

# Blog: Make some noise so no one is left behind! Halla Bol!

*This blog was written by Dr Ricardo Sabates, Reader in Education at the [Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge](#) and member of the [Research on Equitable Access and Learning \(REAL\) Centre](#). His work focuses on equity in educational access and learning as well as social outcomes of education. The blog was originally published on the [Impact Initiative website](#) on 21 October 2021.*



*Credit: A community gathers for a Halla Bol event, Suman Bhattacharjea, ASER Centre*

In August, I was privileged to be present at a *Halla Bol*, or “Make Some Noise” event – part of series of community-focused activities led by [Pratham](#), one of the largest NGOs in India working to provide quality education to underprivileged children, and funded by the [Wrigley Company Foundation](#).

For the *Halla Bol* events which took place in rural villages in the district of Sitapur, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, village volunteers, recruited and trained by Pratham, prepared different activities (such as drama and music) in order to highlight the importance of learning and gender equality in education.

In some villages, Pratham used these activities to communicate a message: a child's learning is everyone's responsibility. In particular, they wanted to demonstrate the importance of the relationship between teachers and parents, and how this can raise learning outcomes.

### A child's learning is everyone's responsibility

Influencing parents' and teachers' perceptions about a child's learning is one of the main aims of Pratham's school and community interventions; actively seeking to demonstrate to parents and families the role they have to play in supporting children. This could include ensuring regular school attendance; taking the child to school to ensure that the child is indeed attending; discussing the child's learning progress with teachers; or making sure that the child is engaging with after school activities, reading groups, library programmes, and the completion of homework.

Within schools, Pratham is supporting teachers by tackling some of the constraints that teachers face in terms of distances to work, and institutional regulations for completion of curricula. For example, teachers are encouraged to support children's participation in volunteer activities, as well as to collaborate with volunteers in the planning of *Halla Bol*, and other strategies to increase school attendance.

However, the question remains: is it working?

With support from the [DFID-ESRC](#) our research team based at the [Research for Equitable Access and Learning \(REAL\) Centre](#), University of Cambridge together with the [ASER Centre in India](#) is currently undertaking a mixed methods evaluation of Pratham's interventions, such as the *Halla Bol* events, in these rural villages.

### Can systems of accountability between schools and communities

A key focus of the project '[Can schools' accountability for learning be strengthened from the grassroots? Investigating the potential for community-school partnerships in India](#)' is to look at whether community-based initiatives can strengthen systems of accountability between schools and communities, with the ultimate aim of improving foundational learning outcomes for children.

As part of our research, 400 villages which have at least two government schools were randomly selected and allocated as follows: i)200 villages where Pratham's interventions work with schools and communities; ii)100 villages where Pratham's interventions are only with the communities; and iii)100 villages where no intervention is taking place.

Several phases of mixed methods evaluations have been undertaken to explore the processes of change within communities, which, according to Pratham field staff, are starting to emerge, but taking time since they are aiming to change behavior.

### Change takes time

The process of change is slow, but, as reported by Pratham's fieldworkers during our recent visit, examples are starting to emerge. One field worker reported: *'In villages where women*

*are traditionally only inside the house, some are coming out to find out what Halla Bol is about.'*

Some teachers have reported increased school attendance, with more parents taking their children to school, as well as collecting them. Some parents are becoming more aware that teachers are giving their children homework, and learning materials provided by Pratham are being used.

Although *Halla Bol* provides teachers with the opportunity to take part in various activities, only a very small number are actively able to do so, due to difficulties in staying in villages after school hours. However, field workers reported that teachers were feeling appreciation from parents for setting homework assignments.

### Let's make more noise!

Being present during one of these *Halla Bol* events was exciting, and has given us a glimpse of how such activities can bring communities together, and how it raises awareness within students, of what can be achieved.

In one *Halla Bol* event, a young female volunteer gave an impassioned speech on gender equality, highlighting the importance of providing young girls in the community with an education. The young volunteer pointed to our research team as an example of how women can make great strides, and be successful in life, if they are educated.

As we enter our second year of research, we take lessons from fieldworkers to continue to promote close collaborations between schools and communities, with the hope that the process of change will ultimately culminate in improved foundational learning. We will be undertaking further data collection to measure changes in children's foundational literacy and numeracy, as well as fieldwork in a number of locations to capture the nature of the change in accountability relations.

Let's make some noise to continue to support children's learning, particularly for those who risk being left behind.