



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2022 – 2023**



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## Our QUEST – Nilesh Nimkar



Writing this foreword to the annual report provides me an opportunity to pause and reflect on the journey of the organization and its contribution to the education sector. Sixteen years ago, the founders of QUEST decided that we would concentrate our efforts on strengthening the public education system. Over the years, we have successfully collaborated with the Government departments in several districts of Maharashtra and implemented our programs for quality education. It is heartening to see that the teachers and Anganwadi Workers who have received inputs from QUEST are continuing to use the materials and teaching-learning practices even after QUEST has exited from the project location.

Teachers who attended QUEST's courses in the past are now inviting QUEST to work with their district administration and schools. Some of the children who were studying in QUEST's Shikshan Samruddhi Kendra in the early years are now working as 'Balmitras' in these centres. In Wada Taluka, where we have our headquarters, QUEST has become a sought-after employer among the educated local youth. It has been an impactful journey!

Quality education for rural and tribal children is emerging as a concern among young adults, who are aspiring to commit their time and energy to work in this field. The Tarabai Modak Rural Education Fellowship launched by QUEST has attracted hundreds of applications from all over Maharashtra, resulting in a competitive selection process. QUEST's Sonale Centre is pulsating with discussions, debates, theory sessions, and activities for the Fellows throughout the year. Many of the graduated Fellows are working on QUEST's projects in various districts and motivating others like them to join the sector.

To meet the needs of a growing team and an ever-widening scope of work, we decided to build a new campus at Sonale. It is an ambitious project, which will have 14 buildings with a total construction area of around 50,000 square feet. There will be four centres, devoted to specific aspects of quality education. For the first building, we successfully



raised funds through crowdfunding. Our well-wishers contributed wholeheartedly and the construction of this building will be completed soon.

While much of our work is centered on the capacity building of teachers and educators, we are now looking at adding a new stakeholder group to our mix – parents. We are starting new pilot projects to work with parents, using a combination of technology and print material. Working with our ed-tech partners, we are developing and testing new apps for parents, which will be made available on a wider scale in the near future.

This work would not be possible without our partners and contributors who have supported us at every stage to achieve our goal of spreading quality education at scale. I take this opportunity to thank all of them and look forward to receiving the same support and energy from everyone for this cause.





# ABOUT US

## VISION

An egalitarian society where every individual leads a dignified life.



## MISSION

To enrich the learning experience of under-served children through the professional development of teachers and educators and through parent awareness.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Develop innovative solutions to bridge gaps in the field of ECE and Elementary Education



Demonstrate the replicability of quality education interventions at scale to interpret and effectively implement government policy



Build a team of inspired professionals committed to enhancing the quality of education



# INTERVENTIONS



'Palavee' means tender leaves. This is QUEST's program to strengthen the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Service in Anganwadis through systematic input to Anganwadi Workers and Supervisors.

An extension of Palavee program to primary schools, to enhance student learning outcomes in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in early grades, through capacity building of teachers



The Sanskrit word 'Anupad' means step-by-step. This is QUEST's Level-based Learning program to address the needs of children who are trailing behind their grade appropriate achievement level, through capacity building of teachers

Centres to strengthen the foundation of elementary school children through active, collaborative, child centered learning which helps to generate pedagogical knowhow. Trained 'Balmitras' from QUEST's Anutai Wagh Balmitra Fellowship work with children in these centres.



A program for ongoing professional development of elementary school teachers and educators through blended mode courses (face-to-face sessions + online mentoring). The Marathi name, Samajoon Umajoon means understanding in depth.

A program for teaching of English as a second language through phonetically controlled text, listening and speaking using basic sentence frames.



Tarabai Modak Rural Education Fellowship - To create a community of inspired and trained professionals who can provide support to teachers through governmental or non-governmental organizations.

Goshtarang is QUEST's program where theatre meets pedagogy. It introduces the world of story books to children by applying theatre to perform story books, creating a unique learning experience that helps increase their literacy levels.

