

External Evaluation Report for the Eureka Program 2013-14

The Eureka Superkidz Program was implemented in 600 villages in the academic year 2013-14. At the end of each academic year, we have had an external evaluation agency, New Concepts Information Systems (NCIS), conducting a detailed evaluation of students in a sample set of villages to gauge the effectiveness of the program. These evaluations were usually carried out in the same set of villages to enable comparisons for a cohort of children. However, due to change in strategy and reduction in overall scale, we randomly selected a new set of 20 program villages for the evaluation (referred to as “Eureka Direct” villages).

This past year, we started implementation of our new strategy of expanding the Eureka program by working with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To evaluate program effectiveness in these villages too, we selected 20 additional villages (“Eureka NGO”) from among those villages started by new NGOs in the past academic year. For the new NGOs, the evaluation conducted by the Eureka state team itself.

Overall, a total of 1815 children were evaluated in Eureka villages and 1032 children in control villages. In the next year, we expect that all villages evaluated will belong to the Eureka NGO category.

Summary and Analysis of the Key Findings

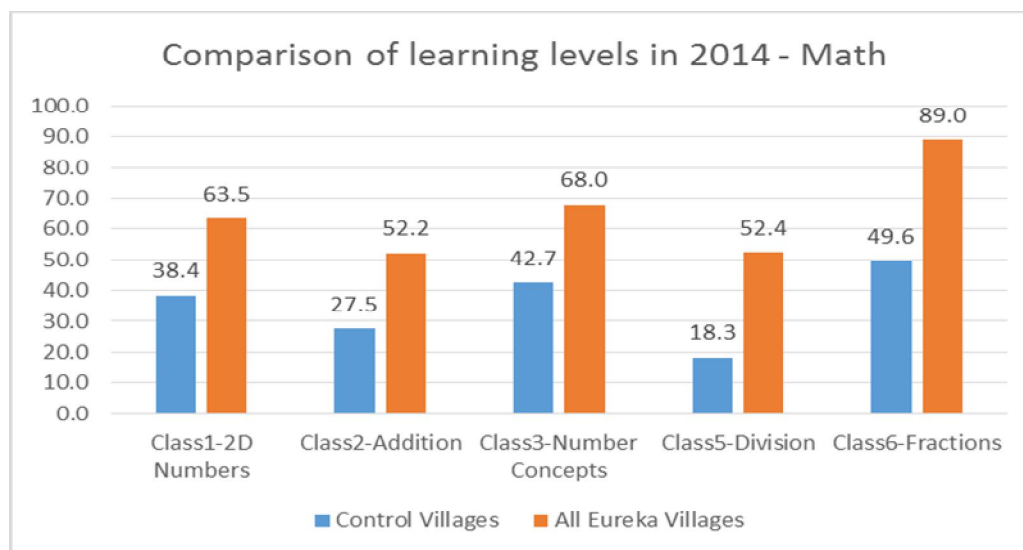
Below is a short summary of the key findings followed by graphs for different classes and skills in Math and Tamil.

- Overall (in all classes, and in both Math and Tamil), children in the Eureka villages perform better than children from the control villages, on average by about 20%.
- Among the Eureka villages, the “Eureka Direct” villages clearly perform better than the “Eureka NGO” villages as they have had the program for a longer time. However, both categories have performed better than control villages, which show that we are able to bring about improvement in the NGO villages too.
- When compared with last year, the performance of children in control villages has improved significantly. We have never seen this kind of improvement in earlier years. Though still lower than grade-level expectations, this is a very positive development. It appears that government school teachers have started paying more attention to ensure children learn basic skills. Possible reasons and environmental factors causing such an increase have been outlined at the end of this note.
- Comparison with previous years is made only for the “Eureka direct” villages. However, since the villages are not the same as that of last year, this is not a cohort analysis. The year-on-year comparison still shows improvement over the previous year for some skills. This implies that the

“net gain” in the last academic year is better than the gain in the previous academic year for these skills, which points to a clear overall positive impact due to the program.

