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Gender Equality Outcomes of the SSA
A Case Study

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CONTENTS

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Abbreviations

BRC	Block Resource Centre
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CRC	Cluster Resource Centre
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DISE	District Information System for Education
DSE	Delhi School of Economics
EBB	Educationally Backward Block
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
GAD	Gender and Development
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NPEGEL	National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RTE	Right to Education
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SMC	School Management Committee
SPO	State Project Office
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ToC	Theory of Change

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Ratna M. Sudarshan[*]

Abstract

Education policy documents have dual objectives with respect to girls' education, one focusing on the achievement of gender parity in enrollment and learning, and the other concerned with education as a tool for changing gender-unequal social norms in society. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been in operation since 2000-01 and is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner.

This study tries to assess through a field based study whether, to what extent, and in what ways the cumulative impact of SSA interventions has been able to advance girls education and gender equality outcomes in selected contexts. The study sought to address the following questions:

- *What is the understanding of gender equality goals of education among various stakeholders?*
- *How relevant is the package of inputs provided through SSA, to the particular context being studied, given these end goals?*
- *How effective has the cumulative impact of interventions been in meeting stated goals: which inputs appear to have made the greatest positive impact? What other interventions appear to be needed in each context?*

The study has been framed using a Theory of Change methodology. SSA does not spell out a ToC, however, at the outset the implicit ToC is presented here, based on the programme document; the analysis of particular contexts leads to the construction of a change model based on empirical observations. Intended as well as unintended outcomes are identified.

Fieldwork has been conducted in three areas. Rajasthan has historically had low education indicators and poor indicators of female empowerment assessed by such indicators as age at marriage and gender gaps in literacy and education. Pisangan block, Ajmer district, which has a KGBV (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya- an SSA intervention for residential schooling for girls between class 6-8), for which the NGO Sandhan is a resource agency, is one site for the field study. Uttarakhand has high overall educational indicators and lower gender gaps in literacy and education, yet some areas are identified as educationally backward. The second site is Dhauladevi block, Almora district, where there is a KGBV, and within the block the Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi and its partner NGO have a strong presence, although no direct connection with the KGBV. The third site is urban, Kalyanpuri in East Delhi, as an example of the context of education for urban poor children, and in this area the Institute of Social Studies Trust runs a community centre for children and youth, although there is no formal connection between the NGO and the schools. In each place one or two upper secondary schools (i.e.

[*] National Fellow, NUEPA, (November 2013 - October 2015).

with classes 6-12) and the KGBVs, were used as 'nodal' points around which the sample was selected. The sample includes persons representing different stakeholder perspectives, including past and present students of the selected schools, girls and boys from the ages of 12/13 onwards, the teachers, principals, education officers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders including the partner NGOs. Almost 100 persons in all were met in both Pisangan and Dhauladevi and a smaller number (approximately 45) in Delhi.

The goal of gender parity is easy to understand; this is not the case with gender equality, a concept that has various interpretations. Moreover social change is a slow process. The study tries to see whether girls who have recently completed schooling up to and beyond class 8 (and therefore would have benefited in some measure from the various SSA inputs) display a sense of agency in wanting to study further, in wanting to work and be economically independent; whether there are differences in their lives and aspirations from that of their mothers; and the ways in which education might have contributed to the observed changes.

This study suggests that while access to both primary and post-primary schools has improved considerably over the last decade, a number of other factors play a role in determining the ways in which schooling leads on to further study, work opportunities, or changing attitudes towards gender roles. The observed outcomes in each place reflect the interaction between school education, various forms of learning outside the school, work opportunities and higher education/ vocational training opportunities. These have to be set against the generalized influence of culture/norms on the one hand, which probably have a stronger influence on marriage practices than on education choices, and of macro-economic changes on the other which influence aspirations and opportunities. Findings suggest that it is important to recognize that boys and girls learn within and outside school, especially where there are active NGO activities going on and this shapes their personalities, attitudes and values, and search for further study/ work. Expectations from and through formal education are mediated by broader influences from the media, underlying culture, and economic growth processes. Economic growth with generation of many more jobs acts as a pull factor both for further study/ training and search for work. The success or otherwise in getting work of one generation will feed into next generation choices around schooling and learning. Thus the dynamism of the changing work environment needs to reflect in the content and methodology of learning in schools so that there is a synergy between these various influences.

The study concludes with recommendations including the need to understand 'gender' in its local context and manifestation, with differentiated strategies to encourage change processes, and the necessity of strengthening interactions within the education sector as well as across sectors.

Chapter 1

Approach and Objectives of the Study

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been in operation since 2000-01.SSA is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner. It is being implemented in partnership with State Governments across the entire country. The programme is conceived as a set of interventions, the cumulative impact of which will be universalisation of elementary education of acceptable quality. SSA objectives include:

- Ensure that all children are in school
- All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007
- All children complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010
- Universal retention by 2010

SSA, girls education and gender equality

With respect to girls' education, there are dual objectives reflected in policy documents. One is the achievement of gender parity in enrollment and learning, and the other is to bring about change in gender-unequal social norms in society. As stated in the SSA Framework for Implementation document (2011)[1], which examined compliance with the RTE 2009, a guiding principle (among others) would be

> `Gender concern, implying not only an effort to enable girls to keep pace with boys but to view education in the perspective spelt out in the National Policy on

[1] http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/SSA-Frame-work.pdf

> Education 1986 /92; i.e. a decisive intervention to bring about a basic change in the status of women`. (p.6) and again, that `education should be a transformative force, build women's self-confidence, and improve their position in society and challenge inequalities`.

The implementation framework recognises that 'gender' cuts across other categories such as `weaker sections` and `disadvantaged groups`. It points out that all too often, gender gets seen `as a biological category (concerning only girls and women); as a stand-alone category (not related to other issues or other forms of discrimination); and in terms of provision of opportunities so that girls can 'catch up' with boys and 'close the gap'`, leading to a focus on gender parity (measured as the ratio of girls enrolment to boys enrolment).

To move away from such an exclusive parity focus, it is suggested that

- data on gender showing the various intersecting forms of disadvantage should be extensively used in planning and training;
- that gender needs to be present in all aspects and not be seen as an add-on concern;
- that men and boys need to be involved, as the change that is sought `to transform unequal gender relations and bring about systemic change` refers to relational aspects of gender roles and responsibilities;
- and that context-specific interventions will need to be developed.

The intention is that

> `SSA will continue to focus on addressing the needs of girls however the understanding will go beyond that to include a transformation of gender relations. Gender will be understood as a social construct that allocates distinct qualities, roles, norms and actions for boys/ men and girls/women. Thus the strategy for addressing gender concerns will also include boys. In the context of RTE the importance of the role of women in SMC's will be taken on board.'

SSA supported interventions (which were strengthened further in light of the RTE, as discussed above), include opening new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthening existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. Existing schools with inadequate teacher strength are to be provided with additional teachers, while the capacity of existing teachers is to be strengthened by extensive training, grants for developing teaching-learning materials and strengthening of the academic support structure at a cluster, block and district level. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. It has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs. SSA also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide.

Specifically in relation to girls education, an important intervention is that of the KGBV, or residential hostels at upper primary level for out of school girls in educationally backward blocks, intended to ensure access and quality education for girls from disadvantaged groups. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), launched by the Government of India in 2004 and merged with the SSA in 2007, is mainly intended for girls belonging to the SC, ST, OBC and minorities in difficult areas. KGBVs can be opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs), previously defined as blocks with a rural female literacy rate below the national average (46.13%: Census 2001) and gender gap in literacy higher than the national average (21.59%: Census 2001). This criterion was revised in 2008 to include EBBs with rural female literacy below 30%; and Towns/cities having minority concentration with female literacy rate below the national average (53.67%: Census 2001). Further from 2010-11, KGBVs can be opened in all EBBs with rural female literacy below the national average as per Census 2001.

Choice of location for KGBV would be further determined by `Concentration of tribal population, and/or a large number of girls out of school; Concentration of SC, ST, OBC and minority populations, and/or a large number of girls out of school; Areas with low female literacy; or Areas with a large number of small, scattered habitations that do not qualify for a school`. As the scheme is addressed to a particular target group, 75% of the girls enrolled in a KGBV are expected to be from SC, ST, OBC or minority

communities and are accorded priority for enrolment in such residential schools. Thereafter up to 25% of the girls enrolled could be from families below the poverty line.

At the State level a 'Gender Coordinator' is appointed with oversight on the KGBV. Training responsibility rests with DIETS, BRCs and Mahila Samakhya Resource Groups. An Advisory State level Co-ordination Committee consisting of nominees from relevant State Government Departments, and other experts provides direction and guidance.

About this study

The SSA is regularly evaluated and assessed through M&E exercises and the bi-annual Joint Review Missions. The focus of these assessments is around the core objectives of access, retention and quality. The issue of `gender equality` in these assessments often gets translated into questions around how better to ensure inclusion and participation of girls. This study poses a slightly different perspective, by trying to assess through a field based study whether, to what extent, and in what ways the cumulative impact of SSA interventions has been able to advance girls' education and gender equality outcomes in selected contexts. The study seeks to address the following questions:

- What is the understanding of gender equality goals of education among various stakeholders?
- How relevant is the package of inputs provided through SSA, to the particular context being studied, given these end goals?
- How effective has the cumulative impact of interventions been in meeting stated goals: which inputs appear to have made the greatest positive impact? What other interventions appear to be needed in each context?

The study has been framed using a Theory of Change methodology. SSA does not spell out a ToC, however, at the outset and based on the programme document, the implicit TOC of the programme is presented here. The analysis of particular contexts leads to

the construction of a change model based on empirical observations. Intended as well as unintended outcomes are identified.

Theory of change approach

"Removing the one-directional nature of change leads us from thinking about a chain of events to a network of events, and from a chain of actors to a network of actors."[2]

Most development interventions are based on an implicit understanding of how change happens. Many times, it is researchers and other experts who guide policy makers by collecting the required evidence. Policy makers also participate in consultations with various constituencies. Paulo Freire advocated that people need to be encouraged to articulate their beliefs about poverty and how to address it, then reflect and take action themselves. Theory of Change approaches are one way of displaying in a narrative or diagrammatic form, the expected process by which a desired change could happen.

ToC approach is particularly useful when we understand a problem to be one of complexity. A distinction can be made between simple, complicated and complex problems. A simple problem is an action such as baking a cake, where the best recipes give good results every time. An example of a complicated problem is sending a rocket to the moon: success depends on having a blueprint that directs both the development of separate parts and specifies the exact relationship in which to assemble them. A complex problem, such as raising a child, is one where uncertainty of outcomes will remain despite other prior experiences, the parts cannot be separated from the whole, and the essence of the effort exists in relationships.[3]

Is achieving gender equality through education a simple problem (requiring a set of inputs with a formula that works each time), a complicated one (the inputs – education, health, livelihood, governance….each needs to be developed and then the whole combined in specified ways), or a complex one, or even having all three elements? Probably, most planning for education has assumed it is a 'complicated' problem where

[2] Davies 2004 in Comic Relief ToC review, James 2011
[3] http://www.solvingforpattern.org/2012/11/09/simple-complicated-and-complex-problems/[14.7.2014]

planning is done for each aspect or sector separately, and then aggregation is expected to yield the desired outcomes. Complexity is present in the process however and certain goals, such as gender equality, for which various strategies are suggested yet, are seen to yield inherently uncertain outcomes. Recognising complexity has implications for governance structures as discussed in Chapter 5.

Complex situations are characterized by 'tipping points' which can cause tremendous change via cascading effects (positive or negative) (Snyder 2013). Evaluation of complex programmes is considerably helped by having a more explicit analysis of underlying theories of change. Theory of Change analysis usually starts with articulating an end goal, a vision, as a specific picture in words of the sustainable future that is desired, describing real people, real relationships, institutions and cultures. Any intervention that seeks to bring about, or helps to bring about, a desired change, is premised upon assumptions, implicit or explicit, about the various factors that might influence the change process, and their relationship with each other. A 'Theory of Change' approach tries to make explicit the context and the process of change. The ToC approach places emphasis on understanding the context, the actors, and identifying a sequence of logically-linked events leading to change. It also recognizes that there may be more than one route from the starting point to the end goal but that the programme has selected one of these as best suited to the context.

The difference between a Logical Analysis Framework and a Theory of Change framework is that the latter expects and allows for changes to be made in the strategies based on feedback and assessment. In using this framework, we are able to pose questions such as: in specific relation to girls education and equality issues, is feedback offered/ received by the education authorities on the kinds of problems being faced, the desirability or otherwise of particular interventions? Does the SSA framework allow for mid-course corrections, have any changes or modifications been made? If not, what might have been the recommended changes in the past, and/or in the present?

Thus what is being attempted is a way of modelling the system that allows us to trace the expected/actual change processes as well as capture the cumulative

impact with respect to gender goals, and to do this in a manner that throws some light on recommended future programme design.

SSA interventions with special relevance to gender can be broadly grouped into four blocks:

- Infrastructure – Interventions expected to promote girls education include ensuring availability of primary school within one kilometer of habitation and upper primary schools within 3 km; separate toilets for girls

- Academic inputs – Interventions expected to promote girls education include recruitment of 50 percent women teachers; ECCE centres in or near schools in convergence with ICDS to free girls from sibling care responsibilities; special training for mainstreaming of out-of-school girls; teachers sensitization programmes to promote equitable learning opportunities for girls; gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials, including textbooks

- Governance – Interventions expected to promote girls education include intensive community mobilization efforts; 'innovation fund' for need-based interventions for ensuring girls' attendance and retention; NPEGEL, including model cluster schools equipped with supplementary reading materials, books, equipment for games and vocational training, teacher training on gender issues, classes on self-defence and life skills – [no longer a separate programme]; residential programme for education of disadvantaged girls in educationally backward blocks (KGBV)

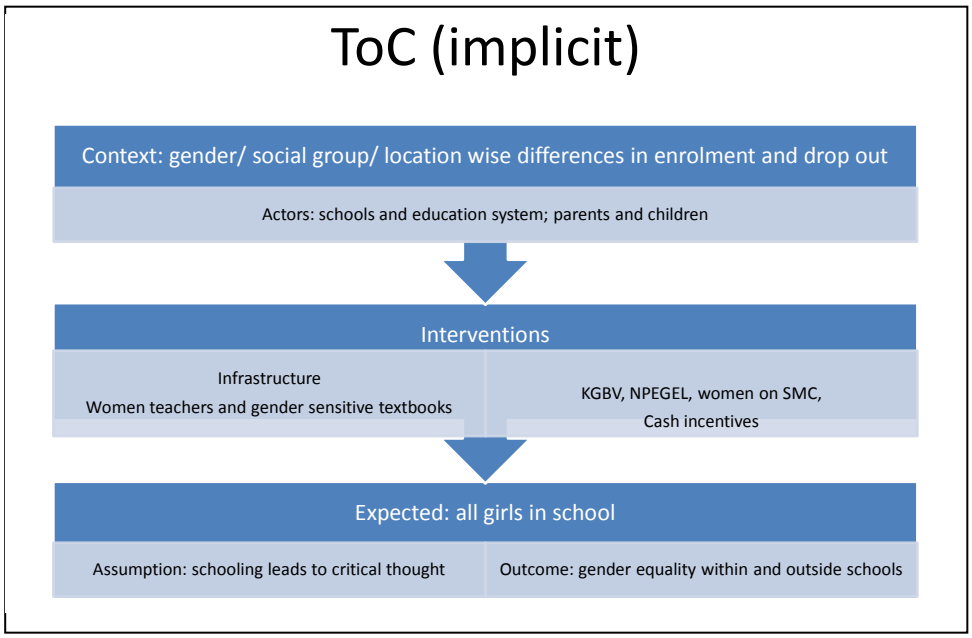
- Incentives – Interventions expected to promote girls education include mid-day meals, scholarships, cycles, cash transfer schemes linked to completion of stipulated grades[4]

[4] See NUEPA (2014) Education for All: Towards Quality with Equity: India, New Delhi: NUEPA, pp 70-72.