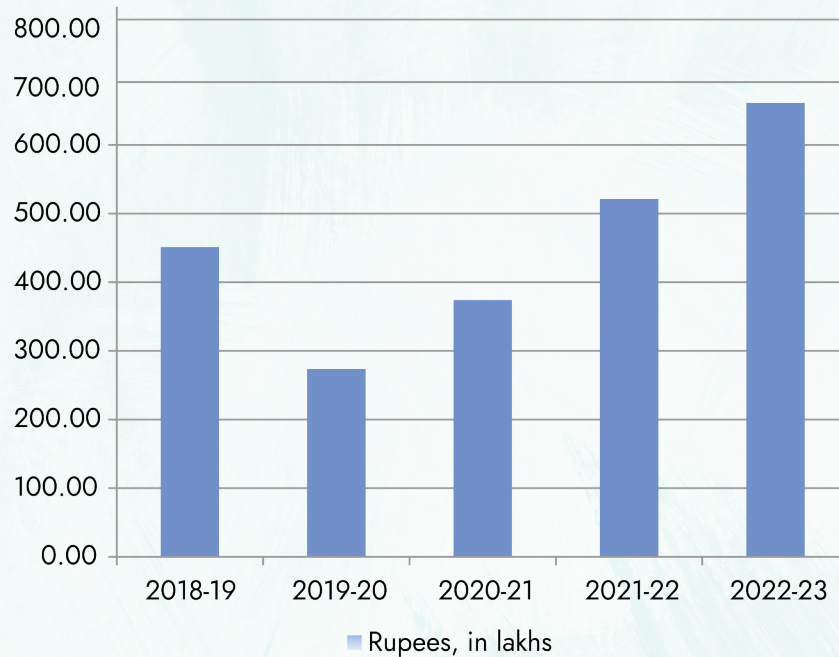




# GROWTH AND IMPACT

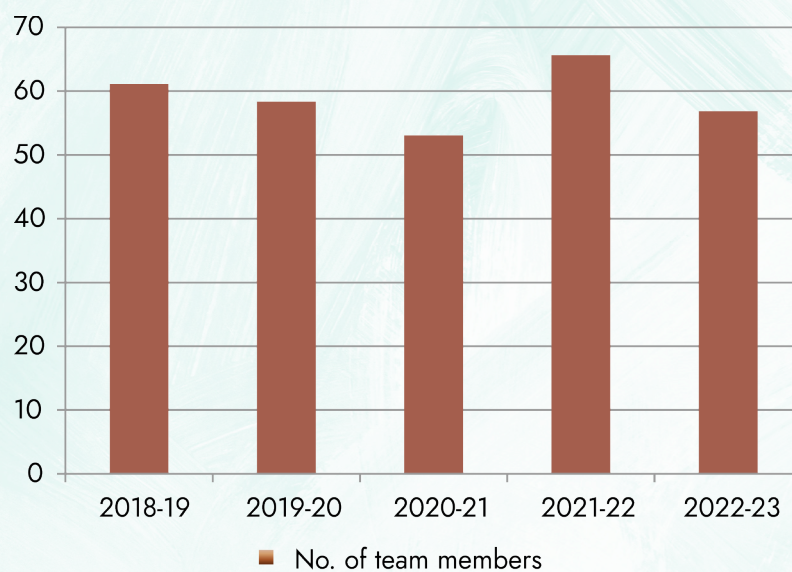
QUEST's financial growth in the last five years

## Grants & Donations



Growth of QUEST's team size in the last five years

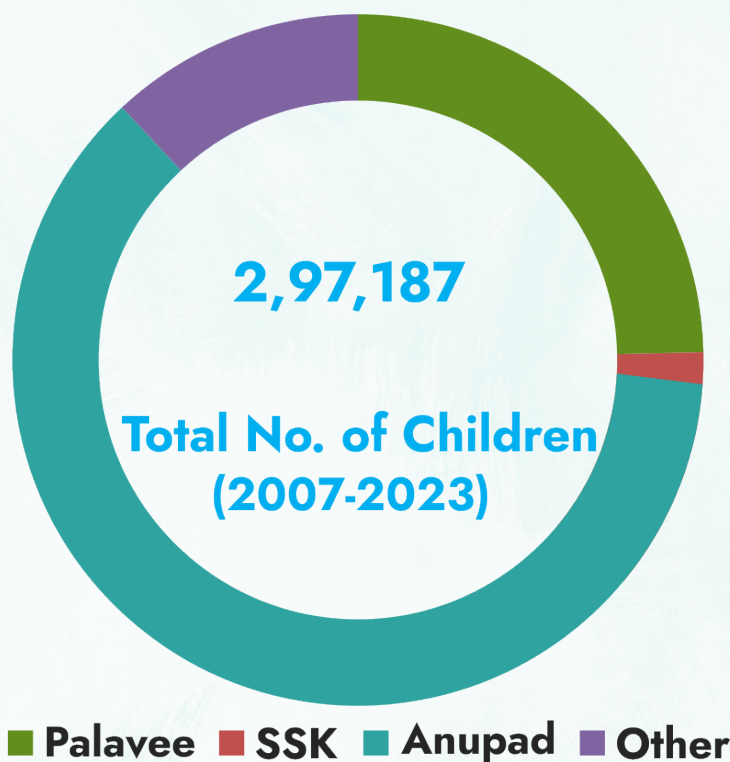
## Personnel



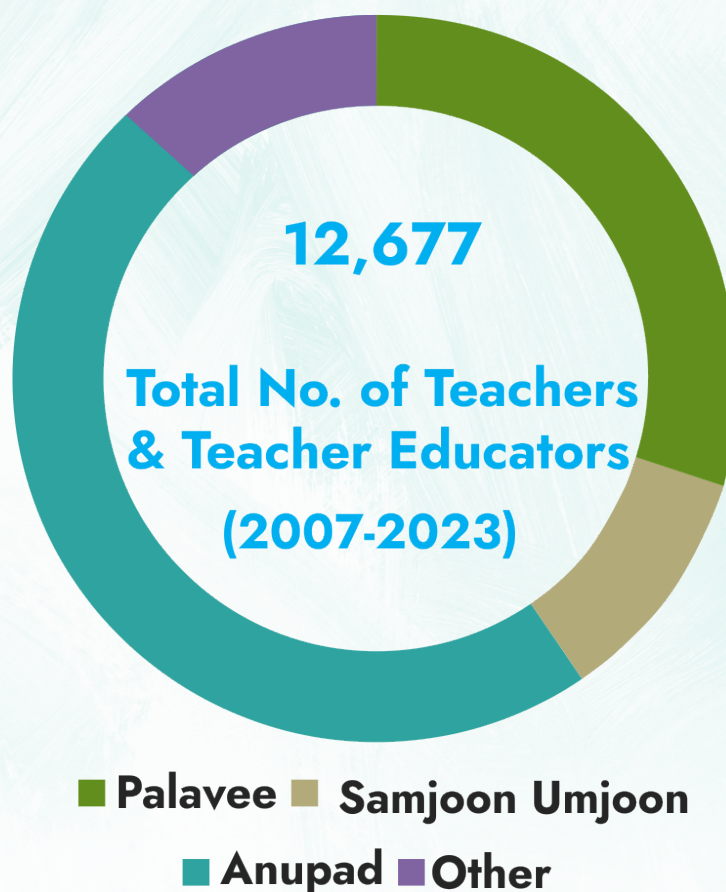
In 2022-23, QUEST supported 35 Fellows under the various Fellowship Programs



### Outreach – children



### Outreach - Educators





# QUEST'S NEW CAMPUS

## The vision of the new campus being developed by QUEST –

- To create and nurture a community of professionals in the education sector working to enrich the learning experiences of children
- A vibrant space which will bring together educators, academicians and artistes to consolidate existing knowledge

## There will be four Centres in this campus –

Centre for Fellows and Young Professionals in Education

Centre for Teachers Professional Development

Centre for Performing and Visuals Arts in Education

Centre for Educational Research and Development

In October-November 2022, QUEST ran a campaign to raise funds for the construction of one of the buildings at Sonale. With the wholehearted support of our well-wishers, we were able to meet our fundraising target.

In the first phase, the 'Educational Centre' is being constructed. It is visualized as a place where QUEST's fellows will learn, study, practice and stay during the period of the Fellowships. It will include a training hall, a small office space and a guest room. The building is a Ground+1 structure with a total built-up area of approximately 2000 sq. ft. The outer structure will be ready by June 2023 and the Centre will be functional by December 2023.



