
Table of Contents

Abbreviations.....	ii
Background	1
Overview of GP libraries of Karnataka	2
Methodology	4
The library as a community asset	7
❖ Key infrastructural revival.....	7
❖ Digital libraries in the rural landscape	7
❖ Library as an information centre.....	8
❖ Open access.....	8
❖ Nurturing libraries through continuous support.....	9
Non- Governmental Organisations’ support and engagement.....	9
User Experience of the Library.....	11
Provider Experience - Library Supervisors.....	14
Role of GPs in functioning of the libraries	17
Consolidating the Promising Growth of Rural Libraries.....	18
In Conclusion.....	26
Appendices.....	27

© CRISP 2023. Dissemination or citation with permission only

Credits: Art work on the cover page (smiling earth in the rain and the happy children) by students of Yaliyuru GP, Tumkur District, displayed on the noticeboard of the library.

Abbreviations

ANSSIRD&PR - Abdul Nazir Saab State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj

CMCA - Children's Movement for Civic Awareness

DK - Dakshina Kannada

FDA - First Division Assistant

GP - Gram Panchayat

KKRDB - Kalyana Karnataka Rural Development Board

KPSC - Karnataka Public Service Commission

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

PDO - Panchayat Development Officer

PSI - Police Sub-Inspector

PWD - Person with disabilities

RDPR- Rural Development and Panchayati Raj

SDA - Second Division Assistant

STE(A)M Ed - Science Technology Education Arts and Mathematics Education

TP - Taluk Panchayat

UPSC - Union Public Service Commission

UT - Union Territories

ZP - Zilla Panchayat

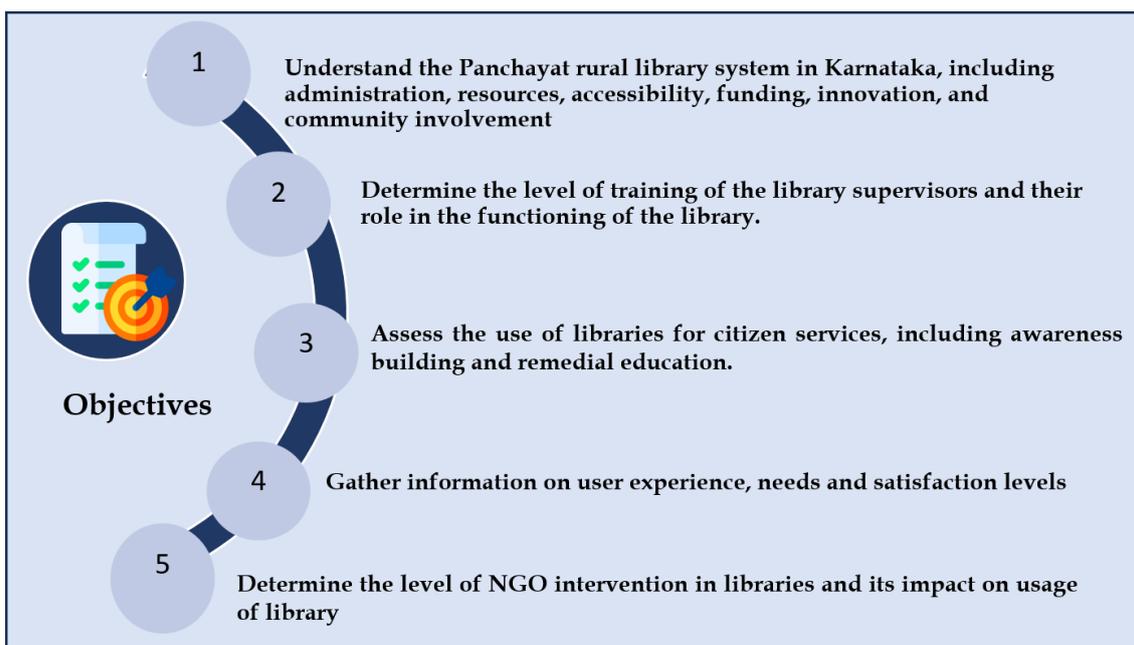
Rural Libraries as Community Assets

Concurrent Evaluation of the Gram Panchayat Libraries in Karnataka

Background

The foundation of the rural library network in Karnataka can be traced back to the enactment of the Karnataka Libraries Act in 1965. Under the provisions of this act, the Department of Public Libraries took the initiative to establish a comprehensive network of public libraries at various administrative levels, including state, district, taluk, and GP. Subsequently, in 2019, the Department of Public Libraries transferred 5623 of these rural libraries to the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR). This transfer facilitated local governance and oversight of the libraries at the GP level.

The rural libraries play a crucial role in fostering literacy, education, and cultural awareness within rural areas. By offering access to books, periodicals, and educational materials, these libraries contribute significantly to the intellectual development of local communities. However, it is imperative to determine their effectiveness in meeting the specific needs of the users and the surrounding communities. Hence, the responsibility of undertaking a detailed study of operations of these libraries was assigned to CRISP. Our aim is to comprehensively understand various aspects of these libraries, including their administration, available resources, accessibility, funding, user requirements, community involvement, and innovative practices. This report is a summary of our preliminary findings from the 36 GP libraries that we have visited across 16 districts.