The diagram below shows the TOC as it appears, implicitly, in the programme document.

Diagram 1

Implicit Theory of Change of the SSA (in relation to gender equality goals)



In Chapter 2, we discuss the understanding of gender in the SSA documents, and the expected 'pathways' of change. Chapter 3 describes the three geographical areas in which the study has been conducted to get a sense of the context, the conditions of schooling and patterns of livelihood and the various factors influencing decisions around education along with any notable changes in the environment in the last 15 years or so.The relevant actors, organizations, networks, that are present in each area are identified. Chapter 4 presents a field based assessment of outcomes (noting intended as well as unintended outcomes). Gender equality is always a nebulous concept and can be hard to pin down, so a range of outcomes around further study, attitudes towards work and marriage, experiences in school are used as indicators to try and assess change.

Sample

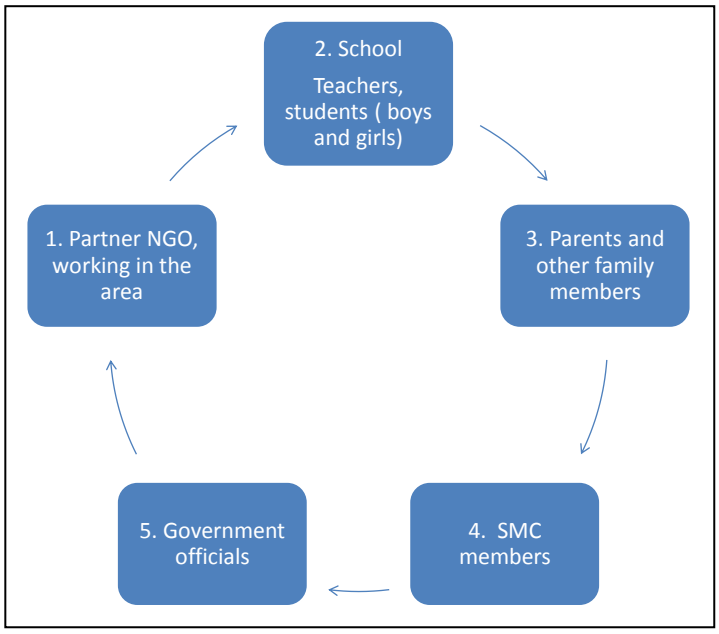
Three areas were selected for the fieldwork. These were chosen so as to include as much variance as possible in the sample. The process of selection went as follows. First,

three states were selected, one that has historically had low education indicators and poor indicators of female empowerment assessed by such indicators as age at marriage and gender gaps in literacy and education (Rajasthan); a second that has high overall educational indicators and lower gender gaps in literacy and education (Uttarakhand); and a third to explore the urban context (Delhi). Within each state an area was selected that has low educational indicators and where NGOs known to the team had some presence: in the case of Rajasthan, this yielded Pisangan block, Ajmer district, which has a KGBV for which Sandhan is a designated resource agency. In Uttarakhand, Dhauladevi block was selected as there is a KGBV here and in the block the Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi and its partner NGO have a strong presence, although no direct connection with the KGBV. In Delhi, Kalyanpuri in East Delhi was selected as an example of the context of education for urban poor children, and in this area the Institute of Social Studies Trust runs a community centre for children and youth, although there is no formal connection between the NGO and the schools.

In each place one or two upper secondary schools (i.e. with classes 6-12) and the KGBVs, were used as 'nodal' points around which the sample was selected. In Pisangan and Dhauladevi, visits were made to neighbouring villages and in Delhi to parts of the Kalyanpuri colony. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with a few teachers and children from these schools, interviews with some parents and siblings were held at their homes, and education officers were met wherever possible. Because the study seeks to understand `outcomes`, girls and boys who had been through elementary school were met, that is, the age group ranges from 12/13 years onwards. The process of conducting fieldwork is diagrammatically described below. The sample includes persons representing different stakeholder perspectives, including past and present students of the selected schools, the teachers, principals, education officers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders. Almost 100 persons in all were met in both Pisangan and Dhauladevi and a smaller number (approximately 45) in Delhi.

Diagram 2

Sequencing of interviews and data collection



The three areas provide very different contexts and thus allow one to see the effectiveness of the SSA approach and the influence of contextual differences. In addition, the study has been conducted with the assistance of local organizations that have had a long association with education, making access to the schools and other stakeholders possible, and enabling the study to gain from their experience and insights. These are Sandhan (Jaipur), Uttarakhand Sewa Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan (Almora), Saathi Centre, Institute of Social Studies Trust (Delhi).

The data has been collected primarily through interviews and focus group discussions. A list of questions prepared in advance was used to guide the interviews and discussions; however, these were largely open-ended. The questions asked included perceptions around the schooling experience, if left school what were the reasons, progression into further study, perceptions regarding changes in attitudes towards gender roles, changes in behaviour regarding education, marriage, work choices. School report cards based on DISE data have been consulted as have other available studies on the selected areas.

In analysing the data, we have been very aware that the sample is small and does not meet statistical criteria of representativeness. However every effort has been made to include a range of standpoints, and to triangulate with different sources wherever possible. Instead of conducting an in-depth analysis of individual interviews, we have chosen instead to identify certain themes which came up repeatedly in the discussion and to use the interview data to reflect on these themes. To maintain privacy, names and designations are not mentioned.

The special focus of the study was to be on girl's education and gender equality outcomes. However the quality of the schooling experience emerges as perhaps the biggest explanation of much of what was observed. Some unintended outcomes of the SSA programme interventions are also noted.

While SSA focuses on the class 1-8 group, transition to secondary school is increasingly a high priority for the education system. To encourage progression to secondary school, state governments have offered a range of incentives to girls who complete Class 8 and enroll in Class 9. The study records any such incentives that were reported in the study areas.

Given the importance attached to regular training of teachers in the programme, this aspect has also been looked at. (Specifically with teachers, an effort was made to find out whether they have participated in trainings, especially gender trainings; what difference, if any, it made to their work, and whether it had influenced their understanding of gender equality concerns).

The presence and possible effects of other programmes present in the area have also been noted, including government supported or NGO programmes.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will be of some use in future policy formulation around girls education and gender equality.

Chapter 2

Understanding 'Gender' in the SSA: Programme Goals

The language of the SSA programme and other related documents shows the influence of a 'Gender and Development' (GAD) approach to addressing gender through policy initiatives, and of approaches to women's 'empowerment'. The GAD approach focuses on the socially constituted relations through which women are rendered subordinate and seeks to transform these relations in the private sphere of the household as well as in social structures that perpetuate women's suppression. Education thus could be a potential site of transformation and developing a different worldview. However there is little further guidance on the 'how' to achieve this. [This, as Elaine Unterhalter points out, is a general limitation of the GAD approach: 'Because GAD is alert to complex processes entailed in the reproduction and transformation of gendered relations, it is less easily translatable into simple policy demands' (Unterhalter 2005: 17). The suggested interventions emerging from this approach are efforts at gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, gender training.]

Gender and education

In a note on `Education and Women's Equality`, Sharada Jain (c.1985) spells out the different levels at which reflection on women's education is needed. To quote:

> `At the first level, one could relate to a large perspective on Education and treat women as a sub-set of the `target group` on the planner's terminology. In that case, one could work on the assumption that educational interventions do, in point of fact, promote `equality` as a value in society and focus on a limited question of how to ensure accessibility to these processes for women. This focus would then highlight the need to evolve appropriate methodology for correcting a distributional imbalance. This perspective would therefore freeze other questions like whether or not education promotes egalitarian values even amongst men or, for that matter, children participating in this engagement.

> At the second level, one may dwell specifically on the fact that there is an unequal situation with respect to men and women in their capacity to reach and apply knowledge. This reflection would then focus on the causes that explain satisfactorily (not just describe) the situation. If it can generate an analysis of the causalities, the implication would be to concentrate on a serious systematic countering of these causes and shelve the larger issue as a step removed from the immediate concern.
>
> At the third level, one can have a still narrower focus on a proposition that there is a need to reflect on women's perception of `education` and their relationship to these processes. In this context, a concentrated attention would have to be given to the reasons why women have not rated the issue of their access to education as really important (i.e. in the current idiom, why women are not keen to send their daughters for schooling etc)`

While the enrolment/access situation for girls has changed considerably since the time this note was written, the complexity around motivation and application remains. Jain (ibid) suggests that `women must experience that they need not look upon their reality regarding themselves and their environment as given or unchangeable; and must experience that there can be a kind of education which would strengthen them and allow them to feel confident'. Today, perhaps, one might venture to say that at least in some areas (and because of the media, known more widely) there are enough role models and enough opportunities that some experience of the kind indicated is now a part of collective consciousness. But it may not be so in all places, for all groups; and moreover whether such consciousness can shape the decisions of persons through observation of the actions of others, or whether it is a process that each individual needs to traverse, remains an open question.

In seeking to translate goals of gender equality into something more concrete, measurable and that can be translated into guidelines, much of the nuance of the above might be lost, yet such translation becomes a necessary part of the policy process.

Several interventions have been made by policy makers to address observable barriers and constraints to girl's education. Stand-alone interventions generally have less impact as compared to more comprehensive plans[5]: the SSA for example consists of several interventions being made together. In the Indian context, it is necessary to simultaneously address intersecting inequalities of gender, caste, class and location.

Indicators of gender equality in education that are widely used include enrolment parity; level of educational attainment; actual learning outcomes. It is also believed, and suggested by different studies, that a number of factors influence gender gaps in education, including economic, social and cultural factors (such as son preference, early marriage, burden of girls' work); education system failures (lack of schools, costs, etc); and education content and process issues (failure to motivate girls, protect rights and dignity of girls)[6]. Moreover, removing inequalities in education can be successful if inequalities in other aspects of life are also being addressed and removed.

Gender equality outcomes

The processes by which SSA inputs are expected to translate into the desired outputs/ outcomes around gender equality are not spelt out in programme documents.[7] That it is not an easy goal, is apparent through other research. Ethnographic studies suggest that even among well educated women, notions of gender equality may be weak (see for example Belliappa 2013; Manjrekar, 2013; Mukherjee, 2013; Santhya et al., 2013 Vijayakumar, 2013). It is also difficult to give an unambiguous definition of 'gender equality'. Does it mean for women to achieve the same roles and responsibilities that men have, does it mean changes in both men and women's roles with new allocations of responsibilities, is it about valuing care work and reproductive roles. Different interpretations exist on the ways in which equality can manifest itself. What does 'gender' mean to you, a group of girls was asked and their reply was '*Girls have to help*

[5] See for example discussion in Global Campaign for Education (2003).
[6] Global Campaign op cit
[7] It has been pointed out that the DPEP which preceded SSA had clearly stated gender goals whereas those in SSA are in broad and general terms. However noting that the SSA, which followed DPEP, is an umbrella programme including many different initiatives, it seems fair to examine how far gender equality goals have been understood and sought by the education system.

in the kitchen while boys are free to roam around. Girls are given dolls and boys are given bikes'. Making the transition from the intangible idea of equality to tangible interventions and outcomes is not a well-defined path.

In this study, and recognizing that there are unlikely to have been dramatic transformations in gendered social norms, the effort has been to look for changes that may be small but indicate the nature of the change under way. First, we try and understand the social change that is taking place in the locations studied. It is true that social change is the result of many factors and forces and cannot be attributed to any single factor. With this caveat, we particularly try and identify whether girls who have completed schooling up to and beyond class 8 (and therefore would have benefited in some measure from the various SSA inputs) display a sense of agency in wanting to study further, in wanting to work and be economically independent; in what ways do their lives and aspirations seem to be different from that of their mothers? What are the various sources of their sense of identity? While attribution is difficult, we try and assess the ways in which education might have contributed to the observed changes.

Second, the study explores albeit in a preliminary way the manner in which schooling processes influence the construction of gendered identities. These are influenced by formal mechanisms to offer an equal schooling to boys and girls, such as curriculum, subjects studied, participation in sports and extra curricular activities, and so on. It also depends on informal processes of socialisation in which parents, teachers and the community at large all play a role. The ability of teachers to transmit ideas of equality surely depends on their own levels of conviction. The ways in which boys and girls develop a sense of personal identity that itself draws on both individual experience and systemic factors is explored through the interviews and group discussions.

Understanding Change

'Doing gender' refers to actions that conform to the socially constructed differences in roles and responsibilities between the sexes. 'Undoing gender' then refers to social interactions that undo these differences. In the field of education, 'doing gender' would refer to practices that reinforce and validate existing gender norms, while undoing

gender would mean practices that try to change these. The processes by which the SSA programmes try to `undo` gender include removing formal obstacles to girls enrolment. This includes offering cash or other incentives, or making special arrangements such as the residential KGBV schools. Recognising that gender stereotypes can be reinforced through the 'hidden curriculum', gender training seeks to change unthinking acceptance of gender norms into recognition of socialization processes. Setting institutional guidelines to change behaviour patterns are expected to ultimately affect understanding at a deeper level. Similarly textbooks may be developed that do not through examples or images reinforce stereotypes.

