



*Creating
readers—leaders!*

क KATHA

i love reading

progress report for millennium alliance . 2013–15



Dear Friends,

To compress a year of adventure, excitement, creativity, innovation, collaboration, and a whole lot more into Reports is perhaps one of the most challenging things that we do in a year – for the words always fall short of our ideas, the sense of accomplishment is always dominated by our relentless commitment to do more, and the long strides that we have taken always seem like baby steps keeping in view the vast educational needs of children across the country. But try we must. And so we bring to you in this Progress Report the main aspects of scaling up quality education through our hallmark project – the I Love Reading programme.

As a reading programme that is perhaps one the most holistic, creative and inclusive in the country today and has impacted the reading skills of numerous children in schools and communities, I Love Reading started in 2008 with the vision of our Founder-President Ms. Geeta Dharmarajan to transform MCD schools into fun, interactive spaces for students, to bring them to grade-level learning and to enhance the joy of reading. Driven by the ideals that our Founder-President set forth, the programme expanded over the years and bucked up popular educational trends... And in the year 2014-15, ILR took epic proportions with the generous support of Millennium Alliance who helped us steer forward in our mission of sustained social transformation through education, and inculcate in the children in MCD schools reading skills that will prepare them not only for future challenges but will also shape their destinies. With the unstinted faith that Millennium Alliance placed in us, we could reach out to 80,000 children in 88 MCD schools and 126 communities in the year 2014-15 alone!

Pushing the boundaries of education through creative technology, Katha this year launched a unique e-learning initiative under the ILR programme – padhopyarse.net. A repository of resources, this unique initiative leapfrogs the huge gap of access to quality content that teachers across the country face. Apart from making content available to teachers around the globe, the initiative will also impart extensive teacher-training for a wider reach, with the help of direct intervention by teams of Reading Mentors and mobilizers.

We realize that education is a process and learning an ability. So we try our best to raise the interest levels in children and endeavour not to just educate them but also to create an environment that builds confidence. To make schools a place where books are opened not out of fear but curiosity. Our integrated approach, the whole school transformation project ILR STeP, is the means towards that end. This year, the training support was extended by ILR to 1,998 government school teachers. As more and more institutions like Millennium Alliance respond creatively to the reading need of children, we hope that new winds of change bring children closer to the joys of reading and education.

At Katha, we always believe in standing by our beliefs and never resting on our laurels. Because we seek to enhance upon what we have already achieved for our children. And we're sure that with the firm support of Millennium Alliance, and other such institutions, there will be many more loftier peaks to scale. Day after day. Year after year.

Cordially
Parvinder

Parvinder Kaur
Executive Director, Katha

We believe in the power of story to get children excited about learning. And more importantly, to find their Indian roots even as they become global citizens.

— Ms Geeta Dharmarajan, Founder-President, Katha



We thank Millennium Alliance for its generous support to Katha's I Love Reading programme. Katha is proud to share the Progress Report for the period 2014-15 and the key findings of the Endline Assessment conducted by Ambedkar University Delhi.



some successes

the year in review



88
Schools + **126**
Communities

80,000

**Children Reading at Grade Level
and for Fun!**

We believe that reading skills are the foundation for all future learning. In our constant endeavour to make learning fun for children on their paths to becoming independent readers, this year too ILR reached out to various communities and schools and strove to increase the reading proficiency in thousands of children – one child at a time.

I Love Reading 2014–15

Katha All In School Mission (KASM)

88
SCHOOLS

6,485
READING-CHALLENGED CHILDREN

126
COMMUNITIES

360
WOMEN WHO EMERGED AS LEADERS

46,437
CHILDREN

84
STORY ROOMS
SET UP

549
PTMs HELD

6,719
WOMEN ENGAGED FOR KATHA ALL IN SCHOOL MISSION (KASM)

23
STEP GROUP TEACHER-TRAINING
WORKSHOPS

1,037
MCD TEACHERS WHO ATTENDED
STEP WORKSHOPS

Communities

1,227
MASTER STUDENT LIBRARIANS

88,338
BOOKS GIVEN IN SCHOOLS

126
COMMUNITIES

105
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRAINING SESSIONS

3
PACT MEETINGS
HELD

72
PRINCIPALS WHO
ATTENDED THE MEETINGS

1,400
DOYTs FORMED

40,644
BENEFICIARIES



i love reading

the next chapter in reading literacy



Reading changes everything. It's not just the ability to read, but the power of reading. It connects us with others and helps us know ourselves better. And reading is not merely a question of going to school, but to know and learn while having lots of fun in the process. With this thought and spirit, and in response to the low reading levels of the children in the country, Katha initiated the ILR programme in Delhi's municipal government schools and the surrounding slum communities.

Aiming to improve the effectiveness of elementary education in the government school system, especially reading skills in children, ILR is based on Katha's proven education and teacher-training methods that we have developed, tested and refined over the last twenty-five years. ILR also uses Katha's

beautifully illustrated, internationally acclaimed storybooks for children to engage them in reading and to help teachers tackle some of the most pressing issues in India such as poverty, inequality, and to enable sustainable change.

