

**Pratham Books' StoryWeaver celebrates International Mother Language Day
with reading sessions in over 60 languages!**

Bengaluru/Delhi – February 21, 2020: StoryWeaver, an initiative of Pratham Books, a not-for-profit publisher, is helping conduct more than 1000 reading sessions in over 60 languages in observance of International Mother Language Day - celebrated annually on 21 February to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and multilingualism.

Every year, StoryWeaver (www.storyweaver.org.in) marks International Mother Language Day (IMLD) in an effort to remind us that learning to read in one's mother tongue early in school helps reduce dropout rates and makes education more engaging, meaningful and enjoyable for children.

For this year's edition of IMLD, StoryWeaver invited volunteers to host reading sessions for children in their mother tongues from February 14 - 23, 2020. Participants from around the world are using StoryWeaver's digital repository of multilingual storybooks to read to children in over 60 languages, including mainstream Indian languages (Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam), indigenous languages (Kuvi, Pawari, Santali), vulnerable languages (Gondi, Korku, Tulu), classical languages (Sanskrit) and other languages from around the world (Arabic, Igbo, Nepali).

Additionally, StoryWeaver announced the release of open digital libraries in 16 minority languages that have limited or no children's literature: Amharic (Ethiopia), Basa Jawa (Indonesia), Bodo, Tangkhul (vulnerable languages from North-East India), Kolami (vulnerable indigenous language from Maharashtra), Kochila Tharu and Rana Tharu (spoken in Nepal), Sindhi, and bilingual books in English-Surjapuri, to name a few. These libraries have been created in collaboration with a network of organisations and individuals, as part of StoryWeaver's Freedom to Read 2020 campaign.

Anil Pradhan, Member-Secretary, Shikshasandhan, Odisha says: "As part of StoryWeaver's Freedom to Read campaign, we are in the process of creating bilingual books in Odia – Kui, Odia – Ho, English – Odia and Hindi – Odia. They will be launched at the Tribal Art and Literature Festival to be held in March 2020 and the digital books will be available for free on StoryWeaver. We have worked with tribal communities to ensure that their voices are heard, and their cultural identities and languages are represented and preserved. I am happy to collaborate with StoryWeaver on this project, which will give children access to books in languages that they speak and relate to."

With 40% of the global population not having access to education in their first language, the issue of lack of linguistic diversity in children's books is a serious concern. UNESCO reports that children learn better in their mother tongue, and this makes it essential to create high-quality mother tongue reading resources, for all the benefits created in supporting reading skills acquisition among children.

30,000 schools in the state of Chhattisgarh, India (of which 15,000 are in tribal areas) have been encouraged to celebrate International Mother Language Day with StoryWeaver by giving children access to books and storytelling in indigenous languages like Gondi, Kurukh, Sadri and many more. Says Dr. M. Sudhish, Samagra Shiksha Chhattisgarh: "On January 26, the Honorable Chief Minister of Chattisgarh announced the use of mother tongue languages while teaching in classrooms. When we heard about StoryWeaver's IMLD initiative, we felt that this was a great opportunity to take the Chief Minister's mandate forward and bring mother tongue storytelling into the classroom."

Suzanne Singh, Chairperson, Pratham Books, says: "Children love stories and they are an important part of a child's growth and development. Children need storybooks that they can relate to and that are in languages that they speak and understand. Through StoryWeaver, we are trying to address the inequity in the availability of reading resources by providing open and free access to over 18,000 storybooks in 222 languages and fostering the respect for cultural and linguistic diversity."

About StoryWeaver

StoryWeaver (www.storyweaver.org.in) is an open source digital platform of multilingual children's storybooks from Pratham Books. On StoryWeaver users can read, create, translate, download, print and share stories for free! By creating a collaborative framework where the creators and consumers of children's content can interact with one another, StoryWeaver attempts to address the scarcity of books for children. StoryWeaver was launched in 2015 with 800 books in 24 languages. Today, the platform offers over 18,000+ books in 200+ languages.

About Pratham Books

Pratham Books (www.prathambooks.org) is a not-for-profit children's book publisher founded in 2004 with the mission to see 'a book in every child's hand'. Its key objective is to publish good quality, affordable storybooks in multiple languages to support reading acquisition among children.