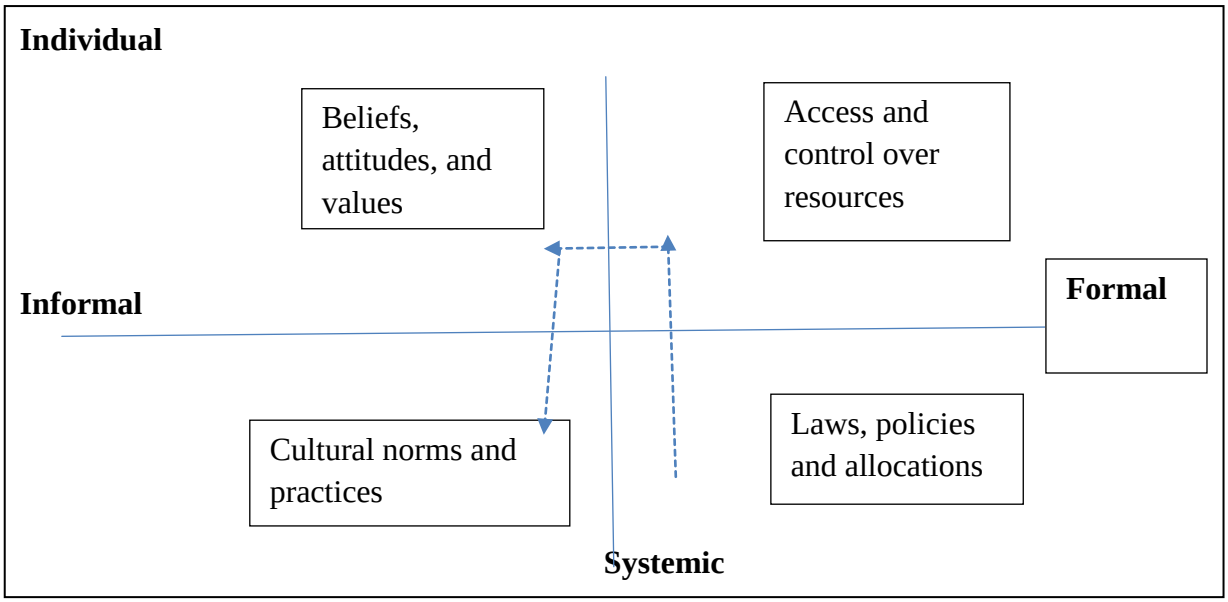
The Change Matrix, developed by Aruna Rao and David Kelleher is a way of conceptualizing change in gendered attitudes and roles. The four quadrants in the diagram show, from the bottom right and turning anti-clockwise, change in formal norms at a systemic level, changes that are individual and in the formal sphere, changes that are individual and at the level of consciousness and attitudes, and finally changes at the informal and systemic level. The bottom left quadrant is the most resistant to change representing the influence of culture and deep seated norms.

One process of change (as shown by the dotted lines) might be for the formal policies and programmes to influence individual actions (such as educating girls equally with boys) that bring about a change in individual consciousness (educated girls feeling empowered, able to take different decisions) that in turn influence social norms. The extent to which any such change process is evident in the areas studied will be discussed in the final chapter.

The Change Matrix, originally developed by Aruna Rao and David Kelleher of Gender at Work in 2002 and adapted by Srilatha Batliwala in 2008 is given below.

Diagram 3

Change Matrix



Source: Rao, Kelleher, Batliwala (2008): The Change Matrix, http://www.inwf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/10-AM-Intro-to-The-Change-Matrix-The-Case-of-the-Global-Fund-for-women-by-PeiYao-Chen-GFW.pdf;

Chapter 3

Context and Background

Dhauladevi Block, Almora District, Uttarakhand

Education indicators of Uttarakhand

The state of Uttarakhand was formed in 2000 and is largely a hilly State, having international boundaries with China (Tibet) in the north and Nepal in the east. It is rich in natural resources,and livelihoods in the remote hill areas are still bio mass dependent. It has been pointed out that the state suffers more from ecological poverty (that is, the problem is one of a shortage of basic, everyday life-supporting materials including fuel, water and fodder, that, in these communities, are obtained from community land)than material poverty (see Ashish 1979). This cannot be easily alleviated through cash transfers; development requires a focus on strengthening and using the natural resource base. Lifestyles and opportunities are very different in the upper hills, and in the plains districts which are more urbanized.

In Uttarakhandthe gender gap in literacy has dropped sharply from 31.2 in 1991 to 17.4 in 2011.

Table 1

Progress of literacy in Uttarakhand

Literacy rate	*Female*	*Male*
1991	41.6	72.8
2001	59.6	83.3
2011	70	87.4

Source: Census of India

School enrolments have shown a steady increase over the years. The Gender Parity Index (SES 2009-10) stood close to 1, at 1.03 for class 1-5, 1.04 for class 1-8, and 1.02 for class 1-10. Some descriptive data for the state is given below. The male-female gaps are small. While more boys are out of school in the age group 6-13 years, more girls are out of school in the age group 6-10 suggesting that boys in the age group 10-13 may have a higher drop out rate than girls.

Table 2

Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) and out-of-school percentage (OOS) (all): Uttarakhand

	Boys	Girls	Total
GER 1-10 (6-15 yrs)	102	104.1	103
GER 11-12 (16-17 yrs)	57.5	54.1	55.9
OOS (6-10 yrs)	2.02	3.69	2.81
OOS (11-13 yrs)	5.08	4.31	4.73

Source: GER: SES 2009-10; OOS: SRI-IMRB National Survey on Estimation of OOS 2014 (Table C3.3, p.174).

The opening of new schools under SSA across the state, and extension of primary schools in villages from classes 1-5, and now increasingly to classes 1-8, has made primary education easily accessible to children (even though as data above shows there are still significant numbers out of school). SSA programme has meant much greater numbers of schools, and free supplies of uniform, textbook and midday meals are provided to all children. State government is providing free education to all children upto 8th standard.

In the state there has been an expansion in the numbers of private schools. According to the JRM (2014) report on Uttarakhand:

> `The enrolment trend in the last 5 years reveal steadily falling numbers in government schools accompanied by increasing student numbers in private unaided and unrecognized schools, indicating student migration towards private schools. This is a serious issue and is an indication that the government schools are not perceived by the customers (students and parents) as satisfying their learning needs. This is not a desirable change as education is a right and it is the state's mandate to ensure that quality education is made available to all including the most disadvantaged in the society' (page 6).[8]

[8] http://ssa.nic.in/monitoring-documents_old/jrm/20th%20JRM/Uttarakhand%20State%20Report%20-%2016.10.pdf [5.8.2015]

Dhauladevi block

For this study, Dhauladevi block was selected as the area from which a sample would be drawn. This is one of the 19 blocks designated as EBB, out of the total of 96 blocks in the state, and is in Almora district (http://ssamis.nic.in/blockdetail.do). The sample was selected in two areas, one around Danya, a town that lies along the Almora-Pithoragarh road and has two government secondary and upper secondary schools; and the other around the KGBV in Chagethi village and the upper secondary school in Gunaditya.

GGIC Danya[9] was established in 1990 and is a girls-only school; the medium of instruction is Hindi, and the school can be approached by an all-weather road. In terms of amenities, the school lacks drinking water facility. The school has toilets (although the field visit found them to be non-functional), a library and computers (again, not in use). Enrolment in class 6-8 was 187 in 2010-11 and 183 in 2013-14. As most village primary schools have been upgraded to include upper primary in recent years, the maximum numbers enrolled in the school are in class 9-10. For class 6-12, at the time of visit, enrolment exceeded 500 girls. The school faces a severe shortage of teachers.

The UPS Swari school in Gunaditya was established in 2008, is co-educational, and not approachable by all-weather road. In 2009-10 8 boys and 10 girls were enrolled in elementary section and in 2013-14, 13 girls and 7 boys. Again the main enrolments here too are in the classes 9-12. The school has just one female teacher, and her presence is reportedly very reassuring for the girls.

The KGBV scheme in Uttarakhand was started in July 2004 when the scheme was announced, as in all the other states. As per the national mandate, KGBV schools are set up in educationally backward blocks where rural female literacy is below the national average. Altogether the state has 28 KGBVs, each with a capacity of 50 girls. None of the KGBVs in Uttarakhand has any regular interaction with NGOs nor with Mahila Samakhya. Enriched curriculum also needs better understanding and strengthening– this being true in many states (Uttarakhand KGBV Evaluation Report 2013, National

[9] From Descriptive School Report 2014, DISE data

KGBV Evaluation Report 2013). KGBV evaluation reported a total of 32 girls in Chagethi KGBV in 2004-5, and also pointed out that `We have noticed that certain KGBVs like Chegethigaon and Bejuhedi suffer from chronic vacancy`. Chagethigaon KGBV was classified as 'average' according to Warden and SPO officers (as given in the KGBV Evaluation, Annexure Table 5). A second KGBV has also been opened in the district, in the adjacent block, Lamgarha. Most villages in rural parts of Almora district have a high population of upper caste students and drop outs reportedly largely due to poverty and opportunity cost of schooling. However, the criterion of caste is strictly followed in KGBV admissions and upper caste drop out girls may not be reached out to even if there are seats available. As per the KGBV guidelines, "…a minimum of 50 girls predominantly from the SC, ST and minority communities available to study in the school at the elementary level. The number can be more than 50 depending on the number of eligible girls" (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Govt. of Uttarakhand, p 2).[10] This may be one reason for enrolments being below capacity.

The KGBV Chagethi follows the model 3, as do all other KGBVs in the state, i.e. the KGBV has a residential hostel with arrangements for additional teaching, and girls attend a nearby upper primary school. This KGBV used to follow model 1 till 2 years back, where the students would reside and study in the same building. Now that the model has been changed, the girls walk to the GIC Gunaditya, about 3 km away, for their classes.

The SSA gender coordinator, Almora district, affirmed that the KGBV scheme is the primary effort of the SSA in regard to gender goals of education. Safety of daughters is of utmost importance in the minds of parents and adequate trust appears not yet to have developed in the KGBV. With the harsh geographic terrain of Uttarakhand, teachers and other community workers have been able to visit and personally advocate for the

[10] The main criteria for admitting girls to the KGBV schools are as follows (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Govt. of Uttarakhand):

- concentration of tribal population, with low female literacy and/or a large number of girls out of school
- concentration of SC, OBC and minority populations, with low female literacy and/or a large number of girls out of school
- areas with low female literacy
- areas with a large number of small, scattered habitations that do not qualify for a school

scheme only in a limited number of villages. To address this difficulty, new advocacy material has recently been printed, highlighting the benefits that girls get in the scheme, and is being widely distributed.

A significant feature of the KGBV in Chagethi is its isolation, both in its physical location and lack of interaction with NGOs. The physical location of KGBV Chagethi, appears to play a big role in the enrolment, advocacy for and the daily functioning of the school. It is located off the main Almora-Pithoragarh road and the road surface is poor. There is one jeep early in the morning and one in the evenings plying between *Chagethi and Danya (from where jeeps are available to go to Almora city).*

NGO networks and external support

Apart from the support that this KGBV gets from SSA, there is no additional support that it receives. The NGO working in the town of Danya and actively associated with the schools in Danya was unaware of the KGBV, and a first contact was made through this study. While the KGBV guidelines encourage interaction with local NGOs, in this case no such attempts had been made.

About USNPSS

The Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan (USNPSS), our partner in this study, is based in Almora. The organization started its work in 1987 with support from the Department of Education, Government of India, which continued until 2005, after which financial support has come from other sources. The initial activities included pre-school balwadis, development of a course on environmental education for children in the 11-16 age group, which has been mainstreamed into the school curriculum, support for toilets, and building up a network of whole village women's groups, teachers, and adolescents in more than 400 villages across the state. The greatest strength of the USNPSS work is the way in which local groups remain independent and yet are networked with each other. Village learning centres are being run today in clusters in seven hill districts, and Danya is one of these clusters.[11]

[11] See report on Village Learning Centres in Uttarakhand, USNPSS Almora, March 2015.

Most girls and boys who study in the schools in Danya have access to these learning centres and the schools and teachers are part of the network that has been built up. However the KGBV and surrounding villages are not part of this.

Development, modernity and its impact

It is an interesting paradox that even though the areas visited in Dhauladevi were the most isolated geographically in the study sample, yet people had an awareness of the larger world and had various connections with distant cities. One reason is that the state has a long history of recruitment of men into the army, and this is one of the reasons explaining a progressive attitude towards education. There is also high male out-migration and most households will mention one or more members living elsewhere. Even though villages are isolated physically, people living here have a higher level of awareness than may be expected because of these external connections. As life in the hills gets increasingly difficult, and with the perception that education offers a way to access opportunities in urban areas, family strategies increasingly look at migration towards larger urban centres to fulfill aspirations. As Manjari Mehta suggests in her study of peri-urban Dehradun, 'the reality of substandard education and the ways in which lack of intellectual stimulation contributes to cycles of deprivation' is set against the recognition that education creates access to better employment opportunities, and the fact of access to schooling and accompanying aspirations is the single fact that sharply distinguishes the younger from the older generations (Mehta 2014). The implications of these aspirations for development and modernity are considered in the next chapter.

Pisangan, Ajmer, Rajasthan

Educational indicators in Rajasthan

Rajasthan has long been noted for its low female literacy, early age at marriage, and severe restraints on women's mobility and presence in public spaces, reflected in the institution of purdah; it is also a state that has been at the forefront of organizing

women's groups and has a very vibrant NGO sector. The progress of literacy in the state is as shown below:

Table 3

Literacy Rates (%): Rajasthan

	Female	Male
1981	14	44.8
2001	43.9	75.7
2011	52.1	79.2

Source: Census

The gender gap in literacy remains high at 27.1 in 2011, although it has come down from 30.8 in 1981. In Rajasthan as a whole, 71 % of the population lives in rural areas. The following tables shows that both in regard to enrolment and estimated numbers of children out of school, data still shows a high gender gap.

Table 4

Gross Enrolment Ratios 2009-10: Rajasthan

	Boys	Girls
Class 1-V (6-10 years)	119	115
Class 6-8 (11-13 years)	95	72.7
Class 9-10	69.3	45.3
Class 11-12	43.1	26.4

Source SES 2009-10

Table 5

Estimated %age of children out of school (all, rural and urban): Rajasthan

	Boys	Girls
6-10 years	4.45	10.28
11-13 years	7.36	16.13

Source: SRI-IMRB National Survey on Estimation of OOS 2014 (Table C3.3, p.174)

In every age group, the disparity is higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

Another persisting feature in Rajasthan is low age at marriage. The median age at first marriage among women (age 20-49) in Rajasthan is 15 years. Men on average get married four years later, at a median age of 19 years. Almost two-thirds (65%) of women age 20-24 years got married before the legal minimum age of 18 and 57 percent

of men age 25-29 years got married before the legal minimum age of 21 (NFHS 2004-5).

Overall, 186 out of a total 254 blocks in Rajasthan are designated as educationally backward blocks (EBB). In Ajmer district, 7 out of 8 blocks are designated EBB.

