Little Masters Creating New Avenues in Adult Literacy: A Case Study of Chitti Guruvulu
AUTHORSHIP AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Last Mile Delivery of Public Service in Remote Regions: A Case Study of an Adult Education Initiative in Vizianagaram District, Andhra Pradesh

‘Last mile delivery’, a phrase often used by the transport sector, is defined as the movement of goods from a transportation hub to the final delivery destination. In recent times, the phrase has been often invoked by development practitioners to explain the execution of public policies in order to draw the connection between the programme implementation, nature and type of access experienced by the end beneficiary of the programme.

The documentation and analysis of last mile delivery of public services assumes the presence of supra structure and infrastructure to deliver the programme. The former entails the presence of political will (the programme has been approved by the ruling political regime and funds are allocated), and the latter implies that the administrative structure is in place (institutions for the delivery of the programme and beneficiaries have been identified) and there is real as well as perceived demand of the programme. Here emerges the real conundrum of the practice of public policy.

The existence of supra structure and infrastructure does not necessarily mean that the programme will be successfully delivered. Both supra structure and infrastructure are essential but not sufficient conditions. In the literature, the lack of success in delivering public policy programmes is attributed to policy capture by the dominant/entrenched social groups, ineffective delivery institutions or
lackadaisical bureaucracy, demand of speed money, rent seeking endeavors etc. While analysing these attributes, scholars have entered the debate through two broad vantage points. The first vantage point enters the discussion through analysing the local power structure and situates them in the conceptual category of ‘local state’ or ‘everyday state’, thereby examining the nature of delivery and impact of public policy programmes. The second group of scholars’ debate whether last mile delivery can be better and effectively done by sub-contracting (sub-contracted either to a non-state actor or to a market player). We don’t have sufficient evidence to conclusively prove that public delivery is better than private delivery or vice-versa. The kind of delivery institutions – public/ private- and their success/ failure is contingent on type of public goods (radio waves or health), geographical location, local context, nature of beneficiary etc.

The case study on the Chitti Guruvulu initiative analysed here is a government programme delivered by the state’s line departments. Chitti Guruvulu is an adult literacy programme. The success of this program indicates that effective last mile delivery is contingent on three important factors.

First and foremost is the presence of strong administrative will at the local level. This implies that the local administrative head is autonomous of various vested interests and committed to the success of the programme. In other words, the local administrative will is a very critical add-on to the already available supra structure and infrastructure. Second, the success of last mile delivery of public policies requires effective vertical and horizontal convergence of institutions, on one hand, and sufficient flexibility to re-imagine the institutions suiting the local context and need, on the other. Last but not the least, the case studies educate us insightfully on the role,
active participation and involvement of the local community, including beneficiaries, as important stakeholders in the policy process.

As an end note, it should also be noted that the administrative will can be an individual attribute of the concerned official(s). In order to firmly institutionalise this public policy programme, the accountability and monitoring of the programme should be handed over to the community or the local elected bodies. In the long run, the latter will ensure that there is sufficient pressure from below. Therefore, they can be a critical safeguard against the fading of the local administrative will.
Little Masters Creating New Avenues in Adult Literacy: A Case Study of Chitti Guruvulu

1. Introduction to Chitti Guruvulu

Started in 2017, Chitti Guruvulu (Little Masters) is a Child to Adult Literacy Programme, a pilot scheme initiated first in the village of Dwarapudi in Vizianagaram Mandal, and a few other villages across 37 administrative blocks. The community-based programme envisages school children belonging to standard 7th – 9th of high school to take up responsibility of teaching at least one adult illiterate at their home or in the neighborhood. Therefore, the target groups were all illiterate adults in the village. The Saakshar Bharat Programme, a central government funded adult education programme, inspired the focus of Chitti Guruvulu on adult education

Chitti Guruvulu aims to:
- Enable functional literacy of non-literate adults in the village by involving their (community) children in imparting education.
  - Teaching is located in the homes of the non-literate adults, reducing opportunity cost incurred in physically going to school.
  - A combination of administrative and community based monitoring to ensure adherence to the timelines.

This case study aims to assess the pilot initiative of Chitti Guruvulu based on two villages (Mugada and Penta villages) with a special focus on last mile delivery of the concerned public policy. Last mile delivery of the public policy in this context implies effective institutionalization of educational deliverables (pedagogy, content, examination, evaluation), which is also attested by the community/beneficiary.
2. **Adult Education Program Prior to Chitti Guruvulu**

Chitti Guruvulu sought to eliminate the constraints of the Sakshar Bharat Program that aims to impart functional literacy to adults through reading, writing and arithmetic. The programme was conceptualized in 2009 to increase the national literacy rate to 80%. The target group includes non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and above with special focus on women and SC / ST categories, minorities, handicapped and widows.

