



STIR
education

10th Anniversary Celebration Report



Foreword

Jo Owen, Founder and Chair



10 years ago we started STiR with a challenge and a dream. School enrolment was at record levels, but in many cases, student outcomes were actually falling. Our dream was for every child to love learning, and every teacher to love teaching.

We always believed that teachers were not the problem: they had to be the solution. Great education cannot exist without great teachers. So our challenge was to help teachers to rediscover their intrinsic motivation for teaching. Once re-engaged, they could stimulate a love of learning in their students too.

For 10 years, we experimented. Slowly, the successes drowned out the setbacks. We now have an approach which ignites intrinsic motivation at every level: officials, teachers and students. And each tier helps to motivate the others.

Covid-19 presented a huge test. During the pandemic, we helped many teachers and students to continue teaching and learning in highly adverse circumstances. And our mission became more important and urgent than ever, as children everywhere lost learning time or dropped out of education altogether.

Over the last 10 years, we've turned down many opportunities to expand geographically. We thought it was more important to get our core programme right first. And while we still don't have all the answers, we're now confident enough in our approach to expand. If the intervention works, we see it as a moral imperative to try to reach everyone who needs it.

In the near future, we will expand from our core in Uganda and India into Ethiopia, Indonesia and Brazil. We will always work closely with partners in any expansion. Our desire is not to grow our own organisation but to grow our mission sustainably. And eventually, we want governments to run our programme without our support.

The past 10 years at STiR have been a rollercoaster journey with great highs and challenging lows. Our work is possible only thanks to our wonderful partners in government, funders, NGO partners and our brilliant staff. Thank you for helping us to get this far, and I hope you will continue into our next chapter.

Foreword

Girish Menon, CEO



10 years is an important milestone in the life of an organisation. As I look back over the past decade, I am inspired by what STiR has achieved. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to join this amazing organisation last year, building on the foundations established by my predecessor Sharath Jeevan.

It is with deep humility that I reflect on the important role our organisation plays in supporting education systems to recover from the disruption of Covid-19. Learning loss has disproportionately affected children from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds, and girls also face additional challenges.

And this is why we exist. We are here to improve learning outcomes for children in an increasingly complex world. We cannot do it alone, but together we can make a big difference in preparing children for the challenges ahead. Teachers in government education systems have huge power to make a difference if they are intrinsically motivated, and working in supportive environments.

Our work in India and Uganda gives us significant depth and breadth of experience. Earlier this year, we

started a new programme in Indonesia. By the end of 2022, we hope to be working in Ethiopia and Brazil too. By 2025, we have an ambitious plan to reach 25 million children across at least five countries.

“Our school has changed and we no longer need walls or gates around our schools to keep us in.” This quote from a group of children in Delhi shows me the power of the change we have been able to realise so far. In a survey of over 8,000 teachers, over 85% said that our approach had contributed to improved literacy and numeracy skills among students. These are strong winds of change transforming education systems so that teachers love teaching and children love learning.

I am deeply grateful for the support we have received from governments, donors and allies to make this journey possible. I am extremely excited about our opportunities to contribute to transforming lives around the world. Together, we can move further over the next 10 years!

Our mission

"The consistent support from STiR has been motivating. I now feel convinced that we can make a difference despite the challenges facing education today."

Manjula G. S., teacher, Karnataka

More children are enrolled in education today than ever before. But for too many, schooling does not lead to learning. Children are not achieving the desired outcomes, and governments worldwide struggle to sustainably and equitably improve learning at scale.

Teachers have the power to transform education. But at present, they receive poor training and a lack of support from their systems. They have fallen out of love with teaching. And these motivational challenges are hampering education systems from effecting meaningful change.

Covid-19 has further exposed and amplified weaknesses in our education systems. School closures affected 90% of students globally. Inequality continues to rise, and learning poverty has surged in low- and middle-income countries, as estimated by the World Bank. Children of all ages now need support to bridge the significant loss of learning time.

