



ipa
INNOVATIONS FOR
POVERTY ACTION

Improving learning levels in schools

Lessons from Randomized Evaluation

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JPAL Africa Launch



Low Quality of Education



- Low learning levels:
 - India (2006) in Std 5 about half of all children are still unable to fluently read a short story of Std 2 level difficulty
 - Ghana (2010): 21% of P3 students read P2 sentences; 21% can do two digit additions
- Profile of students and composition of classes have changed
 - Less help at home
 - Classes with varying levels



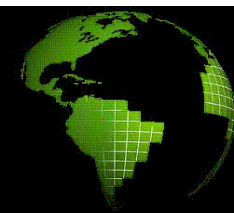
Improving General School Quality



Improving general school quality, without other reforms, does not necessarily help children if they have not achieved the basic skills

Intervention	Impact on Basic Skills
Providing free textbooks	Marginal (high achievers only)
Providing supplies only (flip charts, teaching materials)	No
Adding Teachers	No

→ Need to go beyond inputs and beyond general school improvements and to change class organization



Involving the Community

- Growing belief that the involvement of beneficiaries is essential to make services work for poor people
- Increasing number of “beneficiary participation” components (users’ committees, parents-teachers associations etc.)
- In India, 8% know about Village Education Committees; 42% parents overestimated their child’s level
- Evidence on how to encourage effective participation most effectively is mixed



Outline



- Introduction: Low Learning Levels
- Looking Inside and Outside the Classroom
Black Box
 - Remedial Education through Community volunteers
 - Dividing Classes Based on Ability Levels
- Scaling up Ideas that Work

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Remedial Education in India



Balsakhi (“friend of the child”)

- Pull out program during school hours
- Class taught by community members
- Evaluation: in public schools in Vadodara, India

Read India

- Volunteers trained 4 days as part of community mobilization
- Teach low performing students in communities or in school
- Evaluation in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand

