. Major components of the campaign included strong national level advocacy, district planning and facilitation of partnerships, community mapping to identify households with non-enrolled children, and offering scholarships and school supplies to first time learners from the Ministry. The programme was scaled and resulted in a net increase of enrollment of targeted children” (Shanker, Marian, & Swimmer, 2015_[32]).

A unique child enrollment campaign was carried out in Pakistan. “Plan Pakistan’s Child Enrollment Campaign allowed for cooperation with parents, teachers and other community members in District Vehari, southern Punjab, Pakistan, to plan campaigns to increase school enrollments in districts with the lowest school participation rates. Their campaigns included holding rallies, marches with banners and the chanting of messages. They also met with school committees, parents and teachers to gain their pledges of cooperation. This reportedly increased primary school enrollments” (Shanker, Marian, & Swimmer, 2015).

7. Findings, suggestions and conclusion

7.1. Findings and suggestions

More than five years of collaboration on the OoSC challenge in Haryana has provided a good insight into the vital learnings and potential solutions that have been the backbone of the programme and its eventual success.

Maintain rigorous communication. From past experiences, the Haryana education department had been prompt in taking immediate and necessary action when any issue surfaced. Extensive paperwork was required to resolve issues and the State did not leave any stone unturned in this matter, knowing well that authorisations are needed at every step, and that any delay could greatly affect the overall results.

Print toolkits in time. Unavailability of the Kadam toolkit was a challenge in some places because when the toolkit arrived late, the EVs had to teach children without proper teaching materials or waited to begin the programme until the toolkits arrived. In this situation, the State arranged the printing of the toolkits just after submitting the plan to MoE, from the State's own funds and then, later claimed back that amount from fund allotted for Samagra Shiksha. This assured that the STCs began the bridge course on time and with the needed materials.

Provide longer periods of learning to children as needed. The identified learning gaps are the main determiners of the duration of the programme for each child enrolled. The enrollment period needs to be flexible to accommodate children for the duration they need which may be anywhere from 3 to 6 to 9 months, and sometimes, more than one academic session. The State addressed this fact as a crucial programme foundation by providing extensions to STCs as per the need.

Provide a stipend to EVs. The EVs worked as STC facilitators, community mentors and motivators to parents. They also spent extra hours with children at times, organised camps, etc. Their roles and capacities were thus greatly stretched. Although, the State provided the EVs with a government directed stipend policy of rupees 5,000 per month, the State took the initiative to increase the stipend to rupees 9,000 per month, and then, to rupees 10,000 per month as the current stipended amount. This brought satisfaction to the hard working EV community and also helped to attract more qualified EVs to join the programme.

Pre-plan household surveys. The State had concerns based on the previous experiences when the identification of OoSC was delayed. This, in turn, delayed the funding process and thereby, delayed the beginning of the academic session in STCs. Keeping this in mind, the State insisted that the household surveys be conducted months before the start of the academic sessions. The number of OoSC could be assessed and the figure could be raised as needed in AWP&B.

Keep abreast with the migrant population. The Short period of training of some children had been one of the main challenges for the State because most enrolled in STCs belong to migrant families and after some time these families suddenly move to other places. In this situation, their children could not get proper training to be at par with the grade and age. This challenge was solved by issuing a special guideline to enroll OoSC from day one in school enrollment records without any delay.

Organise camps to create ID proofs. Many children who were enrolled in STCs had no formal identification (at times, the parents had IDs but their children did not, while in other cases, neither

both parents nor children possessed IDs). IDs are mandatory for admission to schools. As a result, it was a challenge to admit children without IDs. The State worked on this issue and asked the DPCs to organise Aadhar camps at venues near the STCs so that the children could get Aadhar cards prepared.

Arrange STCs as per requirements. In some districts - like Panipat and Gurugram - many schools are overcrowded with a high number of students and lack of classroom space. In such schools, there was a challenge to run STCs for OoSC. The State took a decision to encourage EVs to run STCs in open spaces or nearby community places. Community members were also encouraged to come forward and provide help to establish STCs.

Respond to language barriers. In some districts, the EVs faced problems to facilitate children who came from different states and used their own local language. This resulted in extra tasks for EVs; for many days at stretch, the EVs had to teach Hindi to these children during teaching hours, and sometimes, beyond the teaching hours. The State did not want to lose OoSC due to language barriers and hence, directed the EVs to take up this challenge.