Under the ILR programme, Katha works with all the stakeholders – students, teachers, principals, communities/parents, and the government – to ensure a robust, sustainable intervention. With direct intervention through trained Reading Mentors, ILR facilitates whole school transformation. One of the most important features of ILR is the integrated approach of teaching, based on NCERT syllabus. In addition to this, the programme also focuses on supporting the most reading-challenged children in MCD schools and tracks their progress and results.



the eclectic elements of ilr

the lifelines of learning

The various elements and guiding principles of the ILR programme demand a focus on results. A holistic model for the promotion of reading literacy is adopted and outcomes are carefully measured at every level.



Active Story Based Learning

A robust reading technology tested over twenty-five years that uses storybooks, not textbooks, to help children learn standard national curriculum. We use a variety of lesson plans, self-assessment tools for student use, TLM modules, graded reader kits etc. to enhance basic reading in children and bring them to grade-level reading.

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

ILR works with all major stakeholders: children, teachers, principals, community, and the government. This enables us to address the many challenges children face in attending school and learning to read from multiple angles. It also helps ensure the success and sustainability of the programme.



Literature to Literacy

ILR uses Katha's beautifully illustrated, culturally rich storybooks to improve the reading skills and spread the joy of reading in children. We not only work towards literacy, but go beyond that to help children engage with content, and discover the deeper meanings and richness of stories.





In Schools & Communities

ILR employs a multi-pronged approach of working in both schools and the surrounding communities. This immerses children into a culture of reading, engages the community in helping children read, and also helps Katha reach out-of-school children.

Story Rooms & Libraries

ILR provides a space of reading opportunities to children in the MCD schools and slum communities by establishing colourfully designed Story Rooms and libraries.



Reading Mentors

An innovative and motivated team of reading teachers or mentors and a Student Reader Leader who's a Master Student Librarian.

Continuous Assessments through Championships

ILR employs a system of continuous evaluation by way of Reading Championships that measure levels of functional literacy and monitor children's reading habits and preferences for books.



KASM (Katha All in School Mission)

Under the ILR programme, we consistently engage with mothers and mobilize them into Ma Mandal (mothers' association and societies for self-help) to capacitate them to be active decision-makers in ensuring complete formal education of the children.

Workshops & Trainings

Monthly teacher-training workshops are conducted for MCD teachers on how to use Katha's Story Pedagogy to engage children in learning, manage large class sizes, develop interesting curriculum, and linking learning to community issues to ensure education that is relevant. This is also extremely crucial for the sustainability of the programme because unless the teachers of MCD schools are motivated and interested in adopting the innovation, there will only be short-term benefits for the children.





millennium alliance award

implementation summary

2013–14

The year 2013-14 was the first year of ILR's intervention in the cohort of 75 schools and 126 communities in Delhi. Katha Reading Mentors worked with 40,000 students, 800 MCD teachers and 8,000 community women.

2014–15

ILR was operational in 88 MCD primary schools and 126 communities, reaching out to 80,000 children of various schools and communities. This was the second year of ILR's intervention in this cohort of schools and communities. This brought the cumulative total of schools impacted by I Love Reading to 138 schools and 248 communities. Katha's Reading Mentors worked three times a week with the 6,485 of the most 'reading-challenged' students from Classes I – V to take them towards grade-level reading abilities. The use of our well-researched, beautifully illustrated picture books, along with the integrated approach that aligns to the NCERT syllabus, made learning joyful, more innovative, engaging and holistic for children. Katha's Reading Mentors also worked twice a week with 46,437 other children, across the 88 schools, to provide them reading support.



milestone mapping

they have
sons in



2014–15

MILESTONE 4:

- Third Reading Championship conducted in the last week of August 2014–first week of September. It was the first championship of the session 2014-15, which we took as baseline for this year.
- Fourth Reading Championship: After two months of Katha's intervention in its second year, the fourth reading championship was conducted in the month of November.
- Fifth Reading Championship: Conducted in the last week of February 2015 in 88 MCD schools.

Comparative analysis of the fifth championship data with the baseline data:

1. Results showed that by the end of the tenth month of ILR intervention in 2014-15 (April 2014-March 2015), 99.5% of children improved their reading abilities.
2. 26.52% of the children in this group achieved grade-level reading.
3. Average attendance in schools improved from 59% to 89.03%.
4. Katha was successfully able to discourage students from dropping-out, with an overall in-year retention of 100%.

MILESTONE 5

External Evaluation: Endline Impact Study Assessment was conducted by Ambedkar University Delhi under the guidance of Dr. Venita Kaul. The objective was to assess the improvement in reading in Hindi among the cohorts of students who were selected in the baseline.

(Impact report attached with this progress report.)

2013–14

MILESTONE 1

- Completion of Workplan.
- Completion of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.
- Baseline Assessment.
- Creation of TLMs by July 2013.

MILESTONE 2

- First Reading Championship in 75 MCD Schools in October 2013.
- Second Reading Championship in 75 MCD Schools in March 2014.

This marked the end of the first year of ILR's intervention in this cohort of schools and communities.