Overview of GP libraries of Karnataka

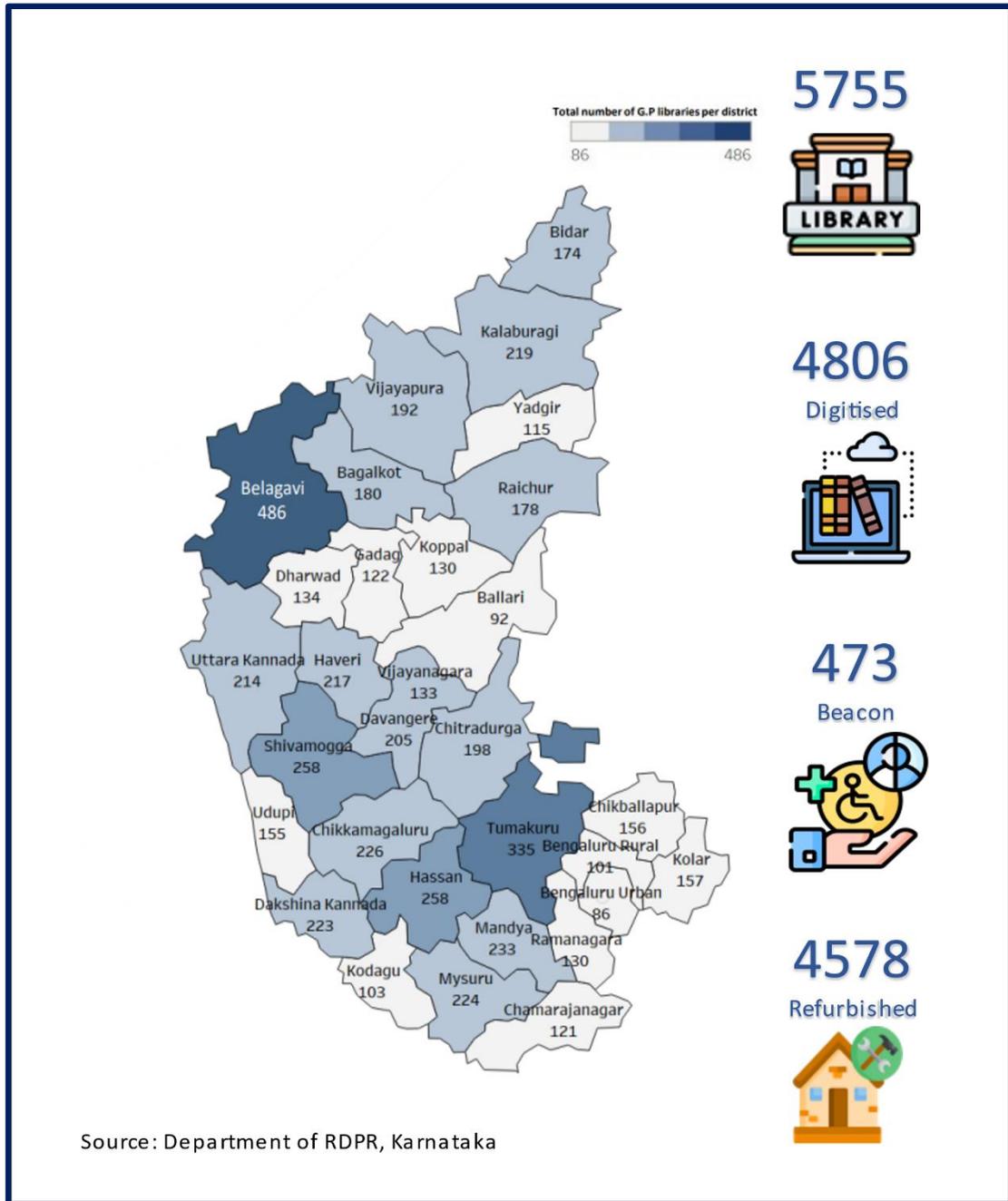
The Revitalization Program for rural libraries stands as a flagship initiative of RDPR in Karnataka. Since its transfer in 2019, the department has implemented various campaigns such as *Oduva Belaku*¹, *Pustaka Jolige*², *Odina manege hogona*³, *Ammanigagi Ondu Pustaka*⁴, *Chaduranga Adona*⁵ and *Chinnara Chittara Abhiyana*⁶. Furthermore, they have embarked on an ambitious endeavour to revive and refurbish the libraries, resulting in the allocation of new spaces and the construction of new buildings for several gram panchayats.

As a part of their vision, the department aims to digitize all existing libraries, with 4806 libraries already digitized (as of June 30, 2023). To establish rural libraries as permanent resource centres, they have been repositioned libraries as Gram Panchayat Library and Information Centres. Additionally, they also introduced “Beacon libraries” that aims to foster equity and inclusivity by providing a barrier-free environment for PWDs. Out of a total of 706 identified libraries, 473 have been upgraded as beacon libraries. (Refer to Figure 1)

In an effort to foster convergence and collaboration, RDPR has actively engaged multiple stakeholders, including the Department of Public Libraries, the Education Department, and civil society organizations. Organizations such as Azim Premji Foundation, Sikshana Foundation, Yuva Chintana Foundation, CMCA, and Adhyayan Quality Education Foundation have played a crucial role in various libraries, facilitating diverse programs aimed at promoting a culture of reading, upgrading infrastructure, providing training for library supervisors, and fostering hands-on learning of life skills.

¹ Light of reading, ²Book Donation Drive, ³Heading towards reading home, ⁴Book for my mother, ⁵Chess playing Campaign, ⁶Drawing/Artwork activities for children

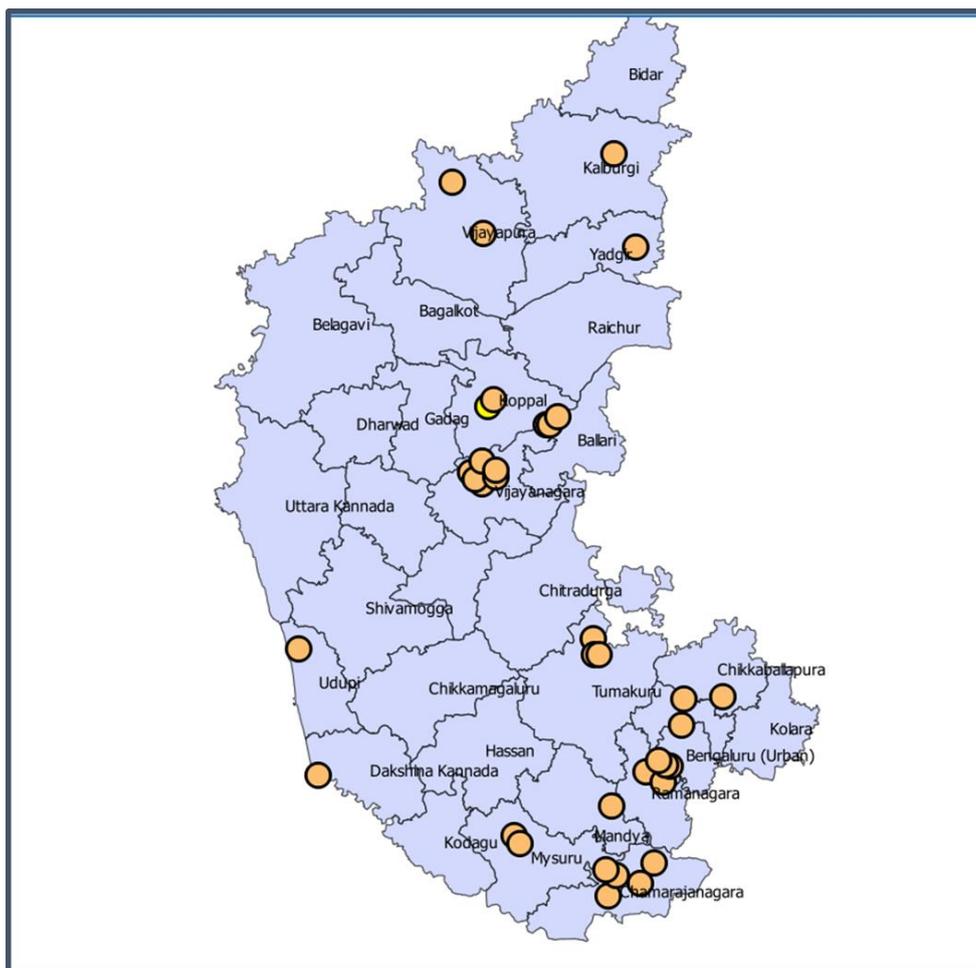
Map 1: Gram Panchayat Libraries in Rural Karnataka



Methodology

To carry out a concurrent evaluation of the rural libraries, the CRISP team conducted field visits to 36 rural libraries between January and June 2023. The processes and tools of data collection used, and findings from this study, will inform a larger outcome evaluation involving a representative sample of the libraries across the state. The outcome evaluation is scheduled to be launched later this year. Meanwhile, this concurrent evaluation reports key findings across the libraries, documented through observation and, in conversation with librarians, officials, and users. Where relevant, data from a census survey of libraries conducted by the Abdul Nazir Saab State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (ANSSIRD&PR) in 2022 are included in the analysis sections.

Map 2: Libraries visited during the study*



*A complete list of library locations with Taluk and District is in the appendix

The CRISP team interacted with a variety of stakeholders during the course of each library visit, including the library supervisors, users of the library (children and adults) and NGO representatives. A list of all stakeholder interactions is given below.

