



Mobile Outreach Program



Nijugrapher | Images by Niju Mohan

Mobile Outreach Program - Junior

Baby steps towards reading

Bookworm - A registered charitable trust supporting reading

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MOP JUNIOR – BABY STEPS TOWARDS READING

MOP (Mobile Outreach Program) Junior, an extension of Bookworm's Mobile Outreach Program started in the month of February, 2014. It first began at the Tonca Site where numerous toddlers were visible and soon travelled to St. Inez and Taleigao and most recently, about two months back to Chimbél. Presently, MOP Junior operates in all 4 sites of Bookworm's outreach work. We are growing! And we are 9 months old and emerging out of infancy and into toddlerhood!

MOP JUNIOR TEAM

This infant component of the MOP program has been strengthened by the people who have piloted the work. Our thanks and appreciation go to Melcom Braganza, Jewel Gomes and Deepali Pitre Correya.



The idea of starting MOP Junior began because of the foundational understanding of Emergent Literacy. While many children do access a local Anganwadi/ Balwadi (Government sponsored early childhood centers), we are well aware of the limitations and the conflicting dimensions of home language, language of the community, language of the school and access to literacy resources that compound early learning. The Anganwadi/ Balwadi centers were imagined as caring centers, nutrition centers and to some extent day care centers. Early childhood learning is a very insignificant part of the programs therein and we experience the

struggle that children have with literacy once they start formal school at age 6.

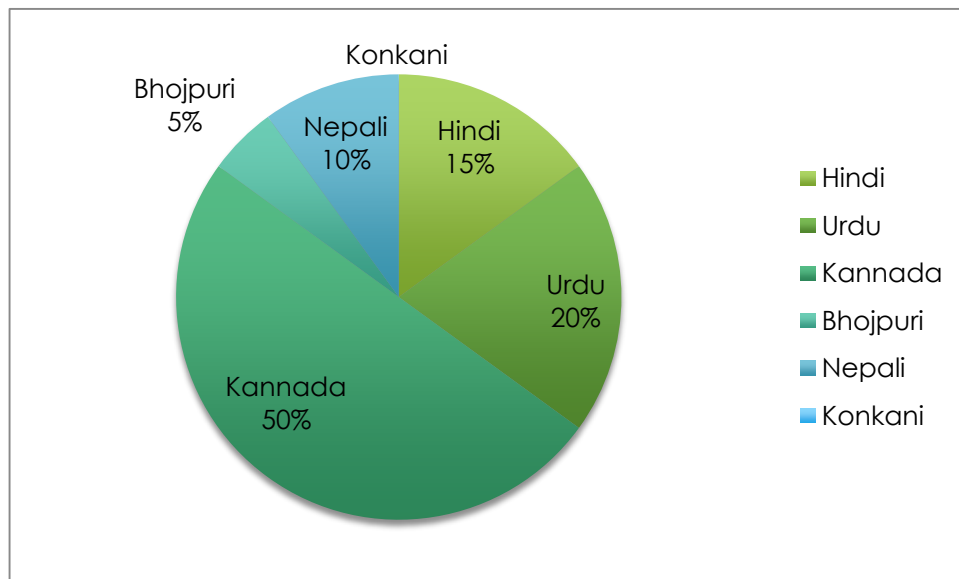


Drawing heavily on the theoretical understanding of Emergent Literacy and the imperative need to enable young children to draw meaning from print, we decided to extend the MOP program downwards. Young children need to be surrounded by print, engage with print meaningfully and start this relationship as early as possible. We realized that including the really young ones into the main program was not an optimum benefit to all groups.

We presently plan and conduct sessions of MOP for two groups (6 years and below and 7 – 10 years). The composition of the children is

diverse in home language but consistent in socio economic background. As MOP's vision is to work with children who have no access to library resources, all MOP beneficiaries are children of migrant poor. They live in urban slum locations, have parents who work in small labour jobs or daily labour work sites. The average number of children in each site is 10 with unequal proportion of boys and girls. We have a ratio of 1: 2 with two Resource Persons facilitating every session.