Comparative analysis of the end-term championship data with the baseline data:

1. Results showed that after 8 months of the ILR programme, 92% of children improved their reading abilities.
2. 17% of the children in this group achieved grade-level reading.
3. Average attendance in schools improved to 90% by March 2014 as compared to 58% in July 2013.
4. Katha was successfully able to discourage students from dropping-out, with an overall in-year retention of 100%.

MILESTONE 3

- External Evaluation: Dr. Venita Kaul's team at Ambedkar University Delhi completed an external evaluation of ILR in 75 schools. Students of class 2 and class 4 were taken as sample groups to map their reading abilities.

(A draft of AUD's report attached with this progress report.)





external evaluation report



Endline Assessment conducted by Ambedkar University under the guidance of Dr. Venita Kaul

The purpose of the study was to do a comparative analysis of the baseline assessment done at the beginning of the intervention undertaken by Katha and the endline assessment in MCD schools situated across three zones of Delhi. The study primarily focussed on the 'reading-challenged' (RC) category.

1/3 schools (i.e. 26) across all corporations were selected through stratified random sampling.
2/4: The sampled students (reading-challenged only) who were in class 2 at the time of baseline assessment (February 2014) now in class 4 (April 2015) and 4/6: Class 4 students at the time of baseline assessment and now in class 6 were assessed on grade-appropriate learning achievement levels in the Hindi language.

The Findings

Significant improvements were seen in the learning levels of RC students in the Hindi Achievement Test, with marked difference in reading comprehension after one year of ILR intervention. The encouraging findings of the AUD Assessment

point towards the fact that ILR is on the right track and our intervention is bearing results and fulfilling its core objective of ramping up every student's ability to read well at grade level and for fun.



Reading Comprehension

Class 2/4. A 70.48% increase in reading with comprehension: The percentage of students who could read and comprehend increased to 76.19% in the endline from 5.71% in the baseline.
Class 4/6. A 62% increase in reading with comprehension: The percentage increased from 22% in the baseline to 84 % in the endline.

Written Expression Comprehensibility

The overall performance in written expression comprehensibility increased to 48.56% from 0.2%, showing a remarkable increase of 46.6% among 2/4 students.

Answering Comprehension

Not even a single child among 2/4 students could answer reading comprehension in complete sentences in the baseline assessment but in the endline assessment, 33.34% of 2/4 children and 42% of 4/6 children could answer reading comprehension in complete sentences.

Reading Fluency

Not a single child of 2/4 could read fluently as recorded in the baseline data. But in the endline survey 26.67% of class 2/4 and 33% of class 4/6 could read fluently at grade-appropriate reading fluency and accuracy.

Impact Indicator!

An Independent External Evaluation by
Ambedkar University Delhi

70.48%

increase in reading
comprehension in
Class 2 students.

62%

increase in reading
comprehension in
Class 4 students.

46.6%

increase in overall
written expression
comprehensibility in
students.

33.34%

increase in answering
comprehension in
Class 2 students.

42%

increase in answering
comprehension in
Class 4 students.

26.67%

of Class 2 could read
fluently at grade-
appropriate reading
fluency & accuracy.

33%

of Class 4 could
read fluently at
grade-appropriate
reading fluency and
accuracy.

75%

of the students
reported that they had
taken books from the
Katha Story Room.



The survey on reading attitude indicated an overall positive attitude by the students towards reading. This intervention by Katha in providing access to books to young children has emerged as a commendable step in changing attitudes towards reading.

— External Evaluation ILR 2014-15,
Ambedkar University Delhi

**AUD REPORT FINDINGS:
COMPARISON OF BASELINE AND ENDLINE PERFORMANCE
OF CLASS 2 STUDENTS WHO ENTERED CLASS 4 IN 2015**

LITERACY ASPECTS	BASELINE (2014)	ENDLINE (2015)	% INCREASE IN PERFORMANCE
LETTER IDENTIFICATION (L-3 HIGHEST DIFFICULTY LEVEL)	51.12%	81.58%	30.46%
WORD RECOGNITION L-3	20.15%	78.09%	57.94%
PHONEMIC AWARENESS L-3	17.38%	81.19%	63.81%
LISTENING COMPREHENSION-(INFERENTIAL-HIGHER LEVEL OF THINKING)	0.95%	18.09%	17.14%
RUNNING RECORD (READING RATE/FLUENCY)	0%	26.67	26.67%
RUNNING RECORD (PRONUNCIATION/ ACCURACY)	3.80%	75.23%	71.43%
DICTATION (HIGHEST LEVEL DIFFICULTY) COMPLETELY CORRECT	5.23%	33.34%	28.11%
PARTIALLY CORRECT	0%	50.47%	50.47%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION-COMPREHENSIBILITY EXCEEDS EXPECTATION	0%	22.85%	22.85%
MEEETS EXPECTATION	1.90%	25.71%	23.81%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION COMPREHENSIBILITY OVERALL PERFORMANCE	1.90%	48.56%	46.66%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION-VOCABULARY EXCEEDS EXPECTATION	0%	5.75%	5.75%
MEEETS EXPECTATION	1.90%	24.76%	22.86%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION VOCABULARY OVERALL PERFORMANCE	1.90%	30.51%	28.61%
READING COMPREHENSION ANSWERS CORRECTLY IN COMPLETE SENTENCES	0%	33.34%	33.34%
OVERALL READING PERFORMANCE: CHILDREN WHO CAN READ AND COMPREHEND	5.71%	76.19%	70.48%

