Madhi Foundation: Press Kit

On Madhi Foundation:

Who are we? Chennai-based education NGO, Chief Management Partners of the Department of School Education, Tamil Nadu for implementing the State Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Mission

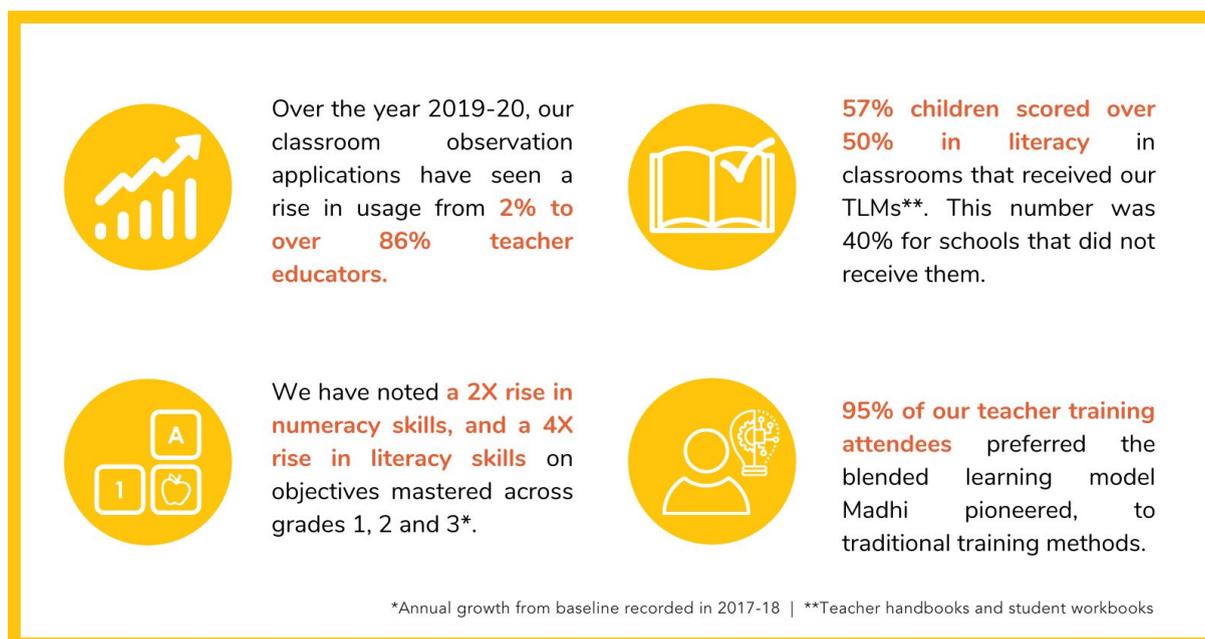**Our vision:** Foundational learning first, so every child can thrive.

Year of inception: 2016

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) India 2018 report states that among Std 3 students, 75% cannot read a Std 2 level text while 81% cannot solve questions on subtraction. A student thus left behind, stays behind. Research shows that addressing these learning deficits get only increasingly difficult and any learning gap not addressed by Std 3 becomes nearly impossible to bridge in higher grades. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places great emphasis on the urgently improving foundational learning levels in India and asserts that it must be treated as a national priority. A strong focus on foundational learning is, therefore, less about teaching children the alphabet or numbers, and more about laying the foundation for a nation of independent readers, thinkers and innovators.

Madhi Foundation is a non-profit organisation working in the education sector and aims to reimagine school systems and eliminate the foundational learning crisis in India by 2030. Madhi designs and implements tech-based, scalable, and context-specific programmes, focussed on fulfilling our vision of putting foundational learning first, so every child can thrive. As the Chief Management Partners of the Department of School Education, Tamil Nadu for implementing the State Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Mission for the next 5 years, Madhi will be working with the government to undertake reforms in curriculum design, teacher training, data-driven governance, monitoring, etc. As part of implementing the FLN Mission, Madhi is proud to contribute to the national vision of realising universal foundational literacy and numeracy by 2025, as stated in NEP 2020.