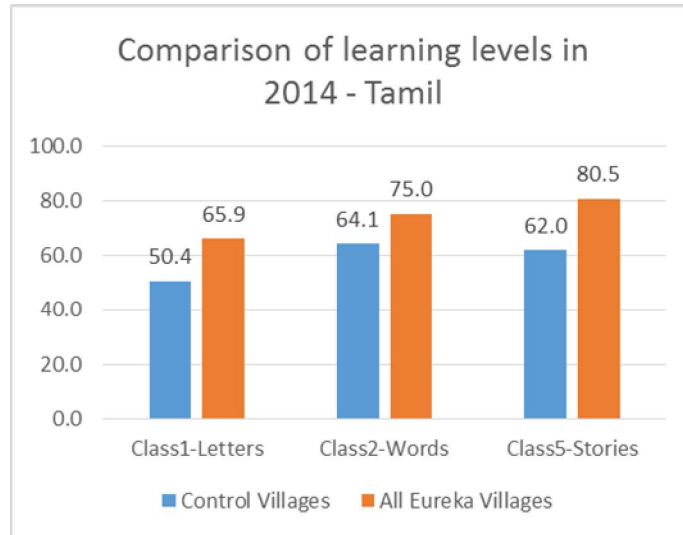
- For some skills, the learning levels have remained steady or even dipped in some cases. This is particularly true for Tamil. However, this does not mean that learning levels have reduced. It means that the “gain in learning levels” is reduced. It is important to note that the comparison is not for the same children. When learning levels are higher to begin with, it takes effort to even sustain these learning levels. Still, this is a cause for concern as we have not been able to build as much on the gains from the previous year, and need to address this factor.
- One possible reason for the lower performance in Tamil is the shift to private schools which is reflected in the enrollment in Eureka program as well. ASER results show that performance of children in Tamil is lower in private schools compared to government schools. Since Tamil is still an important subject and mother tongue, we still need to focus and bring about improvements in Tamil reading. However, since the overall percentage of private school children is increasing, we may need to consider having some private schools as control, to account for the differences in the medium of instruction.

I. Comparison between control villages and all Eureka villages in 2014



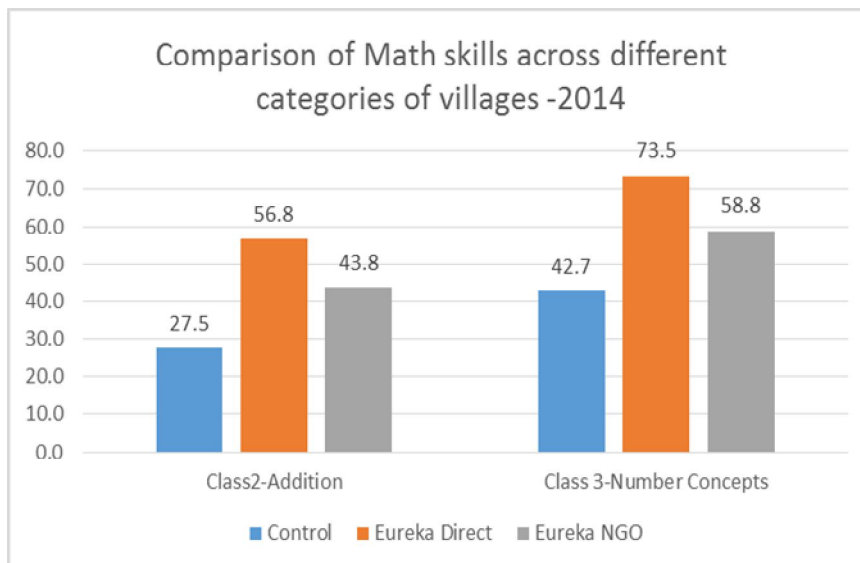
As we can see in above chart, there is a difference about 25-30% between the Eureka children and those in control villages. This shows that the program has been able to make a good impact, even in the newer NGO villages.

The same comparison has been shown below for Tamil skills. We find that the average difference between Eureka villages and control is lower than Math, and is about 15%.