We believe that intrinsic motivation has a key role to play in addressing these challenges. To thrive in the

21st century, children must be able to continually seek, process, act and reflect on new information. And the development of a lifelong love of learning is essential for future success.

At STiR, we are uniquely positioned to focus on reigniting intrinsic motivation at scale within education systems for 10 years. Our model works across whole education systems in partnership with governments. We aim to change and sustain behaviours at every level. And ensure that improvements are mirrored at all levels to transform the lives of children around the world.





Our programme

"We appreciate STIR because wherever they work in the country, they deliver. We need to make sure that this kind of programme is scaled up to the whole country."

Dr. Cleophus Mugenyi, National Commissioner for Basic Education, Uganda

We support government education systems to improve learning outcomes for children. We address this challenge by providing support to teachers and reviving their passion for their work. Our activities significantly increase their abilities in the classroom, and improve their interactions with students.

The heart of our approach is the teacher network meeting. In our networks, groups of 20-30 teachers meet monthly within a school or across local schools – just like our very first 25 teachers in Delhi back in 2012. In the meetings, teachers learn new practices to enable higher quality interactions with their children. At our current scale, we're operating more than 5,000 network meetings every month.

We believe programmes are most enduring and effective when they are delivered in partnership with governments. As you can see from our theory of change, we also work with school leaders and officials at district and state/national levels. Their role-modelling is key to build positive and trusting relationships as a vehicle for behaviour change.

Over time, all stakeholders will develop their intrinsic motivation. Officials and school leaders will develop the confidence and capacity to drive improvements. Teachers will intentionally improve their classroom practice and fall back in love with teaching. And ultimately, children will love learning. They will develop the knowledge and skills they need to thrive.

CASE STUDY – Teacher Development Coordinator programme in Delhi

Our work in Delhi is our longest government partnership to date. Working with the State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT), we devised the Teacher Development Coordinator (TDC) programme in Delhi in 2017. Each government secondary school in Delhi has appointed one teacher to act as TDC, providing mentoring and support to other teachers in their schools. We now work with a dedicated Lifelong Learning Unit (LLU) within the SCERT to design activities for each term and monitor their delivery with officials. A case study about the programme was completed by UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning in 2021, finding that "the programme has acted as a catalyst for teachers to improve both their professional development and motivation".

Our theory of change





Building ownership

"We welcome the presence of STIR in Lumajang and we hope that there will be more exciting breakthroughs to improve the quality of teaching and learning."

Bapak Dr. Agus Salim, Head of Education Agency, Lumajang district, Indonesia

One of our key lessons has been that government ownership is essential. No NGO intervention can (or should) last forever. But embedding NGO-led programmes into government structures is very difficult. So we needed to think differently.

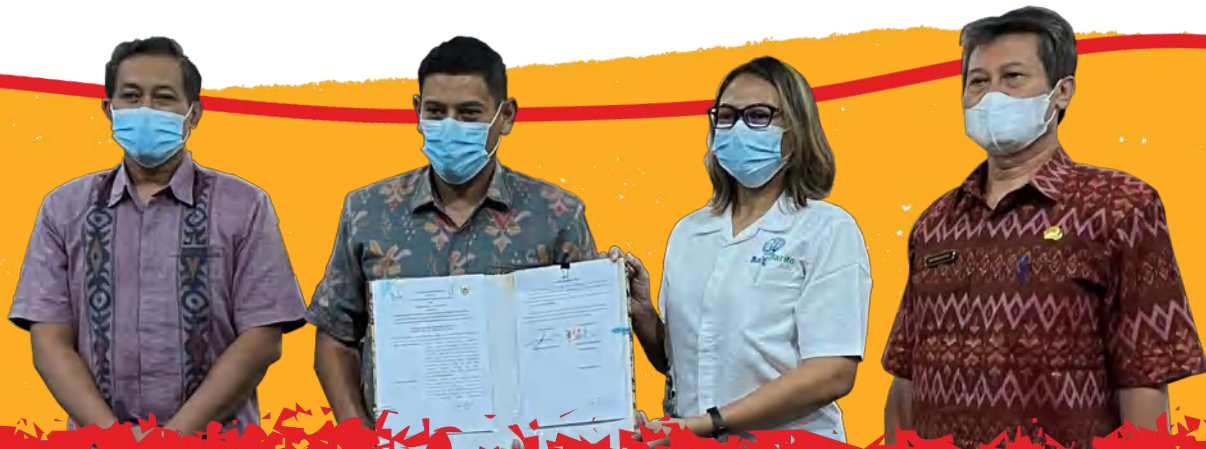
Since 2018, our model has evolved to establish deep learning partnerships with governments. Their buy-in is critical for sustainability and can help to accelerate behaviour change among officials at larger scale. These partnerships have four common factors:

Clarity – we work with governments from the outset to foster a shared sense of purpose, grounded in changing behaviours. And we align our aims with their strategies and priorities. By agreeing time-bound milestones of progress, we build strong ownership.

Co-design – we build the capacity of existing government officials to co-design and deliver every programme activity as we learn together.

Contextualisation – we've learned that we need to be flexible, adapting our approach to the needs of each system. Government priorities often change constantly, but we can respond to these while maintaining a focus on longer-term system change.

Culture – our work will only be sustained if new behaviours are embedded in systems. Relationships are the key ingredient. If we can stimulate role-modelling from the centre and across the whole system, and build capacity to do this beyond our engagement, we may radically redefine what is possible for NGO-government partnerships.



Our work in India

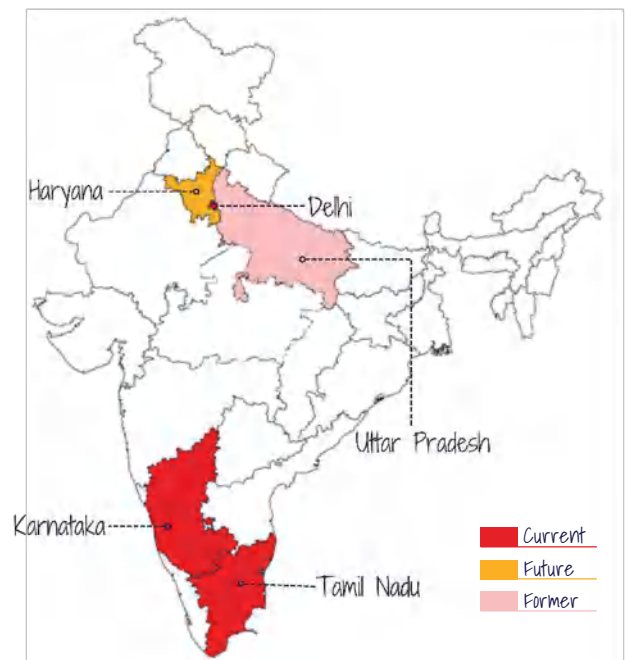
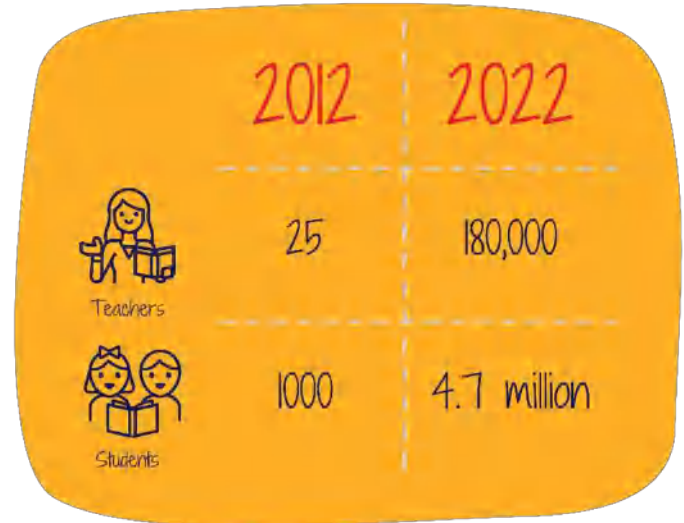
2012-present