In the next phase, a hostel block for the Fellows will be constructed.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



In 2022-23, the **Palavee program** for strengthening Anganwadis was operational in the following places:

## Parbhani

Launched in March 2019

Location – Manwat and Pathari blocks

219 Anganwadis, 8972 children

Project supported by H T Parekh Foundation

## Amravati & Yavatmal

Location – Teosa block, Amravati and Ner block, Yavatmal

293 Anganwadis, 6614 children

Project supported by Motivation for Excellence & Tata Trusts

## Palghar

Location – Wada block

42 Anganwadis, 963 children

Project supported by HDFC Life, Esmech Equipment Pvt. Ltd.

## Gadchiroli

Launched in April 2022

159 Anganwadis, 3237 children

Project supported by Motivation for Excellence & Indira Foundation

## Raigad – Khalapur block

Launched in December 2021

173 Anganwadis, 4098 children

## Raigad – Mangaon block

Launched in June 2022

240 Anganwadis, 4529 children

Project supported by Mahanagar Gas Limited

## Hingoli

Launched in June 2022

16 Anganwadis, 555 children

Project supported by Edelgive Foundation

## Outcome of Palavee Program

The QUEST team conducted 'School Readiness Test' with the children in all the Palavee interventions in March 2023. There is 62% average improvement in the school readiness levels compared to the levels last year.





## Activities and Materials under the Palavee Program



Action Song

Demo of Read Aloud



Palavee pocket board for picture cards and Library on a string

Attendance Chart in Anganwadi, signed by children, AW Worker and Helper



Children scribbling on the board which is placed at their height





## Palavee Plus (FLN) program under The Collaborators for Transforming Education (CTE)

Launched in July 2020

Location – 10 clusters in Hingoli district

163 teachers, 4142 children

Supported by EdelGive Foundation

## Anupad Program under The Collaborators for Transforming Education (CTE)

Location – 20 schools in Hingoli district

35 teachers, 265 children

Supported by EdelGive Foundation



In the ongoing **Anupad** project in Hingoli under the Collaborators for Transforming Education (CTE) program, the QUEST team conducted an interesting activity with teachers and children in Jambhrun. They created a map of their village in the school compound, using simple materials.

The children were so enthused by this activity that all of them started identifying their own houses and friends' houses on the map. They could also grasp the relation between location of farms, water sources and human habitation.





In 2022-23, QUEST's Shikshan Samruddhi Kendras were operational in 7 places in Wada Taluka : Dadhare, Moj, Baliwali, Sonale, Devgaon, Uchat and Varale.

Outreach – Grade 1 to 4 - 436 children;

Grade 5 to 7 (Anupad LBL program) – 347 children

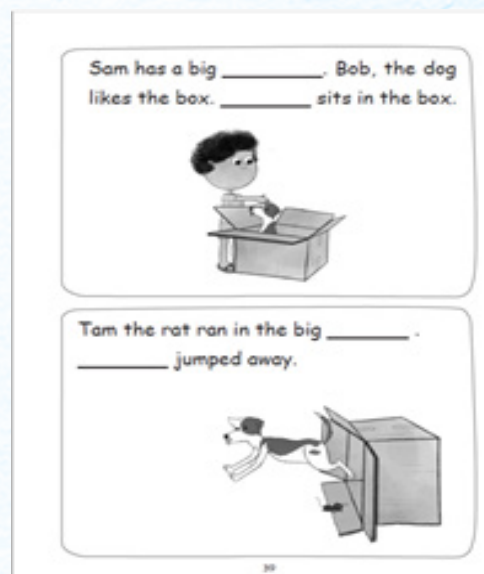
Supported by –

Metores Trust, Nelson Global Products India Private Limited, Everest Kanto Cylinder Ltd., Esmech Equipment Pvt. Ltd. & Deepti Tamhane

## Let's Learn English

QUEST has initiated an English Language Teaching program for children of Elementary grades in 2022-23. Around 170 children from 9 Zilla Parishad schools of Wada and Vikramgad blocks are part of the year-long pilot program. The program is intended as a solution for teaching English particularly to the classrooms in the under-served sections of rural Maharashtra.

During the pilot, the QUEST team members have been conducting workshops with teachers to discuss, demonstrate and practice the inputs in English. Most of the Teaching Learning Material (TLM) has been prepared in-house by QUEST.

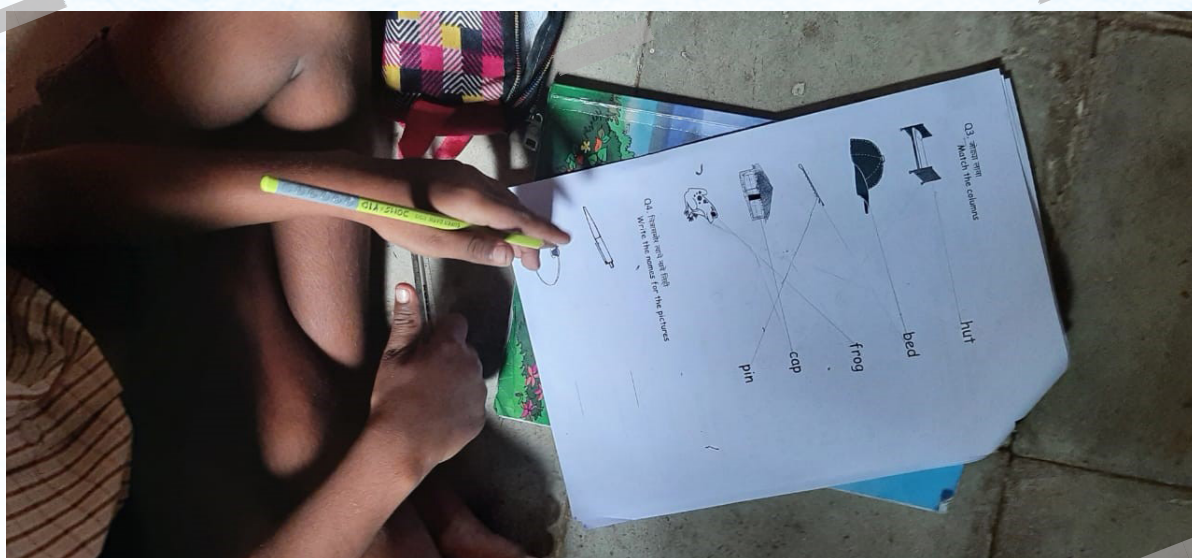


Enthusiastic and committed teachers who are participating in this pilot are a valuable resource of the program. Here is a testimonial by Dnyaneshwar Dukale, ZP school, Dongripada, Vikramgad, who joined the pilot program in August 2022.