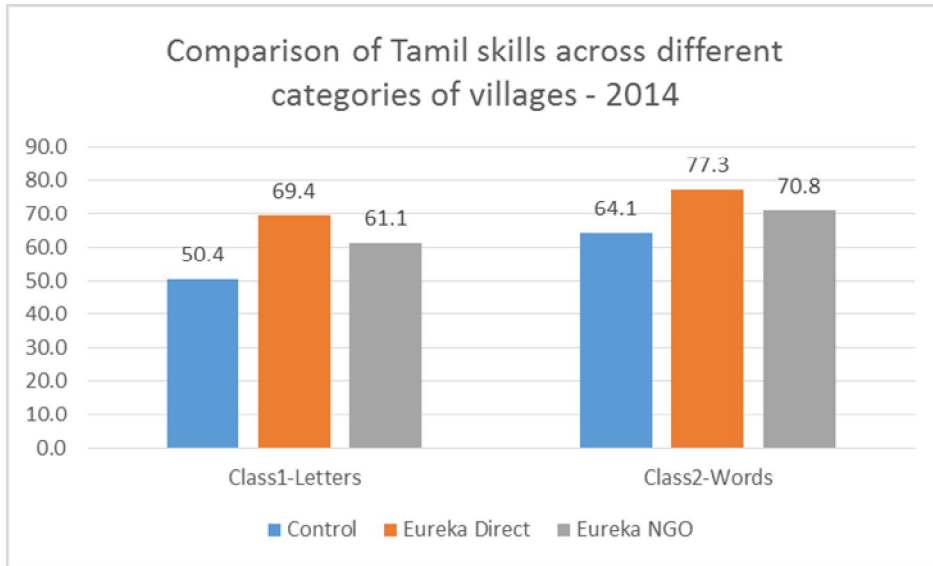


II. Comparison between control, “Eureka Direct” and “Eureka NGO” villages for 2014

a. Math Skills



The “Eureka NGO” villages (i.e the ones which were started this academic year by new NGOs) have clearly shown an improvement over control villages, but their overall learning levels are about 10-15% lower than the “Eureka Direct” villages.

