



Chess99 India: Business Development & User Acquisition Plan

Executive Summary: In the first year we will roll out Chess99 in four phases. Phase 1 (Weeks 1–4) uses the founder's personal network to recruit "founding" players (friends' children, cousins) via free family tournaments, WhatsApp outreach, and a referral bonus (both referrer and friend get free credits ①). Phase 2 (Weeks 5–8) targets Hyderabad schools with chess demos and free in-school tournaments, tying up teachers (paying a commission per new registration) and placing low-cost local ads (flex banners, flyers) ② ③. Phase 3 (Months 3–4) scales to Andhra Pradesh/Telangana schools through partnerships with educators and community leaders (building on India's 17M+ school chess players ④). Phase 4 (Months 5–12) pushes pan-India via digital campaigns (Google/Meta ads), influencer "micro-campaigns," and national tournament promotions, while building the Chess99 brand ("India's own chess platform"). Throughout, we hire progressively (school liaison, social media exec, video editor, ops support) as needed. Our teacher model offers educators a per-student signup fee and schools a share of revenue when chess is included. We emphasize India-centric identity ("Make in India – Chess of India") in all marketing. Early focus is on free sign-ups and viral referrals; later revenues come from paid tournaments, Pro subscriptions (₹299/month) and credit sales ① ⑤. Additional features (WhatsApp communities ⑥, course certificates, chess-teacher marketplace, AI puzzle bot, Hindi/local languages ⑦) will be rolled out as "growth hacks." Total budget is ~₹4.0L, allocated phase-wise in the table below.

1. Launch Phases

Phase 1 (Weeks 1–4): Pilot with Family & Community

- **Targets:** ~200–500 initial users via the founder's network ①.
- **Activities:** Run 5–10 "founding member" chess tournaments for friends' kids; send personalized WhatsApp invites with demo videos; post daily puzzles on Instagram and tips on Facebook (parent/education groups) ① ⑧. Implement a referral program (e.g. both inviter and invited get 100 bonus credits ①) to drive organic growth. Leverage WhatsApp groups and local chess clubs for publicity (WhatsApp is "quickly becoming the MVP of brand communication in India" ⑥).
- **Budget:** Small (≈₹50,000) for content creation (video editing ₹500/video ⑤), simple flyers, and initial giveaway credits.
- **Goal:** Validate onboarding process and server stability; reach ~500 sign-ups by week 4.

Phase 2 (Weeks 5–8): Hyderabad School Launch

- **Targets:** First institutional partnerships in Hyderabad schools.
- **Activities:** Assign (or hire) a **School Outreach Lead** to liaise with 10–20 schools. Offer free in-school chess demos and tournaments (cover travel/materials) to show value ③. Tie up with chess teachers: offer them a performance bonus (e.g. ₹50 per new student who registers). Place local flex banners and flyers near schools and community centers (banner ads are highly portable and one of the cheapest ad forms ②). Use a "Make in India – Chess of India" branding theme to resonate locally.

Continue social media engagement and start small online ads (₹300/day on Google targeting “online chess for kids,” CPC ~₹10–20 ⁹).

- **Budget:** Moderate (≈₹60,000) for local ads, banners, school materials, small referral incentives, and a stipend for the outreach person.
- **Goal:** Secure partnerships with 2–3 Hyderabad schools (see [53]), add ~500 new students, and grow social media following.

Phase 3 (Months 3–4): Regional Expansion (AP & Telangana)

- **Targets:** Scale school outreach across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Activities:** Replicate the school tie-up model statewide. Partner with regional education societies, chess academies, and local youth leaders to reach many schools quickly. Introduce a **Chess99 Teacher Marketplace** – an online directory where certified coaches can register and earn a 15% commission on lesson fees (tapping the booming ₹4.1B+ Indian tutoring market ¹⁰). Offer schools revenue-share if they adopt chess as a formal activity, aligning with the FIDE/AICF push to bring chess into classrooms ¹¹ . Start placing small regional newspaper ads and cable TV spots to raise awareness (print media still offers “local reach and high visibility” ¹²). Produce more Hindi/Telugu video tutorials (with a content editor hire) and add puzzles in regional languages (localization can unlock 57% of users who prefer native-language content ⁷).
- **Budget:** Larger (≈₹90,000) for expanded ads, regional language content production, prizes for larger tournaments, and influencer pilots (pay 2–3 micro-influencers ₹2,000–3,000 each ¹³).
- **Goal:** Partner with dozens of schools; sign up ~2,000+ students; begin seeing organic interest from new cities.