The state of Rajasthan is home to many NGOs, and important government programmes and strategies have been piloted here. The SSA programme in Rajasthan is implemented in partnership with many NGOs and UN agencies. These include both long term and short term collaborations. In the year 2013-14, there have been many partners supporting the SSA in promoting girls' education in the state, including UNICEF; Plan India; Save the Children; BODH; Educate Girls Globally (EGG); Azim Premji Foundation (APF); SANDHAN; Centre for Development Education & Studies from Jaipur, Guru Govind Singh Charitable Trust from Hanumangarh, IBTIDA from Alwar, Ernold Education Samiti from Alwar and Jaswant Vidhya Bhawan Samiti from Bharatpur. Support is sought for two broad types of activities – one, community mobilization and awareness building, and two, technical support as a resource agency. The State enters into an MoU with each partner NGO.

KGBV is seen by education officers as being the most effective of all the SSA initiatives. Other initiatives that have had a good impact, according to them, included Adhyapika Manch, motivational camps for out-of-school children and parents, theatre activities, Meena Manch, and SMC trainings.

Pisangan block, Ajmer district

Data from Census 2001 showed that the overall literacy rate in Pisangan block was 53%, much lower than the district percentage of 65%. As against the 72% literacy rate of males, the rate of literacy for females was then 32%. The participation rate in the area of elementary education (6-14 age group) stood at 87% for boys and 61% for girls. The number of students that drop out of school between class I and V was large. 55% of children left school before completion of five years of education. For girls the drop out rate was 57%.

Table 6

Literacy Rate (7 years and above), 2001, Ajmer district Rajasthan

	Rajasthan	Ajmer district	Pisangan block
Persons	60.40	64.60	52.50
Male	75.70	79.40	72.27
Female	43.90	48.90	31.65

Source: Primary Census Abstract, Census of India 2001, reported on Doosra Dashak website: http://doosradashak.in/new/detail.aspx?Catid=3&subcatid=12

It was this situation that had motivated Doosra Dashak to work with adolescents and encourage mainstreaming into schools through residential camps for out- of- school children.

The education system has seen some changes in the last few years. School Management Committees have been established and are functioning.

For this study, the sample studied was taken from the KGBV Tabiji, Pisangan, and neighbouring villages.

KGBV Tabiji was opened in 2007. The total enrolment was 65 girls in 2007-8, 95 in 2010-11, and 113 in 2014-15. This is a Model 1 school, i.e. the KGBV is a functioning upper primary school as well as a residential hostel. As a self-contained all-female environment, even very conservative families are comfortable with sending girls to study here. Many girls who are married but still living with their parents are sent to study in the KGBV. The school has established its reputation, is easy to access being on the way to Ajmer from neighbouring villages[12], and because of its links with NGOs receives many visitors from within and beyond Rajasthan. It has become a high visibility and desirable schools for girls living in the area. Consequently enrolments do not fall short of the target of 100. In fact it is reported that some girls are withdrawn from village schools and kept home for a year so as to qualify as being out-of-school and eligible for admission into the KGBV, as discussed further in the next chapter.

Adjacent to the KGBV campus is the Government Senior Secondary School in Tabiji, opened in 1944, which has been co-educational since 2011-12. In 2014-15, the

[12] Pisangan block is close to Ajmer city, and there is considerable movement between the two. Both men and women commute for work in factories such as a large Parle G factory in Ajmer.

enrolment in classes 1-8 was 164, out of which 153 were boys and 11 were girls. (School report cards, DISE). This school offers an opportunity for girls at the KGBV to continue their education beyond class 8. Girls who progress from the KGBV to secondary schooling can stay at the RMSA hostel on the campus. Some families are reluctant to send their girls to the hostel to study in a co-educational school. The facilities of the RMSA hostel are seen as being inferior to that of the KGBV.

Education officers in Rajasthan showed good awareness of gender issues, however, the focus appears to be mainly on bringing girls on par with boys. Girls are still seen as lagging behind boys. As one person put it, '*there is no condition put by parents for the education of boys so its not that much needed to work with them. Girls need to reach the level of boys'.*

Better monitoring, attention to discipline, appointment of teachers, toilets and other infrastructure, sports facilities, would all improve the quality of education, according to them. The quality of teaching at the KGBV has improved in the last few years with additional inputs coming from Sandhan.

Sandhan and NGO engagement

As mentioned above, the SSA programme is implemented in Rajasthan with support from several NGOs. Sandhan (Society for Study of Education and Development), our partner in this study, is based in Jaipur. It envisages for itself a role of a National Resource Centre for `integrated education of adolescents and children, bringing concerns of health, life skills and livelihood closer to academic enterprise`[13]. Sandhan works with KGBVs as an Academic Resource Agency in Rajasthan. It offers 'additionalities' to the standard scheme, described as below: `understanding the specificity of girls, taking the individual as the unit of perception. Almost all KGBV girls have a commonality when they arrive in KGBV. They have a limited but a strong worldview of their own. They are oblivious of the fast changing world outside. They are all at different levels of learning competencies. Sandhan's role, therefore, is to

[13] http://www.sandhan.org/

- Identify their strengths and understanding.
- Assess their learning levels in a systematic manner.
- Evolve a multi-level teaching strategy, keeping in view their conceptual strengths.

This process which is new to the teachers is shared and communicated to them; so that it becomes an ongoing process.`

Sandhan's engagement with the KGBV in Pisangan started four years ago. At that time, it was difficult to persuade parents to send girls to the KGBV. The aspirations of girls reflected what they saw around them, so they would at best aspire to become teachers or aanganwadi workers. Since then, the situation has changed in many ways, most notably that there is now a great demand from parents to send their girl to study in the KGBV. The changes in teaching methodology and content get reflected in the levels of confidence, articulation, and problem solving skills of the girls. Their career aspirations show the expansion of their horizons, now including becoming government officers, engineers, joining the police, and so on.

Interventions that have helped bring about these changes also include the Meena Manch, regular melas (fairs), self-defence training, exposure visits and vocational training.

Sandhan also works closely with Doosra Dashak, a project of the Foundation for Education and Development, working for holistic and integrated education of adolescents. Apart from running four month long residential camps through which out of school boys and girls are sought to be mainstreamed into regular schools, DoosraDashak also mobilizes adolescents in villages and encourages a range of educational activities, including science education at village level centres known as 'Ikhvelos'. The Doosra Dashak project which was initially started in Bap block (Jodhpur district) and Kishanganj block (Baran district) in June 2001 is now being implemented in approximately 1003 villages of 196 panchayats in 9 blocks of Rajasthan, including Pisangan. Over the years, the project has worked intensively with

nearly 14,537 adolescents as direct and 34,578 adolescents as indirect beneficiaries, along with their parents and wider community.[14]

While there are several other NGOs present in Pisangan, this study was conducted with the help of Sandhan and included visits to villages where Doosra Dashak has a strong presence.

Development and modernity

Located close to the city of Ajmer, on the one hand this area has easy access to urban facilities including opportunities for higher education as well as work. On the other hand, the communities living here are of mixed caste composition and have strong community norms that are still widely prevalent. This includes the Rawat, Cheetah, Meena and there is also a high minority population. The Cheetah communities follow both Hindu and Muslim rituals.

Thus the benefits of development are geographically closer by than for example in Dhauladevi block; but the traditional restrictions placed on girls and gender norms in general appear to be re-affirmed by communities.

Kalyanpuri, East Delhi

Educational Indicators for Delhi

As the national capital, Delhi is very much in the public eye. Overall progress in literacy has been such as to raise levels of literacy and sharply reduce gender gaps.

In Delhi, female literacy rates were 62.6, 74.7 and 80.8 in 1981, 2001 and 2011 respectively (corresponding to male literacy of 79.3, 87.3, 90.9). The gender gap has dropped from 16.7 to 10.1 between 1981 and 2011.

[14] www.doosradashak.in

Table 7

Literacy Rates and Gender Gaps: Delhi

	Male	Female
1981	79.3	62.6
2001	87.3	74.7
2011	90.9	80.8

Source: Census

Looking at data on gross enrolments suggests that universal enrolment upto class 8 has been achieved.

Table 8

GER 2009-10: Delhi

	Boys	Girls	All
Class 1-5 (6-10 years)	119.8	122.5	121.0
Class 6-8 (11-13 yrs)	110.8	106.9	109.0
Class 9-10 (14-15 yrs)	81.9	79.6	80.8

Source: SES 2009-10

The estimated percentage of children out of school is shown in the table below and suggests again fairly universal enrolment

Table 9

Estimated %age of children out of school (all, rural and urban) for NCT of Delhi

	Male	Female	All
6-10 years	4.16	4.12	4.14
11-13 years	0.23	0.78	0.44

Source: SRI-IMRB National Survey on Estimation of OOS 2014 (Table C3.3, p.174)

Kalyanpuri, East Delhi

Delhi has no EBB block, however there are wide disparities across the different parts of the city. East Delhi is the third highest density district according to Census 2011. Within this district, the area studied, Kalyanpuri and its surrounding areas like Trilokpuri, Khichripur, Mandawali include slums and resettlement colonies. These are areas with a high incidence of crime and drug abuse, besides other problems faced by any urban slum in Delhi, including insecurity of tenure for the *jhuggi-jhonpri* slum dwellers, poor provision of drinking water and public toilets, lack of sewage facilities, safety concern for girls and women in public spaces, lack of secure employment, lack of

documents proving residence, income, age which are needed to access entitlements. The occupation of most people living here are service related and informal, such as trade, manual labour, construction activities, auto/rickshaw drivers, and so on. Women's paid work outside the home mainly is as domestic workers, and a few work in factories close by. Some home based work related to garment work, bindi sticking, gum separation has been noted.

For children and youth in these communities, there are limited opportunities to receive anything beyond very minimal care or education, and risks are posed by the surroundings. These include drug dealers and drug abuse, gambling and frequent outbreaks of violence, and fear of sexual violence for girls. Although levels of enrolment into school have increased substantially over the last few years, drop out remains high. Conventional gendered roles are still prevalent, and many girls may drop out in order to take over child care responsibilities for younger siblings and household chores as both their parents have to work to make ends meet. Boys may drop out due to poor school performance and frequently get involved in petty crimes. At the same time, if children are able to complete secondary schooling, the city does offer opportunities for higher education and more secure work. Among young boys and girls, with media exposure and some information about the city, even though they may not have seen many parts of Delhi, aspirations for getting secure employment through education are high.

In Delhi, SSA was launched in 2003-4 and is implemented by a registered society, 'Universalization of Elementary Education Mission' under the Directorate of Education. To decentralize the work of the mission to the District cluster level, District Urban Resource Centers have been established in all nine Revenue Districts of Delhi.

NGO presence

Several NGOs have a presence in this part of Delhi including Asha Deep, Chetanalaya, YMCA, Pratham, Pragati, SewaBharati.Many if not most NGOs working in slum communities engage in a holistic manner with the community and are not focused on a

single sectoral concern; most encourage children to join regular schools and may undertake some informal teaching.

The partner for this study, Sathi Centre set up by Institute of Social Studies Trust[15], is located on the premises of the Kalyanpuri Police Station.The Saathi centre has facilitated various types of community-school interaction. These include providing some informal teaching to enable dropout children to re-join school and accompanying parents to enroll children in the schools of their choice. The Right to Information Act (RTI)has been used frequently to find out about seat availability both in government schools, and against the 25 % low income group quota in private schools. Armed with information on seat availability, the NGO helps children to get enrolled in the school of their choice, by accompanying them and helping them through whatever processes the schools had set up. In the case of children who have dropped out and are not in a position to attend regular school, the centre facilitates admission into the National Open School system. A majority of those admitted into open school are girls[16]. Informal teaching takes place at the centre, substituting for expensive private tuitions, drawing attention to the fact that school education today is both about attending school and about a teaching-learning process that takes place outside of school and appears to be an essential complement for almost all children.

The Saathi centre has found the RTI to be a good way of getting information about seat availability as well as demanding accountability from schools. For example an RTI petition was filed by children in a neighbouring school to find out about budget allocations for fans and other classroom infrastructure. Following the reply, the amount so allocated, which had not been utilized, was spent on these facilities. Asking through an RTI application about who are the members of the SMC, has led to one school immediately setting it up. And as mentioned earlier RTI applications are used to find out about seat availability in schools. This strategy has been quite effective in getting information that is otherwise not in the public domain. These applications are filed by members of the community, and facilitated by the NGO.

[15] www.isstindia.org

[16] From this centre, about 30-35 children join Open School every year. Personal communication, February 2015.

Other activities of the Saathi Centre include regular classes in basic computer literacy for children from the neighbouring slums, theatre workshops, occasional vocational training, career counseling, life skills training, library, discussion groups and so on.

Development and modernity

Located in the city of Delhi, but being a low income area, aspirations through education are high while at the same time the constraints posed by income, location, and gender are very evident and children and adolescents are aware of these. For those who are able to do well academically, opportunities for further study and work are relatively easy to access. For others, the gender divide is quite sharp, with boys being under family pressure to start earning from a young age, and while girls are encouraged to study they too get channelled into conventional roles unless they are, largely on their own initiative, able to find other pathways.

Overall Context

It needs to be noted that there has been considerable improvement in literacy rates and school enrolments everywhere over the last 2-3 decades, and particularly since 2001. Aggregate numbers however hide the wider gaps that become visible when the data is disaggregated by social group, religion, and location. The more remote areas and in the case of Delhi, the outlying slum areas, are less well provided for.

The Gender Parity Index is a shorthand expression of the achievements in enrolment. Gender parity in schools has improved, and the table below shows the GPI calculated for 2009-10. Rajasthan shows a good level from Class 1-8, but sharp drop in class 9-10. This is less so for Delhi and Uttarakhand.

Table 10

Gender Parity Index: Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Delhi

	Class 1-8	**Class 9-10**
Rajasthan	0.90	0.65
Delhi	1.0	0.97
Uttarakhand	1.04	0.92

Source: SES 2009-10

The three areas studied are thus differently positioned and these varying contexts will influence observed outcomes.

Chapter 4

Gender Equality Outcomes: Field-based Assessment

The umbrella programme of the SSA included, as discussed earlier, a number of gender-responsive interventions. Gender awareness may be present in interventions in different ways: for example Kabeer (1994) distinguishes between ` gender-neutral, gender-specific or gender transformative` policies and programmes. Gender neutral programmes are those that recognize the traditional roles of women and men and their implications for the programme. Gender-specific programmes would examine how far the sex/gender specific needs of women or men have been addressed. Gender-transformative programmes try and contribute to changing power relations within institutions based on gender and other identities (Kabeer 1994, Murthy 2014). SSA interventions, as noted earlier, recognise that there are gender-specific constraints to access and participation, and expect that ultimate outcomes might be gender-transformative.

