

UNICEF EDUCATION

Education Case Study

INDIA

Addressing the Learning Crisis: The Home as a Learning Space Initiative in India

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India, like many countries globally, is facing a learning crisis. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, learning levels in reading and math were a nationwide concern. In 2017, the [National Achievement Survey](#) showed that half of children in primary school—nearly 50 million children—were not performing at grade level in reading and mathematics. The pandemic has further widened this gap, as prolonged school closures severely disrupted traditional classroom learning, particularly affecting younger primary students who were among the last to return to in-person classes.

Recognizing the crucial role of parents in children's learning, as highlighted in India's National Education Policy 2020, UNICEF and Room to Read India (RtR) launched the Home as a Learning Space (HLS) initiative in 2021. This initiative aimed to support home-based learning during the pandemic and facilitate the transition back to school. The pilot programme was implemented in the states of Rajasthan and Jharkhand.

Many parents with limited educational backgrounds and low literacy levels needed initial guidance to help their children learn. The HLS provided tailored resources, including activity calendars, workbooks, story cards, and digital content shared with parents via WhatsApp. These simple, easy-to-use materials offered parents a structured routine and engaging activities to help create a supportive learning environment at home.

Overall, the programme had a notable impact, strengthening the connections between parents, schools, and the community to facilitate effective home-based learning. Parents embraced their expanded roles in their children's education, underscoring the critical role of parental involvement and community support. Despite some challenges with digital content reach, the initiative showcased the potential of homes as vibrant learning environments.

The HLS initiative's pilot monitoring and evaluation efforts focused on gathering qualitative insights to assess the usefulness, effectiveness, and ease of use of various programme components. Focus group discussions were organized with mothers, fathers, teachers, and community volunteers to gain a detailed understanding of their perceptions of the programme. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with government officials,

UNICEF, RtR India staff, and block-level coordinators to understand challenges and gather feedback on the operational feasibility for potential scale-up.

Key insights from the pilot period included:

RESULTS

- Over 30,000 children (approximately 25,000 families) from 529 schools in the two states were reached from October 2021 to May 2022.
- Children developed positive study habits and demonstrated increased interest in their environment and improved social-emotional behaviours.
- Parents highly valued printed materials, especially worksheets. In Rajasthan, 100 per cent of parents found worksheets “quite useful,” and 100 per cent of children completed the activities. In Jharkhand, 99 per cent of parents found worksheets “quite useful,” and 97 per cent of children completed activities.
- Digital content had varied reception, indicating a need for improved accessibility and contextualization. In Jharkhand, 77 per cent of parents found it useful, while only 27 per cent found it interesting and easy to use. School teachers used HLS resources to engage students in learning activities post-school reopening, leading to improved classroom engagement and attendance.
- In Jharkhand, teacher support and involvement of older siblings enhanced family engagement in home-based education.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Parents, particularly mothers actively engaged in learning activities, gaining confidence in contributing to their children’s education.

- Formal avenues for school-community engagement, like School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Meetings, require further strengthening to sustain parental involvement.
- The programme underscored the critical role of parental involvement and community engagement in sustaining learning continuity during crises and beyond.
- Volunteers in Rajasthan played a crucial role in motivating and guiding parents, leading to higher levels of engagement.
- Block and Cluster-level Officials were critical in supporting programme implementation, monitoring and ensuring resource utilization.

“I also attend classes every Sunday when the volunteer teaches the children...I also get to learn new things...I also see her teaching the children, the way she explains and engages with them...I get to learn many new things... she also makes us do activities... it is a lot of fun.”

- HLS participating mother

NEXT STEPS

Based on positive feedback from parents and schools, the Education Departments in Jharkhand and Rajasthan scaled up the programme to cover all 7.6 million primary students.

In the 2023/24 academic year, RtR India and UNICEF will expand the HLS initiative to more regions, incorporating pilot feedback. Plans include scaling up to additional schools and families, enhancing training for parents, and integrating digital tools for home learning. The Ministry of Education is also considering adapting the HLS model for nationwide implementation in vulnerable communities.

Cost effectiveness: The HLS initiative’s pilot phase cost approximately US\$ 150,000, benefiting over 30,000 primary school children and their families, at a cost of US\$ 5 per child. This cost-effective approach ensured learning continuity during and after COVID-19 school closures, with future adaptations and scaling expected to optimize costs and expand reach.

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