

Better Education Lifestyle and Environment Foundation (BELIEF)



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



CO-FOUNDERS' NOTE: A YEAR OF QUIET COURAGE AND COLLECTIVE MOMENTUM

This year, BELIEF took a meaningful step forward in our journey to nurture early childhood education. With the launch of the SHAKTI program across 55 Anganwadis in Mundhawa and Hadapsar, we deepened our commitment to creating spaces where children, educators, and families grow together. SHAKTI is not just a program—it is a philosophy rooted in process-oriented learning, co-creation, and the belief that transformation begins with trust. The rollout was made possible through detailed training sessions for our field team, Anganwadi workers, and helpers. These sessions were not one-time events, but part of a sustained mentoring process that unfolded over months. Our team walked alongside educators in their classrooms, helping them integrate ECE content and practices into daily routines. We witnessed moments of hesitation slowly give way to confidence—when a helper led a story session for the first time, when a teacher adapted a play-based activity to suit her group, when a child responded with joy to a new rhythm or rhyme. These moments, though quiet, are the heartbeat of systemic change. We also deepened our engagement with families through the *Gharoghari Balvikas* initiative, which brought early learning into homes and encouraged warm, intentional parent-child interactions. In a world that often rushes past childhood, this initiative invited caregivers to pause, observe, and participate in their child's learning journey. A quiet but significant milestone this year was the publication of the *Gharoghari Balvikas* book—a resource born from field experiences, designed to be simple, accessible, and deeply rooted in the realities of home-based learning. None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners—WIPRO Foundation, ICDS, and the many individuals who lent their time, trust, and resources. Their belief in BELIEF continues to be our strength.

As we look ahead, we carry forward the lessons of this year: that depth matters more than scale, that listening is as important as leading, and that documentation is not just a tool—it is a mirror that reflects our values, our challenges, and our growth. With the expansion of SHAKTI, the launch of *KITABGHAR*, and the next volume of *Gharoghari Balvikas* on the horizon, we remain committed to walking slowly, steadily, and together.

To every teacher, parent, child, and team member who walked this journey with us—thank you. You are not just part of our story; you are the reason it exists.

With humility and hope,

Atul and Mukta

Co-Founders, BELIEF

ABOUT US

Better Education Lifestyle and Environment Foundation (BELIEF) is a not-for-profit organization started by young professionals who passionately want to work for the underprivileged communities. We are committed to transforming early childhood education by working closely with Anganwadi Workers, Helpers, Parents, and the Government System—particularly through collaboration with the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Department. We also run an active library program for the children with challenging childhoods.

OUR VISION

A society where each individual is leading a dignified life.

MISSION

To improve learning opportunities for 20,000 elementary-grade students by 2026–27 through capacity building of teachers, parents, and education officers.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that lasting change can be achieved by partnering with government systems and empowering stakeholders with small and steady steps. Our approach is to institutionalize change—recognizing that it requires persistent, multi-level engagement.

In the realm of ECE, we advocate for a shared understanding across all levels—from Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) to parents. Without this collective orientation, implementing a quality ECE program at scale remains a challenge.

OUR CORE AREAS OF WORK INCLUDE:

- Training for Anganwadi Teachers and Helpers
- On-site classroom support and activity demonstrations
- Development of ECE content and Teaching-Learning Material (TLM)
- Library sessions for children
- Development of teaching and learning materials.

PROGRAMS SUMMARY

SHAKTI: Strengthening Early Childhood Education

The AKAR curriculum, introduced by the Government of Maharashtra in 2015, was a significant step toward improving early childhood education across the state. It offers a well-structured foundation for developmentally appropriate practices in Anganwadi settings. However, despite its thoughtful design and initial training efforts, the journey from curriculum to classroom has not been seamless.

Many Anganwadi workers continue to face difficulties in translating AKAR's principles into everyday teaching practices. These challenges stem not from a lack of intent, but from the absence of consistent, contextual support. Training sessions, though valuable, are often isolated events, leaving educators without the ongoing mentorship needed to build confidence and refine their approach. In addition, limited academic guidance and irregular follow-up mechanisms have made it harder for workers to internalize and apply the curriculum meaningfully.

Recognizing these gaps, BELIEF, in collaboration with the ICDS department, developed Project SHAKTI—a focused initiative aimed at reinforcing the existing early childhood education system. Rather than replacing or reinventing, SHAKTI seeks to strengthen what already exists by offering sustained capacity building and hands-on field support. Through this approach, the project ensures that educators are not only trained but also accompanied in their journey of implementation, enabling them to gradually integrate AKAR into their daily routines with greater clarity, confidence, and care.