“Earlier I tried conventional methods for teaching English alphabet, word reading, sentence reading etc. Some children could read words after much effort but they could not tell the meaning. When I heard about the pilot of Let’s Learn English program by QUEST, I immediately volunteered for it. In the beginning I was doubtful whether the children will be able to cope with the inputs. But the speaking-listening activities such as discussing the day’s calendar, Picture talk using colourful cards slowly created an interest among the children. This happened primarily because the medium of conversation was not necessarily English. As with all QUEST programs, we were encouraged to use children’s vocabulary and their language in the beginning, which was gradually interspersed with English words and eventually sentences. The children started liking the fact that they could speak about objects from their daily lives in a different language. I believe that this was primarily due to the methods that have been devised to give the inputs.

The program is also helping me personally to a great extent. I was hesitant while using the English in everyday chores. Activities such as sentence frames and story reading provide helpful inputs for me to understand the nuances of the language such as sentence structure, syntax etc.”





# RESOURCE SUPPORT TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

QUEST team provides capacity building and academic support to various organizations in Maharashtra and other states. These organizations also use the teaching learning materials developed by QUEST, translated into their local language as required.

## Anupad Level Based Learning Program

A B Goregaonkar School, Goregaon, Mumbai  
Pashchim Khandesh Bhilla Seva Mandal, Nandurbar  
Sondara Gurukul, Beed

## Early Childhood Education & Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

Earth Focus, Madhya Pradesh  
Livo Link, Odisha  
Khoj, Melghat  
S B Patil School, Pune

## Library & Literature

Pratham Education Foundation

## Mathematics for Early Grades

Prarthana Education Society, Bangalore  
Care India





# VOICES FROM THE GROUND

## **Surekha Jawalage, Teacher, ZP Primary School, Indira Nagar, Vasmat (Dist. Hingoli)**

One of my students, Anjali, was extremely quiet in the class. She didn't play with other children, or participate in the class-work. I was clueless how to deal with her. When I attended the training by QUEST, organized by DIET, I learnt many activities for teaching language and mathematics. It was a very different approach and technique. I started implementing the 10-week plan given by QUEST. Most importantly, I was able to get Anjali to participate.

I started accepting what she spoke in her home language, which made her feel that the teacher was willing to listen to her. Slowly, she started enjoying stories, singing action songs with others. Now she scribbles something in her book and reads out to me what she has written. She participates in games and likes to look at picture books. I am happy to see her progress in the past few months. It makes me realize that every child can learn... we as teachers need to change our teaching techniques and approach.



## **Gangadhar Jogdand, Teacher, Khajmapur, Hingoli**

One of my students, Kanhaiya Gaikwad, was in grade 1 during covid lockdown. I tried to teach him the alphabet. But I did not succeed. In the QUEST training, I learnt that each alphabet (akshara) has a

name, a sound and a symbol. I have started teaching the children to recognize these. They are able to associate the symbol with the sound. Now Kanhaiya is not only able to recognize the aksharas, but is able to read and write short text as well. Children are able to learn quite quickly with these methods. If I give them a topic, they can write a few sentences. During circle time, we use picture cards to talk about a bird, a flower or an animal. I show them a picture and ask them to write about it. Even the average students are now learning fast.





## Vishal Jadhav, Deputy CEO, Parbhani

In many places, the Anganwadi is viewed as a khichadi distribution centre. But I must say that the Palavee program has helped to change the image of the Anganwadi. The Anganwadi Workers have gained confidence. Even the supervisors have gained confidence and are supporting the Anganwadi Workers to do well. The Anganwadi Helpers' role was limited to keeping the Anganwadi clean, bringing the children to the class and cooking food for them. But the Palavee program has even trained the Anganwadi Helpers, who are now participating in the classroom activities. The work of Palavee is carried out in a systematic and planned manner. The education provided under Palavee is resulting in the development of leadership qualities among children.



## Darshana Marbade, Sarpanch, Talegaon Thakur, Amravati

There are 9 Anganwadis in my village. We received a list from the Palavee team, to supply specific items such as blackboard, bucket, mats, plastic bottles etc. In the Gram Panchayat, we had made a provision for materials for only one Anganwadi. I managed to get funds from some other schemes for the remaining 8 Anganwadis, and bought the materials for all.



As a parent, I have seen a lot of change in my daughter who goes to one of the Anganwadis. She tells me everything that she learns there. She insisted that I should create a specific place at home to keep a handkerchief to wipe her nose, like in the Anganwadi! She has learnt basic counting. The Anganwadi worker and helper conduct very good activities, due to which my daughter is making very good progress.



# FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS



Batch of 2022-23



**Nikhil Pujari**

I didn't have any experience of working with children. In the Goshtarang Fellowship, I became aware of children's literature and how to perform the stories for children. We were not only telling stories but also conducting library activities with children to enhance reading and writing. Later in the year we conducted workshops with Anganwadi Workers. It was a great experience to motivate them to shed their inhibitions to enact a story.

**Nikhil Thok**

The grey costume of the Goshtarang Team was familiar to most children in schools around Sonale. The previous batches had already created that relationship! As soon as we entered a school, the children would surround us, calling out, "Tai, Dada..." I was most touched when one of the students actually drew a picture of me! The children gave us a lot of energy, which pushed us to perform every day with the same energy and dedication.



**Ankush Bharti**

For me, an important opportunity during the Goshtarang Fellowship was becoming a facilitator of workshops for children and Anganwadi Workers. Initially I was trying to teach the children, but I realized that the children were discovering theatre techniques on their own. I learnt a lot from seeing their learning process. The Anganwadi Workers were quite focused - "Will my children understand the story if I perform this way?" Some of them sent us video recordings of their storytelling and asked for our feedback. It was a rewarding experience.