HOME LANGUAGE COMPOSITION



Given the multi- lingual nature of the composition and the overriding need to make meaning making central at the start of print engagement. The program is multi – lingual and also relies on many different aspects of language communication – verbal, visual, kinesthetic, auditory and sensorial. We find that due to a peculiar hegemony at work, we all tend to talk more in Hindi than any other



language, but when we have matching language resource with group, we use it with the children.

Each session is designed with the developmental needs of the preschooler in mind. The session follows a pattern of four – five brief activities that change every 10 - 12 minutes. The activities typically have movement, song, book browsing, game, listening, speaking and doing. Some highlights of each component are below:

BOOK BROWSING

Acknowledging the need to engage with print and story books at a tactile level, a set of specifically chosen books is rotated and refreshed every month!

Every session has a component of book browsing time. Books are chosen for their distinctive appropriateness to preschool imagination. They are often bold in format (Pop Up/ Tactile/ Sound/ Moving parts / Flaps). Children respond to the illustration by touching them, feeling the books and telling the RP's what they see and recognize. In the beginning, these conversations had to be prompted by questions and pointing, but it has become such a natural engagement that now a child might point to a character, link it to some experience or something in the home and ramble off into a brief narrative that is both heartening and supportive of the literacy process. The whole interaction between the book and the child is a touch & feel relationship and all about making connections. If the book has flaps

we have found that children are really happy and eager to explore what is hidden behind the flap.



We have observed that children's Concepts of Print have improved significantly, they rotate a book, turn pages, manipulate it and have a sense of ownership and care that has grown from the systematic use of books in the program.

LITERACY GAMES

Games are critical to all learning, but at MOP Junior we choose and develop our games more carefully. While we encourage movement and play during the singing/rhythm time, there is a dedicated time

for Literacy Games. Literacy games include Picture and Word Bingo, Picture and Word Domino, Flash cards for recognition, naming, phonology and vocabulary building. We play matching games with words and pictures, Guess the word with drawings and other games that might connect with the story more closely. There is a high level of interest and engagement with games. In fact in the beginning this was the big draw to the circle of MOP Junior. Children would ask upon arrival “game, game ?” and we used this card well and have sustained meaningful interest as well as stretched this interest into read aloud and book borrowing to a very successful level.



Games, have prompted a sustained interest and attention span and excitement about print and representation and brings an organized learning environment naturally to the program. It is here that children learn to wait their turn, to listen and respond to each other and to generally work cooperatively in a group.



SONG and MOVEMENT

To bring some kinesthetic element to the sessions and grow in language through rhythm, we include a song and movement component to every session. This year we have a theme Circle time song in two languages that the children sing with great gusto.



For many children these are the first English words they are meaningfully articulating and since the lyrics developed are very simple and are matched with the movements and actions and repeated and reinforced systematically, we find children growing in confidence as they express themselves in song.



Songs are written to link with the story being read aloud as well and through this component we often choose to introduce new vocabulary in more participatory ways.

READ ALOUD



Like all Bookworm programming, specific choice of books are made for reading aloud. We choose books based on age, length of the story, context, balance between images and text, and appeal for the preschooler.



We have read a number of very special books that we feel are particularly suited for this age and have engaged our children. Some of our present favourite choices are 'Bindi su', 'I like Stars', 'Brown Bear Brown Bear what do you see?', 'The Boat', 'Three little Kittens', 'My Mother's Sari', 'Five little bats flying in the night', 'Walking through the jungle', 'The Balloon', 'Chhuk Chhuk Chhack', 'What

shall I Make', 'Joe on the Holiday', 'Little Fingers', 'B is for Book', 'Upside Down' , 'Mala's Silver Anklet' etc...



