Learning to Read Together

Global Dream Literacy Intervention in Hamirpur District

A collaboration between:

DEVI SANSTHAN LUCKNOW
DIGNITY, EDUCATION VISION INTERNATIONAL
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OXFAM

Samarth Foundation
Creating Capability

DEVI Sansthan is a 23 year old non-profit Indian educational Non-Government Organisation (NGO) providing literacy programs to children in slums, working with the government to improve the quality of education in local schools, and developing more meaningful curriculum for education. Since May 2014 DEVI has been running the Global Dream literacy project in order to build a people's movement for literacy in Uttar Pradesh. The Global Dream program is unique in that it can be taught by any literate teacher, and a student starting from scratch can become literate in as little as 2-3 months.

The original model for the Global Dream program was that it would be taught to illiterate students one-on-one by literate mentors. As an extension of the program, DEVI ran a trial in five government schools in Hamidphur with the support of Samarth Foundation and Oxfam. Teachers in these five schools were provided with materials and a two-hour training in the Global Dream program as a means of supplementing and accelerating their literacy instruction. Unlike the established program, teaching in this school setting revolved around group instruction as well as peer-to-peer activity and individual targeted help.

A pretest was given to 439 students across the five schools to determine the literacy levels before implementation of the program. This pretest had four categories:

A: simple letters
B: letters combined to form simple words without matras
C: simple words with matras
D: A Standard 3 reading text with matras and multisyllable words

The total pretest data for all schools is shown below.

Chart #1: Literacy levels during taking of pretest (by percentages)

	Boys		Girls		Overall	
	Could read matras	Could read Class 3 text	Could read matras	Coud read Class 3 text	Could read matras	Could read class 3 text
Class 1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Class 2	10%	2%	2%	2%	5%	2%
Class 3	28%	19%	24%	6%	26%	10%
Class 4	72%	44%	48%	30%	57%	35%
Class 5	83%	72%	66%	55%	73%	63%

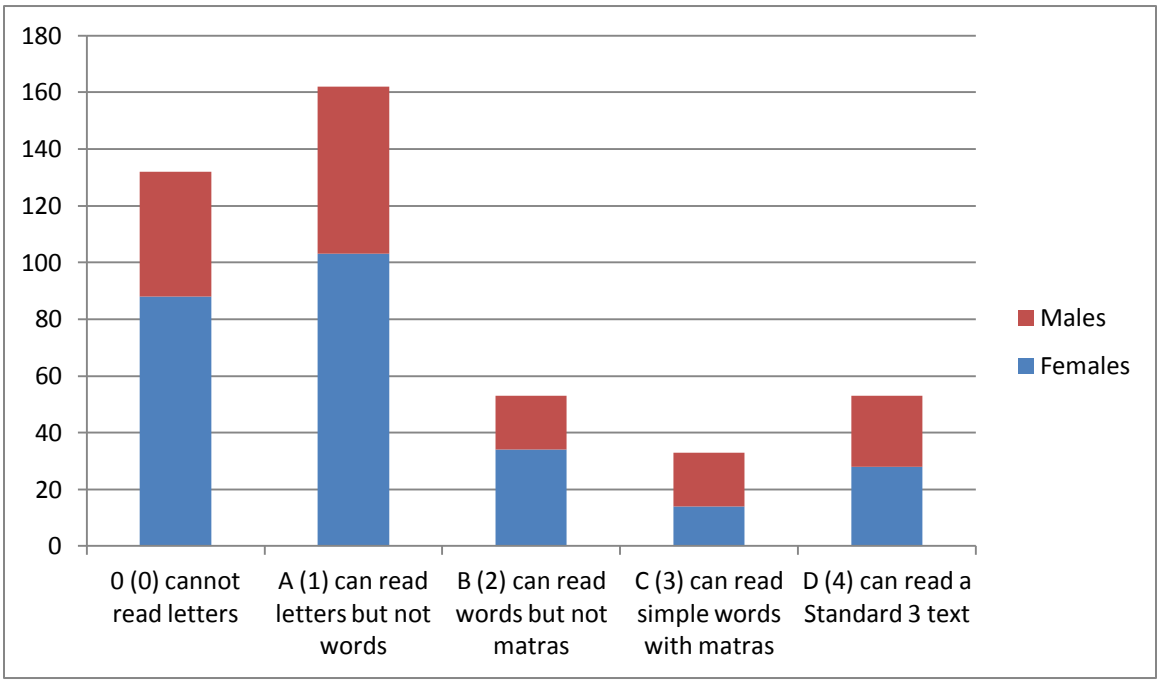
Though a large jump in literacy is seen between Class 4 and Class 5, it is possible that this apparent jump is only the result of the dropping out of illiterate students before Class 5. When the total numbers of students are looked at, there are clear increases in literacy up through Class 4 but no significant increase in the number of literate students from Class 4 to Class 5.