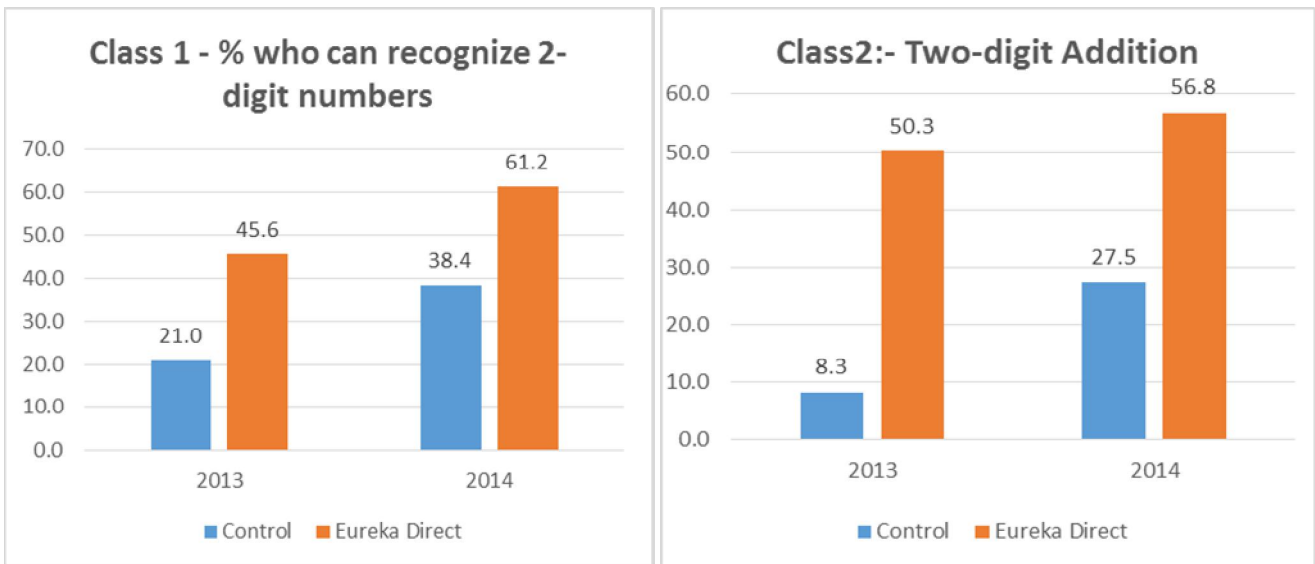


b. Tamil Skills

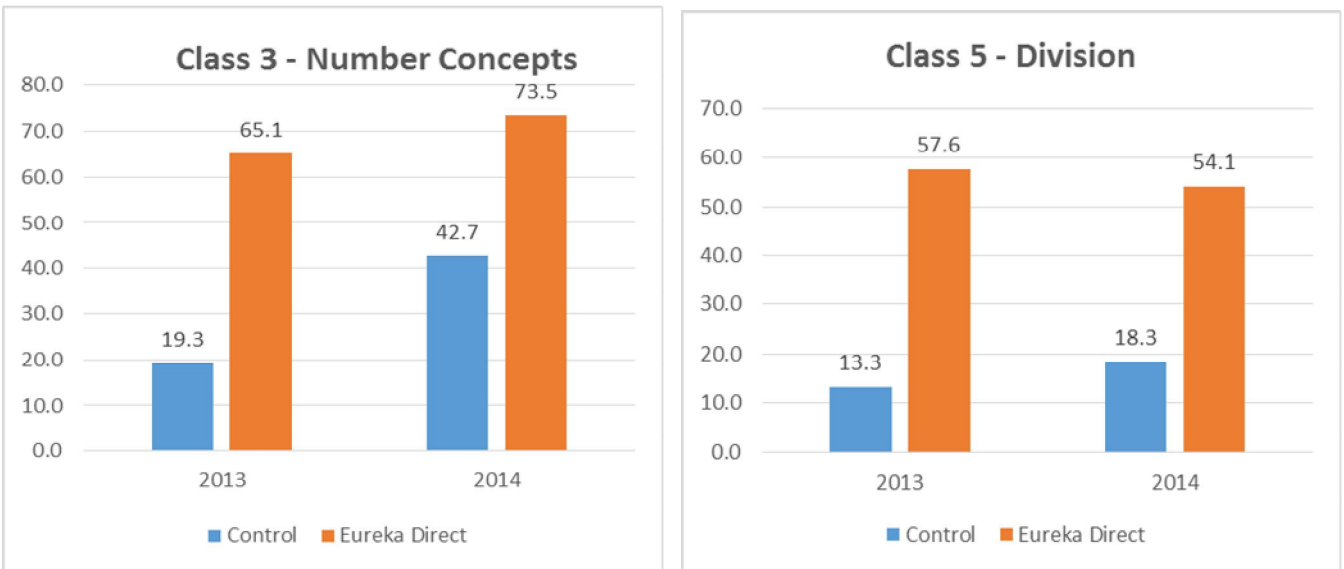
In Tamil too, the Eureka Direct villages perform better than the Eureka NGO villages, but the differences are smaller and at about 8%.

III. Comparison between 2013 and 2014 levels

As mentioned earlier, since villages were changed in the evaluation between 2013 and 2014, we can only do a year-on-year comparison of learning levels. Control villages, however, have remained the same in 2013 and 2014.