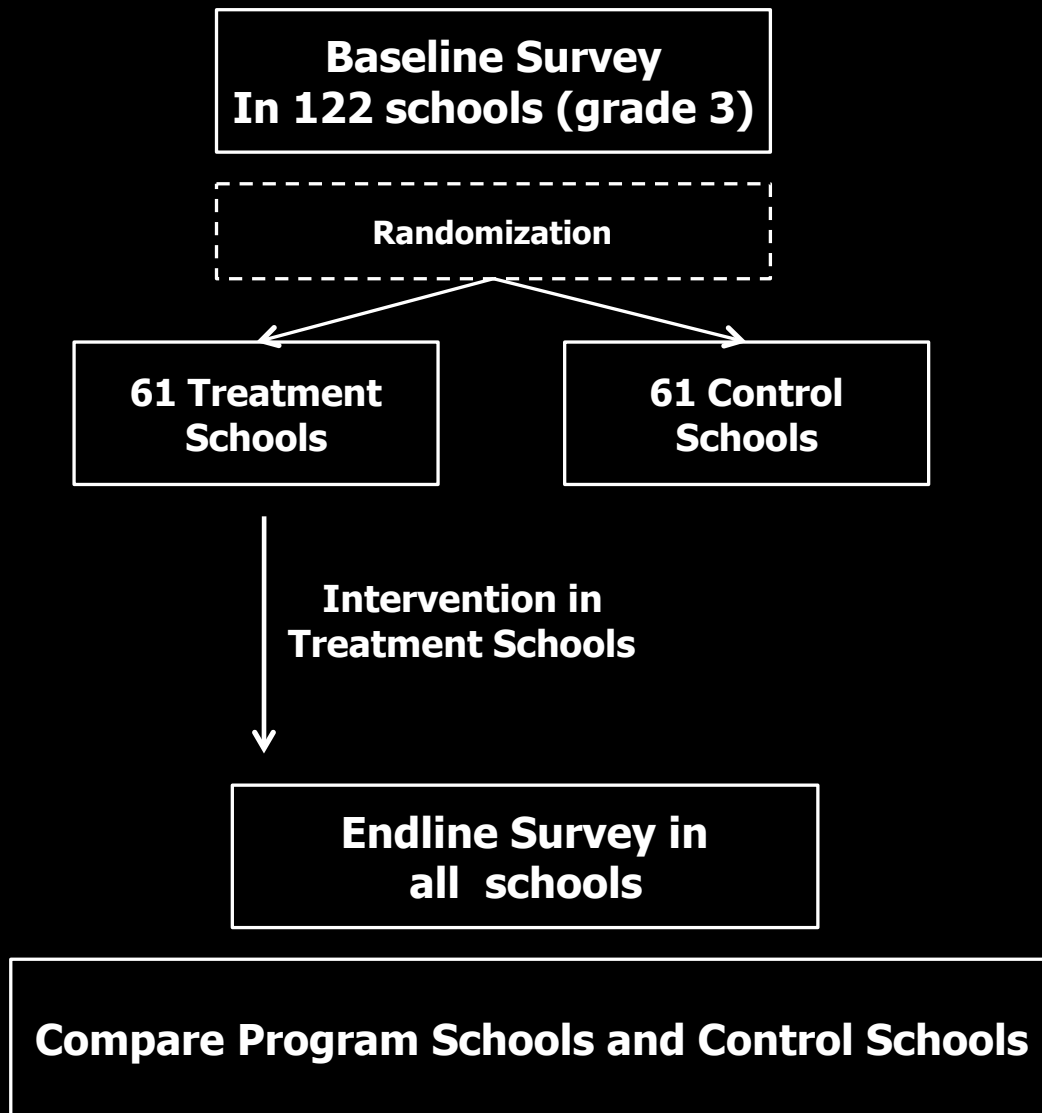
Research Design



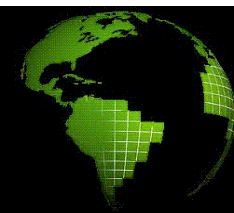
We could have started our evaluation in a place where Pratham had already implemented the program

- Compare children in remedial classes and in non remedial classes
 - There were very different in the first place!
 - Compare program schools and non program schools
 - Pratham may have chosen the worse schools, or the most motivated schools
- We need to compare apples and apples

Randomized Evaluation



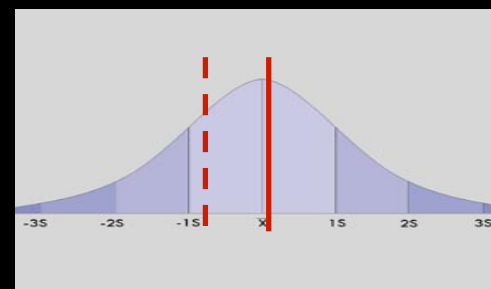
Randomization ensures that all schools are in average similar, before the program starts – so that any difference Measured later is due to the effect of the program



Large Impacts

Balsakhis

- 0.25 std dev in average
- At least 0.6 std dev for targeted students



Read India:

Baseline: 45% could not read words, 15% nothing at all

At endline, went from...

From Nothing to letter



Read India

50%

No RI

35%

Only Letters to stories



37%

24%

Understanding Program's components



- Impact of volunteer program was compared to:
 - Mobilizing community through only information on VECs, and on education levels (UP)
 - Providing only materials (Bihar, UK)
- Lessons
 - Focusing on the child's level is key
 - Providing only inputs is not sufficient
 - Encouraging participation was most effective when direct action was encouraged