Chart #1: Literacy levels during taking of pretest (by total numbers)

	Boys		Girls		Overall	
	Could read matras	Could read Class 3 text	Could read matras	Could read Class 3 text	Could read matras	Could read class 3 text
Class 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class 2	4	1	1	1	5	2
Class 3	9	6	16	4	25	10
Class 4	26	16	29	18	55	34
Class 5	24	21	25	21	49	42

For the purposes of calculating averages, test results were assigned a numerical value: 1 for A, 2 for B, 3 for C, and 4 for D. Students who could not even read letters were assigned a 0. The results of the pretest are shown in the following chart:

Figure #1: Number of students at each literacy level as determined by the pretest

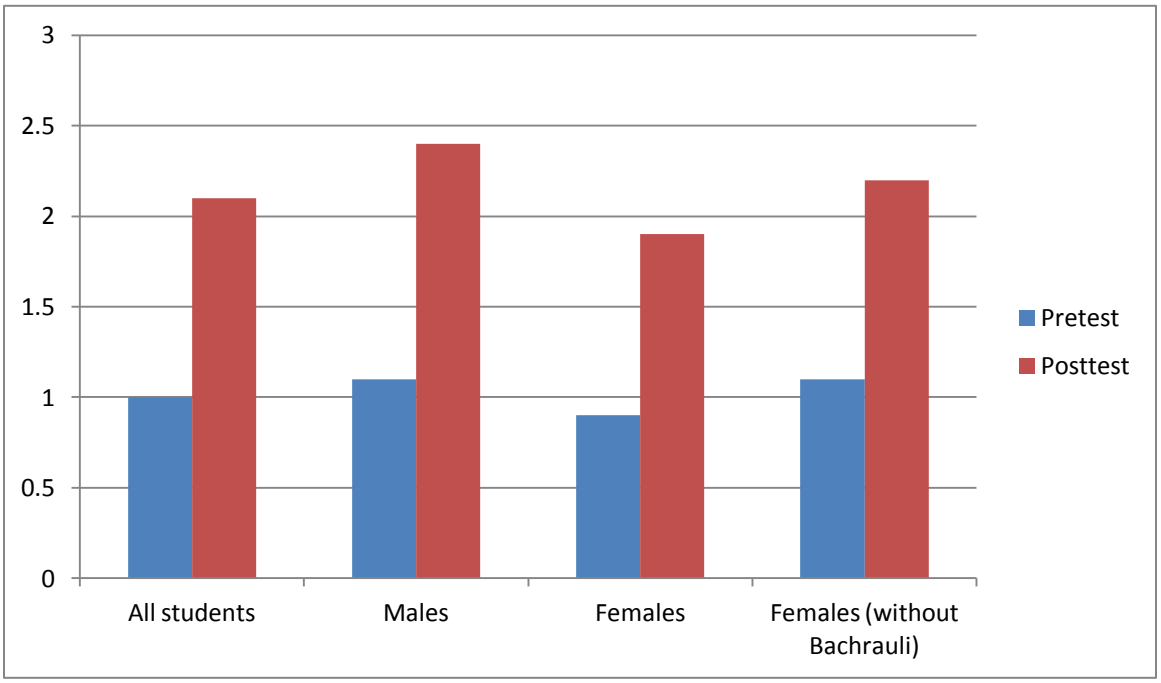


The pretest found that only 134 of the 439 students (31%, males 38% and females 29%) could read simple words in sentences even with no matras, and only 88 of the 439 students (20%, males 27% and females 16%) could read matras correctly. Among students in grades 3-5, there were 51% (39% of males and 57% of females) who are unable to read sentences even without matras. Overall, only 12% of students (14% of males and 10% of females) were able to pass the full Class 3 reading test.

