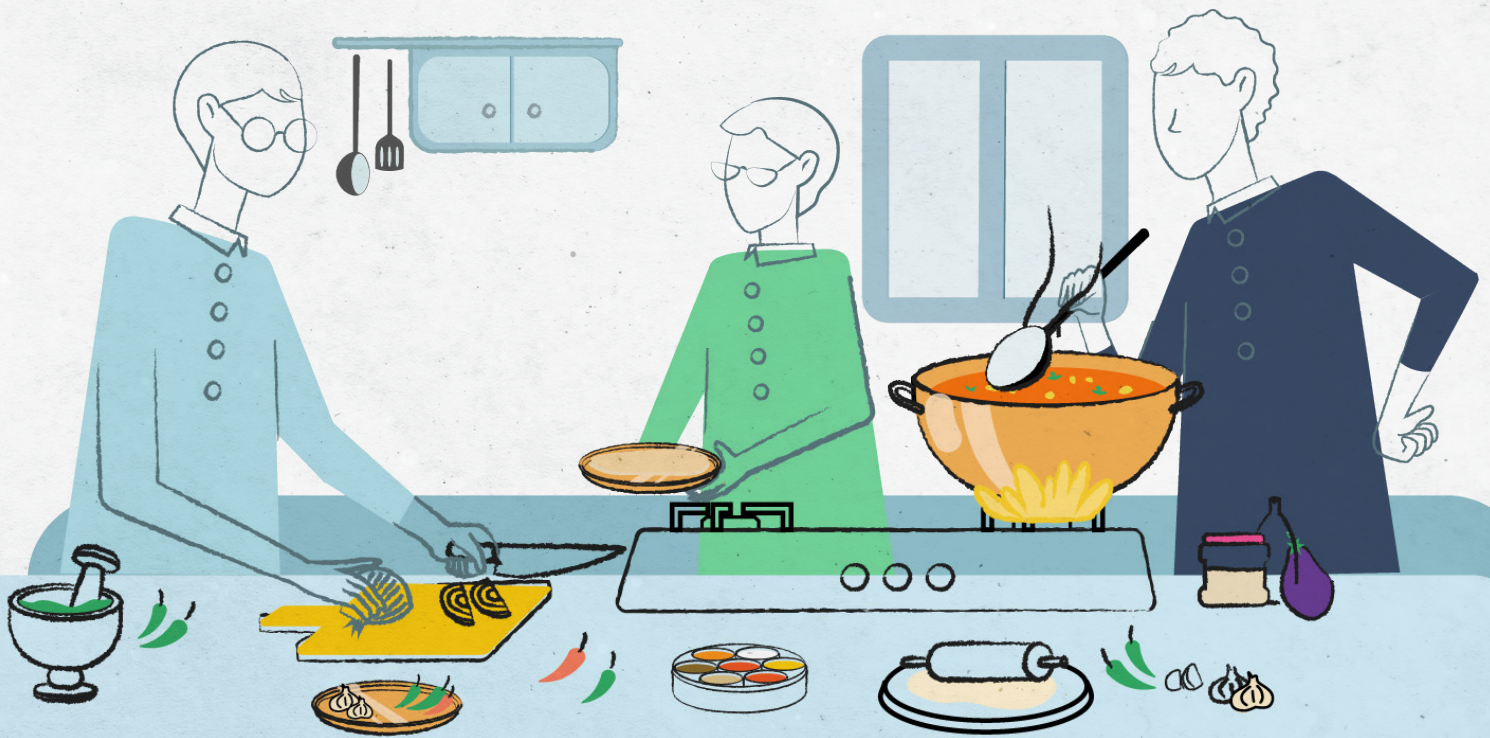# 10to19 Community
DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE

Collaborative Practice

A practitioner led exercise to reflect on what is working & how.

A 10to19 community effort to encourage learning
and discourse on decoding promising practices

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Reimagining the Solutions Landscape

India is home to 253 million adolescents whose contexts and needs are extremely diverse and manifold. From gender inequality to lack of access to education, health services and livelihoods, adolescents remain a disproportionately vulnerable population. Such settings with complex developmental contexts and multiple actors at play require early, effective & collaborative action.