**Priyanka Kotwal**

In the Goshtarang Fellowship, we browse through many stories and select which ones we would like to perform. We do not change the text from the book at all – our responsibility is to tell the story as it appears in the book. I learnt the importance of planning and precision to ensure quality of our performance. Moving forward, I will be conscious about the quality of my work, whether it is puppet shows for children or any other performance.





## Stories performed in 2022-23



### Workshops on Storytelling for AW Workers conducted by Goshtarang Fellows

The Goshtarang Fellows conducted Storytelling workshops with Anganwadi Workers of QUEST's Palavee program. It was an enjoyable experience for the Fellows as well as the participants. The Fellows honed their skills as facilitators, while the AW workers learnt new ways of using their voice and body language for storytelling. "Storybooks contain a lot of fun, and we can tell stories in a meaningful way – this is what I learnt in the workshop," said one of the participants.



### Ex-Fellows of Goshtarang @ Neev Literary Festival

Vardhan, Mahendra and Ram - Goshtarang Fellows from the 2019-20 batch - participated in the Neev Literary Festival at Bangalore in November, 2022. Their storytelling sessions and poetry presentations were a great hit! Over 2500 children and adults attended these performances over 3 days. The Fellows were happy to note that language was not a barrier at all, and everyone enjoyed the stories whether they were performed in Marathi, Hindi or English.



**Supported by** - Servier India Pvt Ltd, Agiliad Technologies Pvt Ltd,  
Praveen Industries, Neev Academy and Individual donors



## Goshtarang Fellowship Felicitation event

A grand event was held on April 2, 2023 to felicitate the Goshtarang fellows of the current batch as well as the batch of 2020 who had missed a felicitation due to the covid lockdown. The event was a big success! The graduating fellows performed stories to a full house. In a panel discussion, they shared their experiences of the Fellowship process. Chief guest Sanjana Kapoor commended the work wholeheartedly.

**"In theatre, half the work is done by the audience – they are imagining things with the actors. Through Goshtarang, QUEST is creating access to theatre for children and teachers – access to stories, ideas and imagination. The Fellows are lucky that they are part of this work." Sanjana Kapoor**



**Batch of 2020**



**Batch of 2023**



## TMRE FELLOWSHIP

### **Tarabai Modak Rural Education (TMRE) Fellowship**

The Tarabai Modak Rural Education (TMRE) Fellowship is a 1 year-long residential fellowship program based in Sonale, Palghar. This Fellowship is designed for young persons who wish to make a difference in the Education sector. It provides an immersive experience to understand the nuances of working in rural and tribal areas to impart quality education to disadvantaged children.

### **Batch of 2022-23**

Eleven fellows were selected for the second batch of TMRE Fellowship. They arrived in Sonale in June 2022 from various parts of Maharashtra and with diverse educational backgrounds. A demanding schedule awaited them, with theory workshops and practical sessions. During the workshop on Pedagogy of Mathematics, many of said that they understood concepts like fractions and using carry-over in subtraction clearly for the first time!

Their initial practical sessions were conducted in Anganwadis and schools near Sonale. Later in the year, the Fellows were placed with QUEST's projects for field work. All of them gained a variety of experiences while teaching children, assisting QUEST's resource persons to conduct teacher training and interacting with government functionaries.

To read profiles of the TMRE Fellows 2022-23, please visit <https://tmrefellowship.wordpress.com/current-tmre-fellows-2022-23-2/>

**Supported by** - Durga Desai Foundation, Ceramet Consultant Pvt Ltd,  
Rambha Charitable Trust, Nelson Global Products India Pvt Ltd







Mandar Mali



Mayuri Tawade



Narendra Bansod



Pradeep More



Priya Wadekar



Damini Bhoge



Himani Dhalkar



# STORIES FROM THE FIELD

## (Written by TMRE Fellows)

### Our young copywriters

~ Akshay Jawane

I was doing my on-field assignment for TMRE Fellowship in the school in Lingi in Hingoli district. The school was 20-25 km away from the main city. I used to get there by driving my bike on a dirt road which ran through turmeric fields. As the villagers were busy with farming throughout the day, the village looked deserted when I went to school in the afternoon. The population of that village was hardly three to four hundred. There was only one shop in the village.



I was working with grade 4 children in this school. There were only 10 students in the class. The teacher would stack up the benches near a wall to make space for group work in the center of the classroom. Initially I conducted some math activities. Once the children got used to my visits, I decided to give them an interesting activity – writing an advertisement.

On the first day of this activity, I took copies of an advertisement for a cricket tournament. The children were curious. I told them that we were going to see an advertisement.

“Advertisement? What’s that?” asked Manasi. The others also looked blank. “Haven’t you seen an advertisement?” I asked.

“No,” they replied in unison.

“Haven’t you seen any hoardings or posters in your village?”

Another ‘No’ in unison.



In a flash, I saw the explosion of advertisements around me when I was studying in Pune while I stood here in front of the children in Lingi who were blissfully unaware of it. I distributed the prints to



the children. At first they noticed the pictures and started showing them to each other. I told them to read the text and said, "If you don't understand any word, please ask me." I was bombarded with questions.

"What is collaboration?" Ayush asked. "What does hat trick mean?" Manasi asked. "What is 'lucky draw'?" Aradhya asked. I explained the meanings to the best of my ability and started breaking down the components of the advertisement.