Of the original 439 students tested, fifty-one had been found to already be fully literate in the pretest, and thus were non-applicable for evaluating the program. One student was marked as “handicapped” and not given a pre-test. Another five students were dropped from the school before instruction began and no longer showed on the student rolls. Fifty students attended 0 instructional days and thus could not benefit. Therefore, there remained 332 students who were not literate before the program began and who attended at least one day of instruction. All evaluation was done based on these 332 students.

After the pretest, teachers the five schools were given a two-hour training in the Global Dream program nd provided with Global Dream materials. The students at their schools were then given supplemental instruction using the Global Dream program during the regular school day for a period of approximately 12 weeks, or 57 instructional days. These students in the program attended an average of 37 days of instruction during the 57-instruction day trial period. At the end of that period they were given a posttest in the same format as the pretest. The results of those pretests and posttests, both total and organized by gender, are shown below.

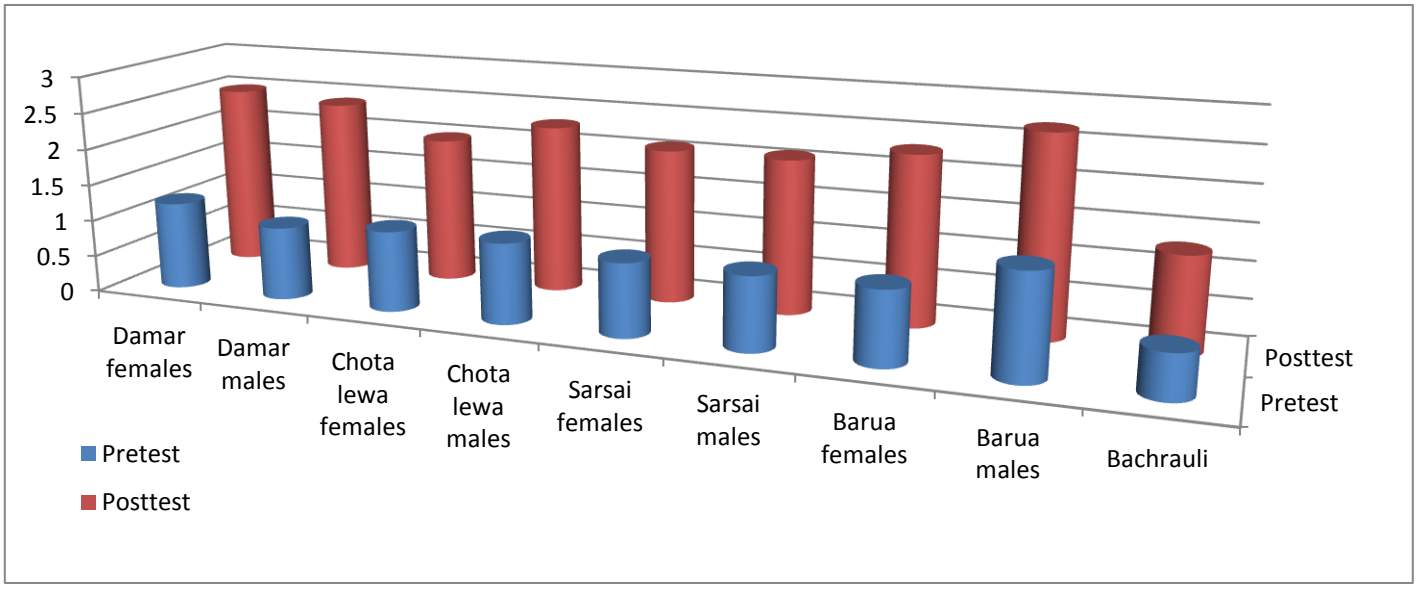
Figure #2:Average pretest and posttest scores for all students



For the total 332 applicable students, average pretest score was 1.0 and averaged posttest score was 2.1. Of the 113 males, average pretest score was 1.1 and average posttest score was 2.4. Of 219 females, average pretest score was 0.9 and average posttest score was 1.9. On average, female students showed significantly lower starting scores and degree of advancement than male students. However, a closer look at the data shows that this effect came almost solely from lower scores at a single school, Bachrauli PS. At Bachrauli PS students averaged 0.6 on the pretest and 1.3 on the posttest. As Bachrauli is an all-girls school, their low averages affected the girls' results but not the boys' results. Not counting Bachrauli, the average scores for females were pretest 1.1 and posttest 2.2, almost the same as the averages for boys. It is not clear why the averages for girls at Bachrauli are lower than at the other schools.