Table 1: Interactions with stakeholders during the course of the evaluation

Category of Respondents	Number of Respondents
Users (Children)	56
Users (adults)	22
Telephonic interviews with children participating in the Grantha Mithra initiative	18
Volunteers (Grantha Mitra); Telephonic interviews	7
Mentors (CMCA)	4
NGO Representatives	10
Librarians	33
Panchayat and Taluk Officials / staff*	25
Gram Panchayat Presidents/Members	5
Librarians who underwent training in May 2023 at Gadag (Telephonic interviews)	20
Total Respondents	200
*PDOs, Secretaries, Taluk Executive Officers, Assistant Directors, Cluster Supervisors, Water man and Data Entry Operators	

Anonymity / Confidentiality of Respondents

The CRISP team talked to children in different libraries and schools during the course of this study. Individual interviews and group discussions, with 3-5 children in a group, were held at several libraries on the list. The interviews took place on or near the library premises (say, a courtyard), or at schools if the team’s visit happened during school hours. At all times during the interviews, the children were within sight of the library staff (or teachers) and other children or adults nearby. Interviews were conducted after obtaining the consent of the library supervisor (if at a library) or the school head (if at a school). Additionally, consent of the child(ren) was obtained before starting the interview.

“Will you share this [gesturing to the interviewer’s notebook] with them?” a child asked the interviewer during a group discussion. She was a frequent visitor to the library and had given thoughtful responses to all questions posed by the interviewer. Towards the end, when she asked the above question, the interviewer assured her that only aggregate information would be shared in a report. No one else would have

access to the field notes and, even if she was quoted, her name and any other identifying information (such as the GP, school or the class she was studying in) would not be published in the report. With this promise in mind, to completely protect the anonymity and confidentiality of their interactions, children's responses will not be attributed by name, library or GP.

In the case of librarians who recently underwent training at Gadag, telephonic interviews were conducted due to the spread of the sample across the state. 20 librarians from 20 districts were randomly selected for the interviews. The interviewer used a pre-constructed checklist to conduct the interviews over the telephone.

Study Team

The concurrent evaluation of rural libraries in Karnataka was conducted as a part of the MoU between RDPR, Government of Karnataka and CRISP, signed in October 2022. A study of the rural libraries is one among many other projects in the MoU. The concurrent evaluation was conducted by the following members of the CRISP Karnataka team:

Dr Lalita Pulavarti – Karnataka State Lead
Daksha Jain – Research Fellow
Hashir, P.V. – Research Fellow, CRISP
Rekha P.S. – Research Fellow, CRISP

The library as a community asset

Since the transfer of libraries to the RDPR department, their aim has been to transform libraries into community assets that offer equitable access to all and provide a platform to build knowledge, skills, and a genuine interest in reading books. The department has undertaken various measures to promote libraries and engage a wider audience. There are specific instances that highlight the efforts made to create libraries accessible, attractive, and inclusive space. Here are a few examples:

❖ Key infrastructural revival

Efforts have been made by all GPs to enhance the infrastructure of their libraries and create a user-friendly environment. They feature wall murals and paintings, particularly appealing to the children. Majority of the libraries visited were clean and well-maintained, offering a welcoming atmosphere for visitors. Adequate seating arrangements and tables were provided to ensure a comfortable reading experience for library users.

- Lakshmipura GP library (Ramnagara District) had a spacious layout with four rooms and separate sections for computers and books.
- Thamballi GP library (Vijaynagara District) had good infrastructure including separate section for women and digital resources, as well as sufficient racks for books.

Books in most of the libraries have been nicely catalogued, ensuring organised and easy accessibility. In one library, the children assisted the library supervisor in creating visually representative cards for different sections (Pictures attached in the appendix).

❖ Digital libraries in the rural landscape

Out of the 36 libraries visited, 32 are designated as digital libraries. They are equipped with Computers, Smartphones, Chromebooks, and TVs. Libraries in the Kalyana Karnataka region have received Printers, Xerox machine and Projectors from KKRDB as well. While most of the libraries have received these digital assets from GPs/TPs, a few of them have received them from Sikshana foundation under the *Digi Vikasana* Program. Sikshana Foundation offered one year's subscription to wi-fi services as well. After the one year was up, some GPs paid for Wi-Fi connectivity to enable online access. However, majority of the libraries - where GPs can't afford, are unwilling to or are irregular with payments - lack dedicated Wi-Fi connections and rely on mobile hotspots of library supervisors for internet access.

The digital resources are mostly used by users preparing for competitive examination like FDA/SDA/PSI/KPSC/UPSC and such others. Additionally, it is utilised by younger users for activities such as painting, M.S Office, typing and showing informative YouTube videos. Some librarians teach typing skills to students on the computers since they themselves are not adequately familiar with the functions and power of the computer to do more.

❖ **Library as an information centre**

With the aim of establishing a lasting presence and purpose, the rural libraries have been rebranded as "Gram Panchayat Library and Information Centre". This strategic repositioning enables rural libraries to play a vital role in empowering rural communities to access information related to social and economic development. The vision of the department is to make the library a one-stop resource for the community to find out any information they wish to – for e.g., on various government schemes that they are eligible for, the approved plans for the GP and their progress, budget allotments, examination and job-related forms and paperwork, to name a few.

The library supervisor at Aloor GP library (Udupi Dist.) uses computers to disseminate information about government schemes and programs. He makes efforts to provide additional services, including Aadhar-PAN card linking and printing of government documents from official websites.

❖ **Open access**

An important role of the library is to reduce inequities by providing free access of learning resources to everyone. To remove barriers and ensure learning for all, rural libraries have taken initiatives such as 'Women's hour', 'child-friendly library' and 'Beacon Library'. During our visits, we had the opportunity to explore two Beacon libraries. These libraries were equipped with resources like Braille Books, Illuminated Hand Magnifiers, wheelchairs, and other learning aids, ensuring an inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities. This initiative is currently in its early stages and requires time for further development. We will elaborate on usage of beacon libraries in our next report, possibly when they are more established.

- Libraries such as those in Mannur GP (DK District) and Ramsagar GP (Ballari District) featured child-friendly tables and chairs, ensuring that the younger children felt comfortable in the library.
- Balichakra GP (Yadgir District) and Thubugere GP (Bengaluru Rural District) featured ramps to provided access to PWDs

❖ Nurturing libraries through continuous support

The department has been actively supporting the utilization of libraries through a range of campaigns and activities. The department releases circulars outlining the campaigns to be implemented in the libraries. These circulars act as comprehensive guidelines detailing the activities and the prescribed approach for their execution. These activities and campaigns serve as a means for librarians to enhance participation and engagement within the libraries.

For instance, they introduced the *Oduva Belaku* program, which played a crucial role in reintegrating children into their studies post covid through libraries. The program resulted in enrolment of 1.5 million students within just one year of its inception. Currently the total number of registered children in the GP libraries stands at 3,735,231. The department has also undertaken additional campaigns, details of which are added in the appendix.

Non- Governmental Organisations' support and engagement

NGOs have played a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the quality of service delivery in the libraries. They have actively engaged with the libraries, offering assistance, training, and handholding support.

Initiatives like the *Nanna Oletigaagi Granthalaya* campaign by CMCA, library digitization project by Sikshana Foundation, and STE(A)M-ED program by Yuva Chintana Foundation in the Kalyan Karnataka region made the libraries more engaging, and users derived significant benefits from their interventions.