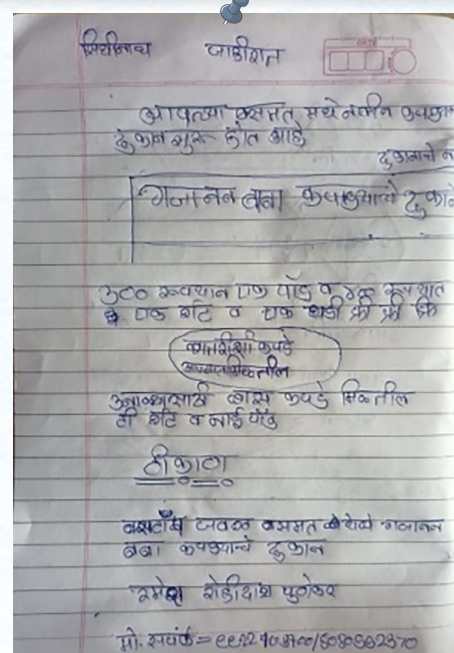
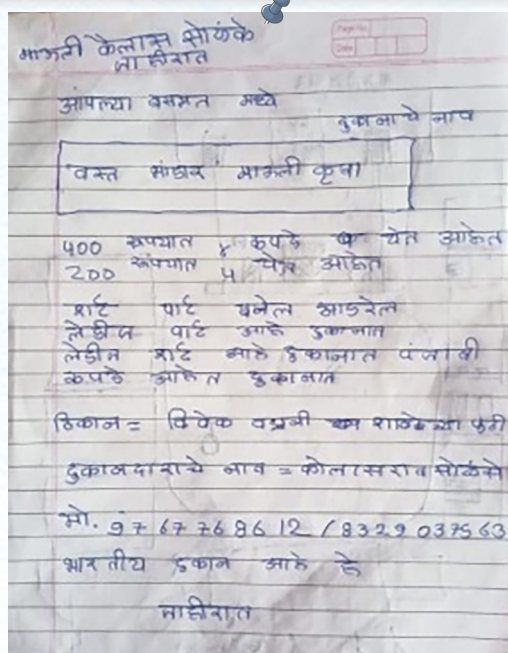
"Who has organized this tournament?" I asked.

Mansi and Aditya buried their heads in their books. Shivani and Ajit started staring out of the window. Samarth and Sainath said, "We don't know." I told them that the answer was in the advertisement. After reading carefully, Aditya found the answer and read out that text – "Rashtrapremi Group is organizing a Cricket Tournament." He smiled victoriously. After that, all of them found answers to my remaining questions by reading the advertisement.

For the next 3-4 days, I took various advertisements to the class – jewelry, horoscope, soaps etc. and discussed in a similar manner. The children seemed to get the idea. Then I asked them to write

an advertisement. Samarth and Sainath promptly said, "We don't know how to write it." Aditya said, "I had gone to Vasmat, to my uncle's place. I saw a big advertisement for a clothes shop." He even shared details such as the name of the shop, the types of clothes listed etc. I said, "Let's work on this – let's all write an ad for a shop." I sat in their group and started writing something in my notebook. The other children also started writing. Samarth and Sainath were still not ready. They stood at the back, watching the others.

The other children were completely engrossed in the activity. They were thinking, then writing something, erasing some words, trying to use new words. I was helping them if they felt stuck at any point. Quietly, Samarth and Sainath sat down in a far corner and started scribbling in their notebooks. All the children took 30-40 minutes to work on their drafts. Then they showed me the work. Each one had used different ideas, words, and pictures. I was happy to see the variety of ideas generated through this exercise. Moreover, I was happy that the children who had little or no exposure to advertisements were able to grasp my inputs and came up with unique ideas and expressions and had become little 'copywriters' themselves!



Ads created by children - shop names, special offers, address & phone no. clearly visible



## Little Tai in a multilingual classroom

~ Madhura Thatte

The Anganwadi at Narangi (Dist. Raigad), where I was visiting as part of my field assignment, had a kitchen without any walls, a few cupboards by its side, a red plastic ladder in the corner and colourful blocks, beads, sticks for children to play with and other teaching materials. In the center of the room, free play materials like blocks and puzzles were arranged for children.

"Where are the children?" I asked the Anganwadi tai who was busy writing in her daily planner.

"Sometimes they reach late. It depends on their rickshaw," she said.

In a few moments, 9 children got out of a rickshaw and walked into the Anganwadi. They put their shoes on the stand, they kept their bags and bottles in their designated place and started playing with blocks and puzzles in the centre of the room.

"Clear up your toys now and come here," the Tai said after the children had played for some time. Purvi, Shreya, Ayush, Mahesh and the other six picked up mats from a corner and sat in a semicircle facing the tai and the blackboard beside her.

"What is today's date?" the Tai asked.

"9!"

"No, 10".

"Right. Today is the 10<sup>th</sup>. And what is the month?"  
"February!"

"Correct. What day is it today?" tai asked.

"Thursday!" "Monday!" "Friday!"

"Today is Friday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of February," The Anganwadi Tai said pointing to the calendar.

Next, the Anganwadi tai picked up a picture card showing the colour red, and various red objects.

"Anyone here wants to talk about this card with others?"

Two hands went up. Purvi's was chosen. About 3 feet tall, dressed in yellow uniform, with red ribbons tied around her ponytails and bangles in her hand. Now Purvi became the Anganwadi tai. She held the card in front of her so that her chin rested on the card and she could see the children in front of her.



"What colour is this?" she asked.  
"Red."



“What all things are red?”

“Tomato, chilli, bangles,” everyone said in Marathi. Almost everyone. A few soft voices said in Hindi, “Tamatar, chudiyan.”

“Shreya, can you show me something red in our Anganwadi,” said Purvi.

Shreya pointed to one of the red blocks kept on the shelf.

“Ayush, can...,” Purvi began in Marathi but then switched to Hindi, “Ayush, show me something red in our Anganwadi.”

Ayush got up and walked to the red ladder in the corner.

In that moment, I remembered my interview with Ayush’s mother, a Hindi-speaking migrant labourer. She had said her son showed a great difference after the Palavee program. The mother explained that Ayush used to be very quiet in the house but after the Palavee program he sang Marathi songs at home and told her about all that he had done in the Anganwadi.

As I was thinking, the activity in front of me continued. The little Anganwadi Tai asked Ayush in Hindi, “Show me more?”

I was once again lost in thought. Why did Purvi talk to Ayush in Hindi? Why did she change her language? It was probably because Purvi had seen the Anganwadi Tai do this every day - using the child’s home language to communicate.

Changing the medium of instruction so that the child learns and understands better. An approach that can go a long way to make children feel accepted and their language respected. As we had learnt from the experts at QUEST, the foundation of children’s language development in their early years is their home language, their environment, and their experiences. If we ignore those, children lose interest and find it difficult to learn. I was happy to see that the Anganwadi Tai was using this approach, and the children had also picked up the same attitude! This is what multilingualism in a classroom looks like and I could see it even when our ‘Little Tai’ led a class in the Anganwadi.

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## When children speak their minds...