OUR APPROACH: CAPABILITY BUILDING

Quarterly Trainings



As part of our ongoing commitment to capacity building, Anganwadi teachers participate in intensive two-day training sessions on the AKAR curriculum every quarter. These sessions are designed to deepen their understanding of early childhood education principles and strengthen their ability to apply them in daily classroom settings. Alongside them, Anganwadi helpers attend one-day trainings that are thoughtfully tailored to their specific roles and responsibilities. These trainings acknowledge the unique contributions of helpers and equip them with practical strategies to support the learning environment effectively.

On-site Support

Training alone is not enough—consistent, hands-on support is essential to ensure that learning translates into practice. To this end, BELIEF’s trained Field Coordinators provide regular on-site mentoring across Anganwadis. Their role is to work closely with educators, observing classroom interactions, offering feedback, and helping adapt practices to meet the specific needs of each center. This ongoing presence reinforces the training content and fosters a culture of reflection and responsiveness.

A distinctive feature of our training model is the inclusion of dedicated time and resources for creating Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs). These sessions empower Anganwadi workers to design and use contextually relevant tools that make early childhood education more engaging and effective. By grounding TLM creation in local realities, we ensure that educators are equipped not just with ideas, but with tangible resources they can use every day.

Since the launch of the program, our Field Coordinators have conducted close to 100 support



visits across 54 Anganwadis. These visits serve as a bridge between training and implementation, helping educators navigate day-to-day challenges and build confidence in

their practice. Our senior trainer, Archana Kulkarni, plays a vital role in this process. She regularly accompanies the team on field visits, offering expert guidance and mentoring our coordinators to enhance their facilitation skills and deepen their impact on the ground.

IMPORTANT INITIATIVES

1. DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN ANGANWADIS

Stories and books have the power to ignite imagination, curiosity and creativity. It can open up the reader's mind to more possibilities and opportunities. We envision this freedom of mind for the children that we work for. To make this happen, we are distributing 33 children's books each to all the 54 Anganwadis that we work with. These books are being distributed on a rolling basis.

In addition to this, we arranged for a Storytelling Session for Anganwadi Workers during one of our trainings to teach them the basics of storytelling.

We have been exploring the power of storytelling and are training our team in this art form. Last year, our team members performed storytelling in a few of their respective Anganwadis. It was enjoyed by all the participants- children, parents and Anganwadi workers and helpers, alike!

2.FLN TESTING

BELIEF has developed an assessment tool focused on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. In 2023, we conducted the first field trial of this tool with a sample of 110 children aged 5 to 6 in Mundhwa. Since then, we have been continuously administering this test and gradually increasing the number of participants. To date, we have conducted nearly 304 assessments in Pune and Nashik.



2. PARENTS AS TEACHERS

We recognize and value the role that parents play in the overall development of their children. Therefore, we engage with parents to skill them in providing a positive and conducive environment of love and support for their children's development. This is done by conducting Home visits to distribute and explain Gharoghari Bal Vikas (a book published by us). When the COVID-19 lockdown was in place, we started curating and sending ECE content to parents via WhatsApp. It was well-received and encouraged us to publish a book on the same. On November 4, 2023, BELIEF published its first activity book called Gharoghari Bal Vikas. This is the first book in a set of three. It is a collection of activities, and games which come along with a Teaching Learning Material (TLM) set, to be used with the book. The book is colourful and filled with illustrations to make it simple and easy to use for even uneducated parents. This is done with the hopes of deepening the impact of our intervention.



OUTREACH

Sr. No.	Particulars	Cluster	Number of Anganwadis	Number of Training
1	Anganwadi Teacher Training	Mundhwa	21	3
2	Anganwadi Teacher Training	Hadapsar	33	3
3	Anganwadi Helper Training	Mundhwa	19	2
4	Anganwadi Helper Training	Hadapsar	26	2

IMPACT:

1. PARENTS:

To take the active involvement of parents in the Early Childhood Education (as also suggested in NEP) we develop and deliver the content to the parents that is aligned to the AKAR curriculum. We encourage them to conduct those activities at home. Many parents send us feedback about the usefulness of the content and also ask us to send more such activities! The awareness about the importance of early years of the child is also getting developed among them.

2. ANGANWADI WORKERS:

We have conducted 16 trainings of the Anganwadi workers in last 1 ½ year, and have also provided intensive on-site support to the Anganwadi workers to implement the learning from the training to their classrooms. As a result of this intervention, we could see the raise in the understanding of the Anganwadi workers about the curriculum. They are taking efforts to overcome the challenges in their Anganwadis and taking every step to make the children school-ready by the age of 6.