Phase 4 (Months 5–12): Pan-India Growth

- **Targets:** National reach across India.
- **Activities:** Launch aggressive digital campaigns: continue Google Ads (₹300–400/day) and Meta (Facebook/Instagram) ads targeting parents (expected CPM ~₹100 ¹⁴). Highlight Chess99 as “India’s own online chess community,” leveraging national pride (e.g. emphasize Indian champions). Run online national tournaments and seasonal “Festival Chess Bonanzas” with prize pools to boost interest. Ramp up influencer marketing: collaborate with 10+ chess/education micro-influencers (each ~₹5k) to share Chess99 links and referral codes. Explore local-language marketing aggressively: e.g. ads and content in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil (as “education localization” dramatically boosts engagement ⁷). Deploy TV spots or newspaper supplements (budget-permit) emphasizing chess as patriotic/intellectual sport.
- **Budget:** Highest (≈₹200,000) for sustained ads, influencer fees, large prize pools, and running community events. Hire an **Operations Support** for logistics and a full-time Content Editor for YouTube. Maintain lean tech ops (cloud servers, minimal dev costs).
- **Goal:** Achieve pan-India brand recognition, reach 20,000+ users, and grow Pro subscriptions.

2. Recruitment Plan

- **Founder (Weeks 1–4):** Solo founder handles platform build, initial tournaments, and outreach.
- **Hires (Months 2–4):**
- **School Onboarding Lead:** A part-time outreach person to connect with schools and teachers (Phase 2 start).
- **Social Media Executive:** To manage Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp communities (Phase 2).

- **YouTube Content Editor:** For Phase 3 to produce tutorial videos (₹500 each planned 5).
- **Operations Support:** From Phase 4 to coordinate tournaments, handle payments and helpdesk.
- **Roles & Timing:** First hires by Month 2 once early traction is proven, later hires as traffic grows (per standard startup advice to fill immediate gaps 15). All positions can start as low-cost contract/freelance, scaling to part-time salaries as revenue grows.

3. Teacher & School Partnership Model

- **Performance Incentives:** Chess teachers (both school coaches and private tutors) earn side income by referring students. For example, pay ~₹50–100 per new Chess99 registration through them. This “performance-based compensation” motivates outreach (akin to education referral models 1).
- **School Revenue Share:** Offer schools a share (e.g. 10%) of any Pro subscription or coaching revenue if chess becomes part of their curriculum or after-school program. This aligns interests: schools promote Chess99 to students, and benefit financially. (This model resembles revenue-share EdTech partnerships.)
- **Formal Training Tie-ups:** Leverage the FIDE/AICF MoU programs: sponsor or co-host teacher training workshops in schools 11 . This builds goodwill with education authorities and embeds Chess99 into official “Chess in Schools” initiatives. Over 1000 Delhi schools have already adopted chess 4 , showing wide appetite.

4. Marketing Strategy

- **Local & Print Ads:** Use flex banners and posters in community hotspots (school fairs, coaching centers). Flex banners are extremely cost-effective – as low as ₹500 for small prints 2 – and highly visible. Run ads in local/regional newspapers (especially education supplements); print still “connects with the mass” and has high credibility 12 . For example, a half-page regional newspaper ad may cost ₹40,000–50,000 16 , so we’ll focus on smaller inserts.
- **Digital Campaigns:** Invest in Google Search ads (₹300–400/day 9) and Facebook/Instagram ads. In India, Facebook CPMs are very low (~₹10 per 1000 17) and CPC ~₹2–8 18 . Target parents (aged 30–45) interested in education. Use skippable YouTube In-stream ads (~₹0.10/view 19) to promote Chess99 to chess-video viewers.
- **Social & Content:** Create daily engaging content. Post chess puzzles/quizzes on Instagram and Facebook (tools like Canva used for design) 8 . Produce a weekly YouTube tutorial series (“Chess Mastery for Kids”) – [1] planned 10 videos at ₹500 editing each 5 – to drive organic traffic and SEO. Use WhatsApp Broadcast/Communities for announcements (WhatsApp is “quietly becoming the MVP of brand communication” in India 6).
- **Influencer Micro-Campaigns:** Collaborate with 5–10 micro-influencers (1,000–50,000 followers) in the chess/education niche. Even small influencers charge just a few thousand rupees per post 13 20 . Give each a unique referral code or discount. Sponsored reels or short videos can amplify reach to engaged audiences. This is “cost-effective” – global spending on influencer marketing is surging (88% of marketers raised budgets in 2024 20).
- **Mass Media & Community Events:** With any leftover budget, pursue PR – press releases to education and parenting media, local TV news stories on our school tournaments, coverage in national newspapers. Organize community chess events (e.g. city-wide school championships during festivals), possibly with TV coverage. Position Chess99 as a patriotic homegrown brand (play on “Chess99 – Made in India”) for emotional branding.

