

UJIYARI PANCHAYAT

Leveraging decentralised governance towards better retention of children in schools

Photo Credit: © UNICEF/Raman Sharma/2019

What is an Ujjyari Panchayat?

The Ujjyari Panchayat programme – a state-wide initiative to ensure school dropout-free Panchayats – was launched in April 2018 in Rajasthan. By August 2018, 1,844 out of 3,900 panchayats across the 33 districts of Rajasthan were declared “Dropout-free Ujjyari Panchayats.”

The experience of the Ujjyari Panchayat programme has showcased a surfeit of local solutions and strategies used by various panchayats and tehsils to identify out-of-school and dropout children, mainstream them and bring a positive change in the community’s outlook towards education.

Defining dropout/out-of-school children

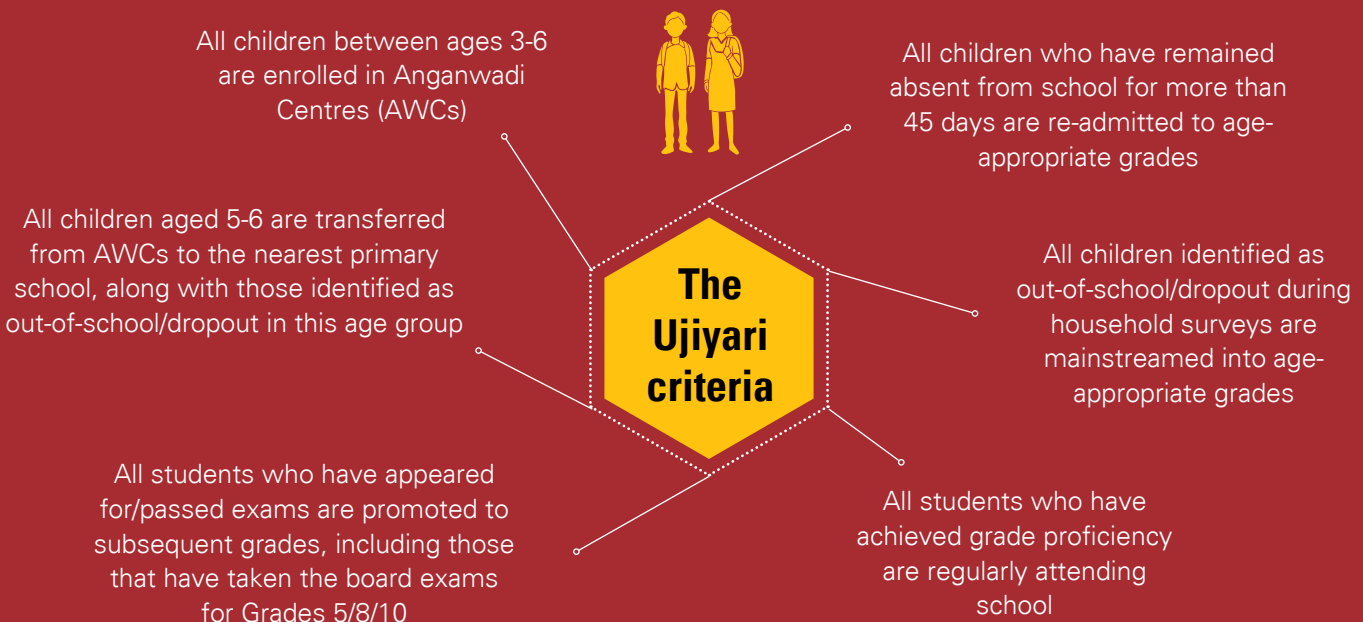
The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) defines an out-of-school child as a child who has been absent from school for a period of 45 days or more.

Source: https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/OoSC.pdf

UNICEF defines out-of-school children of pre-primary or compulsory school age as those who are not enrolled in and/or are not attending school. These are children

- who have never entered school or any kind of recognised education provision
- who have dropped out of school before completion of compulsory education.

Source: https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/2971/file/Improving_education_participation_report.pdf



Application authorised by the Sarpanch, PEEO, Panchayat Secretary and ICDS Lady Superintendent

Applications made by gram panchayats to declare themselves as Ujjari.

Data entry in Shala Darshan and Shala Darpan portals

Verification of Ujjari Panchayat applications by block and district level committees. Verification report submitted to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) officials at the state level

Applications meeting criteria set by the Shiksha Parishad at the state level declared Ujjari Panchayats, and PEEOs and Sarpanchs of such panchayats felicitated during Teachers' Day celebrations on September 5

STEP 4

Formal application for declaration of the Ujjari Panchayat prepared by the PEEO



STEP 3

Mainstreaming out-of-school and dropout children to ensure their retention in schools



STEP 2

Admission Mahotsav and enrolment drives organised during the admission period to create awareness about the Ujjari programme; and to ensure enrolment of all out-of-school or dropout children in local schools, and their mainstreaming into age-appropriate classes



The Education Department has announced that Ujjari Panchayats would get preference during implementation of state development schemes.