Books donated by organizations like Azim Premji Foundation, CMCA, and Pratham Foundation were in good demand among library users. In H. Gollahalli GP (Bengaluru district), books provided by Adhyayan Foundation garnered significant readership among children. These resources were more popular among children than the books supplied by the department, since they are age appropriate and provide variety in content and language (English and Kannada).



Following is a brief on activities undertaken by different NGOs in the rural libraries of Karnataka (Detailed information on each of the projects is attached in the Appendix):

1. Sikshana Foundation

Sikshana Foundation has undertaken an intervention named *Digi Vikasana* to transform conventional rural libraries into digital libraries. By equipping libraries with digital devices and internet connectivity, this endeavour aims to empower students, youth and other community members to effectively tap into a vast array of online resources, thereby facilitating the swift flow of information within the community. Since its launch on March 21, 2022, a total of 1,385 G.P libraries have been transformed into digital libraries by the foundation.

2. Adhyayan Quality Education Foundation

A campaign named Read Aloud was launched in May 2022. This program, initially started in Bengaluru and Kodagu and later expanded to Belagavi, Chikkamagauru, Tumkur and Kolar districts, aims to foster a love for reading among children through engaging and impactful read-aloud sessions conducted in approximately 1000 libraries.

3. Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA)

Nanna Oletigaagi Granthalaya (My Library for a Better Me) is an initiative launched by CMCA under *Oduva Belaku* campaign. It stands out as one of the few programs within the movement that provides regular mentorship and one-on-one interactions with children. The initiative has impacted more than 5,000 children in 55 Panchayat libraries in Ramanagara and Tumakuru districts. Program mentors are predominantly young women from the local community.

4. Akanksha Charitable Trust

Grantha Mithra project, launched by the Akanksha Charitable Trust, aims to create a dynamic learning environment in libraries that addresses various aspects of personal and professional development of students. The program offers a wide range of activities spread over 32 weeks. These include team-building exercises to promote collaboration, language activities to enhance Kannada proficiency, logical reasoning challenges to sharpen problem-solving skills, and mathematics sessions covering foundational concepts and Vedic Maths principles.

The presence of these NGOs made a noticeable difference in the libraries' engagement and vibrancy. The libraries that received NGO support exhibited a higher level of footfall in the library when compared to those without support. Regular participants

of the program expressed fondness for the activities offered under the programs. During our interactions, it became evident that these activities had a positive impact on the students, providing them with enriching learning opportunities, stimulating their creativity, and fostering a strong sense of togetherness among them. Examples are given in the next section.

User Experience of the Library

In all interactions and interviews, school children at grade levels between 6th standard and 9th standard – the primary users of the libraries – were articulate in airing their views about the libraries. Across the board, there is an appreciation of the library space and the multiple activities it offers. Children are especially enthused with the arts and crafts activities, games like chess and carrom boards and, English story books (where available). A few thoughts shared by the students are given below.

- ❖ A student from Ramnagara District: “Staying at home on Sundays is no fun. I have no friends near my house and get bored. That’s why I go to the library. Looking at others reading compels me to study as well. After finishing my homework, I play cricket with other friends who come to the library.”
- ❖ A competitive exam aspirant from Mysore District says, “I utilize the library's internet facility to search for information on various government exams and apply for relevant ones. I also use the computer to access digital books and videos, all of which have helped me save a significant amount of money.”

Requesting upgrades through Children’s Grama Sabhas:

Students in some GPs mentioned Gram Sabhas as an avenue for requesting GP intervention in the library where required. It is unclear whether this is a widespread practice, and the larger outcome evaluation planned for later this year will shed more light on Gram Sabhas as a vehicle for seeking upgrades to the library.

A student in Ramnagara District: “I attended a children’s Gram Sabha a few months ago. While there, we requested for additional computers and for drinking water. We also asked that the broken glass panes on the windows be repaired, so that we don’t hurt ourselves while closing the windows.”

Not all children reported the same level of engagement at the Gram Sabha. In another GP: The children asked for better bus frequency from other villages to the main GP village, so that the commute to the school is easier, and they can use the library more.

“We didn’t get to talk much. Much of the meeting was *nataka* and *bhashana* (plays and speeches). We were also told about the kids’ helpline (1098).”

Both these instances are cues to the immense potential of the Grama Sabha – whether the children’s Gram Sabha or the regular Gram Sabha – as a vehicle for empowering the library users to share their experience of the library and ask for facilities that they identify as requirements. The fact that children attended – even if handpicked to begin with – and presented their requirements is a positive development and can be demonstrated as a best practice to GPs across the state.

Adult users and their experiences

The adult users of the library primarily visit the library to read newspapers. They found value in staying informed about current affairs. While their engagement with books may have been limited, their consistent presence at the library reflected their reliance on this public space as a source of information and knowledge.

However, there were few adults who bucked this trend and demonstrated a keen interest in borrowing books.

- ❖ A woman in her late 50s residing in Chunchunguppe (Bengaluru Urban District) shares her interest for reading novels. She borrows a novel from the library nearly every week and occasionally enjoys reading newspapers there. She expresses her genuine appreciation for having a library in her village, as it has provided her with the opportunity to indulge in reading, particularly in subjects that captivate her interest.
- ❖ A 40 year old man at Ramsagar GP comes to library everyday without fail to read newspapers. As a farmer, he finds value in utilizing the library's resources, often seeking assistance from the librarian or other users to watch instructional YouTube videos on improving crop yields. Additionally, he highlights that fellow library users frequently utilize the facility to access the Sakala portal (which consolidates citizen services from multiple government departments).

-
- ❖ A user in Bilikere GP found the books in library particularly helpful. This user specifically sought out mythological books and expressed a desire for more books like "Abhijnanashakuntalam" to be included in the library's collection.

Users' responses to NGO activities in the libraries

Students clearly got more out of the library visits when an NGO partner like CMCA curated age-appropriate activities involving drawing, painting, life skills like financial literacy, post office functions and, field visits to various locations, all supervised by a trained mentor. It was also evident that, when there is a woman librarian, her collaborative approach with an NGO partner – say a (typically female) mentor who visits every Sunday – led to greater participation of children in library activities. The partnership also built skills in the librarian since she watched the mentor conducting the activities. The same level of involvement of male library supervisors with higher years of experience was missing in the sample that we interacted with. This phenomenon can be further studied in a large sample where NGOs are involved in weekly mentoring programs.

The challenge is to scale such partnerships to all libraries in the state; NGO interventions tend to be localized to smaller areas where trained human resources are required (as opposed to distribution of materials like books or computers which can be achieved to scale somewhat easier than deploying human resources week after week).

1. *Nanna Oletigaagi Granthalaya program*

During the interactions with the students attending CMCA's program, their enthusiasm for the activities conducted by program mentors at the library was noticeable. Students who had been visiting the library for some time found the activities, including storytelling and computer-related tasks, to be valuable learning experiences beyond the school curriculum. The desire for more activities relating to drawing, painting, singing, and dancing was shared by some students.

A student who is an active participant of the CMCA's program, carries an activities file that contains all the past activity sheets while coming to the program. In the upcoming letter writing activity, she plans to write about the need for a toilet facility in the library. She made requests during the Gram Sabha for more chairs, more computers and drinking water facility in the library. While the G.P fulfilled later two requests, first one is yet to be fulfilled.