~ Pradip More

Sonshiv is a village which sits on a hilltop at the end of a road snaking through a forest, some 10 kms away from Wada, the nearest town. During my TMRE Fellowship, I was posted for my field work in the school at the entrance of the village to practice conducting lessons with the students of grade 3. On one such on-field day, our trainer had given us some topics and told us to conduct a discussion with the children in the class. My topic was ‘unemployment and migration’. The idea behind





the activity was to get children to talk about their own ideas and experiences with the purpose of enhancing oral language production. I had no clue about how to conduct this activity. Many questions and doubts circled in my head. Would the children understand these words? If they don't respond, how should I handle it?

As I rode my bike to the village, I decided to check the children's mood and conduct the discussion only if they seemed ready for it. When I entered the school, the children looked rather disinterested. Rohan was lying on the floor, looking sleepy. Viraj was jumping on the benches stacked up outside the classroom. The other children were talking louder than fish-hawkers in a marketplace. When I started talking to them, some of the children came and sat in front of me. The loud chattering stopped. However, Rohan was still sprawled on the floor and Viraj continued jumping outside.

"Viraj, come inside. Rohan, come on, get up and sit properly," I said. "What should we learn today? You decide and tell me." The children looked at each other and smiled. This was a rare chance to decide something on their own.

"Tell us a story," shouted Kajal.

"No, no... he tells us stories every time. Let's just talk today," suggested Sahil.

Most children agreed with this option. I started chatting about farming – an important component of their lives.

"Tell me, whose family owns a farm?"

"We have a farm," shouted many children in response.

"What is the main crop in your farms?"

"Rice," said Amol. Others also shouted in agreement.

"Ok. Do you grow anything else after harvesting rice?"

"Chana," said Arti.

"Jawas," said Vaishu.

"We grow vegetables," said Lokesh.

"Do you sell the vegetables?" I asked.

"We sell the vegetables at the market in Wada," said Shreya.

"What do your parents do?" I enquired. "Let me tell you about my parents – both of them work on the farm. Now tell me one by one." I added, hoping to steer the conversation towards my topic of the day.

"My father works in the Mini Mall at Wada, and my mother is at home," said Tejaswini, the girl with large eyes and long hair.

"What about you, Kavya?" I deliberately asked the shy and quiet girl from the class.

"My father owns a Vada-Pav stall at Wada and my mother does tailoring at home," Kavya whispered.

"Why do your parents have to go to the town for work?" I asked, steering the conversation again.

"There are no companies in the village. All the



companies are in Wada or Thane. Our parents have to go there for work,” said Jai.

“Why are there no companies in your village?” I prompted.

The children looked confused. They thought for some time.

“The company people cut the trees in the village. The villagers fight with them. That’s why the company people don’t start their companies in the villages,” said Sheetal.

Her innocent response surprised me. Now I was at a loss how to take the discussion forward. I could see that the children were tired, so I wound up the activity.

This experience taught me a lot. I had entered the classroom with doubts about the children’s ability to understand such ideas like migration or employment. I was tense whether they will respond to unfamiliar words. But without using those words, the children exhibited some understanding of the concepts based on their own everyday experience.

People generally believe that a child is a lump of clay that the teacher can shape as required. But in QUEST, we always challenge this belief and insist that children are observant individuals who build their own understanding of the reality around them. My experience in the classroom helped me see that when children speak their mind, we can see that they were observing, thinking and articulating their knowledge in their own way.





# RESEARCH

## School Readiness Test

The QUEST team has developed a tool to assess School Readiness, in collaboration with Tata Trusts. The aim is to establish the school readiness benchmarks for various areas through a standardized tool.

This tool is used with children who are 6 years old, about to enter school. The test consists of three main areas; Mathematics, Cognitive Development and Language. Although things like motor skills, creativity and socio-emotional development are important aspects of any good ECE program, they are not assessed in this tool because they take generally much longer to test and require highly skilled researchers to test. Therefore our tool covers the areas which can be reasonably tested in the given resources and which are directly relevant to the content in schools.

The three areas each have 6 tasks. They are:

Cognitive Development: Find the odd man out, Classification, Problem Solving, Sequencing Events, and Extending the pattern.

Mathematics: Comparative statements, Counting, Measuring, Reading a pictograph, Addition and subtraction and Number family.

Language: Print Awareness, Phonological Awareness, Reading aksharas, words and text and narrating a story through a picture prompt.

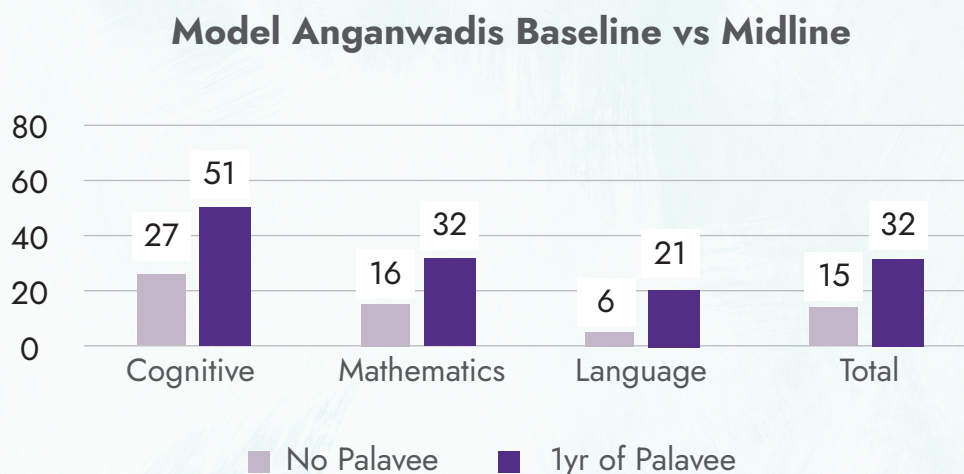
In June 2022, the pilot testing of this tool was done quite rigorously, with children who had just entered grade 1. It was carried out with 184 children in Amravati, Kolhapur, Nashik, Pune, Thane and Wardha. Some of these children were from QUEST's interventions while others were from private schools. Once the pilot was completed, the QUEST team made the required modifications and started using it on a regular basis in QUEST's projects. The School Readiness tool is also being used in four states of India by Tata Trusts in their education interventions being implemented by local organizations.