From very distracted listening and the need for great drama and attention to get the children to attend to the book, story read alouds are now a natural process. In the beginning we found that the attention to print of most children was very weak. They were unable to attend to even the MOST visually stimulating books – like pop-ups and larger prints / engaging visual. However over time we are all amazed at how much they now process and how visually and

aurally they are following narratives, predicting events and naming and sharing.

As soon as the enlarged book is shown to the children, they intuitively quieten down and pay close attention. They respond to questions during the story and also point out to illustrations, attend to details and are quick to make connections. This is an active listening time and one we are most proud of.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



The sharing of literacy material like sketches, crayons, coloured paper, and pencils is such a high for our MOP Junior children. They



are not accustomed to receiving material and we have found that a generous array of material is a very stimulating way to start representational forms. Typically, children attempt to draw something from the story that connects with the read aloud. Many children have never had this 'free' drawing experience and it takes some time (sessions) for them to understand that we appreciate any representation and are delighted with their marks and scribbling as long as they can be named. We attempt to scribe their work where possible, to reinforce the idea that meaning making is critical and there is a whole hearted acceptance of the child's point of view.



We also try and include hands-on creative experiences connected with books and the children have threaded anklets for Mala's Silver Anklet and grown and taken care of their own seeds for The Seed and made Frog Puppets for Frog's Breakfast among other activities.

BOOK BORROWING



Once the children immerse themselves into the program and are actively participating our RPs officially enroll children into the program. This means we collect some background information from a parent or an older sibling and then issue the child with an Identity Card (often their VERY FIRST) and a library bag. Now, they are ready

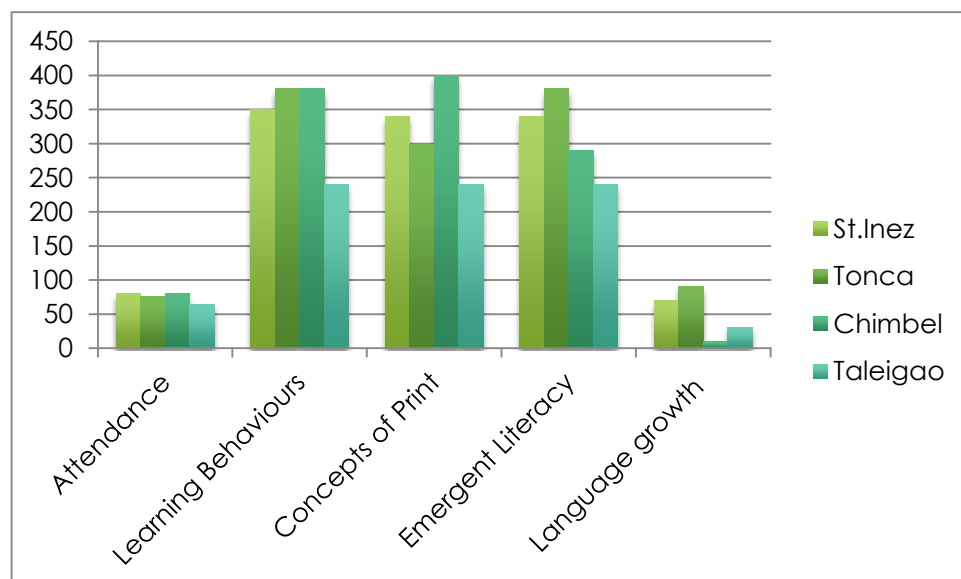


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and responsible to take a book home every week. The aspect of choosing books is always such a fascinating learning experience for us. Children browse, select, then re-think as something in another book catches their eye and sometimes trot off home only to come back in a few minutes saying they want to change the book. We have regular readers in these young toddlers and we have a community of parents and elders who recognize what we are trying to do and support the program by sending their children, assigning space to us and benign good will towards MOP Junior and Senior program.

ASSESSMENT

Programmatically we are reassured and even bolstered by the tremendous benefits we see accruing to different areas of learning and literacy.