When a school-by-school comparison is done, the advancement of girls and boys is seen to be similar at most of the schools.

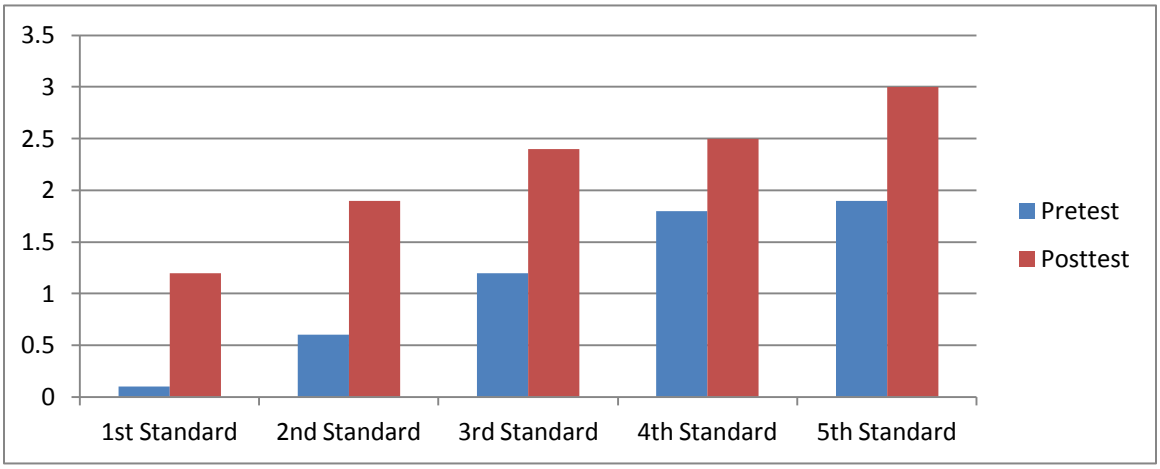
Figure #3: Pretest and posttest scores for female students and male students, separated by school



As can be seen in the above chart, the advancement of females and males was equal at Sarsai, showed females slightly higher than males at Damar, and showed males slightly higher than females at Chota lewa and Barua. This suggests that the program was roughly equally effective for both males and females, and that the lower scores at Bachrauli are due to other factors specific to the school.

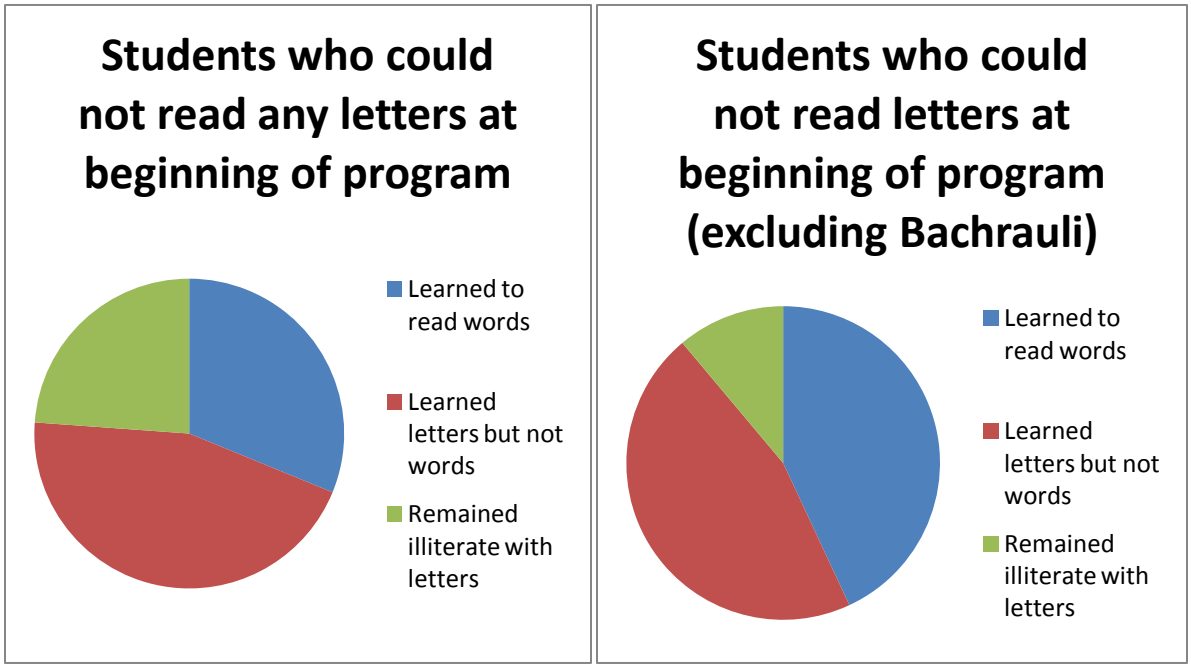
The data was also separated by class level to evaluate whether improvement was different for the different classes. While the starting scores were naturally lower for the youngest classes, the overall amount of advancement during the program was roughly similar across the class levels.