The case for early and collaborative efforts for adolescents became stronger during the COVID-19 pandemic as adolescents were reported to have experienced acute and chronic stress, disruption of daily routines, increased family violence and home confinement with little or no access to peers, teachers or physical activity, significantly impacting their mental health and well-being. Such a critical situation required identifying, at an early-stage, practices that worked on-ground and scaling those in resource-effective ways to cope with the unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic. Reflection and adaptation to serve the evolving needs of communities have been an integral and consistent part of the non-profit ecosystem for a long time, which has in turn enabled organizations to be agile and relevant in their program and implementation approach.

The experience highlighted the relevance of acknowledging practitioner-level insight, data and feedback to identify what works on-ground from a pragmatic lens, in addition to the existing resource-intensive methods and rigorous evaluations like RCTs, long-term observational cohort studies, quasi-experimental studies, determining High Impact Practices, Best Practices and so on, providing the sector the opportunity to strengthen the current solutioning landscape. While other organizations have used a bottoms-up approach before, this document aims at formalizing this approach i.e., the way of identifying and capturing the practices that work on-ground from a practical lens and setting these promising practices on a rapid scale and sustainability journey to deal with diverse developmental challenges, through a well-defined, step-by-step roadmap. This would ultimately allow us to think differently and be intentional about reviewing the program cycle on an on-going basis.

Through this initiative, we have had the opportunity to work with multiple stakeholders, including corporates, foundations, families, non-profits, social businesses, government and the media. In the past, we have also worked on offerings to the sector addressing what works on-ground and what learnings can be adapted across different contexts.

10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative (10to19) is a high-impact platform that unites funders, technical experts, the government and social impact organizations to reach fifteen million adolescents. Our goal is to drive collaborative action and create sustainable models to support the successful transition of adolescents to adulthood. This has given us insight into how social impact programs are structured, how they play out in reality, and how one might identify impactful practices within them.

SOME OF THE CORE PRINCIPLES THAT ARE FOLLOWED AT 10TO19 ARE:

Continual centering of adolescent voices and participation across all stages of program design, implementation, improvement and scaling

Addressing all aspects of service provision holistically, thereby sustainably strengthening the delivery, access, and usage of youth-centric services

Investing in collective learning through documentation and sharing to enhance sector-wide learning and knowledge-building

Integrating GEDI (Gender, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) and intersectionality into all programs

Maintaining accountability to outcomes, while working cost-effectively and collaboratively at scale with a multi-stakeholder approach

Employing and leveraging cutting-edge solutions, like technology and design-thinking, in all programs

In adhering to 10to19's principles of collaboration while working on this report, one of the critical steps has been to gain insights with the support of our partner organizations working in the space of adolescent development and empowerment. We would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all those who extended their support to us in the development of this roadmap for multiple rounds of conversations, their review of the document and to have provided their valuable feedback that has helped us to refine and strengthen this roadmap. These include:

- **Make a Difference**
- **Medha**
- **Enable India**
- **Antarang**
- **Akanksha**
- **FUEL**
- **Quest Alliance**
- **Dream a Dream**
- **Masoom**
- **Sols Arc**
- **CULP**

The next chapter expounds on our understanding of promising practices, followed by a chapter which includes the detailed roadmap and a step-by-step guide for its application. The document concludes with capturing the learnings we have had while developing this roadmap and the action forward. This is a working document and an evolving roadmap, with a vision to collate and publish open-source information that can strengthen knowledge in the sector and enable practitioners to claim space in conversations on evaluation, monitoring and learning.

Understanding Promising Practices

BENCHMARKING APPROACHES IN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR:

Several sectors including the development sector use the term 'best practice' and 'promising practice' in conjunction with benchmarking. In addition, the development sector also uses other approaches to evaluate and document what is working in order to generate impact. In various evaluations, these practices are often identified through a Likert scale of being high-impact practices (HIPs), somewhat high-impact practices (SHIPs) or low-impact practices (LIPs). Other frameworks are used for sustainability reporting in relation to ESG[1] such as the Business Responsibility Reporting (BRR) framework.