Another student mentioned that she enjoyed activities like "Kasadinda Kale", where the mentor taught her how to create decorative items from scrap materials. In the

event of her absence, the mentor ensures she catches up on the activities during her next visit to the library. She shared her excitement about the planned field trip to nearby farms organized by the mentor.

2. Grantha mitra program

Telephonic interactions with 17 students provided diverse understanding on their session experiences. Among them, 5 students noted improved understanding in Mathematics, 4 praised effective English teaching, and 2 reported overall grade improvements. Subjects became easier to comprehend after initial challenges. Regular tests aided progress assessment. Engaging in activities like public speaking fostered confidence and overcame inhibitions. Students found it beneficial to ask about unfamiliar topics from school during the sessions, as the volunteers offered detailed and simplified explanations.

One student attending the Grantha mitra program mentioned that the library is conveniently located within walking distance from his school. He shared that the sessions not only covered the school syllabus but also provided additional guidance in planning his career goals. He has observed improvement in his marks and has learned helpful tricks for multiplication.

3. Read Aloud program

We encountered several positive experiences and feedbacks regarding the program. Students expressed enthusiasm for visiting the library, highlighting the librarians' engaging storytelling sessions that captured their interest. Fond memories of engaging storytelling sessions were shared by the participants. One of the students commended the librarian for extending the program to the nearby Anganwadi centre. The students' excitement about their daily visits to the library and the joy of selecting and reading storybooks was evident, reflecting the positive influence of the program on their reading habits and overall engagement.

Provider Experience – Library Supervisors

Training plays a vital role in preparing librarians to effectively fulfil their responsibilities and for their continual professional growth. For libraries to be able to deliver their intended outcomes, it is essential for its workforce to possess the necessary skills, competence and confidence. The dynamic nature of libraries, particularly in the digital information landscape of today, presents continuous challenges. The context in which libraries operate necessitates adaptability, agility, and continuous evolution. To successfully navigate these changes, libraries must

prioritize the consistent enhancement of their workforce's professional and technical competencies.

Enhancing the essential skills of library supervisors can positively impact their motivation and morale, leading to improved library services. It is crucial to adequately equip supervisors with the necessary capabilities to effectively utilize supporting software or systems, offer IT assistance to library users, and stay informed with the array of digital resources available in the library. Therefore, training and development are critical to sustain the motivation and morale of the workforce, enabling them to meet the evolving demands of library users.

Recognizing the importance of training, the RDPR University, Gadag, is currently hosting a training programme for library supervisors focussed on library management and computer basics. The training sessions are being conducted in batches, with each batch lasting for a duration of five days. To evaluate the effectiveness of the training and gain a deeper understanding of the specific needs of the trained librarians, we conducted telephonic interviews with 20 library supervisors representing 20 different districts who had undergone training. These interviews aimed to gather insights on how the training has assisted them in performing their roles effectively and how they are applying the acquired knowledge in their day-to-day work.

According to the feedback received from the interviewed library supervisors, all of them reported an improvement in their motivation following the training. Out of the 20 supervisors interviewed, 19 reported not having prior knowledge of basic computer usage before attending the training. Consequently, the training played a crucial role in helping them overcome their inhibitions and significantly boosting their confidence in using computers. Additionally, the library management training enabled them to provide better assistance to library users. In the words of one of the library supervisors who was interviewed, "I have never operated a computer in my life. During the training, we were required to practice using the computers. Now, after having gone through that experience, I no longer fear touching a computer. I found the training to be very useful".

Regarding library management, 14 out of 20 respondents indicated that the training significantly aided them in improving tasks such as book cataloguing, register maintenance, and providing assistance to readers, particularly children.

The library supervisors were unanimous in their desire for an extended duration of training, ranging from 15 days to two months. They expressed their need for additional support in acquiring computer skills. Notably, among the 20 library supervisors interviewed, 16 had over 15 years of experience and specifically expressed the need for more intensive guidance on computer usage. The findings align with a survey conducted by ANSSIRD, Mysuru, which revealed that 74.8% of library supervisors in the state have more than 15 years of experience. These findings indicate the significant magnitude of training needs among library supervisors and emphasise the need for a more rigorous and comprehensive training programme to be conducted.

Applying the training to everyday work at the library:

When asked about the extent to which library supervisors have been able to apply the knowledge gained from their training in their work, the responses revealed a limited application. Out of the 20 respondents, only 4 mentioned that they have been able to substantially apply the learnings. Notably, they have utilized their training to teach computer basics to children and for tasks such as book entry and membership management.

Given the relatively low rate of substantial application – albeit in a small sample, it is crucial to conduct an assessment of the training outcomes six months after completing the training. This assessment will help determine the extent to which they have been able to effectively translate their acquired knowledge into their day-to-day work responsibilities. Understanding the actual utilisation of training learnings will provide valuable insights for future training interventions.

Library supervisors mentioned that, before the training, they were not equipped to fulfill the expectations outlined in the circulars from the department. One of the interviewees articulated the gap in understanding of what the department requires of them, “we do not have clear information about the definition of a digital library, what constitutes beacon libraries, the distinction between digital and non-digital, or what Mahiti Kendra entails. Without clarity on these aspects, how can we implement them effectively?”. To address these concerns, it is crucial for the training programmes to incorporate comprehensive coverage of the activities mentioned in the circulars. This will provide the necessary clarity and understanding required for library supervisors to carry out their tasks in alignment with the directives and intended outcomes.

Role of GPs in the functioning of the libraries

Interactions with various GP staff members, including PDOs, Secretaries, Data Entry Operators, and elected representatives, provided insights into their roles within the libraries. The extent of GP officials' involvement in library operations varies across different locations. However, the participation of elected representatives in the visited libraries was minimal. While some library supervisors acknowledged a receptive attitude from GP office regarding their requests, others expressed a lack of attention given to their needs.

- ❖ In Ballari District, a library supervisor shared an experience involving a PDO. Competitive exam aspirants visiting the library requested monthly current affairs magazines. The supervisor brought this to the PDO's attention, and not only did the PDO provide the requested magazines, but also arranged for additional books related to competitive exams due to the demand.
- ❖ In one of the digital libraries visited, there were 2 computers, but no electricity connection, rendering the computers unusable. The library supervisor expressed frustration, stating that she had been following up for the past 9 months regarding the electricity connection at the GP office but had received no positive response.

The interaction with PDOs provided an understanding of utilisation of the library cess in developing resources of the library. GPs with higher revenue demonstrated a willingness to allocate additional resources beyond the amount collected through cess. This may involve subscribing to more newspapers, acquiring extra furniture, or constructing toilets within the library premises. Although not all GPs have the capacity to do so, it is recommended that GPs make minimum provisions for developing the library out of the library cess and other resources where feasible.

Consolidating the Promising Growth of Rural Libraries

After RDPR took over the rural libraries in 2019 from the Libraries Department, the Department's investment of time, resources and ideas has led to the revival, refurbishment and rejuvenation of the libraries in nearly 6000 GPs in Karnataka. In addition to the already existing ones, RDPR added on several hundred new libraries in this time period.

Along with the department's periodic directives to drive activity at the library in a systematic manner and aid the Library Supervisor in planning and implementing activities regularly, collaborations with other NGOs working in the education space has also enhanced the capacity of the libraries to diversify their activities and provide hands-on learning experiences, especially for children.

