



PROJECT ROSHNI
ERNAKULAM, KERALA

OBJECTIVES

TO HELP MIGRANT CHILDREN CROSS LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL BARRIERS AND IDENTIFY THEIR STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS WHILE RETAINING THEIR OWN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN ORDER TO CREATE A BETTER SOCIETY.

Ernakulam District of Kerala has the highest number of migrant labourers in the state. Children from migrant communities attend different government and aided schools in Ernakulam. As per a survey conducted by Samagra Shiksha, Kerala the majority of these students are not regular to classes and many actually drop out of school midway through the academic year. Two of the most significant drivers for high dropout rate are the linguistic (inability to speak/understand Malayalam, the instructional language) and dietary (these children often were showing up in school empty stomach as their parents had to rush to their jobs leaving no time for preparing breakfast).

Most of the migrant children acquire the ability to speak in their native tongue by the time they migrate. But once in a school in Kerala they are compelled to learn in an alien medium of instruction once they enroll. This creates hurdles in the acquisition of instructional language, second languages, and the conceptual understanding of other scholastic subjects. "Discourse Oriented Pedagogy (DOP), clubbed with code-switching strategy can be employed to provide, what Stephen Krashen termed as 'comprehensible input', to acquire competence in any language. Code switching occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more languages, or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation. A multilingual facilitator who switches between the migrant learners' native tongue and the medium of instruction (or second language) can be employed to pedagogically address their linguistic deterrent.

Project Roshni uses the support of Educational Volunteers (EVs) who are proficient to handle multilingual learners and are appointed Under Sawashalesha Abhiyan (SSA) to deliver an extra class, of about



“Roshni is an innovative educational project initiated by District Administration Ernakulam, Kerala and funded by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), Kochi. Launched in October 2017, the project ran in as many as 20 schools covering more than 600 migrant students - majorly from Nepal, Lakshadweep and states like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Orissa, UP, Bihar, Karnataka and Assam.”

one hour, to the multilingual and multi-graded learners. The sessions begin with a nutritious breakfast every morning before the regular classes. The EVs are given continuous support through training sessions, try-ons, review meetings, supply of hard/soft copies of transaction modules and most importantly an online platform to discuss their concerns/difficulties at any time. Each of them shares his/her classroom experiences, discourses/model produced in classrooms and the growth they witness among their students through photographs and videos. This gives the other EVs an opportunity to see what happens in other classrooms, and the academic coordinator an opportunity to guide them. Project Roshni has also introduced the concept of 'Student Volunteers'. In schools where the migrant students' strength is high, students proficient in languages are employed pedagogically to edit migrant learners' writing and to assist the EV by doing the follow up of works assigned to students.

Another unique element of the pedagogy is the development of integrated, theme based evolving texts using audio/visual aids rather than a printed textbook, designed assuming that it would address the evolving academic needs of the learners. This facilitates active participation of the learners during the production of discourses. Also, instead of correcting the errors of students while writing these discourses, Project Roshni introduced editing at sentence and discourse levels. To give rich input in the target language, and to address the learners at different proficiency levels, the micro process goes for graded Teacher's Versions of the said discourses. This inclusive approach is one of the reasons why the learners could acquire ability to communicate in Malayalam even without the support of a linguistic community around them using Malayalam for communication.

A special package called PEACE (Package for Elementary children in Acquiring Competence in English) was also designed under Project Roshni. The package concentrates on strengthening the ability of teachers to identify the indicators of each discourse at different levels and to plan the micro level classroom process of sensitizing this to the learners. This in turn makes the teacher confident to analyze the



current level of learners, and, to assess their linguistic competence at each level for giving qualitative feedback using different strategies.

OUTCOMES

The impact of Project Roshni in terms of acquiring competence in the instructional language was assessed through different methods. All 20 schools conducted social audits in the presence of officials from Education Department, SSA, language enthusiasts, NGOs and general public in November 2018 to declare students' acquired Malayalam proficiency. Students undertook live tasks to showcase their language skills. The reports of these audits along with the feedbacks from the officials were compiled together as a book titled *Samskaha*. The success of the Project Roshni is evident in all the internal and external assessments that testify that an average of 75% of students have acquired complete competence in Malayalam and English. Another major impact is the decrease in the dropout rate, even after the turmoil of flood that hit Kerala in August 2018. The dropout rate has come down to half compared to the figure last year. Some other outcomes are:

- Integration of Talent Lab with Earn n Learn Package for migrant children
- A Summer Camp to strengthen the talent of the learner in fine arts, sports and games
- A Cultural Exchange Programme among the native and migrant students to have a better understanding of the cultural diversity of the country
- An Internship Programme for graduates to learn about multilingual pedagogy Year 2019-20 onwards, Project Roshni is all set to be extended to all schools in the district with migrant students.