However, the two highly used terms are 'Best Practices' and 'Promising Practices'. It is worth noting that there is no single standardized definition of what constitutes a best practice or promising practice across sectors, as different organizations use different criteria for determining them. This section focuses on providing some common ways in which these terms are defined in the sector and emphasizes the purpose and importance of organizations to actively have systems in place that can capture promising practices.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BEST PRACTICE & PROMISING PRACTICE:

There is limited agreement on the criteria used to refer to a best practice, since many refer to the same set of criteria under different names, such as, 'best practice', 'effective practice', and 'recommended practice.' Some commonly used definitions of 'best practice' have been presented below:

- **A technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven reliably to lead to the desired result** (A Guide to Identifying and Documenting Best Practices in Family Planning Programmes, 2017)

- **Successful initiatives which have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving people's quality of life;** are the result of effective partnerships between the public, private and civic sectors of society and are socially, culturally, economically, and environmentally sustainable (Kazancigil & Makinson, 1999)

The fundamental procedure for the identification of a 'best practice' involves a rigorous process of review and evaluation which is often resource-intensive. A promising practice, on the other hand, is described as an intervention, program/service, strategy, policy, or solution that has the potential (or 'promise') of turning into a best practice (Fazal, Jackson, Wong, Yessis, & Jetha, 2017). Promising Practices are interventions, methods, or techniques that **incorporate measurable results,** have been shown to **work effectively and report beneficial outcomes**, but lack the backing of rigorous research data to establish the program or method as useful in a variety of contexts and people. For non-profits, these practices can either be programmatic or organizational, with the possibility of long-term sustainable impact.

A core criterion for both a best and promising practice is that the intervention must be based on **evidence-based guidelines** (Spencer, et al., 2013).

Promising practices can, therefore, be supported by:

SUBJECTIVE DATA

(e.g., interviews and anecdotal reports, testimonials, and lessons learned documentation from the individuals implementing the practice)

OBJECTIVE DATA

(e.g., feedback from subject matter experts and the results of external audits, articles, and reports)

DOCUMENTATION AND TESTING

through learning documents, process documents or dipstick studies.

THE BENEFITS OF IDENTIFYING PROMISING PRACTICES:

There are several benefits of identifying and documenting promising practices. This would help in:

- Identifying and documenting the innovations and uniqueness of an approach
- Maintaining a guided focus towards transformational changes
- Identifying promising solutions that can be rapidly scaled independently
- Identifying quick plug-ins to urgent challenges

Both best practices and promising practices play their own roles in defining solutions. It is worth noting that neglecting a promising practice altogether may be counterproductive to a program. **While transitioning into the real world, out of a controlled environment, 'promising practices' help understand the evidence deeply and identify what works**.

10TO19'S UNDERSTANDING OF PROMISING PRACTICES:

We understand 'promising practices' as strategies or solutions that have the potential to be successful if evaluated. They are not necessarily full-scale intervention models or large programs, but are strategies or aspects within these programs that are impactful, innovative, scalable, sustainable, and unique. These can be approaches, frameworks, implementation activities or any innovation that has been demonstrated and tested by the organizations.

We use the modified criteria established by UNICEF and other partners for the Overview of Promising Practices in Adolescent Programming, the RE-AIM framework, the Most Significant Change framework and insights from working with practitioners, philanthropists and government stakeholders, to understand the following success themes of a 'promising practice' as the potential for:

- **Impact:** Positive effects produced by a development intervention by an organization or initiative, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

- **Scalability:** A process whereby organizations and initiatives expand, evaluate, adapt and sustain successful practices

- **Sustainability:** The continuation of benefits from a development intervention by an organization or initiative. Sustainability looks to the probability of continued long-term benefits.