**AUD REPORT FINDINGS:
COMPARISON OF BASELINE AND ENDLINE PERFORMANCE
OF CLASS 4 STUDENTS WHO ENTERED CLASS 6 IN 2015**

LITERACY ASPECTS	BASELINE (2014)	ENDLINE (2015)	% INCREASE IN PERFORMANCE
LETTER IDENTIFICATION (L-3 HIGHEST DIFFICULTY LEVEL)	63%	83.34%	20.34%
WORD RECOGNITION L-3	47.34%	89.17%	42%
PHONEMIC AWARENESS L-3	39.75%	88%	48.25%
LISTENING COMPREHENSION-(INFERENTIAL-HIGHER LEVEL OF THINKING)	03%	25%	22%
RUNNING RECORD (READING RATE/FLUENCY)	0%	33%	33%
RUNNING RECORD (PRONUNCIATION/ ACCURACY)	22%	91%	69%
DICTATION (HIGHEST LEVEL DIFFICULTY) COMPLETELY CORRECT	16%	42%	26%
PARTIALLY CORRECT	0%	46.50%	46.50%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION-COMPREHENSIBILITY EXCEEDS EXPECTATION	01%	38%	37%
MEEETS EXPECTATION	7%	37%	30%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION COMPREHENSIBILITY OVERALL PERFORMANCE	08%	75%	67%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION-VOCABULARY EXCEEDS EXPECTATION	0	17%	17%
MEEETS EXPECTATION	07%	37%	30%
WRITTEN EXPRESSION VOCABULARY OVERALL PERFORMANCE	07%	54%	47%
READING COMPREHENSION ANSWERS CORRECTLY IN COMPLETE SENTENCES	0%	42%	42%
OVERALL READING PERFORMANCE: CHILDREN WHO CAN READ AND COMPREHEND	22%	84%	62%

Key areas for focussed attention: There has been a remarkable improvement across all literacy aspects as can be seen from the tables. However, there still are some specific areas such as vocabulary, grammar, words with complex *matras*, speaking in complete sentences etc. which need more focussed attention.

the upshot

some other impact indicators

Master Student Librarians (MSL) are the students who conduct reading activities based on Katha storybooks in their schools and are also responsible for issuing Katha storybooks to children. The ILR team engaged intensively with the MSLs and gave them hands-on training on how to issue books, maintenance of records and undertaking reading-based activities. In the year 2014-15, the total number of MSLs in 88 schools was 1,227. The number of storybooks distributed in the schools was 41,360 and 81,350 books were issued and reissued by children.

13 students who were mentored by Katha in the year 2014-15 have been selected for Medhavi Scholarship Exam for meritorious students. These students were referred to Katha Story Room as reading-challenged by their respective class teachers. By the end of the year they not only achieved grade-level reading but also scored more than 60% marks in their class exams.

From the internal analysis that Katha did, it emerged that 93.75% of the principals of MCD schools want the ILR programme to continue in their schools, 85% of the teachers found workshops useful, 50% of the teachers are using Katha books in their classrooms and 55% are using TLMs and story pedagogy in their classrooms.



key highlights

the joy of reading
and pleasure of learning


Transforming MCD schools into fun, interactive and cooperative learning places: Katha designed Story Rooms in all 88 schools and furnished them with storybooks, reading kits and teaching-learning material – making them child-centric spaces for holistic learning.

Improved reading skills and overall performance across literacy concepts: The use of our well-researched, beautifully illustrated picture books by Reading Mentors created reading interest in children. The integrated approach, keeping in view the NCERT syllabus, made learning a joyful, more innovative, engaging and holistic experience for children. Children who were at the lowest level of the learning ladder, some of them even unable to identify letters and simple words, have shown remarkable improvement in reading skills.

ILR Community and Katha All in School Mission: Katha's constant engagement with the stakeholders by holding regular Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), School Management Committee (SMC) meetings, and forming volunteer communities such as the Delhi One Young Team (DOYT) has enthused more number of community members and parents to participate in school activities, and contribute to the child's performance by becoming more responsive to their needs.

Reading events: Numerous reading-based events in schools were conducted to broaden the horizons of children by establishing cross-cultural linkages and build in more excitement in the act of reading.

ILR-STeP in school: Pedagogy support was extended to the teachers of the MCD schools and workshops were conducted by experts to acquaint them to Katha's novel model of education. Katha's Teacher Training Team conducted 6 teacher-training workshops, reaching out to 1,198 government school teachers from 88 schools.