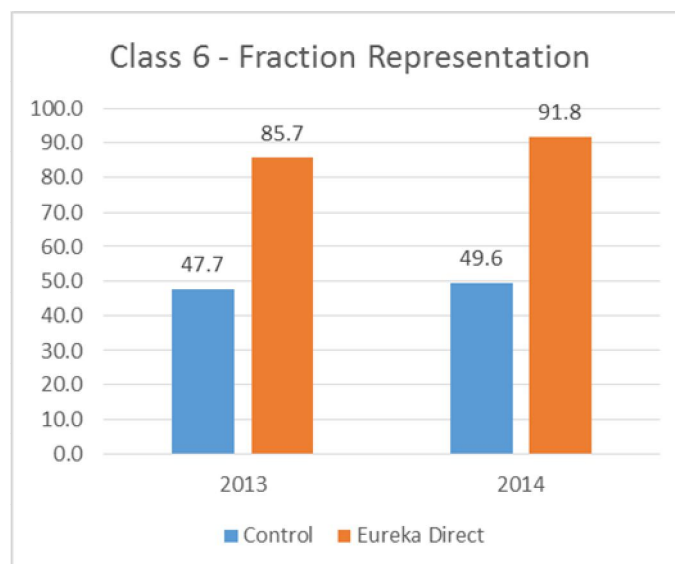


As we can see from above graph, the learning levels have improved for class 1 children in number recognition as well as class 2 in addition, compared to 2013. Given that all Class-1 students are new, we can infer that the net gains have been higher in 2014 compared to 2013. For Class-2, while students would have continued, the skill itself (i.e 2-digit addition) would have been relatively new. So there is a small improvement in net gain. However, control students have also improved, and hence the gap has narrowed.



In number concepts, the learning levels in 2014 are better than those in 2013, though the improvement in control children is also significant. In division, the class 5 percentage in 2014 is lower than in 2013. This does not mean that learning levels have reduced. With no intervention, in 2013, children’s levels would have stayed at 13.3 (control level) whereas the Eureka program took it to 57.6. In 2014, we started with a different set of Class-4 children, and because of the Eureka intervention, it has gone up to 54.1 . This means, the **net gain during the academic year** in 2014 is lower than that in 2013.

In Fraction representation (shown below), both the control and program levels appear stagnant, but

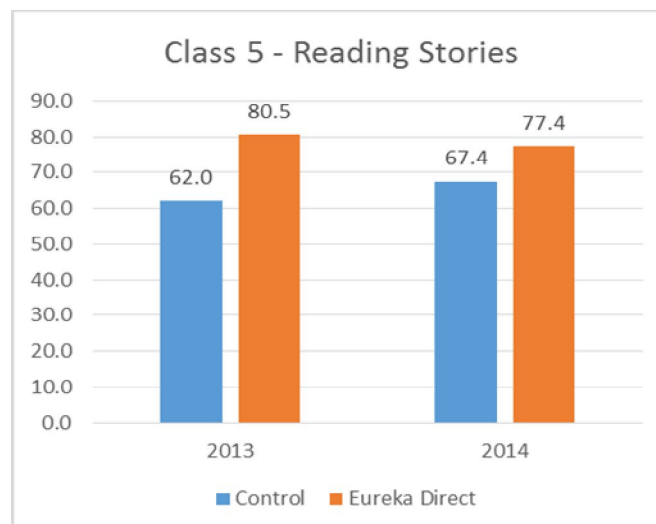


this implies that we have been able to bring about the same level of improvement in both years. However, since we should have made some gains for these children in 2013, the net gain in the 2014 academic year could be lower.

b. Comparison of Tamil Learning Levels in 2013 and 2014



In Tamil, we see that both in Class-1 and Class-2, the absolute levels are lower in the Eureka villages compared to 2013. This implies that the gains in this academic year were clearly lower than last academic year. For class-2 words, we can clearly see a significant improvement among children in control villages. This has narrowed the gap between the program and control school children.



Again, the learning levels for story reading have dipped, but overall, the levels are higher than control villages. However, as the performance in control villages itself is showing improvement, we have to devise better means of ensuring that the last 20% children are able to get the skill, as well as address the issue of ensuring Tamil skills for private school children.

IV. Possible reasons for significant shift in control school learning levels

In the 2012-13 year, the new government had just announced steps to split the text books for different trimesters and also simplify the ABL methodology. However, there was considerable delay in effecting these changes in that academic year and books reached late. By 2013-14, these changes had set in and seemed to have helped.

But a bigger factor could be the steady decline in enrollment in government primary schools over the past 5 years. As per ASER, the percentage of class 1-5 children in private schools has increased by about 7% between 2009 and 2013. Since new enrollments happen only in Class-1, the shift is actually larger. Government school teachers are under pressure to retain children as otherwise their school can get closed for want of sufficient children.

These two factors could be the reason behind improvement in control schools.