- **Innovation and/or uniqueness:** A break from previous practice—either small or large—that has a significant positive impact.

PLEASE NOTE:

The above definitions are generic and must be contextualized according to the lifecycle of a project and the type of organization or initiative. Hence, it is advised that such interpretations be defined according to the expertise and experience of the organizations that intend on using this tool.

Additionally, practices that are centered around young-people and have acceptability from various stakeholders can provide a good ground to advance participatory approaches and reframe who leads.

Roadmap to decoding Promising Practices

This chapter lays out the proposed process to be followed by organizations to think about their program in a comprehensive manner and to streamline some of their promising practices. The roadmap is a guide to support reviews, self-reflection and learning to continually identify effective, innovative, unique, scalable and sustainable promising practices during the project lifecycle. As a 5-step process of reflection, which can be done internally with teams, partners/stakeholders and/or communities, this will ultimately help you to arrive at a promising practice from a practitioner's lens.

THE PROCESS OF BUILDING THE ROADMAP:

To chalk out a roadmap that could decode and document the Promising Practices in the sector, we engaged with some of our stakeholders, including partners who worked with adolescents. The process undertaken to arrive at the roadmap is laid out below:

- We first documented our own learnings and ways of identifying promising practices based on years of valuable experience of working as a collaborative with multiple stakeholders.

- Once the roadmap was designed internally, we took it to 10to19's partner organizations to validate the process and provide their input in order to improve it. We would like to specifically acknowledge the unparalleled support that we received from one of our partner organizations, Quest Alliance, with whom we collaboratively tested the roadmap over a series of conversations.

Therefore, the following roadmap is not -

- x A scientific framework that will measure the effectiveness of the program

- x A tool to be used for carrying out an in-depth program evaluation

- x A heavily data-driven framework to identify best practices or high-impact practices that are established using tested frameworks

The organizations that are applying this roadmap to identify some of their promising practices are encouraged to review this and provide further feedback.

- After receiving feedback, the roadmap was reviewed and refined further basis the conversations that had taken place.

- Since this is a living and evolving document, we will continue to review and strengthen it as and when we receive new learnings, inputs, and feedback.

We acknowledge that this is a sample set and by no means captures the wide variety of work happening in the sector. However, the intent is to enable key players to build on this sample and further solidify their knowledge in the sector.

Limitations: While the process followed certain academic frameworks and principles such as the development of data collection tools, the information gathered and so on, the tools and the processes have not been previously validated. The data collection tools that were developed for this study were not rigorously tested and evaluated.

WHEN AND WHERE IS THIS ROADMAP APPLICABLE/USEFUL:

The roadmap has been developed to support development practitioners and program design and implementation teams to identify promising practices throughout the project lifecycle and to gain insights into what is working. It brings lived realities to the forefront for more informed and strategic decision-making in order to create better impact. Interestingly, we feel that the roadmap can also be used to find out what is NOT working, what seems ineffective, and what teams are struggling with to get a sharper understanding of how to make the necessary changes.

APPLYING THE ROADMAP TO DECODE PROMISING PRACTICE

Before you begin

Assign roles: The roadmap is effective when implemented collectively within teams with people playing complementary roles. Therefore, before you begin, choose the following members and clarify their roles.

Enquiry Specialist

This can be someone who asks the guiding questions to arrive at the promising practices and assesses the potential to scale the journey, however, is not necessarily involved in the day-to-day implementation of the program. For example, this could include roles similar to that of a project manager or project administrator.

Program Specialist

This can be an individual from the program team who delivers the program on-ground on a day-to-day basis and understands the program from its inception to the present day. For example, this could be someone like an implementation coordinator or on-ground volunteer. We recommend you have more than one program specialist present while implementing the roadmap.

Impact Specialist

This is someone who has a good understanding of learning and impact in general, especially qualitative impact. The person must also have a good understanding of the scaling ecosystem within the development sector in India. This can include a keen understanding of government policies, programs and schemes, and the needs of the practitioner and philanthropic sector. Such roles are usually carried out by senior/mid-level management in leadership positions.