FUTURE PLANS

Mobile Outreach Program Junior has tremendous potential to grow and also formalize a model of Emergent Literacy through story telling. This kind of an approach is both pedagogically sound, developmentally appropriate and also the finest way for the human experience to expand and grow children into literature.

Since the entire population of the MOP program come from non-literate communities the only opportunity to engage with story reading and story books is through a community driven intervention like Bookworm. It is anticipated that we grow this program in multiple ways

1. Trainings at Aganwadi/ Bal Wadi and other preschool intervention sites.
2. Developing and conducting an Emergent Literacy Certificate course for preschool teachers
3. Growing the number of direct intervention sites
4. Linking with Village Panchayats to offer a weekly program at the VP libraries.

MOBILE OUTREACH PROGRAM (MOP)

The Mobile Outreach Programme (MOP) was conceptualised in April 2011 to take “Bookworm” into community spaces reaching out to children who have no access to library resources. Children who access MOP are mostly first generation school goers between the



ages 3 to 13. With few or no adults to read with them or to introduce the library to them, this was an essential cog in the wheel towards realizing the aspirations of the community and Bookworm's aspiration of creating an atmosphere that fosters informed reading for every child irrespective of his/her environment.

BOOKWORM

Bookworm is a Charitable Trust with work that began in 2005 to promote children's literature and foster stronger literacy. Bookworm seeks to achieve this through several avenues.

The Library in Schools program (LiS) takes a library and literacy program to schools where children are struggling on many fronts.

The Mobile Outreach Program (MOP) takes reading, storytelling and other literacy related activities into community areas. MOP caters to children who are mostly first generation learners hailing from families who have limited economic resources.

Library is the storehouse of one of the finest collection of children's books in the country. The curated collection is available to local residents for borrowing and library events, trainings and activities are conducted on a regular basis at the Library.

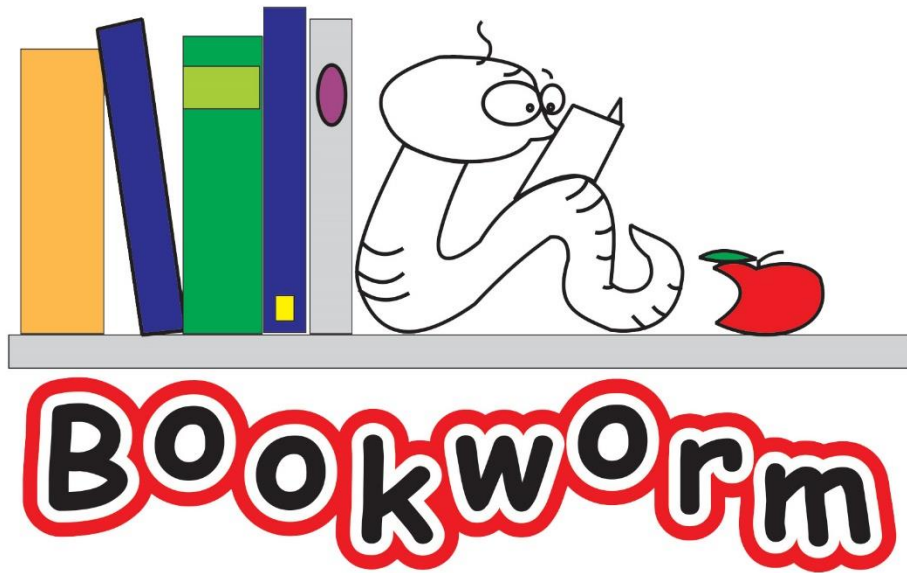
CONCLUSION



As the pilot phase of MOP Junior comes to an end, we are very committed to sustaining the present momentum, streamlining our program further and also extending the resource to more sites and villages.



MOP Junior requires financial support and a sustained team and these are areas of concern when planning for the road ahead. Given that we have come so far, we are determined to go ahead and we know that when the work we do is precious, the support will be equally so.



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