
Child Friendly Schools Initiative- The Progress So Far



Background

Azim Premji Foundation's Child Friendly Schools Initiative (CFSI) attempts to demonstrate comprehensive and sustainable ways to improve the quality of education in identified schools, by establishing partnership with schools, community and the education functionaries. The program in trying to foster a process of democratisation of education. The programs seeks to provide a healthy, hygienic, safe and happy environment for children to learn, promotes classroom activities and behaviour that is gender sensitive and results in effective learning and tries to facilitate the active involvement of families and communities in their children's schooling. The initiative covers all the 350 government primary schools of Shorapur block in Yadgir district of north-east Karnataka.

Midline Evaluation

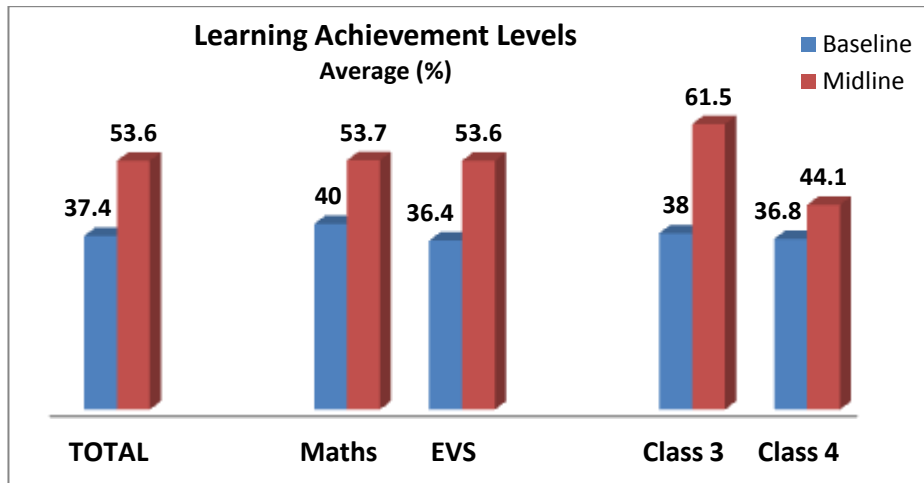
In order to assess the impact of the program so far, the Foundation carried out a midline assessment of learning achievements among the students in class 3 and class 4 in some sample schools in March 2011. A baseline study had been carried out in March 2009.

The baseline and endline assessments were conducted on the following lines:

- The sample comprised 50 schools selected at random (samples selected independently for baseline and midline)
- All students of class 3 and class 4 in the sample schools were assessed using written (pencil-paper) learning achievement tests in Maths and Environment Science. Both the tests were administered in Kannada.
- Identical test instruments were used for both studies.

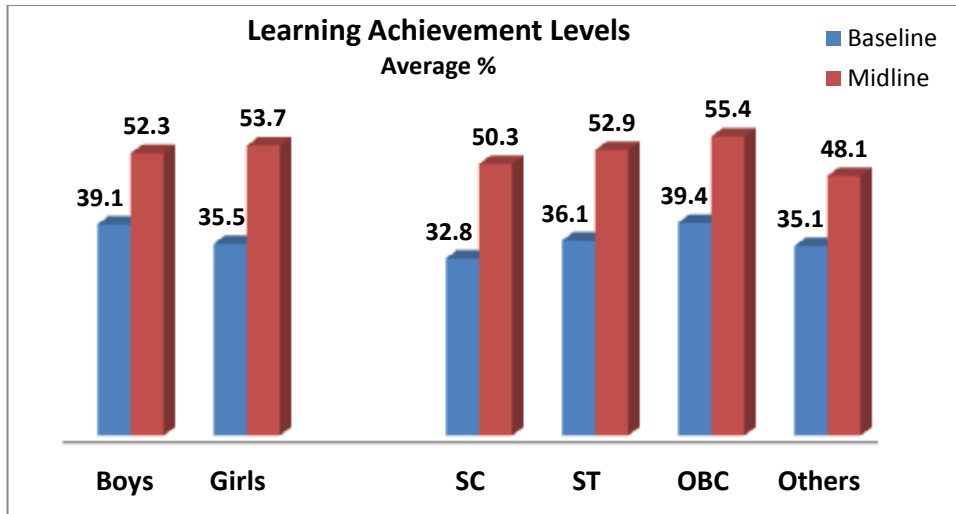
Results of the Evaluation

The learning achievement levels by subject and class are shown in the figure below.