Figure #4: Pretest and Posttest scores by student class level



During the instructional period, students tended to move approximately 1 to 2 levels up regardless of where they had started. For 1st Standard, average scores moved from 0.1 to 1.2. For 2nd Standard, average scores moved from 0.6 to 1.9. For 3rd Standard, average scores moved from 1.2 to 2.4. For 4th Standard, average scores moved from 1.8 to 2.5. And for 5th Standard, average scores moved from 1.9 to 3.0.

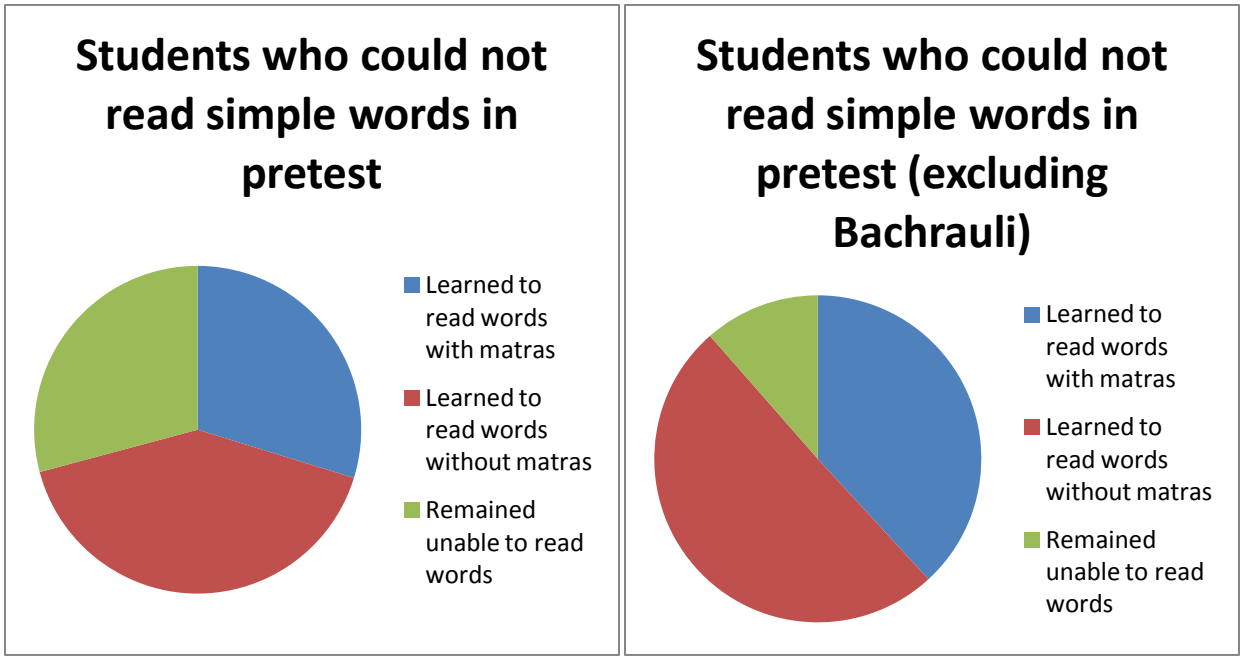
Figure #5: Advancement of students who could not read even letters at beginning of program