This chapter summarises the main findings from fieldwork. It takes note of the different types of interventions, and tries to see how far the presence of these appears to have made a difference to gender equality outcomes in different contexts. Four sets of interventions are discussed, including infrastructure, academic inputs, governance, and incentives.

Fieldwork was conducted in three selected areas as discussed in the previous chapters. In each place, a range of stakeholders has been met, including boys and girls currently in school as well as a few who had discontinued schooling, their parents, other community members including members of the SMC, teachers, block/district/state level government officials, and NGO representatives working in the area. The findings may not be true of other areas in the three selected states or of other states. However they throw up some general issues that may be more widely relevant. Each of the three areas has the active presence of NGOs working on educational issues, in different ways. This was a conscious choice to enable study of the various ways in which NGO interventions

may interact with the formal schooling system. Each of the areas also represents a relatively low income area, two rural and one an urban slum.

The reason for looking beyond the school is because SSA's goals of change extend to the community: that education will lead over time to changes in social norms of gender roles and responsibilities, and to change in the status of women.

As SSA interventions started in 2001, students in Class 8 and above would be able to talk about or demonstrate some of the interventions which have helped them. Interviews were conducted with children from Class 7/8 upwards, including a few who have completed Class 12, and a few who have dropped out at some stage, with the view of identifying the usual life trajectories in each context. Interviews with teachers and government officials helped to understand what the approach to gender equality in actual implementation was.

A. SSA Interventions

I. Infrastructure: more schools, toilets

Access to Schools

With SSA inputs, there has been an enormous expansion in the numbers of government primary and elementary schools, and all the areas visited had primary schools in all villages. These are in many cases now being extended to Class 8. This means it is only from Class 9 onwards that children might need to travel further to continue their schooling. Fieldwork showed that enrolment of girls and boys was high everywhere, with almost all children enrolled in school. There is a high demand for education and although it is generally believed that when parents have received an education they will be motivated to encourage education of their children, in fact the demand for education is also very high among parents who have not been educated. This is well captured in a comment made by a woman, herself not literate: `*If the mother and father are uneducated, then for sure the children will be educated*`. Neither caste nor gender were found to be necessarily barriers to schooling, although caste discrimination continues to be present in social interactions especially in relation to marriage and food.

Interestingly in Danya, when asked about caste based discrimination, one young girl from SC community emphatically said it is not there in the government school that she attends, all children eat together, but they do face it in the village. She related an incident where one day an upper caste woman from a neighbouring village had come to their village (which has SC population) to fetch water as they have a water shortage in their own village. She was also filling water at the same tap and accidently touched this woman's bucket whereupon the woman just threw away the water. When she asked her why she threw away the water, the woman said, '*You should not have touched the water.' `Next time she filled the water, I purposefully touched it, and then the same thing happened 3 times*` says she giggling. The woman then just abused her and walked away. Another example she offered is of her brothers experience, and that when he goes to school, a private school in the village, other classmates tell him to not walk in front of them, and do not even play with him.

There are some exclusions, children not yet properly integrated in the school system, noted in each place, specific to each situation.

For example, in Delhi, there is one part of Kalyanpuri that is home to a Maharashtrian Gond tribe, approximately 150 families and around 1500 persons. Their main occupation is selling medicines which they make themselves and sell from different spots, they do not have a fixed place for vending these. Boys accompany fathers for this work. Between 2009 and the present, Sathi centre has helped about 50 girls and 25 boys to get enrolled in school. Of these, 25 girls and 7-8 boys have reportedly continued their schooling while the others have dropped out. Parents would like their children to get educated. But these are first generation learners; they speak a different language; the community lives separately, without much interaction with others living in the area. Not seeing others from their community in schools discourages the younger children. Boys from a young age start working with their fathers, and drop out of school. Often, household poverty means that girls also start working as domestics and drop out of school. Girls tend to be married by 15-16 years, and they would discontinue at that time if not earlier.

Talking to a young girl from this community who has dropped out from school, we find that she continues to take private tuitions in Hindi close by: "*I just want to learn how to read and write in Hindi. Nothing else. Knowing Hindi will help me. I will be able to read things and will be able to manage my own work*." This is a poignant reminder of how language can become a barrier in early schooling.

Similarly in Danya, it was communicated to us that several children are out of school in an upper caste village, mainly because of economic hardship.

Expansion in the number of schools has also had its drawbacks. According to one informant in Delhi, `*The condition of primary has improved, meaning that the enrollment at a primary level has increased but the quality of teaching has actually gone much worse. With increase in enrollment more students are in the class and since the infrastructure is not improving, quality is suffering. The number of schools are increasing but the number of teachers are not as a result of which, there are many single teacher schools as well. There are primary schools which are managed by just one teacher teaching all 5 grades in one classroom*`.

In Delhi, with the large number of private schools, some children have been able to get enrolled in private schools under the 25% quota for students from economically deprived sections. As an NGO respondent said `*We have worked hard to try and enroll those students who manage to fall into the category. The parents, who knew about it, have managed to send their children. In some cases RTIs were filed to get information about seat availability. Those families who had identification and proofs have been given admission, those who did not have residence proof have not been able to get admission. Even when these students are admitted, the books and uniforms etc are not given to them, and this can be very expensive*`.

Drop out of girls and age at Marriage

It is usually assumed that early marriage is a barrier to education and conversely that increasing demand for girls' education would help raise the age at marriage. Data shows that across countries early marriage is associated with lower educational attainment

(Jensen and Thornton 2010). A recent study by Nirantar points out that when the education system itself conforms to patriarchal gender norms this reduces the likelihood that education could become a space for awareness and empowerment, and more likely that it becomes one more way of controlling behavior (Nirantar 2015). This study finds some evidence that the education of girls is seen as a decision that is distinct from that of marriage. Girls themselves are beginning to aspire to studying further, maybe working, actively helping their families, and expanding the horizons of their lives as possible. In this, they find support from parents and often in-laws as well. Negotiating within families is needed, and girls are trying to do this. However largely they accept that marrying with parental consent and support is better than without. So the decisions of marrying and studying are made within different frameworks of thinking. This plays out in different ways in the three places.

In Ajmer, it was seen that at times married girls may continue their education. In the area visited the age at marriage among certain communities continues to be very low, with child marriages still being conducted, however, the age at *gauna* (cohabitation) has gone up considerably. As a result even after marriage girls continue to live with their parents for many years and continue to study in schools. In fact some married girls were even seen to be enrolled in the residential KGBVs. Thus it seems that schooling at least up to the time that the girls approach the age of 18 (the age is more relevant than the class that they might have reached by that time)[17] is considered as being necessary/ desirable and neither parents nor in-laws have an objection to this. This has not meant that the age at marriage, or marriage choices and decisions around marriage, have also changed. Interestingly, this field visit found that there was an openness in talking about child marriage, parents did not try and hide this fact, mainly because the actual *gauna* and the move to the marital home takes place at legally acceptable ages.

Rati tells us that she has been married when she was very young. She cannot even remember how long ago it was that she was married. She was probably only 3 or 4 years old. She was married when her older sisters were married during the time of her grandfather's funeral which is common practice. When asked whether she would be

[17] This point has also been noted by Madhumita Bandopadhyay, CREATE study.

able to study even after her gauna, Rati says that her in-laws live in Ajmer and the girls in that family are studying in Ajmer. The person she is married to is also studying in Class 10.

The social push for early marriage stems from a desire to ensure security, both economic and social, for girls and is seen as a desirable strategy in the given environment. But families have no particular objection to girls education before or after marriage, if they feel the study environment is a secure one; and if a girl is keen to study she might receive much support from parents and in-laws. Education may be pursued for its own sake, or in order to do some acceptable/respectable work. The assumption that educated girls will *necessarily* question the norm of early and arranged marriage is not supported by our tentative explorations. This, of course, might be partly explained by the ways in which norms are reinforced through education.

In Almora, while child marriage at very young ages is not seen, early marriage from age of 16 onwards does take place, although the median age at marriage is higher. In that case girls will likely drop out from regular school; it was reported though that in such cases many girls continue to study privately, so that getting married does not necessarily mean the end of schooling. During the fieldwork, an example was seen where a young daughter in law has been supported to study further, and has completed her B.Ed after marriage. To enable her to do this, the family moved into rented accommodation in Almora for the duration of her studies. She had just completed Class 12 when she got married. As her husband showed little interest in formal studies, it was the father-in-law who encouraged her to continue her education and with a B.Ed she can also look for a suitable job.

In Delhi, it was observed that girls who are studying and doing reasonably well are not under pressure to get married at very young ages. However if a girl is unable to keep pace or for some reason discontinues schooling and has reached the age of 17-18, then parents and families start to look for suitable matches.

Toilets and other infrastructure

Separate toilets for boys and girls is an intervention that has been strongly recommended since many years, and is expected to improve regularity of attendance of girls, in particular adolescents. In most of the schools visited for this study toilets had been constructed, but were mostly not being used (except in the KGBVs, where they were functional). In most cases the toilets had no water and were not being used at all. Girls, including those in higher classes, however, were present in the school in large numbers. In the interviews, lack of functioning toilets was not mentioned as a priority area for action by anyone. This does not mean that presence of well-functioning toilets would not improve the quality and regularity of the school experience for girls; toilets would surely improve hygiene and security. The limited point being made is that toilets might not change the nature of school participation or outcomes much, in the absence of teachers and effective learning.

It might be noted that a systematic review looking at the impact of the provision of separate toilets for girls at school on their primary and secondary school enrolment, attendance and completion confirmed the lack of clear evidence regarding toilets and girls' education (Birdthistle et al, 2011, cited in Unterhalter 2014).

Speaking about the things that could be improved in school, students put `more teachers` at the top of the list; and some girls said they would like more female teachers, older women who could understand their concerns and offer guidance on matters they found hard to share at home. More science teachers were mentioned frequently. One group of boys mentioned sports equipment like cricket bat and volleyball, a functional library and computers that they are allowed to use on their own even in the absence of a teacher. Others mentioned the need for a boundary wall to make it easier to play cricket and football, tables and chairs, window panes. Girls mentioned that they would like a school ground and space to play. The non-availability of clean drinking water in school was mentioned by others, especially in Almora.

II. Academic inputs

SSA seeks to increase the numbers of women teachers with a rough target of 50 percent women teachers; open ECCE centres near school to reduce sibling care demands on older sisters; teachers gender sensitization training programmes, including understanding the role of men and boys; provision of gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials, including textbooks

Teachers and teaching

Perhaps the biggest problem or limitation of the programme was seen as being a shortage of teachers. Given a shortage of teachers and large numbers of children in the school, this meant that classes were sometimes being taken by older girls and class monitors, sometimes children were left to study on their own without a teacher in the class. Perhaps in this situation little effective teaching is taking place. However children continue to come to school even when it involves walking long distances as in some rural areas, because it is important as a certification of presence and to access entitlements.

Good teachers are appreciated in all contexts. One young girl from the SC community in Almora said that even though there are not enough teachers in the school, she likes the teachers who are there, they teach well, behave just like friends so that there is a familial feeling in the school, they organize many extra-curricular activities, would explain the same thing over and over again if they did not understand, and that there is no caste based discrimination in the school among students or teachers.

Teachers themselves place the responsibility of being a 'good teacher' on the teacher himself/ herself; and even the rowdiest of students acknowledge a good teacher. As one boy puts it;

'*Some teachers are good and some teachers in the school are not so good. The good teachers are those who explain well, who teach in such a way that we understand, someone who clarifies doubts. All students understand what the good teachers teach. The teachers are very approachable and teach all students in the same way, they don't*

favour the ones who are good students and ignore those who are not. The 'not so good' teachers are those who also teach, but what they teach cannot be very easily understood by all.'

When teachers live at a distance from the school and need to commute daily between school and home this can lead to problems. As one boy in Danya explained `*we have a teacher for science who comes to the school on only one day in the week, and then in that one day he teaches us 4 or 5 classes back to back and makes us write so much that our hands start aching with the amount that we are writing. He tries to cover the entire syllabus for the week in that one day. He reads out of a book and we have to copy*`

Shortage of teachers in the school leads to delegation of duties that is not always appreciated: one young boy says `*The thing that I hate the most about school is the class monitor. The teacher is hardly ever in the school so the responsibility of maintaining discipline in the class lies with the monitor and the teacher gives the monitor full authority. The monitor uses his 'dadagiri' on us. ..Monitors are chosen in Class 6 or so and these monitors were chosen and the same person has continued as monitor for the past few years.*`

In Delhi, private tuitions are almost a norm.[18]

'The individual attention that you cannot get in a school classroom you can get in tuition and thus many students go there to learn……in school it is difficult to understand when the teacher teaches something. Especially with Maths, a bit of individual attention is required which the teachers at the school cannot provide…'

Tuitions are expensive and boys seem to help each other out: `*I go for tuitions for maths, someone else goes for science, someone for language, and we try and help each other out with the syllabus*."

Children were thus mostly enrolled in school and attending school. But there is shortage of teachers and often no teaching happening because of absence of teacher for various

[18] While data on costs of private tuition has not been systematically collected interviews record that Rs. 300-400 may be charged per subject per month

reasons. Children were seen however to be learning in many different ways. They learn from each other in and outside school; take private tuitions; participate in educational activities conducted by NGOs, such as at the Saathi centre; use libraries at NGO centres such as Saathi in Delhi and NGO run village learning centres in Danya; learn science at NGO centres, such as the ikhvelosrun by Doosra Dashak; attend village learning centres for a range of activities and learning, as in Almora.

While in Almora and Delhi most girls and boys participating in the NGO led activities were also enrolled in school, in Ajmer it was seen how the presence of the Ikhvelo could make a difference to children who were out of school. Two young girls who discontinued schooling after class 10 said they were not allowed to study further as '*it takes too much time'.* But they were allowed to come for a 3-month computer course at the ikhvelo which they were enjoying very much.

Teacher sensitization training programmes and understanding the role of men and boys

Socialisation at home and in school on issues of gender can be different only when conscious effort is put into getting teachers to reflect more deeply on stereotypes that are unconsciously imbibed. One way of encouraging such reflection is through training.

On the one hand, it was seen that the perceptions of 'who is a good boy and a good girl' reflect established roles and were generally shared by children and parents/ teachers.

On the other hand, teachers had generally not received any gender training, barring some modules that were part of the Sandhan training in Rajasthan. In the general understanding 'teacher training' refers to academic training to strengthen subject knowledge. There is a regular schedule for such training. Gender training is seen as a separate and unrelated activity and would be undertaken only as a special initiative or scheme. Responses from teachers and administrators bring this out.

'Training has been subject specific. Gender training is considered a component apart from academics and thus training is not focused on gender'..