2014-15 was an important year for ILR which evolved into being a national campaign and made its presence felt across the nation. Through trainings, workshops, reading events and festivals, ILR touched ever more children and stakeholders. As we continue to enlarge the scope of the programme, efforts are already underway to strengthen it with like-minded collaborations and strategic partnerships to reach out to schools in every state.

ilr goes national!

Getting Ahead of the Digital Curve

A dedicated teacher resources website called www.padhopyarse.net was launched in 2014-15. This Hindi resource website is for teachers and schools on an open-source digital platform. Teachers who cannot access the wealth of Hindi e-teaching learning resources due to geography and context barriers will now be able to do so. It will also encourage teachers to join an online community to share learning experiences and best practices in integrating technology into the education model. Through this website Katha will scale-up its reach and positively impact the lives of children across India in a cost-effective way.

Spreading Reading Literacy in Uttarakhand

Katha partnered with CHIRAG, an NGO in Uttarakhand, and conducted a workshop to introduce e-books to the teachers and students of their school. The objectives of the workshop were to demonstrate to students how easily they can access e-books and to train the teachers on using these e-books to incorporate Story Pedagogy in the classroom.



Stepping Up in Gujarat

Under ILR, a pilot programme was held in Vadinar, Gujarat, called Village Bricks and Clicks, with an aim to enhance the quality of education and learning experience for children in rural and peri-urban areas. Through this programme the district government school primary teachers learnt how to creatively engage children in learning through Katha's Story Pedagogy. This programme also leverages existing IT infrastructure by providing schools with Katha's beautifully illustrated e-books.

I enjoyed the training in Story Pedagogy imparted by Katha. Through this training we learnt how to make reading fun for children.

— Ms. Jadeja Dimpleba Bhikubhai,
Bharana Girls' School, Vadinar

The Second Edition of Katha Utsav

A Journey of Discovery & Celebration!

Designed to draw out the storyteller in every child, Katha Utsav is a CBSE-Katha initiative that aims to help students use their creativity and imagination to come up with some great stories. The unique initiative that cultivates a culture of writing among young people through a series of creative writing workshops, witnessed a successful second edition with over 600 participating schools and 8500 stories. This year, as an extension of the Katha Chitrakala Awards and with the kind support of the Ministry of External Affairs, five eminent international illustrators and writers were invited to India to inspire and help cultivate India's budding young writers and illustrators.

100
shortlisted
stories.

8,500
stories chosen
and uploaded by
the participating
schools.

18,000
stories by budding
writers in schools
across the
country.



In association with CBSE, Katha kindled the creativity in bright-eyed, ever-eager children as they explored the craft of writing through:

Katha Clubs: Katha brought its prestigious brand of writing and translation to schools through Katha Clubs. 600 CBSE schools registered for the Katha Clubs that conducted an on-the-spot Search for Excellence.

Jury-enabled Shortlisting: A Jury was formed and guidelines issued to review and evaluate these stories on the basis of their originality, theme and expression.

Regional Writers' Workshop: The young writers of the shortlisted stories were invited to the Regional Writers' Workshop conducted in Delhi for the Northern Region, and Chennai for the Southern Region. The young writers honed their creative skills under the guidance of professional writers, poets and translators.

National Writers' Workshop: The students refined their creative potential, and were encouraged to submit their final entries for the National Writers' Workshop. The best of student stories from each school were nominated by student vote for Katha's Search for Excellence longlist. From this, a panel of respected national writers and illustrators chose young writers for the prestigious Katha Awards for Creative Writing.

The Katha Utsav 2014 and the Katha Awards: The winning entries were felicitated with awards during a three-day Katha Utsav held in Delhi. Each participant was awarded with a certificate.



The Chitrakatha International Writers' & Illustrators' Workshop

Painting with Words, Writing with Pictures

The CBSE-Katha Search for Excellence had an international component this year. Facilitated by the Ministry of External Affairs, the three-day fest saw six writers and illustrators from different countries holding workshops with 400 students of CBSE schools from across India on story writing, poetry composition and illustration.

ALT21: Approaches to Language Teaching in the 21st Century

The National Teachers' Workshop

While children were engaged in the writers' workshops, the teachers too had sessions called the ALT21: Approaches to Language Teaching in the 21st Century. With a keynote address by the Founder-President of Katha, Ms. Geeta Dharmarajan, followed by a discussion led by the eminent educationist Mr. G Balasubramanian, Academic Director (Retd.), CBSE, the ball was set rolling for all the participating teachers to come up with innovative ideas and best practices adopted in classrooms. The deliberations included innovative ways of inculcating the habit of reading, creative writing and critical thinking in students.



My heartfelt thanks to CBSE-Katha team for organizing such an innovative event!

— Ms. Poonam Lalla,
Hansraj Model School, Punjabi Bagh, Delhi

I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with students. They were quite enthusiastic and open to learning. I was pleasantly surprised to note how creative the students were during the programme. Thanks again for giving me an opportunity.

— Ms. Kala Ramesh, Award-winning Haiku Poet

What a wonderful time I've had in India! I am glad to have met such a various and vigorous group and to have been into the chaos and beauty and gladness.