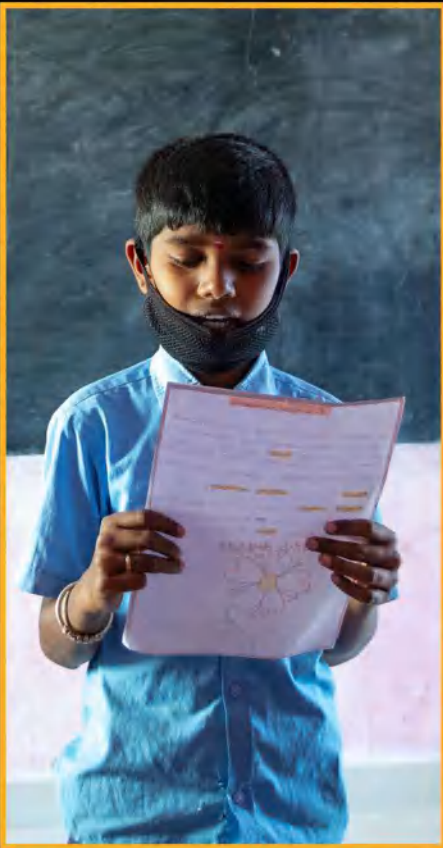
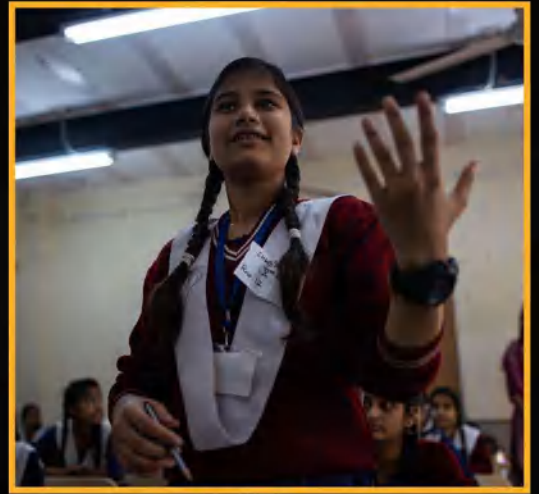
India has the world's largest school system. One quarter of its citizens are below the age of 14. So it's essential that children and young people are equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to contribute to India's social, economic and political transformation.

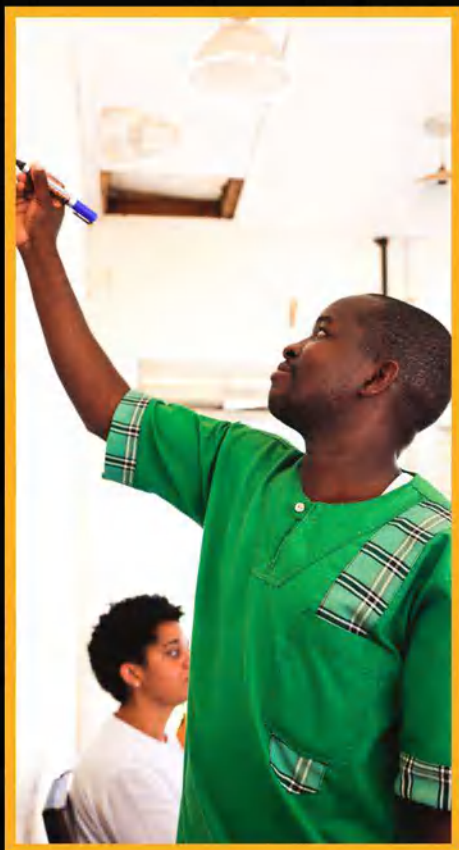
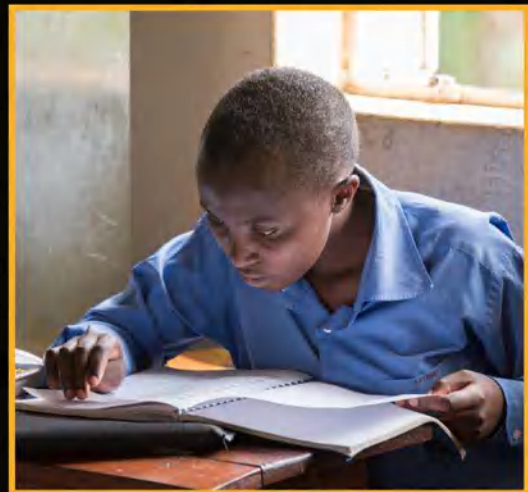
Our learning journey started with just 25 teachers in Delhi back in 2012. By 2016, the government of Delhi had asked us to expand to reach all 1,029 government secondary schools across the state, representing our first project at full scale.