Documentation Specialist

This must be someone who uses the roadmap to document the discussion and promising practices. Such a role usually requires someone with strong organizational and typing skills, good command over the English language and who pays attention to detail.

From here on, we would refer to the group of these specialists as 'the team.'

Additionally, it is important to note that the team would have to identify the information that can be gathered internally to corroborate the impact prior to applying the roadmap. Such types of information include:

- **Insights/knowledge from the program team like:**
    - Detailed understanding of their program lifecycle
    - Program Ecosystem awareness of similar initiatives across the sector

- **Information available on-ground such as:**
    - Verbal accounts of the beneficiaries
    - Case studies from the field

STEPS TO ARRIVE AT A PROMISING PRACTICE(S):

Below is the summary of the 5 steps that the team can follow to arrive at the Promising Practices for their program - ach step in this process will enable the team to gain a holistic picture of the program while narrowing it down to solutions that work. This is followed by the roadmap itself that contains the guiding questions under each step to arrive at the Promising Practices and recommendations based on them. A glossary has been provided at the beginning of the section to help the readers easily understand the terms that are used in the roadmap and use them in the same manner as intended.

GLOSSARY OF THE TERMS USED:

- **Programmatic Practices –** These include various components/aspects/ activities of the program life-cycle from the planning stage to the implementation stage. For instance:
  - › Studying the existing solutions that address the program's gaps and needs
  - › Having internal team meetings to design the program
  - › Or day-to-day activities like daily team meetings and reporting

Such practices also comprise of effective tools, methodologies, frameworks, systems & processes, ways of working that have been used for the program.

- **Frameworks:** In the development sector, frameworks include various approaches/analytical tools that are used to design, implement and evaluate a program that 'adds value' or leads to 'meaningful change' to systemic problems. Some of the commonly used frameworks include:
  - › Systems Mapping
  - › Developing a theory of change for the program
  - › Human-centered design
  - › Right-based frameworks etc.

- **Project Methodologies:** These are usually used in relation to the management of the project. This can include mapping the targets, the strategies to meet the targets, the activities to achieve the desired results etc.

- **Quantitative data:** Quantitative data is data expressing a certain quantity, amount or range. For instance, in the development sector, we often map how many people are being impacted by an intervention on-ground or through an online platform, the percentage increase in the level of awareness of the participants of a program etc.

- **Qualitative data:** Qualitative data is information that cannot be counted, measured or easily expressed using numbers but is still an indicator of impact. For instance, changes in the attitude of men toward gender cannot be documented in number but can be done through the verbal accounts from the person, observations noted in the monitoring reports etc.

- **MEL: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning –** These are frameworks/tools used at various points in the program lifecycle to allow evaluators to evaluate and improve programs by monitoring comprehensively, evaluating selectively, and learning continuously to support their initiatives. This can include capacity building of the team for learning, report formats for monitoring and documentation, evaluation studies carried out at the mid-point and end-point of the program etc.

- **Catalytic:** Something that demonstrates the potential to create rapid direct/ indirect change across interventions

- **Spike Factor:** An outcome of a programmatic component/aspect/activity that can be considered as positive/beneficial/advantageous and which can indicate a possible Promising Practice.

STEPS IN THE ROADMAP:

1 | List & Shortlist

OBJECTIVE

To identify gaps/needs/ opportunities and to shortlist program practices that are impactful, sustainable, scalable, innovative and/or unique.

OUTPUT

› policy gaps
› community needs
› opportunities for innovation and other aspects that the program is addressing.

• A list of program practices that are working on-ground in bridging gaps/needs/opportunities.