— Ms. Libby Hathorn,
Award-winning Australian Writer and Poet



key learnings

the challenges we faced, the strides we made



How do we deliver it to the best of our capabilities? How do we ensure long-term impact of our intervention? How do we reach out to children all across and address their needs in the right way? These are some of the challenges that we grapple with on a daily basis. But we also know that workable, effective, creative and innovative solutions do exist, and these are what we strive to find.

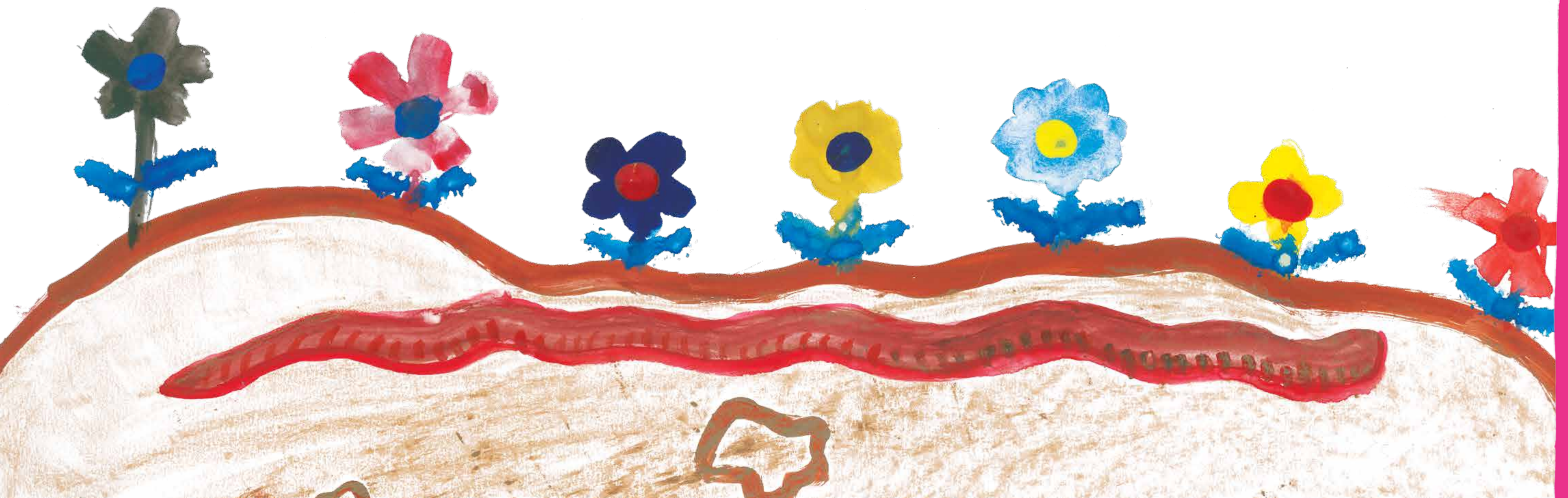


CHALLENGES

- As the I Love Reading programme is run in MCD schools of Delhi under a five-year MOU, Katha needs to seek annual permissions from the government for the implementation of every component of the ILR programme. The very first step to get the necessary approvals to run ILR programme in the first year in MCD schools itself consumed a lot of time due to administrative issues like transfers of officials, leave, and other official engagements. Also delay in allocation of Story Rooms further delayed intervention in some schools.
- Some of the teacher-training workshops, as a part of the larger STeP Workshops, scheduled in the month of February could not take place due to non-availability of dates by government authorities because of the Delhi elections.
- Follow-ups with DOYTs (Delhi One Young Teams), or volunteer cadres, and the women in the communities is a constant challenge due to the large number of communities.

LEARNINGS

- Through our well-honed and multi-pronged strategy we have managed to effectively work with a large number of children and especially with those who have reading difficulties and are at the bottom rung of the skills ladder. But we understand that the complete reliance on the intervention by Reading Mentors is an impediment in the path of scalability and sustainability. Employing vast number of Reading Mentors will not be feasible in the longer run.
- One very important aspect of the programme is that it's a transformative project, so the motivation and the participation of the stakeholders are crucial for the sustainability of the programme.
- With the wider reach and scalability, data collection and monitoring needs to be integrated with technology as manual collection of data consumes a lot of time which could be spent more productively otherwise.
- The moderate attrition rate among Reading Mentors and other frontline workers has given stability to the programme and has helped in smooth functioning of the programme, hence the need to continuously capacitate and motivate them. More funds need to be mobilized for training and skill upgradation of staff for increasing the effectiveness of the programme.
- Also more integration of technology into data analysis will help us be more efficient and reflective.





Despite challenges, the ILR programme has been able to achieve remarkable results in the year 2014-15, with a 26% grade-level reading attainment and more than 60-70% improvement in overall reading comprehension as shown in the AUD Assessment. The approval of Corporations to continue the programme in the year 2015-16 in the MCD schools of Delhi and the development of e-learning resources for teachers and children clearly indicate the fact that we have made an impact with the available resources and expertise.



feedback

teachers and principals

We had reading-challenged children who did not take any interest in learning. But when we adopted Katha's story pedagogy and teaching methodology in the classrooms, children showed keen interest in reading and learning. Difficult subjects were easily taught by Katha's methodology.