We have since developed projects in Uttar Pradesh (finished in 2019), Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, with a new programme planned to launch in Haryana in 2022. Each programme is unique to the specific state, working closely with government partners to create content to meet the needs of their teachers and officials.

We're now exploring opportunities to further scale our work to reach every district in our current states, and identify new states for future projects.







Our work in Uganda

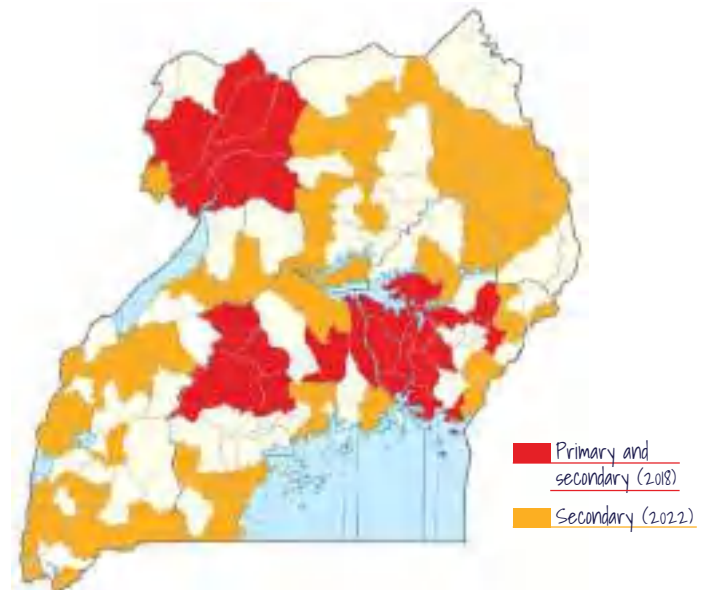
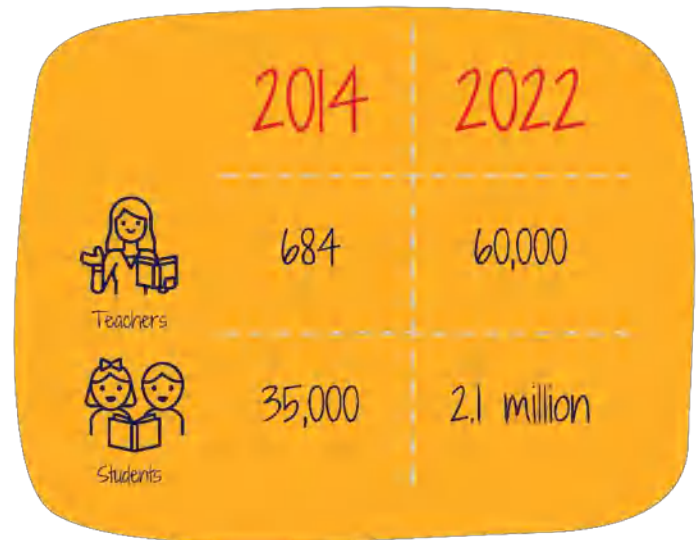
2014-present

Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world. Around half of its citizens are under the age of 15. Investment in education is therefore needed to support economic growth. But at present, more than 700,000 young people enter the labour market each year with few job opportunities on offer.