This tool also serves to test the effectiveness of pre-school interventions. At QUEST, we are using it in the Palavee intervention in Anganwadis. It helps us to gauge the children's learning levels, so that we can decide the pace of the inputs to be given.

The following graph shows the school readiness results in Dhanora, Gadchiroli for two successive batches of children from Model Anganwadis; one which entered first grade in June 2022 and had received no benefit from the Palavee intervention and the other which is expected to enter the first grade in June 2023 and has received one year of good ECE input as a result of the Palavee intervention



We see that children who have received one year of input through the Palavee intervention have a significantly higher school readiness score while entering grade one than the children who have not benefitted from the Palavee intervention.

QUEST is currently in the process of measuring the impact of Palavee intervention in 7 districts by using this tool in order to establish local benchmarks which will inform further interventions.



**Please contact us if you would like to use the School Readiness tool in your educational intervention.**



# CAPACITY BUILDING

## Workshop by Abha Bhagwat on 'Visual Art'

Crayons, sketchpens, poster colours, paper, stones, twigs, dried leaves – everything became a medium of expression in the 'visual art' workshop conducted by well-known illustrator and visual artist Abha Bhagwat. All QUESTians enjoyed themselves thoroughly, getting a fresh perspective on art. Abha's sessions with children helped them learn new techniques of art education.





## Workshop by Shaili Sathyu on 'Theatre for Young People'

Renowned theatre person Shaili Sathyu conducted a 10-day workshop for Goshtarang Fellows and other QUESTians, on 'Theatre for Early Years'. By definition, this is about performing for children in the age group of 0 to 5 years. Using actions and little or no language, the participants were introduced to the idea of telling stories to engage young children. "When I work in the Anganwadi, I can't hold the attention of the young children beyond 10 minutes. But here, I saw a word-less performance being enjoyed by them with rapt attention for 30 minutes! I could see proof of what Shaili was telling us in the workshop," said QUESTian Rupali Patil after the workshop.





## 'Shikata Shikavita' book release function

A much awaited book by Nilesh Nimkar (Director, QUEST) – 'Shikata Shikavita' – was released at a function in Pune on November 3, 2022. This is a collection of articles written by Nilesh about his experiences, beliefs and his unique perspective on education of rural and tribal children in Maharashtra. It was released by education analyst Kishor Darak, renowned author Veena Gavankar and QUEST's founder trustee, actor Atul Kulkarni.



The event was broadcast live on YouTube on this link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tV4eeO-sZwQ>



The book (in Marathi) is available on <https://www.amazon.in/SHIKATA-SHIKAVITA-Marathi-Nilesh-Nimkar-ebook/dp/B0BLYYC7P4>



# OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

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Several individuals, organizations and foundations have supported us over the years and many of them continued to do so in 2022-23.



# GOVERNANCE

## Board of Trustees

President – Manoj Karyekar

Director – Nilesh Nimkar

Trustees – Ketan Gala, Kailas Kulkarni, Nitin Nimkar, Dr. Jayashree Shinde  
(Nilesh Nimkar and Nitin Nimkar are brothers.)

One of the founder trustees, Aparna Bhole, resigned from her position as a trustee in January 2023.

## The Trustees meetings were held on the following dates –

Sr.No	Date	Venue
1	May 21, 2022	Online Zoom meeting
2	Aug. 20, 2022	Quality Education Support Trust, C/O Suhas P Kulkarni, Flat No A4/401 Chabhaiya Park, Kapurbawadi Thane 400607
3	January 7, 2023	Same as above

## Transparency Disclosures

No remuneration, fees or compensation was paid to any Board Member in their capacity as Board Members, except to the Director, as the Director of the organization and for his academic contribution as a resource person for workshops and other activities. The costs for his domestic travel and lodging-boarding for workshops and other activities during the year were borne by QUEST through project grants and QUEST's funds.

There was no international travel during the year.



## Legal Compliances

QUEST complies with all statutory requirements of the Income Tax act and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. All donor requirements are duly complied with.

We are Accredited by **Credibility Alliance** under **Desirable Norms** & awarded **Platinum Seal** for transparency by **GuideStar India**



## Honorarium Distribution as on March 31, 2023

Monthly Payment + allowances to persons working Part-Time/ Full Time ( in rupees)	Men	Women	Total
Below 15000	1	3	4
15,001 - 25,000	7	8	15
25,001 - 50,000	18	9	27
Above 50000	7	4	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>57</b>

In addition, 35 persons received various Fellowships offered by QUEST.



# FINANCIALS

## Quality Education Support Trust Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2023

PROPERTY AND ASSETS	Amount (Rs)
Land (Corpus Fund)	4,861,696
Immovable Properties (At Cost)	
Building and infrastructure (Resource Centre)	942,567
Building and Infrastructure (Dadhare)	444,664
Container Classroom	1,543,866
Fixed Assets Funds	4,221,559
Investments	4,23,225
Capital work in progress	81,910,216
Advances	1,737,290
Cash and Bank Balances	9,447,017
<b>Total Rs.</b>	<b>105,514,099</b>

FUNDS & LIABILITIES	Amount (Rs)
Trust Funds or Corpus	58,575,138
Other Earmarked Funds	
Building and infrastructure (Resource Centre)	924,567
Building and Infrastructure (Dadhare)	444,664
Container Classroom	1,543,866
Fixed Assets Funds	4,221,559
Unspent Project Grants	-
Liabilities	248,275
Income and Expenditure Account	39,556,030
<b>Total Rs.</b>	<b>105,514,099</b>



## Quality Education Support Trust

### Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31.03.2023

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Amount (Rs)</b>
By Interest accrued/realised	3,424,874
By Donations in Cash or Kind	3,345,997
By Grants	59,401,008
By Unspent Grants Brought forward	8,414,715
By Income from other sources	757,926
<b>Total Rs.</b>	<b>75,344,520</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Amount (Rs)</b>
To Establishment Expenses	4,480,096
To Remuneration to Trustees	1,969,788
To Audit Fees	70,800
To Contribution and Fees	194,840
To Depreciation	2,611,089
To Amount transfer to Reserve to specific grants	-
To Expenditure on Objects of the trust	55,476,381
To surplus	10,541,526
<b>Total Rs.</b>	<b>75,344,520</b>



# CONTACT US

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