Take prompt action in unprecedented times. A challenge was faced by STCs located in the containment zones during the lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. A few guideline letters were sent to district project coordinators regarding how to run the STCs in difficult situation so that education of these children could be re-started and continued while keeping the safety of enrolled children as a priority. Stringent SOPs were followed and masks and hand sanitizers were provided for all by the State. With the collective efforts of district authorities and partner organisation the State managed excellent results in these trying times.

7.2. Conclusion

The case study of the Kadam Step-Up Programme may contribute in addressing the challenge of out-of-school children in other countries

The Kadam Step-Up Programme has valuable practices in the areas of pedagogy, operations and partnerships that may be applicable in other countries and settings.

Pedagogy: Workbook exercises that are linked to specific learning competencies is a common practice in bridge and remedial education. What makes the Kadam experience unique and effective is its integrated participatory assessment system, which makes the learning goals and achievements visible to the child, class and teacher.

Kadam combines various elements: academic work that is formulated on competency-based exercises, supportive working groups of three learners, small projects and activities organised around monthly themes. Together, these elements make the learning joyful and also enable the children to use their gained knowledge and capacities in contextual activities.

The two main methods of learning in Kadam – the exercises and the themes – are carried out individually, in groups of three and in larger groups. This enables personalised learning in resource poor communities and schools (without technology) in a collective setting. This results in all-round development of the child.

The themes are described in a programme book, with suggested activities provided under monthly headlines.

Operations: The Kadam toolkit of printed materials includes all the resources needed for the

implementation of the programme, including teacher manuals. With these low-cost print resources and minimal training, the Kadam programme can be implemented by anyone with a passion for children’s well-being. Where teachers are not available, the programme can be implemented by “Education Volunteers” who have an appropriate educational background.

A simple operational structure is created and teachers meet weekly in groups of ten under the leadership of the best among equals – one of the teachers that have shown excellence in her or his classroom. Together, they share their experiences and support each other to ensure that they deliver a quality education and support its up-scale.

Partnership: From the beginning, the Kadam Step-Up Programme in Haryana was implemented as the State’s programme for out-of-school children, and the State provided resources to print toolkits and to engage education volunteers. In the first three years, HPPI was financially supported by Educate a Child, a programme of Education Above All. This enabled the civil society partner to establish the programme’s leadership and management, M&E and to hire additional teachers. Such a partnership was necessary to entrench the operational model for education in the existing State structure and to provide proof of concept at scale. After three years, the State Department of Education took complete charge of the project implementation, with a small component of technical support from HPPI.

A crucial learning from the Kadam model is that time is needed to make a programme fully operational and it takes leadership and management resources to implement it successfully with scalability and sustainability. A tri-party partnership between a state government, civil society organisation and an international foundation with an operational model that builds on sustainable structures from the onset may achieve sustainability over time, when significant leadership and management are invested.

The success of the Haryana Model

Through its out-of-school programme, Haryana has been able to showcase the success of the public-private partnership model that improved the quality of school education service delivery in the State with a well-designed and innovative model for quality-based learning. The programme has, since, received recognitions and accolads from India and International.

- The Kadam programme as implemented in Haryana has been rated as one of best examples of the good work done in its area by the Nexus of Good^[33], a foundation set up with a view to identify, understand, appreciate, replicate and scale good work happening in India.
- In a recent report release by HundrED^[34] and the Jacobs Foundation^[35], Spotlight: Formative Assessment (June, 2022^[36]), the Kadam programme was selected as one of the most impactful and scalable innovations^[36] in education for the HundrED Spotlight on Formative Assessment. The innovation was one of the 14 selected innovations, chosen from 129 submissions from 42 countries. It was reviewed by 55 Advisory Board Members, who made a total of 674 reviews based on HundrED’s two main criteria of impact and scalability.

The Kadam model of Haryana and its analysis provides a great insight for its adoption, adaptation and expansion. With a vision that once the first generation of learners grows up being literate, it is most probable that next generations will aspire to be more literate and committed to education, thereby, making the term ‘OoSC’ obsolete.

8. References

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