To consolidate the promising revival and growth of the libraries, and to develop them as information centres that can serve a diverse set of needs in the rural areas, the department will benefit from examining the learnings from the field, summarized in the concurrent evaluation findings in this report. The learnings have come from the stakeholders themselves – whether the children using the library, the library supervisors anchoring them or, the Gram Panchayat officials and members who will play an important role in sustaining the growth and functioning of the libraries. We discuss the findings here, in order to spur further critical dialogue and action on the findings, with the purpose of benefitting the libraries and their users in rural areas of Karnataka.

1. Child-centric focus of the libraries: Children have been regular visitors to the rural libraries. Across the state, lakhs of children have been registered as members in their Gram Panchayat libraries. They read books at the library, borrow books, play games, and participate in arts and crafts activities. NGO collaborations have added to the liveliness of the libraries through guided activities for the children. The murals on the walls and all the above activities point to a child-centric focus of the rural libraries currently. Most libraries see only sporadic adult readers; mostly, a few visit to read the newspaper. In a few cases, women borrow story books to take home (although, the team never met any such visitors during the visits).

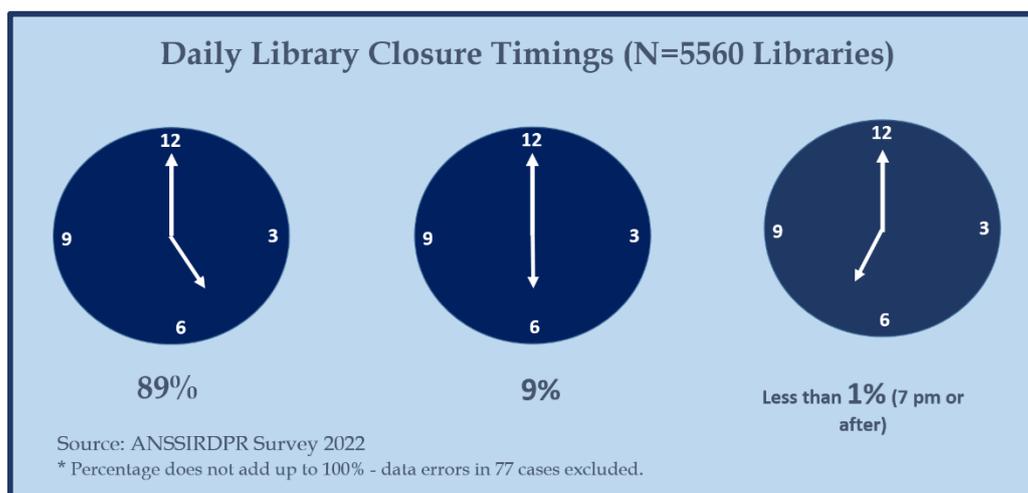
The perception among the general public is also that the library is a space for children, no doubt reinforced by the child-centric murals in most libraries. NGO interventions are almost exclusively aimed at children.

Significantly, with the exception of competitive exam aspirants in some libraries, uptake is also highest among younger children – in the ages of 10-14 years. The children in this age group love the arts and crafts and activities sessions.

A student from 7th standard: her older sister accompanies her to the library on Saturdays after school but does not go into the library. Instead, she spends time waiting at the bus stop while her sister uses the library for an hour, and then returns home with her by the designated auto. The older sister is in X std. Their village is 4 kms away from the school and library, so they have to catch the designated auto and get back home.

Repositioning as Information Centres: Since the libraries are now perceived as spaces for children (for the most part), they will have to be re-positioned as Information Centres (also). Due to their school schedules, children tend to use the library space on weekends. It is therefore feasible to carve out library space and timings for other uses and user groups. However, the perception of the library as a space for citizens of all age groups will have to be built up through targeted activities for different groups like SHG groups, farmers, home makers and senior citizens.

2. Current timings of the libraries: The official timings of the library, as per the department issued circular are: 9 am to 1 pm and 3 pm to 5 pm on weekdays. On weekends, the timings are 10 am – 1 pm and 2 pm- 5 pm. However, a majority of the libraries are open from 10 am to 1 pm and 3 pm to 5 pm. 89% of the libraries close at 5 pm. Slight variations may occur based on local decisions at the GP level. Some may remain open for another hour or two after 5 pm, but it is rare.



Children – the largest user group of the libraries by far - are usually in school for the better part of the day. In all the interviews with children, they mentioned being in

school at least until 4 pm. By the time they get back home, and make their way to the library (if they reside in the main GP village where the library is also situated), it is time for the library to close. As a consequence of the 5 pm closing, most children are able to spend only Saturdays and Sundays at the library, if there are no family outings or events. With the largest user group's access severely restricted by the closing timings, and adults not using the libraries much (yet), it is recommended that the feasibility of keeping the library open till 6.30 pm can be assessed. This will help the children use the library on school days as well, if they wish to.

3. Distance to the library from other villages in the GP: For children residing in other villages of the GP, weekends are the only windows available for visits to the library. They have to make their way to the library either on foot (as we saw on a recent visit to a library), or a family member has to accompany them to the library. In some cases, where CMCA has a program, the CMCA mentor accompanies a group of children from her own village to the GP village where the library is situated.

While it is not viable to have a library in every village, some strategizing is necessary, to find a way of taking the library to the residents of the distant villages in the GP. Some pointers are already available from the CMCA mentors who currently take activities to the children (either in schools or other public places) when the children are unable to come to the library. Similarly, librarians can plan a library day in the other villages of the GP, by taking a few books along, having a read-aloud program and other activities during a 2-3 hour session at the village. Such strategies will help the library go to the children when they are not able to physically go to the library. The same strategy can apply to other groups of users as well, such as SHG members, senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

4. Current book collections at the libraries: Many of the libraries have been running for decades. The book collection also reflects the age of the library. Newer libraries have acquired newer sets of books. The library department continues to send bundles of books to libraries. Libraries catering to competitive exam aspirants try to acquire relevant books if they are able to. Where NGOs are involved – such as Azim Premji Foundation – libraries have a selection of age-appropriate children's books. In some other libraries we visited, children's books were difficult to find, especially so in English.

“I would like some English story books – Panchatantra and Fairy Tales” – a budding poet and story teller studying in 6th standard.

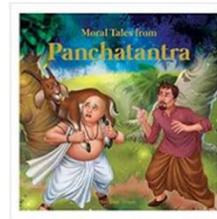
“I was looking for a book on Law as a career (either English or Kannada). I searched a lot, but could not find it in the library” – studying in 8th std, aspires to be a lawyer.



Classics and Mythology – request from some adult readers



Legacy Library Books currently on the shelves



What the current library user-base wants / provided by NGOs in many (not all) libraries



Expanding the collection of children’s books in English and Kannada to more libraries across the state (in addition to those already served by NGOs like Azim Premji Foundation) will help in fulfilling the demand for such books by the children.



A collection of easily accessible books on the table as seen in the picture (the NGO that provided the books instructed on the placement of the books on the tables) helps the children to browse, pick up books of their choice and enjoy the process of choosing and reading during their time at the library.

Legacy books may have to be cleared out of the library or stored away if they are irrelevant to the users – for e.g., in one library frequented only by children, there were heaps of old books on which lay “Das Kapital” by Karl Max and Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes. All books belong in the library of course, but where space is

limited and the user base has specific requirements, making space for relevant books that will be used is a necessary strategy as the libraries continue to grow.