5. Revenue Generation

- **Free Core Service & Referrals:** All users join free. Emphasize viral loops via referral codes (e.g. "bring a friend, you both get bonus credits" [1](#)). Early gamification (points, badges, certificates) keeps kids engaged.
- **Tournaments:** Charge entry fees for competitive events (e.g. ₹50–₹500 as per plan). Platform takes a cut (e.g. 20%) while rest funds prize pools. E.g. 50 players at ₹100 each = ₹5,000 pool [21](#). Gradually introduce marquee paid tournaments with larger prizes (sponsored via budget or partners).
- **Pro Subscription:** Offer Chess99 Pro at ₹299/month (previewed in the plan [5](#)). Features: ad-free play, premium puzzles, advanced stats, 10% discount on entry fees, etc. Free users get basic play and ads. Drive upgrades via in-app prompts and "free trial" periods.
- **Credits Purchase:** Sell virtual credits (100 credits = ₹50) for in-app purchases (entry fees, virtual goods). Credits allow micropayments; this "coin" system smooths spending.
- **Coach Marketplace Commission:** When the Chess99 tutor marketplace launches, take 15% commission on bookings. This monetizes the teacher network (similar to Outschool's 30% model [22](#)).
- **Focus Flow:** Initially, prioritize user growth (make sign-up free and rewarding) then gradually introduce paid elements. The plan's model foresees Pro and credits as upsells after users are engaged [1](#) [5](#).

6. Additional Initiatives (Missed Opportunities)

To deepen engagement beyond the plan:

- **WhatsApp Communities:** Create dedicated WhatsApp groups/channels for Chess99 users. Send tournament reminders, puzzles, and allow peer interaction. (With 500M+ Indian users, WhatsApp is ideal for direct engagement [6](#).)
- **Certifications:** After finishing learning modules or tournament series, award digital "Chess99" certificates. This encourages course completion and adds prestige (similar to Coursera certificates).
- **Chess Teacher Marketplace:** Develop the envisioned tutor marketplace (connecting students with coaches). As India's private tutoring market hit \$4.1B in 2024 [10](#), even a niche chess tutor platform can thrive.
- **AI Tutor/Puzzle Bot:** Introduce an AI assistant (chatbot) or puzzle generator (e.g. like ChessBuddy/Anekal solutions) to give kids instant practice and feedback. AI chess coaches (though still evolving) could set Chess99 apart.
- **Hindi & Regional Languages:** Roll out UI and content in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, etc. Given that ~57% of Indian internet users prefer local languages [7](#), this will massively expand reach. For example, add Hindi voice-over to tutorial videos and Hindi puzzles.

7. Budget Estimates (0–12 months)

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities	Estimated Budget (₹)
Phase 1	Wks 1–4	Founder-run family tournaments, referrals, social media content 1 5	50,000

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities	Estimated Budget (₹)
Phase 2	Wks 5-8	Hyderabad school outreach, flex/poster ads ² , local flyers, early Google/Fb ads ⁹	60,000
Phase 3	Mo 3-4	AP/Telangana expansion, teacher partnerships, regional ads, hire content editor	90,000
Phase 4	Mo 5-12	National digital (Google/Meta) campaigns, influencer marketing, large tournaments, hires	200,000
Total	0-12 mo	Entire Launch (0-12 mo) ²³	4,00,000

Notes: Budgets include marketing (ads, print), modest tech ops, tournament prize subsidies, and small hires. Phase 1 and 2 are kept lean using organic and word-of-mouth; Phase 4 carries the bulk of spend on paid ads and influencer fees. This aligns with the plan's first-year total of ₹3-4L ²³. All figures are estimates within the ₹4L cap.

8. Action Checklist

- **Week 1:** Finalize platform MVP, referral system and initial content. Set up WhatsApp broadcast channel. Plan family-chess “tournament” prototype.
- **Weeks 1-4:** Run friends/family chess events; post daily puzzles on social; onboard ~200-500 users via personal network. Monitor sign-ups and feedback.
- **Week 4:** Review metrics; hire part-time School Onboarding Lead and Social Media Exec if targets met.
- **Weeks 5-8:** Execute Hyderabad schools campaign: visit/demos at 10+ schools ³, install flex banners locally, distribute flyers. Deploy small Google/Fb ad campaigns (~₹300/day) and drive traffic.
- **End of Month 2:** Sign agreements with 2-3 Hyderabad schools; train partner teachers on referral incentives.
- **Months 3-4:** Expand to AP/Telangana: replicate school visits (use local language materials), launch Chess99 tutor directory (15% commission) online. Continue digital ads; begin influencer outreach.
- **Month 4:** Hire YouTube Content Editor; publish bi-weekly tutorial videos. Begin offering certificates for course completion.
- **Months 5-8:** Launch full-scale digital ads campaign nationwide. Collaborate with 5-10 micro-influencers to promote Chess99 (with unique codes). Hold first pan-India online tournament.
- **Months 9-12:** Introduce Pro subscriptions and credit purchases actively (via in-app promos). Run large “Festival Chess” tournaments (e.g. Diwali special with prize pools). Evaluate expansion: add Hindi/localized UI.
- **Ongoing:** Track KPIs (daily new users, CPC, conversion to paid). Optimize ads. Foster WhatsApp and Discord communities for retention. Iterate each phase based on learnings.

Sources: Chess99's own strategy plan ¹ ⁵, industry insights on edtech and advertising in India ⁴ ¹² ² ⁶ ¹⁰ ⁷. All budget and tactic estimates are aligned with these analyses and with the 1st-year cap of ₹4,00,000 ²³.

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