'No gender training is conducted separately'

The one exception was from Rajasthan, where a respondent said that *'I have not attended any gender training but in the Life Skills education training conducted by Sandhan there was a bit that was spoken about gender'*

Consequently stereotypes do get reinforced. This is reflected in the finding that girls once they reach the age of 11-12, don't play. *`No of course we don't play in the village.. I mean no-one says that we cannot play but other girls don't come and we have other chores to do..people say I am too old to play now`*

There is no gender training with boys, and it is assumed by all that 'boys are rowdy', no efforts are made to understand the ways in which gendered identities are being constructed within schools.

As R. W. Connell (1989) pointed out, 'Schools do not simply adapt to a natural masculinity among boys or femininity among girls. They are agents in the matter, constructing particular forms of gender and negotiating relations between them'.

'Girls are made to sit in the class whether the class is going on or not. The boys are always running around….'

The following account of boys from a school in Tabiji, Pisangan clearly shows how poor teaching might be leading to the construction of an aggressive masculinity. ['Some masculinities are formed by battering against the school's authority structure, others by smooth insertion into its academic pathways, others again by a tortuous negotiation of possibilities': Connell (1989)]

'O*ne boy had broken a window just that morning. When asked why he had done this, he said, there are no fans in the class, we were all feeling hot, there was no teacher but we were asked to stay in the class, so I broke the window.' The boys continued by saying there is no water, no proper toilets either, the chaprasi does nothing, and we do all the cleaning. 'we wrote an application to the headmaster about a teacher who does not teach or come to class, but he did not do anything.'*

In contrast, a boy from the Delhi sample, who is a good student and enjoys science, said '*many boys don't even sit in the class….I don't like to talk to such boys, I prefer to focus on my studies and be with my friends who do not believe in fighting. I don't like the foul language that many boys in the schools use and I want to stay away from such company.'*

In all three places, the value of education both for girls and boys is not in question, and it is equally well understood by students, parents and teachers, that in order to be able to successfully navigate pathways of mobility that open up through education, good performance in examinations is needed. To quote Connell: 'Social power in terms of access to higher education, entry to professions, command of communication, is being delivered by the school system to boys who are academic 'successes'. The reaction of the 'failed' is likely to be a claim to other sources of power, even other definitions of masculinity. Sporting prowess, physical aggression, sexual conquest may do' (Connell 1989: 295). Schools influence the construction of identities as well as the likely future work trajectories.

As we know, a primary motivation everywhere for education is that it offers a pathway to better work. As we also know, only a small number of persons are able to complete education to the level, and with the quality, that enables such mobility successfully. Drop out of boys is strongly influenced by family pressures, stated or unstated, and their sense of responsibility to contribute to household income. What fieldwork showed is that while these pressures on boys have not eased, girls too have begun to assert their ability to learn and earn and contribute to their families, a change that was much more apparent in Delhi and Almora. However, this does not mean that they question their traditional gendered responsibilities. As some of the girls met said:

'I want to build a home for my parents and repay all the debt that they currently have'

'Women should definitely work but should also ensure that the housework is not suffering as a result of this'

Experience also shows that for girls to do different things takes additional effort outside of school to enable negotiations within the family. The example below is from the UKSN and shows how continuous hand holding is needed to enable girls to get family consent to travel and learn some new skills.

Take Mamta's story. She lived in a village in Bageshwar and completed intermediate (12) from the village school. She was 17 1/2 and had never spent a night away from home. At her request I talked to her family to allow her to come to Almora for a meeting of adolescent girls. They agreed on condition that I escort her both ways. But at Almora she fell sick and barely participated. However on her return she called together other girls and said that in Almora the girls were saying that one should keep on doing some work.

There was talk of her marriage but when she said it will be illegal, I am not yet 18, it got stalled. Mamta took care of 50 goats, taking them out to graze everyday. She did not study beyond class 12. She had a mobile phone and kept it with her expecting to get news of class 12 results. She passed, but the family did not encourage her to study further and began planning for her wedding.

At that time there was an opportunity to go to Delhi for training and when I asked her Mamta was overjoyed to go for this. Her family agreed reluctantly but Mamta worked very hard and enjoyed the training at Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi.'[19]

The dominant pressure on boys to start working is evident everywhere. In Almora, while talking to a group of boys in a GIC in class 9, it emerged that through the period from Class 6 to 9, at least 10 boys had dropped out of their class and discontinued their education, some to work as labourers in construction sites, some to work in malls and hotels in cities. One boy who had dropped out in class 9 had run away to work in Hissar, following some of his classmates. This boy's father had been in the army and

[19] Nandi Koranga, Nanda,October 2013, UMP Almora, p.20-22

had hoped for a better job for him. It appears that the same educational system in an earlier generation had been able to fulfil the route to a government job more easily[20].

Talking to a family with four children, it was seen that while the younger three, two girls and a boy, are still studying, the eldest son quit school in Class 8. His mother said

`*My son went on his own to school one day and got his name removed from the register, even signed on my behalf..He said that we are very poor and he would rather find a way of earning money to help support his family than go to school. The teachers of the schoolcame to our house, came to speak to him and told him that they would help him and asked what the 'pareshani' (trouble) was, but my son did not answer. Now he manages to get some fruits and sell them in the market.*`

Completing an ITI course after class 12 is a demonstrated route to a job, and was seen to be a widespread aspiration among the children, especially the boys, in all three places. The best expected outcome is of schools opening up new pathways ('sarkarinaukri'). If this does not materialize, some level of schooling is still needed to access work through known labour market networks, thus many boys in Rajasthan said they needed to compete Class 10 to become drivers. And when there are doubts about either of these pathways being realized, aggression by boys against authority seems to emerge.

III. Governance

SSA places considerable importance to community mobilization efforts, encouraging women's active role in SMC. KGBV schools for out- of- school girls is a special effort within the education system to address gendered constraints to schooling.

[20] A study by Darkwah (2014) similarly found in Ghana that while an earlier generation of educated women were able to access regular government jobs, this was not the case for the next generation, and thus concludes that 'the provision of universal primary education without concomitant attention to the provision of jobs that satisfy the conditions of decent work as stipulated by the ILO hinders educated women's efforts at gaining control over financial resources' and that 'conventional empowerment initiatives which assume that providing education for girls is all it takes to produce empowered women are problematic' (102).

Women in SMCs

It is a policy of SSA to strengthen the role of women in the SMCs. This study found varying situations, captured in the interviews reported below. In Danya, the president of the SMC of a girls school, whose own daughter is a student in class 7, was met. Although she lives quite far, about 8 kms away from the school, she had volunteered to be involved. She said that when the old SMC was dissolved and a new one being formed, the Principal invited volunteers. While many parents said they have some *majboori* (obligation) at home and won't be able to give time to the school processes, she volunteered. As she said, `*I cannot really read or write, but I can come to the school when necessary and help solve any kind of problem that the school is facing and participate in improving the quality of the school.*`

She has been made aware of her role and responsibilities, and is also confident that her views and suggestions will be heard. Her confidence and willingness in taking up this role owes much to the Danya based NGO and village learning centre, whose programmes have made the women very aware of the importance of quality education` *for my children and their education, I am willing to do anything…I want them to keep studying and achieve something in life*`. She is clear about the ways in which the school needs to be improved. There is need for more teachers, so that students don't have to go through classes without a teacher; there is a water problem in the school that needs to be solved as well; enrollment should increase and drop outs be reduced. She points out that dropout happens because the foundation of the education is not strong. There is also a problem that teachers who commute from Almora do not stay for the entire day in the school, as a result usually there are only 2 or 3 teachers present at any time. She talked of a protest that is being organized by parents to put pressure on the school management to have more teachers in the school.

In Delhi, a young woman, mother of two girls both in school, who had also volunteered to be a member of the SMC said the committee had just been formed so she had no experience with it yet. She felt there was not enough teaching in the school – about her own children, she says `*the only time they study, or so I have heard, is at the Saathi*

centre`. Another mother with three children in school has been a member of the SMC for 3 years. According to her, the school phones and calls her when there is an SMC meeting and also for school programmes; recently they asked her to attend a workshop in another school and gave her an amount as conveyance for those days. She is not able to read or write, though she can sign her name and had been to school till class 7 or 8. Being on the SMC mainly requires her to sign off on purchases being made by the school. According to her, there is no discussion around teaching, enrolment, other problems being faced etc.

In Ajmer, a male member of an SMC was met, hailing from a nearby village and with a daughter in the KGBV. He is on good terms with the teachers and sees his role mainly as overseeing all the material that is bought in the school including the food and study material, checking with the students about arrangements in the school, taking an interest in their learning level. He finds it a difficult position since teachers are wary, especially as he had refused to sign any blank cheques, and do not like being questioned about teaching. He feels there could be more accountability to the SMC. Another (male) SMC member brought up unresolved issues with women teachers – they have to simultaneously look after their young children and household responsibilities. On the role of SMC, he too said that the role is mainly about giving approval for things that the teachers need to buy. According to him, while there are women members in the SMC, they remain veiled and do not speak or actively participate.

The study confirms that SMCs have been set up in the schools visited, and that the attitude of the members very much depends on the extent to which they have been sensitized to issues around education and gender through interactions with NGOs, or their own life experience. In Ajmer, it seems that women members are not yet playing a very active role, but this could be just a sampling issue.

KGBV

The opening of residential schools for girls is one of the main interventions of the SSA designed to reduce the number of out of school girls. The Second National Evaluation of KGBV programme (November-December 2013) notes that there are over 3000

KGBVs across the country (3609 sanctioned and 3573 operational). The distribution across states reflects the female literacy level and the gender gap in that state. Rajasthan has 200 KGBVs in 33 districts. Uttarakhand has 28 KGBVs. The KGBVs are thus a far more significant share (financially as well as programmatically) of the education system in Rajasthan, than in Uttarakhand.

Rajasthan is also characterized by low age at marriage overall, and also by the continued prevalence of child marriage among some communities and in some parts of the state. Because there is a difference between 'age at marriage' and 'age at *gauna*' (living together), girls continue to live with parents for some time even after they are married. For this reason they may continue to study and attend school. Because the decision of marriage has been taken, paradoxically this reduces parental control somewhat so that it is acceptable for a married girl to attend girls-only residential schooling, provided the marital household also concurs in this decision.

Several differences emerge in the role that KGBVs are playing in the two states.

In Rajasthan, there has been a lot of supplementary and complementary investment in KGBVs, intended to support and strengthen the SSA. The KGBV evaluation mentions the following NGOs and organisations being associated with KGBVs: for training, special mention is made of Sandhan, Bodh Shikshan Samiti and Azim Premji Foundation. Other linkages are with UNICEF, Plan India, Save the Children, Educate Girls Globally.

This has led to an enriched curriculum, KGBV remaining in sight with continuous visitors and engaging in a range of activities. The KGBV in Pisangan is easy to access and has a number of visitors. It has become a preferred choice for girls living in the neighbouring areas. As an inadvertent outcome, good quality schooling in the KGBVs has meant that some girls might be kept out of school for a year to fulfil eligibility requirements of being 'out of school'. Parental aspirations behind sending the girls to KGBV appeared to be more around having a well-groomed girl, and not for any work-related motivation. Good educational outcomes were noted by teachers and administrators:

'In a good KGBV there is a lot of input given to girls from teachers, SSA and organisations like Sandhan. So girls show a massive increase in confidence over the years. The change is not so marked in the students in regular schools'

'Before I started studying in the KGBV all the work outside the home was done by my brother. Now even I can go out and do that kind of work and my parents are also willing to let me'

As a result the demand for getting enrolled in the KGBV is high and the targets are fully met.

However girls generally did not continue with schooling after class 8 even though an RMSA hostel is available in the same campus. It seems that social norms of behaviour are such that older girls are expected to be in the background. As expressed by a group of boys, *'girls who stay in the RMSA hostel are arrogant, they even speak to boys, they go here and there….the girls from the village are better, they don't talk back, and they don't talk much to anyone'.*

In Uttarakhand, unlike in Rajasthan, KGBVs are not such a significant part of the overall SSA programme. Persisting vacancies and lack of demand is reported in the KGBV evaluation and was observed during our field visit. There appear to be several reasons behind this. KGBVs in Uttarakhand have no additional inputs or NGO linkages and no particular effort being made toward this either, consequently the enriched curriculum that is part of the KGBV mandate is not being implemented. There has not been any gender training. Physical isolation affects daily routines. Medical aid is also difficult, as the government doctor is not easily accessible from this distance and so at times the local medical practitioner is relied upon, `Bengali doctors` as they are known, who can deal with minor health concerns but not anything more serious. Two attempts have been made to lay a water pipeline to enable running water for the hostel, and both failed as parts of the long pipeline were stolen. Water therefore has to be fetched from the nearby naula (spring).Isolation makes it hard to recruit teachers for the school.

The KGBV cannot be accessed through an all-weather road, is quite far from the road head, and there are no facilities for visiting parents to stay nearby. As mothers usually cannot come on their own, and fathers cannot be accommodated in the KGBV, this means that generally parents do not visit. The lack of visitors, nil engagement with NGOs,low general visibility and poor access is in sharp contrast to the situation in Rajasthan. At the time of visit there were roughly 35 girls in Classes 6-8. The total number of girls who are enrolled in the school is below the target enrolment of 50. However, the warden seemed to have taken many efforts to personally visit many villages where it is known that there are drop out girls and has personally brought many girls to the school. She also takes responsibility for dropping these girls back to their homes when school closes for vacations. In conversations with the students, we learnt that the majority of the girls discontinue after class 8, even though it is possible for the girls to continue staying here and studying further. One of the Class 12 students informed us that when she started KGBV in Class 6, there were many students in her class. By the time she reached Class 10, they were reduced to just 2 students and now in the 12^{th}, she is the only one left in the school. She attributed this mainly to marriage, as many girls are late entrants to schooling and reach the age of 17-18 by the time they have completed class 8, by which age their parents are anxious to see them married.

On the positive side, girls who have completed Class 8 and wish to continue are able to stay on with State government support, and an RMSA hostel is under construction on the same campus. The KGBV building is large and spacious. The dormitories are large and there are many rooms. The building is situated on a hill and there is limited playground space. The ground floor has offices (in which craft work has been displayed for visitors) and classrooms meant for after- school classes, while dormitories and kitchen are on the first floor. Although equipped with computers, these were not being used in the absence of a teacher when visited. On the day of our first visit, when we were expected, the school was clean, dormitories clean and the girls looked well dressed and neat. This takes special effort given that water has to be fetched from a nearby spring. It had apparently been difficult to get land for the hostel, and while the original site selected was at the road head which would have made it more accessible, that did not work out. The land finally obtained was made available by a local family; the

owners have been given employment as guards and their daughter lives and studies in the school.

IV. Incentives

Relevant incentives include mid day meals, scholarships, cycles, cash transfer schemes linked to completion of stipulated grades.