Of the 109 students who could not read letters when the program began, 83 learned letters (76%) and 34 learned to read words (31%). An issue with stagnation can be seen, as 24% of these students did not advance during the program. Analysis of the data showed that most of the stagnating students were at Bachrauli. Of 37 students who did not read letters in the Bachrauli pretest, only 16 learned letters (51%) and 3 learned to read words (8%). The chart on the right shows that results shift if Bachrauli is excluded.

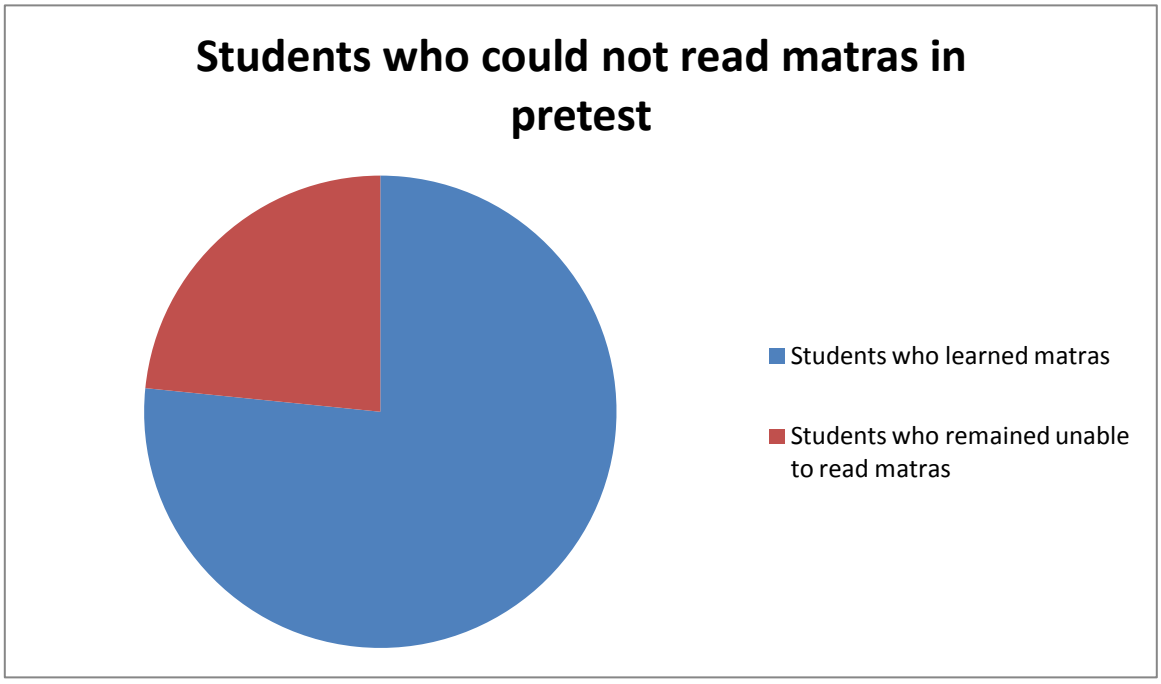
Outside of Bachrauli, the seven students who stagnated at this level only averaged 16 days of attendance, over 20 days below the average, with four of those seven students attending 11 or fewer days of instruction. That is likely the primary reason why these students did not attain the benefits of the program. At Bachrauli the attendance of the eighteen students who stagnated at this level averaged 23 days, with eight of the eighteen attending fewer than twenty days of class.