During the course of implementation of the ambitious Sakshar Bharat program, the District Administration realized the following last mile delivery constraints leading to suboptimal results:

- The ratio of village teaching volunteering staff and adult participants became very adverse over a period of time due to lack of incentive and motivation.
- The Village Coordinating Officer (VCO) solely responsible for the Sakshar Bharat Scheme not only worked for this scheme but also got involved for various other schemes unofficially. Being paid only a meager INR 2000 monthly, it became painstaking for their village level involvement of the program.
- The villagers’ lack of incentive to study coupled with unwillingness to travel to the Adult Education Centers resulted in reduced number of adult participants in the program.
- Due to lack of volunteering staff, the programme was not able to enumerate the adult illiterate.
- The program suffered from inadequate resources - human and financial - at various nodes of delivery.

As per the latest data available by the Adult Education Department of the Vizianagaram District, the Saakshar Bharat Program identified a little
more than 4 Lakh female and over 3.2 Lakh male non-literates. Given the commitment to adult education, the District administration launched Chitti Guruvulu.

3. Enabling Last Mile Delivery: Institutional Innovation of Chitti Guruvulu

The national and district level administration structures of delivery were replicated by Chitti Guruvulu but with suitable grass-root level institutional/ administrative changes to effectively overcome the last mile challenge experienced by the Saakshar Bharat Scheme.

Saakshar Bharat Scheme was structurally constituted between the Adult Education Department (AED) along with the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA). The AED and State Resource Centre (SRC) are responsible for the provision of academic related tools and academic support. Village appointed Coordinating officers (VCO) and teaching staff volunteers are then further involved in the training and conducting examination for the adult participants.

Reimagining Institutions: A Panacea to Mitigate Last Mile Delivery Challenge

In order to facilitate the last mile delivery, the delivery institutions were re-imagined, with more innovation at the last mile. The institutional architecture of the Chitti Guruvulu can be understood by identifying them at macro, meso and micro level.

Macro-Meso-Micro Convergence

At the macro level, a convergence was brought between the Saakshar Bharat Scheme, and Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) village-
adopted by a minister) for pursuing policy mandate of adult education. The financial resources are utilized from Rajiv Vidya Mission.

At the meso level, Saakshar Bharat mandated State Resource Center is responsible for the academic support in terms of textbook content and examination paper. The books are prepared as Primer I and Primer II (3 month duration and 6 month duration respectively), the content priority is given to 22 most frequently used letters in regular conversation, usage of pictures to connect to words, usage of advertisements and hoardings, TV serial names to relate to words were the initial step to finally making sentences and paragraphs. School level Headmaster and teachers supervise weekly through checking notebooks of elders, conducting examinations. A special orientation is conducted for the Chitti Guruvulus before they start the process of teaching.

At the micro level, Chitti Guruvulu has created a two step reformed institutional architecture to facilitate last mile educational deliverables. This implied the re-imagination of the roles and responsibilities of the line officials and the community and an innovative process of delivery
Roles and Responsibilities:

- A convergence between *Shiksha Samitis* at the Panchayat Level who are responsible for awareness programs, and providing feedback for content development to the AED, *Parents (other adults)* as the participants to the program and the *Children* as Chitti Guruvulus.
- A monitoring body convergence between the *District Level* who appoint officials for data collection and identification, *Village Level* the VCO’s and teachers who take up responsibility to supervise evaluation and guiding the Chitti Guruvulus and *School Level* wherein the HeadMaster supervises the entire program process of their school’s Chitti Guruvulus.
- At the Division Level where the Active HeadMaster is the Key Resource Person, at the Mandal Level are the Headmasters, Teachers, VCO (under Saakshar Bharat Program) as the Master Resource Person, and School Level are the Chitti Guruvulu who are the Volunteers.

Process

- A new process was institutionalized in the villages called *Matching-Batching*. Existing survey reports under the Saakshar Bharat Scheme are used for non-literate data at village level.
- This data is further used by the VCOs to identify which student is responsible for which non-literate adult they need to teach. Students are picked from classes 7th-9th and each student is matched with 1-3 elders whose demographic details and Aadhar Number are noted down.
- Priority for adults matching is given to the said students’ relatives and then neighbors. Every Mandal Education Officer and Head Master of the school is required to maintain the matching-batching lists.

The above position and process are key to the smooth functioning of the
program; the new roles and responsibilities for monitoring the program can be summarized through the following while also showcasing Last Mile Connectivity flow:

- **District Level**
  - Appointed officials for data collection, awareness programs and funding.

- **Village Level**
  - Teachers adopting streets to supervise adults.
  - VCO’s conducting examinations and collating data for Matching-Batching.

- **School Level**
  - Head Master as Key resources person to supervise pedagogy, weekly supervision of adults and guiding Chitti Guruvulu.
  - Student Volunteers (Chitti Guruvulu) for teaching non-literate adults.

### 4. Evaluation of Beneficiaries and Initiative

**Outcome Evaluation:**

The program saw a conversion rate of 100% in terms of adult participation. Set of two start books namely Primer I and Primer II are provided as textbooks. As per the program curriculum, after the completion of Primer I and Primer II, 3-month and 6-month duration respectively the VCOs conduct a test at school level. Primer I was completed in 3 months in December 2017 and 88% achievement rate was obtained while the rest attended special classes for improvement through January 2018. In addition, all the adult participants of the program also take the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) test conducted every year in the months of March and August.