The Library department continues to send bundles of books to the libraries and, in many cases, the libraries do not have space to shelve all the books. And, often, the books are not of relevance to the reader base of that library. So the books lay in bundles. In one case, the librarian sent the books back to the library department citing a lack of space to keep them.

Some libraries have multiple copies of the same books. While this is useful for some categories like competitive exam reference books, it is not so for others like story books.

A thorough book audit to get rid of old and unusable books can make way for newer books of relevance and interest to the users.

5. Upskilling of library supervisors: The rural libraries have library supervisors that have been working at the library for more than two decades. With a new push to

increase the activities of the libraries and cater to diverse needs, and specifically hands-on activities for children, many of the ‘legacy librarians’ are hard pressed to provide the services needed.

Table 2: Library Supervisors’ Years of Experience on the Job

Years of Experience	No. of Librarians	Percent
1 - 5 Yrs	361	6.8
6 - 10 Yrs	334	6.3
11 - 15 Yrs	648	12.1
16 - 20 Yrs	2294	43
21 - 25 Yrs	1100	20.6
26 - 30 Yrs	419	7.9
31 - 35 Yrs	178	3.3
Total	5334	100.0
Missing Data	240	
Total all	5574	

Source: ANSSIRD&PR Survey 2022

Nearly a third of the library supervisors have been on the job for more than 20 years and, nearly 75% have been on the job for more than 15 years.

In interviews and interactions during visits, they have also highlighted the need for more training in computers, to keep up with the digitalization of libraries.

“To be honest, I do not do much other than issuing a book if someone asks for it. And, writing it in the register. Only after the CMCA program started, we see more activity in the library when she [the mentor] brings the children over to conduct the program.”
– a library supervisor with 16 years experience on the job.

“I don’t know how to operate the computers. Even though I went to a training, it is difficult for me to do it.”

Continuous upskilling of library supervisors is therefore of utmost importance. As reported elsewhere in this write up, the department is training the library supervisors on library management as well as digital devices. However, many librarians feel that the training is insufficient. Given the scale of the library initiative however (nearly 6000 libraries), the continuous training program has to be decentralized – by roping in local universities / colleges / NGOs - for it to be viable.

6. **Monitoring of Libraries:** While the Gram Panchayat is actively involved in finding a space for the library, sprucing it up and getting the infrastructure ready, it was unclear on our visits as to how much of the library functioning is monitored actively by either the PDO or other officials and Members. Some PDOs are actively interested in the library while others are not (or do not have the time). None of the library supervisors could clearly articulate how often any monitoring activity happens, officially and systematically. With the result that, highly motivated library supervisors would perform their duties regardless of supervision, while others would barely conduct any activity specified in the circulars. Many had only a cursory knowledge of the content of the circulars and directives from the department.

If there is a lack of monitoring and / or interest shown in the library by the GP officials and members, it often impacts the functioning of the library. For example, cleaning services are not always provided by the GP; the library supervisor has to clean the library as well as take care of the activities. Old newspapers have to be picked up and sold by the GP (since they pay for the newspapers). Some libraries reported that no instructions had been issued on how to dispose of the old newspapers, so huge piles of old newspapers were occupying an already congested space in the library. On a positive note, many libraries reported that the water man supplies drinking water to the library in a large can, so that there is sufficient supply of drinking water.

7. **Gram Panchayat elected members'** involvement in libraries: From our visits, there is no clear cut data on how many GP elected members involve themselves with the functioning of the library and help the librarian navigate various issues on a day to day, or month to month, basis. While in some GPs, members (or, often a vice president) do show up at the library, during our visits we have not found any library supervisor mention a GP President or member as a person to go to for any library related issues. If the library's future is included in the budget planning, and perspective plans, and a budget is allocated for its expenses (either from the Library Cess, or other revenue if the cess is too small) recurring costs such as newspaper and magazine bills, repair of computers and other digital devices and, cleaning of the library can be budgeted for. This can also alleviate the issue of unpaid newspaper bills (reported by many GPs in the ANSSIRD&PR survey of 2022) and other expenses like computer repairs. Involving elected GP members is an important step towards this goal of self-sustainability of the library, and ownership by the GP.

8. **Library Management Committee:** None of the library supervisors we talked to mention the presence of a library management committee. If the committee is revived

(or freshly constituted) including in its active members of the community, users (including children), teachers and other identified stakeholders in the community, it will help streamline the monitoring, oversight and consequently, day to day functioning of the library.

9. **Norms for infrastructure, facilities, and services:** For libraries to grow and thrive, norms for infrastructure and facilities, as well as functioning of the libraries, can be laid down in a clear and succinct manner in a master document. Based on the norms, and the achievement of the library in meeting them, a robust grading system needs to be developed. The grading system will help the GP to strive for a higher grade in order to gain recognition and / or other incentives (tangible or intangible). Lending a competitive edge to the library consolidation phase through such a grading system will reap dividends and, the citizens will benefit from the competition to do well and get a good grade.

In Conclusion

The rejuvenated rural libraries in Karnataka are beginning to make their presence felt. Especially by registering the children in the GP, issuing ID cards and fostering a sense of ownership among the children and the GP itself, the libraries are beginning to make a difference to the learning landscape in the rural areas. RDPR department, Government of Karnataka has helped the libraries move along in their journey of growth by providing continuous handholding, resources, and NGO support in many cases.

The next phase of the journey is to reposition the libraries as Information Centres - a one-stop information booth on all matters of interest to its membership. This will necessarily involve digital solutions to access the plethora of information requested. Rapid digitalization of the libraries will certainly help in this next phase. However, adequate systems, training and resources must be in place for the libraries to leap to the next level. Primarily, from our observations, we note that the capability of the library supervisors to pick up new digital skills, be motivated and accountable for running a thriving library will be key. In this regard, not all library supervisors are equal in their capacity, motivation, or sense of accountability. How to solve this conundrum is the big question for the rural libraries of Karnataka.

Finally, the interest that the GP officials and elected members take in the library's functioning, and the sense of ownership and pride in a well-run and well-used library will determine the grade that it can earn. Taking their role as the local governing body seriously in matters related to the library, monitoring its work, supporting it through finances, will pay dividends. At the same time, putting systems in place, providing technical support and handholding to the GP are important department inputs that will lead to successfully run libraries.

An active and empowered citizenry, including children in the GP, play an important role in holding their elected members and officials accountable in turn, so that the library as a community asset in the GP is a reality for many years and decades.