Our first pilot in Uganda in 2014 aimed to understand how our programme could work in a very different context. Delivered with partner NGOs, this project generated localised, teacher-driven solutions to address classroom challenges.

By 2018, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports, we had started to scale our operations in government schools. Now supporting officials to deliver activities in primary and secondary schools, we were able to reach every school in 32 districts and eight municipalities (shown in red on the map).

In early 2022, we agreed a new partnership with the Association of Secondary School Headteachers of Uganda (ASSHU) to take our programme to full scale. With their operational and financial support, we added an extra 46 districts and 26 municipalities (shown in yellow) and now aim to reach every school nationally by 2025.



Responding to Covid-19

"We face lots of challenges due to Covid-19. The STIR team like always has come forward to support us in these difficult times."

Lakshmi Devi, District Institute of Education and Training, Chikkaballapura district, Karnataka

The past two years have been among the most challenging ever experienced by education systems. The learning of every child globally has been impacted by the pandemic due to widespread school closures which lasted for many months. We're proud of our work during this period with our partner governments. Some of our key learning is as follows:

Our approach is adaptive and flexible. Before Covid-19, all of our activities were delivered in person. But because of the structures and relationships we have in place, we were able to find new ways to achieve our objectives in every geography.

Relationships with governments are critical. At such a challenging time, it was hugely beneficial to have strong relationships with officials to quickly find ways in which we could contribute.

Technology is not equitable. The availability and connectivity of technology was variable both within and across geographies. In Delhi, most teachers had good access and were able to take part in online activities including video calls. But in Uganda, we quickly realised that this was unrealistic, and delivered regular sessions over public radio instead. Even with these methods, many teachers were unable

to access support during this period, and it's essential that we help them to catch up too now that schools have reopened. And we continue to keep equity as a key priority as we think about further integrating technology into our work in future.

We cannot assume confidence with technology. Many teachers did not know how to use basic software, which impacted their ability to access support and connect with their children. Our open learning sessions helped them to bridge these knowledge gaps and engage more broadly in activities.

We must prepare better for future shocks. We are now developing scenario plans with our partner governments in preparation for sudden changes to the education landscape, in line with our long-term impact objectives.



CASE STUDY – Ms. Flora, Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu

Ms. Flora is a teacher from Nagapattinam district in Tamil Nadu. During the Covid-19 school closures in India, Ms. Flora found it difficult to connect with her students. She was inspired by one of our videos, which asked teachers to consider how they could continue to reach students, and started to make a plan that would leave no child behind.

Most children only had one smartphone at home which belonged to their parents, who would take it to work with them. So Ms. Flora created mind maps and worksheets explaining key concepts, which were photocopied and delivered to their homes.

We could see immediate potential in this simple and elegant method for reaching children. So we created a video which we shared with up to 40,000 teachers across the state. Ms. Flora says: “These days, when I go to other government training sessions, teachers walk up to me and recognise me for my work, which makes me feel happy!”



CASE STUDY – Mr. Kintu Noah, Mityana district, Uganda

“I find the teacher radio programmes very useful. The teachers who listen to them benefit a lot. Teachers have shared feedback that they are being reminded of effective classroom strategies that improve learning. They feel touched that they have not been forgotten during this challenging time when schools are closed.

The radio programmes have had a significant impact. Immediately after the session, teachers call me to share their views about the strategy shared on the radio.

The programme has also increased the trust in teachers within the community, as all people are able to listen and note the importance of the teacher in creating a safe and engaging atmosphere conducive to learning. The role of the teacher is being highlighted as significant to a child’s progress.”