– Sushma Jain, Teacher, Pul Pehladpur, SDMC

I Love Reading programme has been beneficial for children. The Katha Marg, designed and developed by Katha in integration with the NCERT syllabus, has made teaching very easy for teachers.

– Veer Singh, Principal, Gautam Puri No. 2 Boys School, SDMC

Most of our children have started reading. They take great interest and feel motivated with ILR's activity-based learning. The use of Katha pedagogy is leading to an overall development of children. Teachers are also adopting Katha's methodology. Students are developing the habit of reading by getting books issued from the Story Room and reading them. I hope that Katha's programme will be continued and more and more children will be benefitted.

– Sunita Kumari, Principal, MCPS New Dev Nagar, NDMC

Katha workshops are really useful for the teachers to teach students in a more effective manner. I learnt a lot from these workshops, like how to make the best use of waste material while creating teaching-learning material and many other things that make the process of teaching and learning interesting. The group activities conducted in the two Katha workshops – Art and Craft and Best Use of Waste – were extremely insightful and effective. I conducted the same group activities in my class. Later, the students spoke on different stories in context to the material they made during the class. All the students in my class actively participated in these activities, and now I use these kinds of methods and activities all the time to make teaching-learning ever more effective.

– Vanisha, Teacher, MCPS Jai Rani Bagh, NDMC



reader—leaders
their success defines ours!



Discovery of instant storytellers!



Student: Deepika

Class: 1, Age: 6 years

**School: MCD School,
Paharganj New, NDMC**



From a hesitant speaker to a celebrated storyteller!

Meet the youngest and the most celebrated storyteller - Deepika! Her transformation from being a shy girl to a mesmerizing storyteller is a fascinating journey. Our Reading Mentor used to go to her class for storytelling sessions. Like every other child, she enjoyed listening to stories but never was vocal about her likes and dislikes. But somewhere, those stories struck a chord with her. She would stand silently at the window of the Katha Story Room and her inquisitive eyes kept staring at the vibrant storybooks.

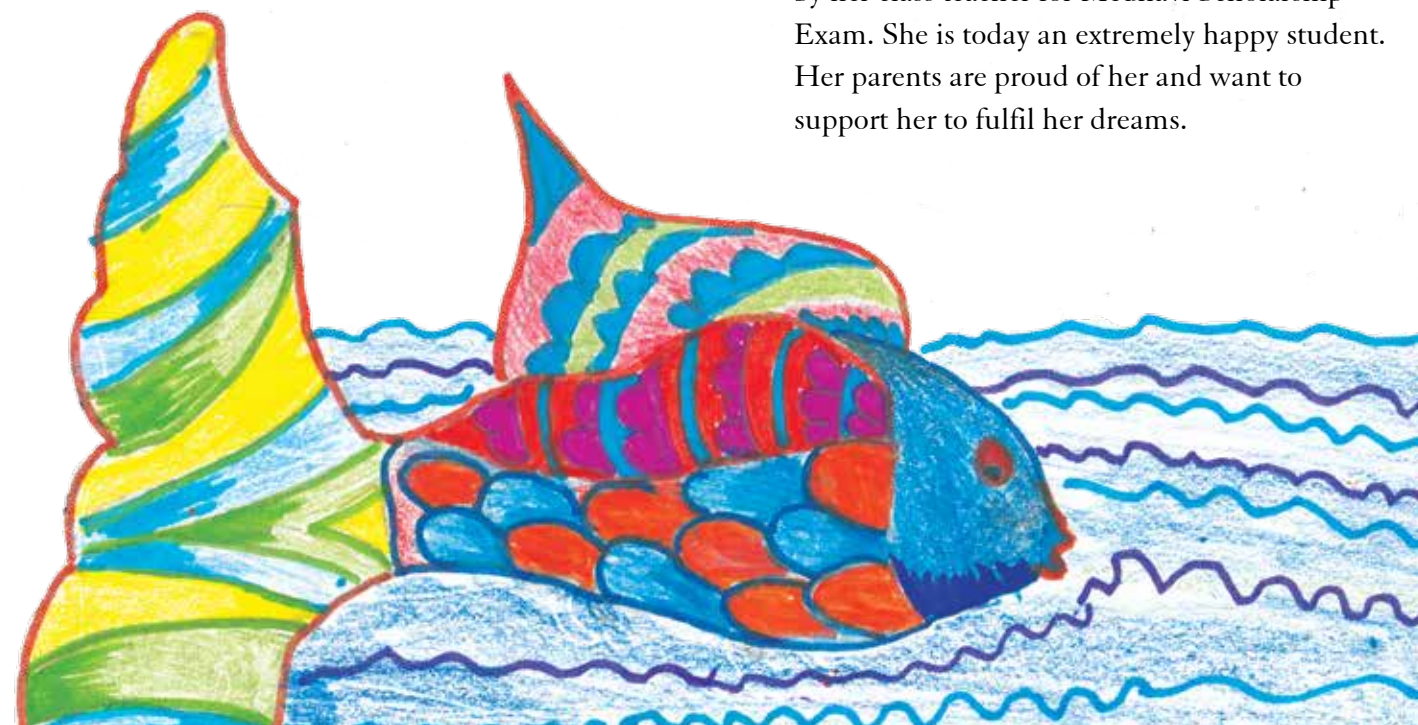
She was being keenly observed by our Reader Mentor. Seeing her interest in storybooks, the Reading Mentor made her MSL (Master Student Librarian). To everybody's surprise Deepika took this responsibility with a lot of enthusiasm. Also in one of the activities, our Reading Mentor narrated an incomplete story and asked students to complete it using their imagination and Deepika came up with an interesting story. Since then, she has become the most sought-after storyteller of her school; students, even from senior grades, come to the Story Room to listen to her stories!