At Madhi, we believe that technology can be leveraged as an enabler to implement grassroots interventions that are contextual as well as scalable. Over the years, our projects have seen the extensive use of data collection applications, digital learning content, blended teacher training models, and data visualization dashboards towards supporting the education department in cultivating the habit of making evidence-based policy decisions. In the light of the increased relevance of virtual learning and teaching in a post-COVID world, we are hoping to continue leveraging technology in creative ways to reach our existing stakeholders including over 8000

administrative officials, 45,000 teachers, and 10 lakh young students and their parents, all the while placing equity as a priority and addressing the digital divide in access to technology.

Over the year 2019-20, our classroom observation applications have seen a rise in usage from **2% to over 86% teacher educators.**

57% children scored over 50% in literacy in classrooms that received our TLMs**. This number was 40% for schools that did not receive them.

We have noted **a 2X rise in numeracy skills, and a 4X rise in literacy skills** on objectives mastered across grades 1, 2 and 3*.

95% of our teacher training attendees preferred the blended learning model Madhi pioneered, to traditional training methods.

*Annual growth from baseline recorded in 2017-18 | **Teacher handbooks and student workbooks

On the problem: Foundational learning crisis

1. 617 million students worldwide are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. 2/3rds of them are in school. (UIS, 2017)
2. When denied complete education and full health, productivity of 56% of the world's children reduces by more than half. (World Bank, 2019)
3. In 2010, 6.5% of children in India were unable to read letters. In 2014, this number became 19.2%. (ASER, 2018)
4. Only 50.8% of children in Std 3 can read a Std 1 level text. (ASER, 2019)
5. Close to 50 million children have fallen behind. And, once children fall behind, they are unable to catch up. (Draft NEP, 2019)
6. Only 66% of the Std 3 students in India can answer basic mathematics questions correctly (NAS Class III, 2013)

On the founder: Merlia Shaukath

With nearly 10 years of experience in the development sector, Merlia Shaukath, CEO and Founder of [Madhi Foundation](), is a passionate advocate for equity in education and is committed to working towards eliminating the Foundational Learning Crisis in India.

Merlia completed her undergraduate degree in Economics from Stella Maris College, Chennai and went on to pursue an MSc in Governance and Management from the esteemed London School of Economics and Political Science, as well as an MSc in Development Studies from Oxford University, London. She then joined the Teach For India (TFI) Team, setting up and leading the TFI Chennai Chapter for over 3 years during which time she had the opportunity to don various leadership roles around community relations, government relations, development, fundraising and human resources. Guided by this rich experience, she then went to work for a policy consulting firm, as the senior consultant on education and skills for the Vision 2020 project by the Tamil Nadu Infrastructure Development Board. She has also independently consulted for various international NGOs including the Aga Khan Foundation and the Smile Foundation, on projects concerning education and skill development

Madhi Foundation was born in 2015 out of this confluence of wanting to ensure that policy and implementation went hand in hand, as well as Merlia's deep passion for education. She believes that access to quality early childhood education is the greatest leveler against social inequity and guides Madhi to work towards the vision of putting foundational learning first, so every child can thrive. Starting with just 3 schools and a 5 member team, Madhi Foundation has now grown to be the Chief Technical Partners of the Department of School Education, Tamil Nadu for implementing the State Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Mission for the next 5 years. Madhi will work with the government to undertake reforms in curriculum design, teacher training, data-driven governance, monitoring, etc.

Having been conferred the awards for 'Iconic Woman Creating a Better World for All' and 'Leader of the Decade' at the recently held Digital Conclave by the Women Economic Forum as well as been [featured](#)by the London School of Economics and Political Science for her work in catalysing change through Madhi Foundation, Merlia is recognised for her dedication to ensure that every child is ensured access to meaningful primary education. Through programmes improving foundational learning skills implemented across Tamil Nadu, Madhi Foundation has consistently been working towards designing tech-based, scalable and holistic solutions impacting over 32 lakh children across the state, and has been featured by many including [The Hindu](#), [Youth Ki Awaaz](#) and [The Better India](#) for its efforts in addressing inequity in the access to good quality education.

Quote from Merlia Shaukath: "A problem as complex as the foundational learning crisis needs a nuanced, holistic, and empathetic approach rooted in the realities of the context."