An assessment report, which is prepared by the district administration to
evaluate the outcome, indicates:

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*Process Evaluation:*

Due to the combination of formal recognition and social relationships with the parents and neighbors, inspires these students to pursue the mandate with all sincerity. As noticed in following precepts of the interview that the formal process of teacher assessment is being followed along with the perseverance and sense of responsibility of the Little Masters to teach. A policy inculcating a sense of pride and responsibility is itself an institutional achievement.

The following are precepts from the interaction on their involvement in the program.

**Area: Zilla Parishad High School (English and Telugu Medium)-“Model” school for the initiative, Penta Village, Bobbili Mandal**

Name of interviewees: Jayaram, 8th standard student, Telugu Medium and Manoj, 9th standard, English Medium.

*Q. Whom do you teach at home?*

*A. I teach my grandmother, grandfather and aunt.*
Q. How do your teachers help you?
A. The homework that we give to our family is checked by schoolteachers every 3 days. They also tell us to hurry up if we are slow in teaching and methods to improve.

Q. What has been your experience teaching your family? How did you benefit from it?
A. We are now willing to teach other family members. It has helped us build our confidence. Don’t have stage fear anymore. Also find it easier to talk to elders. We get the feeling of “Vidyadaanam”.

Q. Do they keep a register of your names in school if you are teaching your parents or family?
A. Yes, the teachers noted down the names of the students to whom the study material was handed out. On that day, one of our classmates was absent, so we informed him about this initiative the next day,

Q. Do you all have an option to refuse to participate in this scheme?
A. How can we say no if we know how to teach?

Area: MPUPS School, Muguda Village, Badangi Mandal, adopted by the Honorable Minister for Civil Aviation

Name of Interviewee: Principal, MPUPS School

Q. How many students from this school are participating in the Chitti Guruvulu initiative?
A. 37 students including the high school students.

Q. How many parents or family members are taught?
A. Each student is matched to approximately 2 adults. There are 183
illiterate people in this village who are relatives/ close family to these students.

Q. Do teachers provide any help?
A. Yes they guide the students. They also correct the homework that is given to the family members by the students. Each teacher has adopted a street that they visit once a week to check on the progress of the teaching.

Q. Since when have the teachers adopted streets?
A. Since Chitti Guruvulu started.

Q) What about the Aadhar linkage? Why is it done?
A) It is done to prevent duplication and maintain the quality of the initiative.

Q) What about family members who do not possess Aadhar cards?
A) They are not allowed to participate in this initiative. They can only participate if they have the Aadhar card. Most people of this village have Aadhar cards.

Initially, reluctance existed at a large scale among the elders as the shortsighted benefits overpowered the long-term benefits of the program.

“We are agricultural class, we don’t need education.”
“This is not our age to study.”
“We feel silly to be taught by our children, we’d rather give that time to their homework.”
“It is very difficult to grasp all this, who needs our signatures anyway?”

Daily conversations with children, Gram Sabha meetings, awareness programs, and monitoring systems through teachers adopting and visiting village streets has steadily increased the adults interest to
participate in Chitti Guruvulu.

“I can now sign my own name instead of imprinting my thumb.”
“I can read what’s written on the blackboard, shall I tell you?”
“We all recognize posters on buses.”
“We feel proud when we see our children happy and proud of us writing in our notebooks.”

5. Factors facilitating institutionalization of Chitti Guruvulu

- A convergence of institutions at three different levels- macro, meso and micro. The available resources and expertise were effectively utilized at all these three levels.
- The roles and responsibilities at the last mile were innovatively re-imagined in the interest of mitigating all aspects of last mile challenge.
- Involvement by the stakeholders is not driven by any incentives or remuneration. This brings forward the self-motivated role of Chitti Guruvulus who are the critical assets to the successful achievement of adult literacy rate. This reflects an effective work done by the local line officials and community to mobilize the inherent social capital in the interests of the community.
- A firm administrative will at the micro level, to eliminate last mile challenges.
- A combination of administrative and community monitoring which is driven through a shared interest to increase adult literacy brings cohesion.

6. An overarching impact

Chitti Guruvulu saw an overarching impact between the stakeholders for capacity building and increasing program efficiency. Increased social cohesion between all beneficiaries regulated at various levels of
implementation, the structured institution through ‘The Last Mile’ concept of distance, reduces the disparity between providers and end-user.

7. Scalability

To scale up the program to other districts would require budgeting and more streamlined allocation of funds and functionaries. Recognizing the lack of Village Coordinators and their low income levels, this may be the sole incentive for individuals to take up the responsibility. Chitti Guruvulu is a program that brings the community together through resolving ‘The Last Mile’ concept of distance disparity between providers and end-users. The political will of the District Administration emphasizing a collective cohesion between already established institutions, was necessary for achieving desired results.

Overall, through the model village study of the Chitti Guruvulu program, it is understood that the pattern for growth in adult education has a high probability of scaling up using the existing institutions in play while making sure there exists no involvement or interference of external interests and motives to achieve 100% adult literacy level.