Student: Vanshita

Class: 4, Age: 9 years

**School: MCD School, Katra
Chajju, NDMC**



From being irregular and disinterested in class to getting selected for a scholarship exam!

Vanshita stays in Kishanganj slum in a big family, her father is a factory worker. A very shy girl who would always find reasons to miss her class, her participation in school activities was minimal. Vanshita was recommended by her class teacher as her poor academic performance and lack of regularity in class were constant worrying factors.

Katha Reading Mentor conducted various reading activities in the Story Room which had an instant positive impact on her. At the time of the baseline assessment, Vanshita's reading abilities were almost nil with hardly any recognition of even simple words but once she started coming regularly, her interest in books increased. Within three months, she could recognize *matras* and read simple sentences. And her attendance was more than 95% at the end of the last quarter.

Vanshita secured 75% in her class exams. Seeing her remarkable progress, she was selected by her class teacher for Medhavi Scholarship Exam. She is today an extremely happy student. Her parents are proud of her and want to support her to fulfil her dreams.



Student: Rohan

Class: 4, Age: 10 years

**School: MCD Ganesh Nagar II,
West Zone, SDMC**



From having severe reading difficulties to getting to the top!

Rohan was sent to Katha's I Love Reading programme by his teacher as a reading-challenged student. He could recognize alphabets but could not form sentences or read properly. He had problem reading *matras* and difficulty in writing words. It was observed that his behaviour and listening skills were very good. The Reading Mentor helped him recognize *matras* and difficult words through reading-based activities.

By the end of the first quarter itself, Rohan was able to read simple words and sentences; by the second quarter, he could read and write all *matras*, and as a result his fluency in reading greatly increased. He was also applauded for fluently reading Katha storybooks in his school's morning assembly. His attendance increased from 64% in August 2014 to 84% in February 2015. He started doing remarkably well in all subjects and, in the Reading Championships conducted by Katha, Rohan got O level (in VIBGYOR scale, ascending order), way above grade-level reading which is at G. This remarkable performance was also repeated by him in his class exams as he scored more than 70% marks. Impressed by Rohan's performance in class exams and fluency in reading, he was selected to write the Medhavi Scholarship Exam from his class.



From speaking difficulties to spot-on!

Vikram had difficulties in reading and speaking as he used to stammer. He was often a subject of his peer's pranks which irritated him and forced him to fight with them.

Stammering was not his medical problem but a psychological one which somewhere emanated from his low self-esteem. Vikram found friendly environment in Katha Story Room which helped him open up. The initial challenge was to engage him in team-led or peer learning, a tool to improve his inter-personal skills with his peers. Soon Vikram overcame his fear of public-speaking. He felt motivated to come to school regularly and his attendance increased from 35% in April 2014 to 84% in February 2015.

With focussed attention and specific worksheets, his grammar also improved and Vikram started performing well in reading and writing. Whenever he found any difficulty in studies he would immediately come to the Reading Mentor to clear his doubts.

His sincerity paid off as he achieved grade-level reading and secured 65% in school examination. Vikram wants to be a doctor and serve poor people in the country.



Student: Vikram

Class: 5, Age: 11 years

**School: MCD Ganesh Nagar,
SDMC**

our heartfelt gratitude

A substantial part of our success derives from our ability to harness the energy of individuals and institutions with whom we work to achieve our goals. We are extremely grateful to Millennium Alliance for its generous support. Thanks to its support, we could spread the joy of reading to more than 80, 000 children and improve reading skills of children in 88 MCD schools. It has helped Katha to understand the potential and scalability of I Love Reading programme.

We look forward to Millennium Alliance's continued support in the future as well!





Φ KATHA

Katha is a non-profit organization that has seamlessly connected grassroots work in education, teacher training and publishing for nearly 25 years.

We believe that by providing children with holistic, relevant education and fostering in them a love of learning, they can become agents of change who lift their families and communities out of poverty. Our innovative education model, integrally supported by our award-winning book publishing programme, benefits over 160,000 underserved children and 1,100 teachers annually.

Our mission is to help every child realize her full potential through community-based quality learning, to spread the joys of reading, to reduce injustice and poverty through education, to enhance linguistic diversity and to help break down gender, social and other stereotypes through story and translation.

all artworks in this report have been done by Katha children in communities.

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