3. SYSTEM:

We closely work with the ICDS department of Government. They support us to run this program in all the Anganwadis. Supervisor personally attends almost all the trainings. The system is also being aware about the importance of the post training on-site support in the Anganwadis. As a result of our work and the trust got built with the system, we recently renewed our MoU with the department for 2 years.



Launch of Gharoghari Balvikas part 1at
by Ramesh Panase, at Pune



Smt. Shakundatal Patade Social
Enterprise of the Year Award by
SPANDAN (COEP college alumni)
at Pune

TESTIMONIALS

1. **Mr. Ramesh Panse:** *A well-known child educationist in the State of Maharashtra, India*

"I want to congratulate BELIEF three times. First, you have carefully and consistently worked in a neglected field to produce a practical book that will be useful both to Anganwadi teachers and to parents at home. Second, you have chosen the right direction for early childhood education — emphasizing the need to connect parents with their children's development — and this book will create an opportunity for that connection. Third, you have steered early childhood education toward research and systemic thinking, which is important for future work in this field."



2. **Mrs. Smita Shrisagar-** Anganwadi Worker



"The quality of our work is not as per the government plans and policies on ECE, but because of them (BELIEF), we get a lot of new and useful information. It encourages us and gives us the strength to work better. Thank you very much."

3. **Mrs. Pretti Joshi-** Anganwadi Worker

I am deeply grateful to BELIEF. We have been associated with you (BELIEF) for the last few years. You can learn a lot from this training. Due to Archana Tai's (BELIEF's trainer) guidance, through this training, we gained knowledge about Dindarshika (calendar activity), Balgeet (children's songs), and FLN (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy). Such training should continue in the future and we should keep learning."



4. Jyoti Jadhav - Parent (Gharoghari baalvikas book)

“We use the activities from this book every day. After school, when I have time I do them with her, or I demonstrate first and then she does them. The book has helped her a lot — I make her sort household items as shown in the book, so now she’s started recognising things at home. The cards in the box are very nice.”

5. Vanita Palavi, Anganwadi Worker, Harsul

“In our Harsul project at Beat Thanapada 1, BELIEF works with 25 Anganwadi centres. The organisation provides us regular training on how to deliver preschool education. These trainings have been very helpful. Through them we learned how to teach children, how to speak with them, and how to encourage them to speak — we saw practical demonstrations of all this. The training helps us take preschool education effectively. We gained knowledge about children’s emotional, physical, and overall development. We also learned many songs during the training, and BELIEF provided us with posters of those songs and a variety of teaching toys. These resources make it easier to provide preschool education. The training from BELIEF motivates us to work more enthusiastically at the Anganwadi centre.”

6. Ms. Pushpa Shingade, Anganwadi Worker, Hadapsar

“Thank you very much to BELIEF for running this project. Since BELIEF began working with us, our work has changed a great deal. BELIEF staff visit the Anganwadi regularly and, when an activity is being conducted, they explain and correct any mistakes they observe. Giving the Gharoghari Balvikas book helped us understand how to conduct the curriculum in simpler ways. Children now come to the Anganwadi with more enthusiasm. Attendance at parent meetings has increased, and parents are beginning to understand how different activities support their child’s holistic development and why these activities are done in the Anganwadi.”

7. Ms. Ashwini Kore, Anganwadi Worker, Mundhawa

“The Anganwadi visits from BELIEF representatives have been very helpful to us. The progress book BELIEF provided for the children is excellent. It helps us understand how each child is progressing and shows how we can support their learning at home. Because of BELIEF, parent participation in meetings has increased, meetings are held more regularly, and discussions about early childhood education have become more common. Fathers are attending more often, and meetings are now better planned and prepared. Working with BELIEF has changed me too. I have learned to talk more with the children, and they have begun to open up and share things about their feelings and home life with me.”

OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS



1. Integrated Child Development Scheme
2. Wipro Foundation
3. ATMA (Through Atma Nirbhar Grant)
4. Tarachand Ramanath Seva Trust (Through Atma Nirbhar Grant)

STEPPING INTO TOMORROW

Strategic goals 2024–25

- Expand SHAKTI program in rural/tribal geographies.
- Initiate KITABGHAR: An active library program
- Launch Gharoghari Balvikas part 2.
- Strengthen community partnerships: Work more closely with Anganwadi workers, parents, NGOs, and government departments to co-create nurturing learning environments.
- Invest in team growth: Offer more workshops and learning circles for professional development and collective reflection.
- Build inclusive systems: Develop participatory tools and processes that respond to children's and communities' needs.