Our impact

'Lightbulb' moments are critical in shaping an organisation's direction. Our first such moment came early at our first ever teacher network meeting in Delhi in 2012. One participating teacher told us: *'This has unlocked something inside me.'* This showed us the importance of intrinsic motivation, and we have dedicated our efforts over the past 10 years to provoking similar moments for thousands of teachers.

Given the scale at which we work, we use a range of methods to understand our impact. We still have a great deal to learn, but we believe that changes in behaviour over time give the clearest indication of our progress. And that this behaviour change ultimately impacts on the learning and socio-emotional outcomes for children.

Our evaluations gave us confidence that our approach was working:

- Our external longitudinal study data suggests that students taught by STiR teachers had high levels of grit and determination, were engaged and participated meaningfully in classroom activities.
- Our 2018 randomised control trial in Delhi found a significant effect on student numeracy levels.
- Our study with ASER in Uttar Pradesh between 2015 and 2017 found a significant increase in reading scores for students in grade 4 and 5.
- A recent survey of 8,000 teachers in India showed that they believe their participation in teacher networks resulted in
 - 88% reporting improvements in student reading levels and numeracy (86%).
 - 94% reporting that their classrooms were safer, and students feel happier in class.



200,000 teachers
in peer networks



6 million school
children reached



109 districts across
India and Uganda



CASE STUDY – Mr. Usufu, Kabarole district, Uganda

Usufu has been a mathematics teacher since 2011. Despite this, he had never considered gender responsive strategies in his teaching. His focus was on teaching content to the whole class without ensuring that this was inclusive for all children.

After attending training from STiR, he learned about the need for gender equity in the distribution of resources, benefits, responsibilities and opportunities for children. He gained new skills to take their different needs into account through his teaching.

Now, he has pledged to support other teachers from his school to gain mastery in these new strategies. He is excited that all children will have the opportunity to realise their full academic potential. He hopes that this approach will strengthen his relationships with his students.

CASE STUDY – Mr. Chandra Kanth, Mysuru district, Karnataka

“I am the District Champion for the STiR programme in my district. In this role, I am responsible for planning and implementing training sessions for teachers and officials. I’m also responsible for monitoring the quality of this training at every level.

After STiR’s intervention in the district, teachers are more proactive. They are continuously recognised for their efforts. This motivated me to plan more field visits and provide more support to teachers.

I also collected feedback on STiR’s activities during my visits. It was an overwhelmingly positive response from the teachers about the skills, techniques and strategies introduced in network meetings. They have been simple to use and had a huge impact on student learning.”



The next 10 years

We're proud of what we have achieved over these first 10 years. But we're also hugely motivated by the challenges that lie ahead. This is a crucial period in the aftermath of Covid-19, and as the deadline for the completion of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals looms in 2030.

Our top priority is to realise sustainable and systemic behaviour change in our existing geographies. It's essential that we reach a point where we can hand over our activities to our government partners, with full confidence that these will continue to happen at high quality.

But further scale is also important. Our programme works, so we want to reach as many teachers and children as possible. We've set a target to reach 25 million children by 2025, across at least five countries, and we don't intend to stop there.

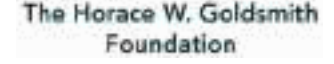
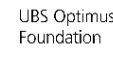
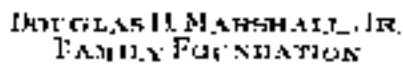
We're worried about growing inequity in education, with a particular impact on girls. We're focusing more explicitly on this area in the coming years, so that every child develops a lifelong love of learning.

We have significant experience of the critical role of intrinsic motivation in improving learning outcomes. So we want to speak with a louder voice in advocating for a different way to look at strengthening education systems. We will invest in research and partnerships to build a stronger case for further investment.

We'd like to thank everyone who has played a part in our journey to date. We hope that you will continue to support us as we enter our second decade, working towards our vision of a world where teachers love teaching and children love learning.



Our partners to date





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