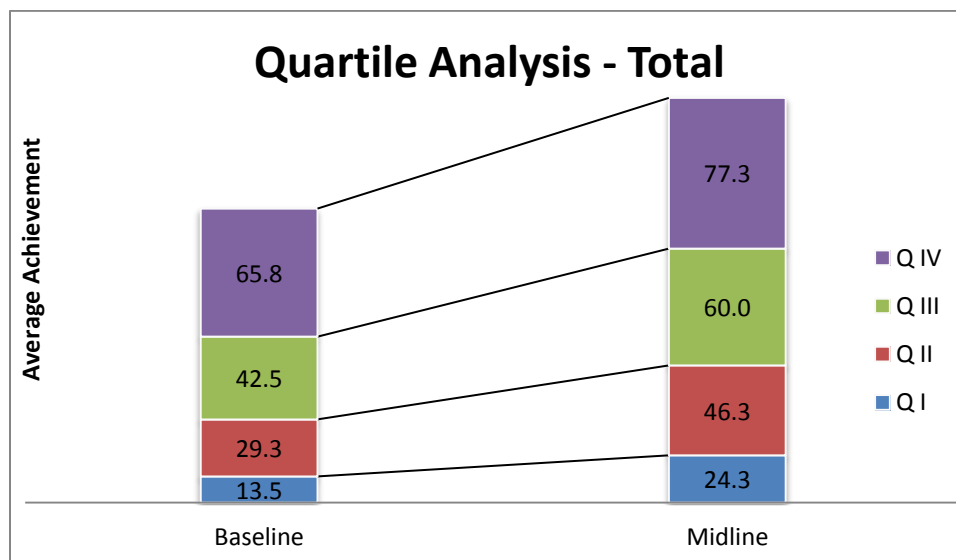
There is a sharp and statistically significant improvement of 16.2 percentage points (more than 47% **improvement**) in the learning achievement levels between the baseline and the midline assessment. If we analyse data of the subjects separately, we find a similar increase across both Maths and EVS. However interestingly, the improvement is much higher in class 3 (23.5 percentage points) than in class 4 (7.3 percentage points).

The data when analysed by sex and socio-economic categories shows that there has been a significant improvement between the baseline and midline assessments, within all these categories.



The improvement in learning levels appears to be roughly similar for boys and for girls, although it is marginally higher for girls. Similar results emerge when disaggregated data of socio-economic categories is analysed.

We have examined the data by quartiles in order to determine if the improvement in learning achievement levels has been equitable across different levels of students. The data is presented below with the numbers in the table indicating the average of each quartile.



This table indicates that while there has been substantial improvement in learning levels across all levels of students, the performance in the second and third quartiles has shown the

most improvement. The improvement has been the least among bottom quartile ie the weakest performing group of students.

Conclusion

The improvement in the average performance of the students between from the time the program started till the time of the midline assessment has been significant. The improvement has been sharp and in both subjects tested, Maths and EVS. The improvement is also fairly uniform across both boys and girls and across socio-economic categories. However, the improvement in the lowest quartile of students has been somewhat lower than for other quartiles.

This success can be attributed to the active involvement of all the stakeholders in the program. Enthusiastic participation by the teachers and head teachers, the cluster and block level education functionaries has played a significant part. In addition, focus group discussions with community members, girl child themed jathas, newsletters, teacher learning centres, theme based melas, onsite support to the teachers and periodic teacher interaction meetings are some of the factors that have contributed to making the schools child friendly and thereby improving learning levels. Although the results are heartening we are aware of the dangers of getting complacent. Going forward, the CFSI team is focused on maintaining the momentum built up over the first few years of the program and making further gains in improving the quality of education imparted in the program schools.