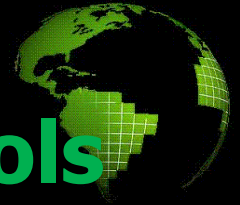


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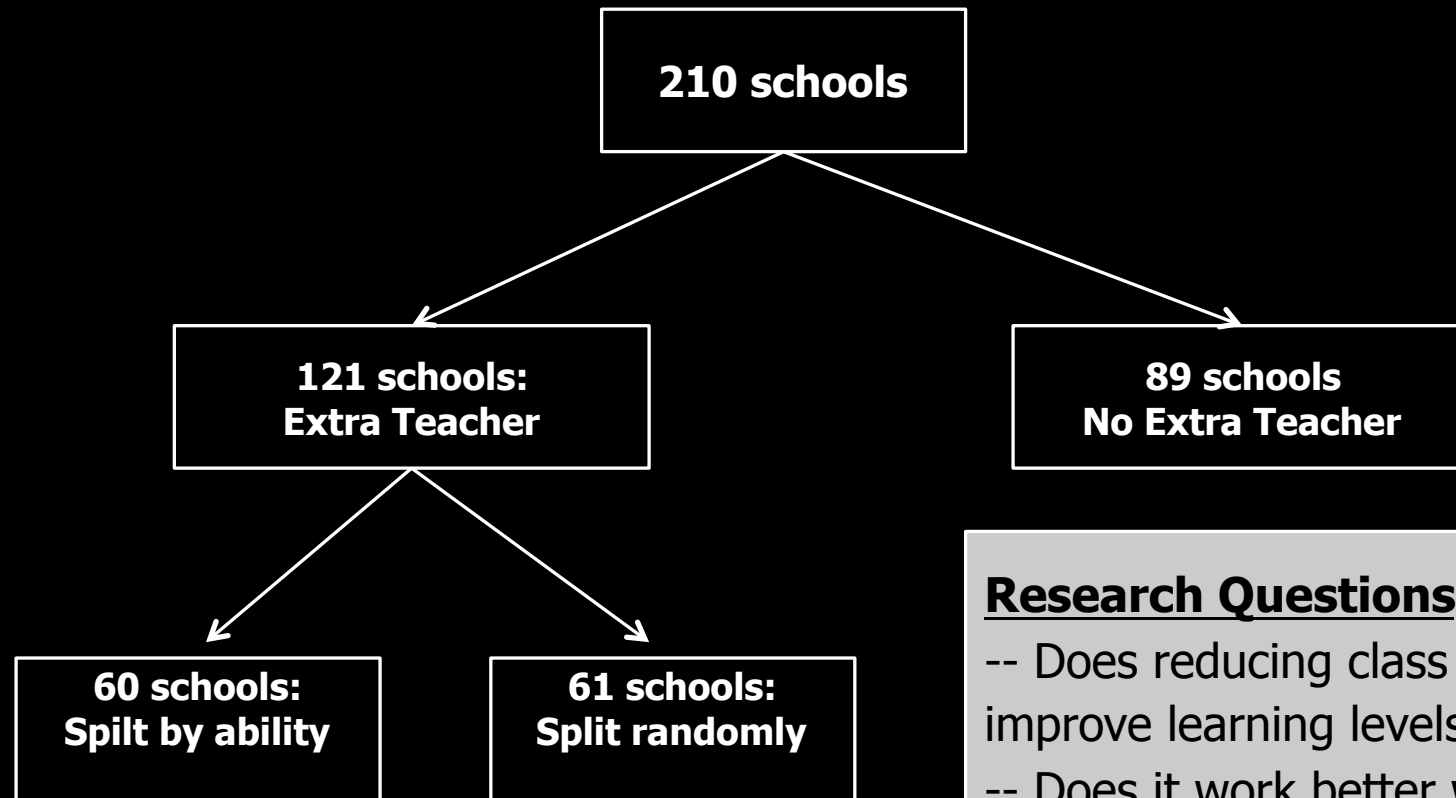
Extra teacher in Kenya primary schools



- Challenges
 - Large class size
 - Teacher absenteeism
 - Heterogeneous classes
 - Low completion rates
- Extra Teacher Program
 - Recruited and contract renewed by SMC
 - In some classes, classes split by ability
 - In some schools, the Extra Teachers were monitored by SMCs



Research design



Among those schools, half of them had the Extra teacher monitored by the SMCs

- Research Questions**
- Does reducing class size help improve learning levels?
 - Does it work better when classes are split by ability
 - Can CMS involvement impact teachers presence?

More Focused Teaching is Effective



- Dividing by ability levels increased test scores for all students (for low and high performers)
 - After 18 months, difference of 0.14 st dev in test scores
 - One year after the program ended, difference was still there
- Students may benefit from more focused teaching and perhaps more teacher effort
- The program was more effective when SMCs were tasked to monitor the extra teacher
 - Otherwise Teachers' attendance decreased

Outline

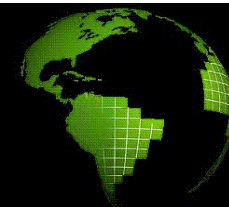


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Understanding Cost Effectiveness



- What matters it not only the impact of the program, but also its compact compared to its cost
- To achieve a similar goal, how do programs compare to each other?
- For the same amount of money, what impacts can we achieve on learning outcomes?
- For the same impacts, what is the difference in costs between programs?
- Remedial education and extra teachers were some of the most cost effective programs



Taking these insights elsewhere

- Understanding contexts and anticipate challenges
 - No Pratham-like NGO's
 - Maybe less of a volunteers' culture?
 - No unemployed trained teachers like in Kenya
 - Employing people is more expensive than in India
 - Adapt insights from studies to other contexts
 - Understand *why* it worked is key
 - Insights from several studies can (should!) be combined
- The actual intervention may look quite different

Key Insights



- Easy to teach students how to read in a relatively short time, using a simple methodology and low-cost materials (India)
- Key is to focus instruction at the right level. E.g, teaching the students lagging behind separately (India, Kenya)
- Low qualified individuals can be trained in a short time (4 to 15 days) to teach basic literacy and numeracy (India).
- Empowering local school committees to hire community teachers and monitor their performance can maximize the benefits (Kenya)
- In order to involve communities most effectively: encourage direct action with a clear target; Give SMCs a specific and simple role and task as opposed to broad school management roles

From replication to scale-up



Often a new evaluation may be required

- Does the new design work, and in a “scale-up” context?
- Informed by policy makers’ questions (alternative programs)
- Operational questions