The study noted the incentives that were reported by people who were interviewed. Mid day meals were being given in all the schools. Other incentives include free uniforms and books for all till Class 8 and in Danya, Uttarakhand, these are free for SC girls till Class 12. A cash incentive is given to SC girls on completion of Class 12 (equivalent to cost of cycles given in the plains); and the State government makes a fixed deposit for SC girls (on enrolling in Class 9, available after completing Class 12). School participation of SC girls in this area is high. Thus talking to a young girl from SC community who walks around 10 kms to her secondary school, to avoid spending on transport, she says that her parents have told her from the time she was young that she needs to study to achieve anything and get a job, otherwise she would end up working in the fields like them.

In Ajmer, Rajasthan, a laptop is given to the girls who score highest in Class 8. Cycles are given to girls from the Gujjar community (that has low educational levels) on taking admission into Class 9. A scooter is given to Gujjar girls on completion of Class 12 and taking admission in a regular BA college course. All expenses are covered for girls who enroll in RMSA hostels.

In Delhi, it was reported that there are cash incentives, waiving of fees and free books, uniforms for girls from SC, ST and OBC communities in Class 9 and 12. While there is high awareness of these incentives, due to the migrant nature of most families, accessing these entitlements is difficult due to a lack of identification papers and caste certificates.

The interviews found that there is a general understanding among people that all children should receive an education in schools, and boys in school strongly support

education of girls/their sisters. Parents are supportive, even make sacrifices for girls education – this was specially seen in Dhauladevi, where because of the remote nature of this area, continuing an education requires moving towards an urban centre, or else continuing to study privately. However, it was also seen that families with money send children to private schools, both boys and girls if finances allow in Dhauladevi and Delhi; while mainly restricted to boys in Pisangan.

B. MEETING ASPIRATIONS

Merit and mobility

Children who are able to do well in school examinations can hope to achieve a level of social and occupational mobility.

Despite the poverty and marginalization of the Kalyanpuri area, there are examples of successful transitions from school to university. Talking to a young man who is in his final year in the BA Economics Honours course at Delhi University, he recalls his schooldays and how after the death of his father he self-motivated himself to work really hard at his studies. He was in the Commerce stream after class 10, was able to do well enough to get admission in two colleges, and chose one where he had been admitted into the BA Economics Honours course. He talks of his first day in the college and how `*I felt as though I had gone to the USA*!` Teachers at the college were helpful and he was given a 50 % concession in fees because his father was no more. He enjoys economics and his conversation was peppered with the language of economics - `*I want to understand the accumulation of capital and why there is poverty*` and he points out that there has not been a financial block in his education because his `*income equals consumption*`. He realized that none of his class mates knew where Kalyanpuri was, so after some time started saying he lived in Lakshmi Nagar which is better known. By the second year he felt more at ease, and now confidently looks ahead to doing his masters degree in economics from JNU or DSE.

In Kalyanpuri, talking to young girls who have just completed schooling, the likely trajectory looks a little different. One, that being able to apply along with friends makes

decisions to study further easier. Second, location of the college is a relevant factor, all had applied to the college of Delhi University that is closest to home. Third, the option of the 'non-collegiate board' and of correspondence courses makes a real difference to their ability to study further. Fourth, the choice of subject (political science) seems to reflect that they had been able to get additional coaching in this subject from the Saathi centre. Fifth, some of the girls are also taking on home based income generating work already. And finally, all of them help with home duties. Many of their brothers have had to drop out and start working due to family financial difficulties, but the girls get encouragement from their parents and brothers, reinforced by the team at the Saathi centre and by their peer group, to continue their education if possible.

Rita has just completed Class 12, and has applied for a BA under the non-collegiate board at a nearby college.[21] Her school leaving marks would not have given her eligibility for the regular course, and additionally she says she needs time to help with the housework. One of her brothers is in school, another dropped out in class 9 and is

[21] Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board: In 1943, by a Delhi University act, Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board was established, wherein women students were enabled to take some of the examination of the University with special coaching but without attending regular classes. This gave shape to the Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board (NCWEB). The Board began functioning in September, 1944 with 3 students. At present, the enrolment is more than 13,000. Only women students residing in the National Capital Territory of Delhi can enroll themselves as students of the Board. NCWEB is a unique system with lectures on Sunday and academic breaks leaving students with five working days free. Undergraduate classes are held at some specified colleges of the University. Postgraduate classes are held at the Tutorial Building, Arts Faculty, University of Delhi, North Campus. The Board is able to accommodate only 20% of the applicants and the admission is done on the basis of merit by declaring cut-offs. The Board enables thousands of young women, who cannot join regular college for various reasons to attend classes during Saturdays/Sundays, academic breaks to obtain Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree from the University of Delhi. However, Non-Collegiate students are not allowed to pursue any other full-time course.
Since there is classroom teaching, no written material is given. Students are expected to attend classes regularly as the minimum 66% attendance has been made mandatory to appear for University Examinations, which are held along with the students of regular colleges. Students are also expected to see the Notice Board for various information displayed from time to time. No individual information is sent by post. The Board provides library facility to all undergraduate students in the respective Teaching Centres and a Postgraduate Library is located in the Arts Faculty Building, North Campus. The Board provides DTC concessional pass facility for the NCWEB students. The Board gives financial aid and book loan facility for the academic year to the needy and deserving students. There are 50 teaching days in a year. A major advantage of the Non-Collegiate programme of teaching is its low cost and utilisation of the existing infrastructure of educational institutions during Saturdays/Sundays and academic breaks. Teachers of the University of Delhi and affiliated Colleges are deputed as guest faculty to teach the Non-Collegiate students. The pass percentage of these students is as good as regular students.
Source: http://www.du.ac.in/du/index.php?page=ncweb [19.7.2015]
For more information see Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board website.

now working. Ritu has also just completed Class 12, and intends to apply to the same college for the same course. She has a strong interest in fashion designing. Renu like the others has just completed Class 12 and filled the same college application forms. While one of her sisters was married after class 10, the other is studying in a polytechnic. Her brother is in 2 nd year of BA and also opted for the correspondence course as he has the additional responsibility of managing their family shop along with their father and mother. Reema too has just completed Class 12, and plans to apply for the same college and a correspondence course, but is not sure whether she will be able to enroll for the degree, because while her mother supports her, her brother says that she need not study anymore, and " *I will do what my family asks me to do*." When probed further she says, " *of course I want to enroll for BA but it may not be possible. The worst thing is that my father does not say anything. If he supports me then I can get permission to study.*" One of her brothers left studies after Class 10 and started working. Her younger brother has also dropped out of school he failed in the Class 9 exam.

Rekha has just completed her BA final exam from Delhi University, as a correspondence course student, and is now planning to join for the MA in political science. Both her brothers have left school, one after class 10 and one after class 12, the former to do a vocational engineering course and the latter to work. She is happy with a correspondence course as it means less travelling, and allows her to work as well. She has started a small enterprise of sewing clothes which she operates from home and manages to earn a decent amount of money from it; she also does some basic beauty parlour work in her house and through that also earns some money. She had learnt both sewing and parlour work from a YWCA centre (now closed). She dreams of having enough money to have a small shop of her own. "*I don't want to do a job. I want to have my own business and make it bigger and bigger. I will not even have to travel anywhere and still have a means of livelihood*".

Looking to the future, these girls aspire to work, some with clearer ambitions than others, but they also see looking after the home as an integral part of their future roles. As one of them said, "*I will sit at home myself but I wont let my husband sit at home. Men are supposed to earn money, that is their job and it only looks good if men earn*

money. Men look good working. People will also make fun of our family if the man sits at home while his wife goes to work."

Parental support is important. Talking to the daughter of two wage labourers in Delhi, it seems that the mother has been able to get information and encourage the daughters to study and look for better work. One girl is a 3rd year student of commerce in a nearby college along with working in a call center. Another is in 1st year college doing a course in fashion technology. When asked how they got to know about the courses and jobs, the youngest girl, still in school, replies that `*its our mother, I don't know where she gets the information from, but she finds out and encourages us*`. Her own aspiration is to become a lawyer.

Parental support for further education of girls in Danya was seen in several cases. There are just two girls in the science stream of the one school in Danya that offers science, but the girls were quick to point out that there are very few boys who qualify for science too. Having been good students throughout, these girls did not report having had any difficulties (despite lack of teachers in Class 9-10 etc). They did get full support from their parents, one of the girls' mother said she could help with school work till class 8 but not after that. She is willing to move to another city with her daughter if needed for her to study further. Her going along is needed because as she said, the girl is shy and scared *'billi se bhidartihai*' (`she is even afraid of a cat`) and so will not be able to go on her own. This young girl is also clear about future plans – she would like to do BSc nursing, about which she learnt at a career counseling session in school. From these conversations, it seemed that more information about what are the opportunities for girls, what is needed for different career options, would be very much welcomed both by parents and girls.

There is a trend of students and their families relocating to Danya from nearby villages to allow the children to study up to class 12 and also be able to get some additional support through private tuition; others relocate to larger cities such as Almora especially for higher education.

Children living in rural areas are well aware that meritorious school performance is not enough, and that geographic mobility is necessary to meet aspirations. A young boy studying in Danya said that ` O*nce my results are out, I will tell my father that I want to go to Haldwani. I have not told him yet. Once the results are out and I have done well, then I will convince my father to let me go and study there. There is a Sir in our school who has told me that the schools in Haldwani are good and I should try and go there to study and he will help me with the admission also*`.

Unintended outcomes

In Ajmer, an unintended outcome of the good quality of education being offered in the KGBV in Pisangan is some amount of planned dropout of girls after class 5 in villages near the KGBV, so as to be eligible to apply to the KGBV (seen as a good school offering upward social mobility). It was also noted that some of the girls who join the KGBV are married, and this raises the interesting point as to whether the usual assumption that more years in school will push up the age at marriage is in fact true or not. In the particular case of this part of Rajasthan, it seems that there is no clear connection between the two. In the last few years, a lot of attention is being given to 'stopping early marriage' as a critical lever to bring about social change and the rights of the girl child. This seems to have had the odd consequence of making this issue more public than earlier, when people hid the fact of child marriage as they recognized it is against the law.

Parents are openly saying their children are married at very young ages…Everyone has become more relaxed about child marriage.

Another unintended outcome seen in Dhauladevi is that there appeared to be high drop-out especially after class 8 of children from poor general caste households, particularly in one of the villages visited during fieldwork, as no further financial support is given for continuing education to children from these families. Cash incentives are given to SC girls, and there is high/universal enrolment and good completion rates of this group.

In Delhi, a sharp stratification was observed across and within schools, presumably not intended. There are several secondary schools in the area, and these are clearly `ranked` according to final school results, teaching etc, in the minds of parents, teachers and students. Moreover within the school considered the best, children were being allocated to English or Hindi medium streams according to performance.

Some tentative comparisons

The three areas are very different, and this has been a small study, therefore it might not be appropriate to attempt any detailed comparisons across areas. Some tentative observations based on the field work are given below.

In relation to drop out/early discontinuation from school, the study suggests that in Kalyanpuri, drop out of boys is apparently more than girls, and it is almost always due to poverty and family need, so that boys leave school in order to start earning. In Almora too the drop out of boys is apparently higher than that of girls, mainly as a result of peer pressure and attraction of job opportunities in cities. In Pisangan in contrast, the drop out of girls continues to be higher than that of boys and is due to the need for them to help in household chores, safety and security concerns on the part of family, distance and availability of schools close to the home, and marriage (*gauna*).

Attitudes towards traditional gender roles, for example care responsibilities that are usually shouldered by women, did not show much change. In Kalyanpuri, many girls are first generation learners, and their care responsibilities remain the same as that of their mothers, even though the girls also have new aspirations for further study or work. In Almora, a fairly marked generational shift was seen in the career aspirations of girls, as compared to their mothers, and at least some of them had the active support of mothers/ families in seeking out new opportunities. Less change is seen in regard to care responsibilities. In Ajmer however, despite considerable commitment of parents to the schooling of girls, comparing the aspirations of girls and parents did not show any marked generational shift.

Regarding the understanding of a `good` boy or girl, most students said that 'good' girls stay in school, behave themselves, are well mannered etc, 'good' boys should fend for their families, do good jobs, not take drugs. Most students said that a woman should know all the housework and should respect her in-laws, keep the family together and definitely should not under any circumstances break up the family. Men on the other hand were seen to have responsibilities related to earning for the household. Certain attributes like girls should not have mobile phones or that they should not talk much were also mentioned. There seemed to be a lot of restriction on the freedom of a 'good' girl as the fear for her to get corrupted (by using a mobile phone) or losing her morality in some way was of great concern. Girls who were seen as talking too much, or ignoring household responsibilities, were easily termed as 'bad' girls. Both girls and boys across the three contexts agreed to these ideas.

Attitudes towards seeking work also varied. In Kalyanpuri, a strong connection was perceived between schooling and employment, more so for boys than for girls, since the latter are largely expected to comply with gendered roles. In Almora, there is a high perceived link between education and employment for both boys and girls; the actual choices that girls make might be different largely for reasons of differential mobility, but the effort to explore opportunities is most evident here. In Pisangan, the education of girls was largely understood as creating well-groomed and well-mannered girls. The link between education and work for girls was very weak. It was visible for boys, but yet seemed to be weaker than in the other two states, with existing job trajectories seemingly dominant.

Finally, a mention must be made of the role of NGOs in these areas, specifically the partner NGOs who had an active presence in the areas studied. In Delhi, the NGO works independent of the Government with a focus on rights and entitlements, and its activities can become confrontational with the school system. However the children who attend the Centre get varying kinds of exposure, access to library/computers and some subject coaching along with personal counselling, and this hand holding helps to sustain their effort to study further and or access a wider range of work opportunities. In Ajmer, the NGO works in collaboration with Government, with a shared vision towards

educational interventions. Its activities have strengthened and improved the quality of education received by the girls. There is less engagement with post-school decisions, given the nature of the engagement. In Almora, the NGO works independently of the government schools, but given the remoteness and relatively small size of villages, along with the focus on developing whole-village groups, the teachers (from schools in the areas where the NGO is active) are aware of and know about the activities. Differences in attitudes of older women towards schooling of girls can be seen between villages where the women have mobilized into groups and where the village learning centres (see Box 1) are active, and those without these efforts.

