**Outcomes**

Pratham assigned ASER Centre to do a sample based testing of children in all Read India blocks. Tests were designed to evaluate children’s progress in the Read India goals of talking, expression, writing, comprehension and problem solving. A cohort of children would be followed for a period of three years so that overall progress over this entire phase of Read India could be tracked.

Of the government schools in 100 villages in every Read India block where Pratham works intensively, 25 government primary schools were randomly selected. From the enrollment registers of each grade, 10 children were randomly selected from Std 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 each. Thus the desired sample size was 25\*50 = 1250 children from each block. Since Pratham works in 250 blocks, the desired sample size for all of Read India was 312,500. For Std 1 and 2 children, assessment tools in math and language were used. Children in Std 3, 4 and 5 were assessed on language, math and English. 213,209 children were tested in both the baseline and the endline.

After much discussion, it was decided that in the first year, the assessment would be done by the Pratham teams in their own blocks. This decision was based on cost and time considerations and also on the fact that actual testing of children provides a lot of information to those who are implementing the program on the ground.

Observations that can be made from the data available are:

* In Andhra, where many para-teachers (short-term contract teachers appointed by the local village administration) doubled up as volunteers, and in Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, where volunteers generally taught in schools, the data indicates that a very high percentage of children - 60%, 77% (class1-2), and 88% respectively of all children in the block, were given academic support by volunteers. In Maharashtra, Orissa and Chhattisgarh, where community participation was heavily encouraged, approximately 59%, 45% and 37% children respectively were found to have been helped by volunteers. In all other states, 20% or a smaller percentage of children were helped by volunteers. The numbers indicate that large numbers of children were touched in each village, although how regularly and how intensively is a question difficult to answer.
* There seems to be a considerable difference between end-test scores and baseline scores for the same class across many states. The difference between the baseline scores of Std 3 and Std 4, for example, may be taken to indicate to what extent children had progressed in the previous year. For example in Andhra, the Std 3 baseline median language score was 55 and the Std 4 baseline score was 69. That is, the normal progress to be expected for Std 3 was to reach a median score of 69 by the end of the year. However, the median endline of Std 3 was found to be 83. This jump of about 14 percentage points (pp) over the ‘natural’ progress is quite significant. In the case of Punjab, however, this jump is only 5 pp and much lower in some other states. However, in Maharashtra, the baseline language median scores were so high (73 for Std 3 and 84 for Std 4) that the jump of 6 pp is still considerable.
* The above difference in scores and jumps is for the entire sample population tested, which includes those helped by volunteers and those not helped. So, do the children helped by volunteers register a comparatively higher jump than those who were not? The answer is not a clear “yes” except in Karnataka where the program was focused in only one block, in Punjab (Std 3-5) where the program was in collaboration with the government, and in Andhra Pradesh (Std 1-2 but not Std 3-5) where many para teachers volunteered in large numbers. This analysis is purely based on cumulative scores and may need some more in-depth analyses.
* In 2011-12, with activities planned to involve the entire population of children in learning camps and so on, the distinction between those helped by volunteers and those not helped by volunteers, may disappear altogether. In this case, it will be necessary to test children in a non-intervention block in order to generate a counterfactual.

The chart above depicts language and math baseline and endline scores by standard. Note that as mentioned in the narrative, the Std 1 endlines are higher than the Std 2 baselines. Similarly Std 3 endlines are higher than the Std. 4 baselines (in language only) and Std 4 endlines are higher than Std 5. baselines. *(Note – The Std 2 endline cannot be compared with the Std 3. Baseline since Std. 1 & 2 took one test, while Std. 3-5 took a different test.)*



The chart above shows the differentials between endlines and baselines. Positive difference shows depicts the additional improvement beyond the “natural progress” in learning of children, while negative difference (Std 3 & 4) depicts reduced improvement beyond the “natural progress” in learning of children.