Figure #6: Advancement of students who could read letters but not words at beginning of program



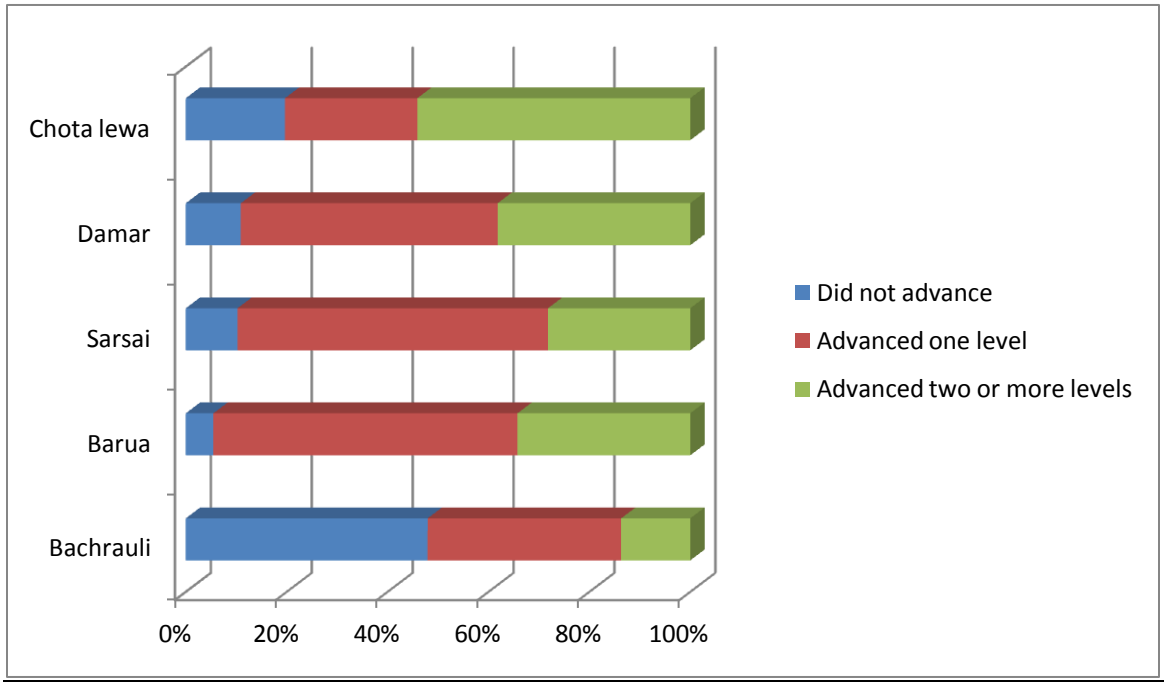
Of 277 students who could not read words, 153 learned to read words (55%) and 56 learned matras (20%).

Figure #7: Advancement of students who could read words but not matras at beginning of program



Of the 47 students in the program who could read words but not matras before the program began, 36 of them (77%) learned to read matras. The Bachrauli PS's data did not affect this result as there were very few students who were already reading words at Bachrauli when the pretest was undertaken.

Figure #8: Number of steps of advancement per student at each school



The above chart shows that in four of the five schools, student advancement was roughly similar. In those four schools only 10% of students who could not read before the program began failed to advance at least one level in their reading skills. Approximately 50% of the students advanced exactly one level, and 40% advanced two levels or more. However, at Bachrauli PS nearly half of the students (48%) did not advance during the program, and only 14% advanced two or more levels. As was noted above, many of the students who did not advance were those whose attendance during the program had been extremely irregular.

Conclusions

In conclusion, analysis shows that students at most schools advanced reliably and consistently during the period of the program. Over an average of 37 instructional days, 90% of students advanced in their reading skills at four of the five schools tested. The reading improvements held for both girls and boys, at all class levels from Standard 1 to Standard 5, and at all reading levels from students who could read words but not matras all the way down to students who could not even read a letter before the program began.

One school showed significantly worse testing results, with half of students failing to advance. Without on-site monitoring, the reason for this discrepancy is unclear. It is possible that the teachers at this school did not participate in the training adequately, did not effectively utilize the program, or did not attend regularly during the instructional period. It is possible that students at that school were unable to advance well for reasons outside of the schooling experience and the discrepancy has nothing to do with the teachers.

From this trial it is not possible to determine how much of student improvement was due to the Global Dream program. The fact that many of the students showed impressive improvement regardless of their starting level suggests that the Global Dream program is a meaningful addition to the school curriculum. However, it will be advantageous in the next trial to include control groups.