STEP 1

A household survey in all gram panchayats to determine the status of out-of-school children between the ages of 0-18 years



OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Bridge curriculum developed by the State Education Department for newly enrolled students

Additional classes organised for upto 45 days to bring newly enrolled students at par with the others

In cases where the number of newly enrolled students was more than 15, a new section started to ensure that they caught up with the mainstreamed students. Extra lessons for newly admitted students in case the number of such students was less than 15 and they had to attend regular classes with other students

Provision made to hire either a Basic School Teaching Certificate (BSTC) or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) trainee teacher to teach the bridge course. In case of absence of these teachers, Level 1 teachers were put in charge of mainstreaming activities

Children identified as out-of-school or dropout enrolled in local schools/AWCs

Rallies organised by schools, where students and teachers chanted slogans about literacy, enrolment and the importance of schooling

Pamphlets distributed to highlight the facilities available at local government schools

School Open Houses organised and parents invited to visit local schools to survey their facilities and attend information sessions on the importance of schooling

Local Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) leaders roped in to talk about the merits of schooling and the Ujyari programme

Panchayat meetings held to discuss the Ujyari programme with the wider community to encourage them to support teachers during the enrolment drive by convincing families to send their children to school

Data collection strategy developed by the Panchayat Elementary Education Officer (PEEO) and teachers

Ward-wise data collection by a team comprising 2-3 teachers and an Anganwadi Worker (AWW)

Cross-checking a random selection of survey data by a team of teachers to ensure quality data

Collation of all data into a survey register to tally the number of children in the panchayat and identify never-enrolled and dropout children during previous years

Data from survey registers uploaded on the Management Information System (MIS) portal (Shala Darshan) to enable monitoring by higher administrative officials

Verification and monitoring processes

State level

Shala Darshan and Shala Darpan portals used to track status of out-of-school/dropout children in each district, and district officials updated

Field visits conducted by Deputy Directors and Additional Deputy Directors to monitor programme progress in each district

District level

Regular updates from Block Elementary Education Officers (BEEOs) and PEEOs on enrolment and mainstreaming of out-of-school and dropout children

25% schools and AWCs of a block visited by District Verification Committees to physically verify survey data before certifying block level reports

Three-member District Verification Committees set up by District Collectors to verify applications received for Ujjiyari Panchayat status

Final status report presented by District Education Officer (DEO) (Secondary) to District Verification Committee and panchayats declared Ujjiyari only after applications meet all criteria as per Ujjiyari Guidelines

Block level

Regular updates to district officials regarding enrolment and mainstreaming activities completed at the school level

At least 25% or four schools and AWCs (whichever is higher) visited by the Committee in each panchayat to verify student records and household survey data

At least 5% households from survey records selected for physical verification and to tally the total number of children

Three-member Block Verification Committee to physically verify Ujjiyari applications and household survey data in the presence of Sarpanch and Ward Panch

A verification report prepared and submitted to the Block Development Officer (BDO), for submission of status report to the District Collector and DEO (Secondary)

Some innovative approaches adopted

Parents of out-of-school and dropout children were counselled in Baran and Barmer districts to convince them to enroll their children in schools and to ensure that children are not pulled out of school due to family responsibilities.



In Phagi, Jaipur, enrolment information of families that had migrated out of the gram panchayat was cross-checked to ensure that there were no gaps in data.

Wall markings were made to indicate completion of the household survey during the data collection process in Loyara, Udaipur. This helped ensure that no household was left out of the survey sample.

In Baran and Barmer districts, confidence of students was built and their grade competency improved through group work and peer mentoring.

Student awareness was given an impetus in Thur, Udaipur to encourage students to start conversations about schooling with their parents, families and the larger community.



Efforts required to retain Ujjari status

- Conducting constant dialogue with community members about benefits of literacy and compulsory schooling, with interventions from PRIs for lasting behavioural change among parents
- Galvanising active roles of local PRI members to ensure zero tolerance for cases of dropout or out-of-school children and to provide utmost support to strengthen AWCs and enhance the sense of commitment among field functionaries towards their responsibilities
- Connecting the benefits of local schemes to school enrolment to reduce dropout rates in local communities
- Linking vulnerable children and children in need of care and protection (CNCP) to social protection schemes such as the Palanhar scheme to take care of expenditure incurred by their foster families
- Ensuring that benefits and entitlements from Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) reach girl children at each stage of their lives
- Undertaking targeted outreach among communities susceptible to taking children out of school

“We have started focusing on our shortcomings. Due to rechecking of data and regular monitoring, we can see the gaps in our work and this helps us in bringing improvements. For example, we saw that many students had stopped coming to school as they found their homework to be excessive. We told our teachers to reduce the amount of homework but make it enough to engage the students and encourage them to come to school. We also inspire and motivate students during Bal Sabhas.”

Gajanand Sewak, PEEO
Rajakiya Uchcha Madhyamik Vidyalaya
Taliasar gram panchayat
Dungargarh block, Bikaner district

- Tracking children in the 0-2 years age group to enrol them in the AWC as soon as they turn three
- Updating MIS at the state level and Child Tracking System (CTS) at the district level to improve quality and undertaking gap assessments.



UNICEF's adolescent empowerment programming in Rajasthan focuses on increasing opportunities for education to reduce the vulnerability of girls and building their life skills to empower them with an enhanced ability to speak against early marriage and for child rights.

To this end, UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the Department of Women and Child Development, Department of Education and Department of Social Justice and Empowerment to build awareness, sensitisation and capacities among frontline workers and mobilise communities to make them active partners in planning and decision making. UNICEF is also strengthening the alliance of civil society organisations towards ending all forms of violence against children and women.

In its adolescent empowerment efforts, UNICEF has also actively worked for inclusion of child protection programming in schools of Rajasthan and for out-of-school children, with components such as strengthening of adolescent forums in and outside schools, self-defence trainings in schools and by giving an impetus to the enrolment of dropout girls in Open Schools. UNICEF's programming is facilitating access to various government schemes and programmes influencing children's education, among economically weaker sections, to ensure that entitlements reach all children and they can continue their education.





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