Appendices

1. List of GPs visited by CRISP team
2. List of GPs whose library supervisors were interviewed through telephone
3. Campaigns conducted by Department of RDPR
4. Detailed information on NGO intervention

Appendix 1: List of GPs visited by CRISP team

S no	District Name	Taluk Name	GP Name	Digital Status	Beacon Status
1	Ballari	Kampli	Ramsagar	Yes	No
2	Ballari	Kampli	Muddapura No. 10	Yes	No
3	Ballari	Kampli	Sanapura No.3	Yes	No
4	Bengaluru Rural	Dodballapur	Thubugere	Yes	No
5	Bengaluru Urban	Yelahanka	Rajankunte	Yes	No
6	Bengaluru Urban	Bengaluru South	H. Gollahalli	Yes	No
7	Bengaluru Urban	Bengaluru South	Kumbalagodu	Yes	No
8	Bengaluru Urban	Bengaluru South	Chunchunguppe	Yes	No
9	Chamrajnagar	Chamrajnagar	Chandakavadi	Yes	No
10	Chamrajnagar	Yellandur	Maddur	Yes	No
11	Chamrajnagar	Kollegala	Tagarapura	Yes	Yes
12	Chamrajnagar	Hanur	Bandahalli	Yes	No
13	Chamrajnagar	Hanur	Lokkanahalli	Yes	No
14	Chikkaballapura	Sidlaghatta	Anur	Yes	Yes
15	Dakshina Kannada	Ullala	Munnur	Yes	No
16	Kalaburagi	Kalagi	Gotur	No	No
17	Koppal	Yelbarga	Bevoor	Yes	No
18	Koppal	Kuknoor	Mangalore	No	No
19	Mandya	Maddur (TP library)	--	No	No
20	Mysuru	Hunsur	Bilikere	Yes	No

21	Mysuru	Hunsur	Bannikuppe	Yes	No
22	Ramanagara	Ramanagara	Laxmipura	Yes	Yes
23	Ramanagara	Ramanagara	Byramangala	No	No
24	Tumkuru	Sira	Melukunte	Yes	No
25	Tumkuru	Sira	Yaliyuru	Yes	No
26	Tumkuru	Sira	Ratnasandra	Yes	No
27	Udupi	Kundapura	Aloor	Yes	No
28	Vijayanagara	Huvina Hadagalli	Itigi	Yes	No
29	Vijayanagara	Huvina Hadagalli	Holagundi	Yes	No
30	Vijayanagara	Huvina Hadagalli	Uttangi	Yes	No
31	Vijayanagara	Hagaribommanahalli	Malvi	Yes	No
32	Vijayanagara	Hagaribommanahalli	G. Kodihalli	Yes	No
33	Vijayanagara	Hagaribommanahalli	Tambrahalli	Yes	No
34	Vijayapura	Indi	Chowdihala*	Yes	No
35	Vijayapura	Basavana Bagewadi	Mannur	Yes	No
36	Yadgir	Yadgir	Balichakkar	No	No

*This library is not in the official records of the department

Appendix 2: List of GPs whose library supervisors were interviewed over telephone

S.NO.	District name	Taluk Name	GP Name
1	Ballari	Siraguppa	Nadavi
2	Belagavi	Savadatti	Sutagatti
3	Bengaluru Rural	Hoskote	Ganagluru
4	Chikkamagaluru	Shringeri	Begaru
5	Chitradurga	Molkalmuru	Rayapura
6	Dakshina Kannada	Belthangadi	Bandaru
7	Dharwad	Alanavar	Kadabagatti
8	Gadag	Gajendragad	Sudi
9	Hassan	Arasikere	Rampura
10	Kadaba	Kushtagi	Bijakal
11	Kalaburagi	Kalaburagi	Melakunda
12	Kodagu	Virajpet	Kannangala
13	Kolar	Kolar	Kondarajanahalli
14	Mandya	Maddur	Maraliga

15	Mysuru	T Narasipura	Hegguru
16	Raichur	Raichur	Yergera
17	Shivamogga	Bhadravati	Mavinkere
18	Tumkur	Sira	Ratnasandra
19	Udupi	Kapu	Bada
20	Yadgir	Hunasagi	Kodekal

Appendix 3: Campaigns conducted by Department of RDPR



Appendix 4: Detailed information on NGO interventions

1. Digi Vikasana project of Sikshana Foundation

Under *Digi Vikasana*, the foundation implemented technology interventions to aid learning and assessments of students coming to libraries. The Sikshanapedia App, developed during the Covid pandemic, enables students to learn topics related to school syllabus using mobile devices. Additionally, MyGP is an Android application that tracks the overall performance of digital libraries, providing insights into usage of the resources available.

Since the launch on March 21, 2022, a total of 1,385 G.P libraries have been transformed into digital libraries. These libraries are equipped with digital devices such as Android smartphones, Dell Chromebooks, Android TVs, and Dell monitors, along with a year of internet connectivity. 400 *Grama Hitaishtis* were onboarded across 31 districts. These individuals provide handholding support to librarians in using digital equipment. Moreover, the program has established a real-time dashboard, enabling continuous monitoring and evaluation of the program's progress. To ensure the success of the program, Sikshana Foundation also engaged with library supervisors, providing them with training to enhance their skills. More than 1700 librarians received training across 31 districts. The initiative has gained recognition at national level. It was recommended by the Union Government's Ministry of Panchayat Raj as a model worth replicating by other States/UTs.

2. Adhyayan Quality Education Foundation's "Read Aloud Programme"

Read aloud sessions involve students reading out loud while others listen, creating an immersive and interactive reading experience that deepen students' connection with books. Selected library supervisors were trained to become Master Facilitators. In a cascading model, these trained supervisors passed on their expertise to other librarians.

Aligned with *Oduva Belaku*, Read Aloud campaign aspires to awaken children's interest in reading and encourage regular library visits. By harnessing the power of storytelling and oral reading, this program seeks to ignite children's imagination, enhance language skills, and contribute to their overall development and educational growth. It aims to create a lasting impact on the library ecosystem and nurture a love for books and literature among young minds.

3. Nanna Oletigaagi Granthalaya of Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA)

Nanna Oletigaagi Granthalaya (My Library for a Better Me) is an initiative launched by CMCA under *Oduva Belaku* campaign. The program not only encourages children to choose books but also allows them to select from a wide array of activity cards that promote vital citizenship values and life skills. These activity cards focus on various aspects of self-development, including resilience, goal setting, financial literacy,

appreciation of arts and literature, as well as civic skills such as gender equality, celebrating cultural diversity, environmental consciousness, and active participation in governance. One student can select two activity cards, one card is to be completed in the library, while the other serves as homework for the week and is to be submitted in the next session. The program aims to foster teamwork, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and empathy through engaging students in collective projects known as 'Together for Change.' Under this, children are organized into groups and given specific projects to work on. These projects focus on themes such as Bird Watching, Critical Thinking, Gender, and Diversity. Students are required to prepare a report in a chart format and present it in front of the PDO and their fellow students.

Additionally, *Nanna Oletigaagi Granthalaya* offers an IVRS (Interactive Voice Response System) service that is accessible 24/7. Children can call this toll-free number to access a variety of resources, including story reading sessions, stories of inspiring change-makers, and information on child rights, trees, animals, and birds.

4. Grantha Mitra of Akanksha Charitable Trust (ACT)

Grantha Mithra project, launched by the Akanksha Charitable Trust, aims to create a dynamic learning environment in libraries that addresses various aspects of personal and professional development of students. The program offers a wide range of activities spread over 32 weeks. These include team-building exercises to promote collaboration, language activities to enhance Kannada proficiency, logical reasoning challenges to sharpen problem-solving skills, and mathematics sessions covering foundational concepts and Vedic Maths principles. In addition, the project incorporates arts and crafts activities to nurture artistic development, as well as English practice and communication exercises aimed at improving fluency and boosting confidence.

The program, originally launched in July 2022 at Katapady G.P library (Udupi dist.) and Kabaka G.P library (Dakshina Kannada dist.), has experienced significant growth. It now operates in a total of 44 GP libraries across Dakshina Kannada and Uttar Kannada districts, catering to students from nearby government schools. These students receive valuable guidance and support from dedicated college students who serve as NSS volunteers.