2 | Calibrate & Substantiate

OBJECTIVE

To substantiate the shortlisted practices by collating gathered data in the form of: (a) feedback from the community (b) verbal accounts of the ground team (c) documentation reports (d) other valuable data

OUTPUT

• Qualitative and/or quantitative data to assess the promise of the shortlisted practices according to the four guiding factors

• First list of promising practices

By the end of Step 2, the team would have arrived at a list of the Promising Practice(s)

3 | Develop into a Recommendation

OBJECTIVE

To construct a recommendation in a brief, specific and clear-cut format which would assist other initiatives in implementing the same

OUTPUT

A clear and comprehensive recommendation(s) addressing:
• Demographic to cater to
• Gaps/needs/opportunities addressed by the practice
• The direct/eventual beneficiaries of the program

4 | Document

OBJECTIVE

To document the promising practices in a detailed manner

OUTPUT

• 2-3 promising practices documented in a concise format capturing: (a) what gap/need is addressed, (b) how it is addressed and the change that is created (c) the potential for replicating along with recommendations for implementing

5 | Objective Review

OBJECTIVE

To validate the final promising practice and recommendation(s) by at least one person/ partner organization/ community/ MEL partners outside of the team.

OUTPUT

• Promising Practices and recommendations ratified by at least one member/ partner organization/ community/ MEL partners outside of 'the team'

The next section provides step-by-step guidance on using the roadmap, in order to pull out promising practices from your program intervention.

THE ROADMAP FOR DECODING PROMISING PRACTICES

Once the roles have been assigned, the following questions will be used by the enquiry specialist to facilitate the discussion. The documentation specialist will also use the provided templates to take notes.

Each step contains 'instructions', along with 'probing questions' for facilitation. The team does not need to answer all the probing questions. This is left to the discretion of the enquiry specialist.

Keep these pointers in mind: The roadmap focuses on certain aspects of the program or initiative but is not an exercise to re-calibrate the theory of change or strategies.

The goal of this tool is to capture the on-ground strategies, solutions, frameworks, aspects, methodologies, and ways of working in a program that should be gathered for knowledge-sharing among actors in the sector.

While applying the roadmap given below, ensure that:

› The objectives are specified by the enquiry specialist at the start of each step

› All activities and approaches are probed for by the program specialist using probing questions

› Responses are captured by the documentation specialist and summarized by the enquiry specialist at the end of each step using the documentation template

Scan / click on this QR code to access the tool that will help you and your team to identify promising practices within your program

Conclusion

The last two years of enduring a pandemic have presented enormous challenges globally. At 10to19, we are inspired by the limitless potential of the sector to be resilient, sensitive and action-oriented. As we reflect, we recognize that the country has come a long way in creating accessibility to services, empowerment and opportunities for its adolescents and young people. We have seen several crucial efforts led by governments at the central and state level. We have been supported by a vibrant nonprofit ecosystem, an engaged civil society; a proactive private sector; and rapid developments in technology.

However, to achieve India's ambitious yet necessary targets for sustainable and inclusive development by 2030 and recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot more needs to be done. The pandemic underlined the fact that complex developmental challenges cannot be dealt with in isolation and often need effective and collaborative practices that can enable governments, civil society organizations and philanthropists to generate sustainable impact.

We hope that the roadmap presented in this document can facilitate this process by identifying what is working on-ground and understanding the unique practices that can be replicated rapidly. It is aimed at supporting organizations to carry out reflective, discussion-based reviews of their programs in a resource-efficient manner and share this knowledge widely through the identification of promising practices. We have had many learnings in the process of developing this roadmap:

- Focus on 'what's working and how.'

- Various sources of evidence are critical for validating the promising practices that the team identifies. This includes the feedback of the community members, the inputs of the ground team about what is working and what is not, the weekly and monthly reports, etc.

- While it is critical to document our promising practices, it is equally important to share them in the sector as easy-to-understand recommendations for a rapid scaling journey as well as to build more collaborations.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This living, breathing document would evolve as we go along. We want to develop this into a guidebook that various organizations in the sector can access to identify and document their best practices as well as contribute towards the existing body of knowledge.

Organizations can send in (i) their experience of using this approach, and/or (ii) the promising practices identified using the form attached in Annexure <> through *10to19community@dasra.org*, or by using the following QR-code, which 10to19 hopes to publish as a compendium of promising practices.

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