Box 1

Village Learning Centres, Uttarakhand

A village learning centre provides a shared space to communities. The physical space to run the centre is provided by the community, mostly free, the maintenance of which is the responsibility of the women's group in the village. The selection of the facilitator (*sanchalika*) is carried out in an open meeting in the village itself. About 95% of the facilitators are girls, a majority in the age group 18-22 years. The women's group in coordination with the CBO selects the facilitator, later to be trained by USNPSS at Almora. The centres open in the evening; six days a week. Following the busy schedule on Sunday, Monday is marked as the weekly holiday. The village learning centres offer trans-disciplinary facilities that present multiple educational opportunities to children, adolescents, youth, women and men: After-school activities focus on mental, physical and emotional development of children. Gender distribution of children shows boys (50.29%) and girls (49.71%). Out of a total of 2465 children attending the centres 28.32% belong to SC and 1.99% to the OBC population. In the socially disadvantaged section of population, more SC girls than boys attend the centre. Similarly the ST girls outnumber boys, both in enrolment and retention in the centres. Since students in schools continue to experience gender differentiated choice of subjects and gender stereotypes in textbooks, the programme has introduced several ideas to sensitize students, the parents and the school staff to inculcate a sense of equality in education at all levels. For example, schools continue to offer home science (which includes cooking, sewing and home making) to adolescent girls while taking up science and maths as subjects to study remain a taboo for female students. Also, the quality of education in rural schools is a matter of concern. The village learning centre provides an enabling environment where socialization among children and adolescents and the women's groups could help in questioning gender and caste related stereotypes. Besides, encouraging the drop out girls to re-enrol in schools and attend on a regular basis, the programme ensures equal opportunities for girls and boys in the centre.

Activities are geared towards developing the ability to read with comprehension; open ended discussions organized on specific issues every week; maps, globe, newspapers used to provide diversity of resources; strengthening maths skills among *sanchalikas* and children; library. Practical exercises include actually measuring a field or the land around the centre; make a visit to the nearby water source to measure its outflow; making a model of one's own village.

Continued...

A variety of sports equipment available in the centre makes it an attractive place even for children who otherwise may not attend either due to their age or gender. For example, prior to opening up of the learning centres in many villages, girls in adolescent stages were not allowed to run and play any outdoor games. Girls did exhibit keen interest in sports but the gender stereotyping had created such a strong barrier that no girl would either run or play in the village. The trained facilitators took up this issue with communities in open meetings and discussions were started. After several rounds of meetings within and between communities and informal discussions with parents, girls were allowed to play a few games like skipping ropes, badminton etc. in the evenings.

Indictors that could be used in monitoring and for measurement of outcomes in village learning centres include:

a. Quantitative aspects include the following:

The number of children, girls and women involved · caste, age and gender-based distribution across villages · participation in the centre · Regularity in attending-percentage of learners who attend on a regular basis · Learner-facilitator ratio-for children the ratio of 1:20 is ideal while for women and adolescent meetings the ratio may rise up to 1:30

b. The qualitative indicators were identified as follows:

For children · Improvements in reading habits of children, especially girls and socially disadvantaged section of population · Conceptual and practical level clarity on measurement related issues as prescribed in the workbook Our Land Our Life · Understanding of history of the village, its environment and the village map

For adolescent girls · Ability to take decisions · Understanding of and action re violence against girls · Mobility and diversification of employment opportunities

For women's groups · Leadership in the village and participation in panchayats · Understanding of issues of gender and caste equality and action · Mobility and decision making at the household, community and regional levels

Source: Extracts from Annual Report 2014-15, USNPSS, Almora

Chapter 5
Looking Ahead

Returning to the questions posed at the outset, this study suggests that while access to both primary and post-primary schools has improved considerably over the last decade, a number of other factors play a role in determining the ways in which schooling leads on to further study, work opportunities, or changing attitudes towards gender roles. The main findings are briefly summarised below (recognising that these are tentative findings based on the fieldwork).

On the question of access and achieving gender parity in schooling, considerable progress has been made in all three areas. It was seen that the level of education sought by boys is mainly influenced by work opportunities and their educational requirements. Family circumstances influence choices. In Uttarakhand and Delhi, drop out rates of boys appear to be higher than that of girls. The level of education sought by girls in Uttarakhand and Delhi is also to some extent influenced by work opportunities, and is linked to marriage in a somewhat subtle way. Once girls reach the age of 17-18 years, they are more likely to discontinue schooling and enter into marriage, irrespective of the level of education that has been achieved. At the same time, it was observed that marriage does not necessarily mean an end to schooling. Married girls were studying in the KGBV in Rajasthan, and married girls were reported to be studying privately in Uttarakhand. The decisions around marriage appear to be taken for reasons to do with security of girls, ensuring family influence in choice of partner, etc. Decisions around education can be distinct from those around marriage, and both natal and marital families could be seen to encourage study after marriage, particularly when it was felt that this might be advantageous for the family, such as the girl being qualified for a secure job.

Incentives offered to encourage girls from SC/ST communities to complete schooling appear to have been effective in Uttarakhand and Rajasthan. Caste discrimination has not disappeared from villages, but did not emerge as a barrier to school enrolment. Some exclusions were noted, particularly in the case of an isolated tribal group in one

part of the Delhi Kalyanpuri area. Toilets are essential from the point of view of health and hygiene, but from the narrow lens of correlation with girls' schooling, this study finds no clear link between construction of toilets and presence of girls in the school. Other infrastructure that needs strengthening includes provision of clean drinking water, playgrounds, library and computer facilities that children are allowed to use on their own. Shortage of teachers was noted in all the three areas.

On the question of attitudes and understanding of gender equality, the study found less change. Gender training and sensitisation of teachers is absent or very minimal. The KGBV in Pisangan with NGO support and an enriched curriculum was the one example seen of encouraging girls to acquire problem-solving and negotiation skills within the school. In general, children, parents and teachers shared the same perceptions on appropriate behaviour and desirable gender roles. However, this is not to suggest that there is no change, as discussed further below.

Gender Equality and Changing Perceptions

In relation to gender equality and how this is understood, the initial focus of the education system has been on the structure/ institutions, that is, removing formal obstacles to schooling and achieving gender parity, a goal for which enrolment and drop out rates are the key indicators. It has also been recognized that there may be a `hidden curriculum`, eg classroom practices that reinforce traditional gender norms. This study finds that there is in general an agreement on `boundaries` of acceptable behaviour among teachers, parents, girls and boys. Little evidence was seen of schools/ teachers attempting to push these boundaries, for example, encouraging older girls to play, or encouraging boys to think about gendered constructions of behaviour.

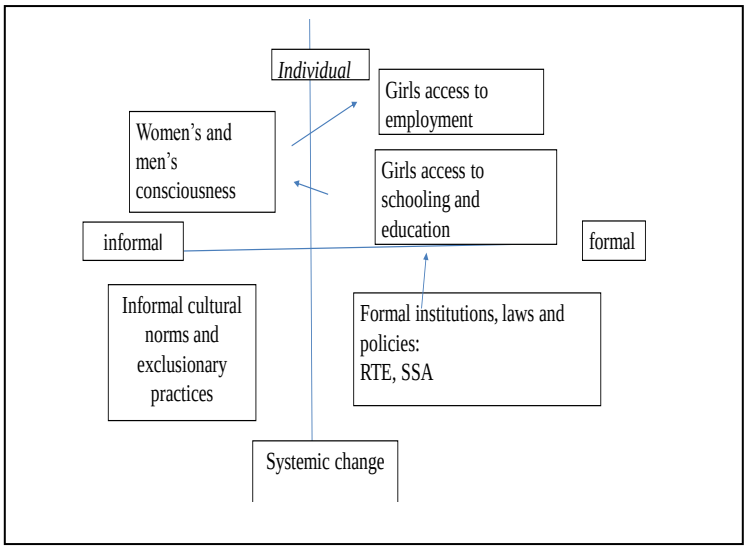
Drawing upon the Gender@Work framework discussed earlier, the change that was observed on the ground may be presented as below. Mainly, the study saw some evidence of a shift at the level of individual consciousness leading to educated girls thinking about and seeking opportunities for further study and work, most noticeable in Almora and to some extent in Delhi. The influence of the NGOs working in these places and the counselling and exposure that the girls receive through the NGOs adds to the

schooling experience. It is possible that over time these small changes in consciousness and aspirations would also begin to influence the underlying norms and gendered practices, and this remains an area for examination in the future. This also suggests that if we are to identify a trajectory of change that shows synergy with people's own understanding and aspirations, it might lie in encouraging the education-work focus. In turn this calls for giving the highest priority to better teaching, more teachers, and career guidance. The diagram below illustrates this change.

Such a shift was not seen in the sample from Ajmer. The transition from primary to secondary and senior secondary which is well established in Almora and Delhi, was found to be weaker in Ajmer. From the interviews, it appeared that more restrictive social norms in Ajmer lead to this situation.

Diagram 4

What is the change we see?
(G@W Framework)



Modeling the process of change

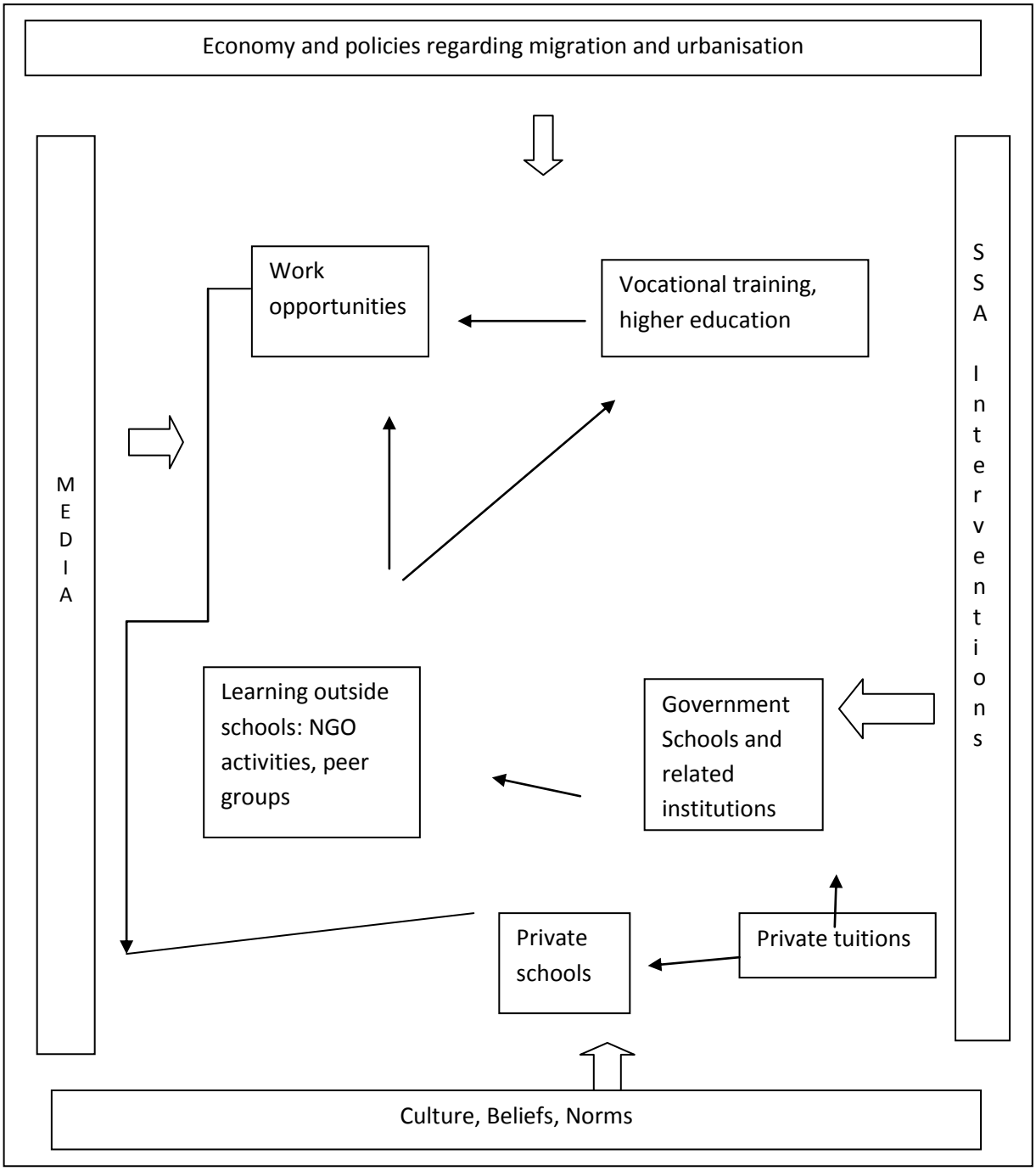
The implicit theory of change of the SSA was discussed earlier. Simply put, a set of interventions in the education sector is expected to lead to gender equality outcomes. The fieldwork conducted for this study suggests that in practice various factors interact to determine what change takes place. School education is complemented by *various*

forms of learning outside the school. This includes NGO learning centres, village level activities, peer learning outside of school, as well as private tuitions which are linked to the school curriculum. Boys and girls learn within and outside school, especially where there are active NGO activities going on and this shapes their personalities, attitudes and values, and search for further study/work. Motivation to study is strongly influenced by work opportunities, higher education/ vocational training opportunities, and the experience of older boys and girls. There is a generalized influence of culture/ norms on the one hand, but this study suggests that these have a stronger influence on marriage practices than on education choices. The media and TV in particular have reduced distances and brings awareness of different ways of life to the remotest areas. Underlying culture reinforces long-standing ideas about appropriate behaviours and roles but is not immutable, and change depends very much on perceived benefits of new opportunities. Economic growth with generation of many more jobs acts as a pull factor both for further study/ training and search for work. The success or otherwise in getting work of one generation will feed into next generation choices around schooling and learning. This really means that the dynamism of the larger world and specially the changing work environment needs to reflect in the content and methodology of learning in schools so that there is a synergy between these various influences.

A 'realistic' model of the change process would include apart from the education sector, livelihood opportunities and civil society engagement.

Diagram 5

Model of change process based on fieldwork



In other words, this study suggests that observed educational outcomes including gender equality outcomes result from the interaction of several elements: different parts of the education system, the local environment and learning that takes place outside of school,

the economy and availability of jobs, diverse influences through the media, cultural norms. There is no linear relationship between inputs and outcomes, in fact outcomes are difficult to predict. Such 'complexity' has implications for the governance structures that are in place. Government systems tend to operate in silos with each department addressing problems falling within its mandate and with very little inter-departmental joint actions or planning. Although convergence especially at local levels has long been recognized as being desirable, in practice very little progress has so far been made to making this possible.

A preferred governance structure would be one that not only devolves power to the local levels, but, as Snyder (2013) suggests, one that creates greater 'connective tissue' between the different levels of the education system and the different areas that interact within and with the education system. Such connections are vital to provide a constant feedback that could guide the system in continuously making adjustments. Traditional top-down and prescriptive governance systems need to be replaced by education 'as a loosely coupled system' with processes of collaborative learning and networks that extend to other sectors such as health and livelihood so that interactions are recognized and visible. Whether such a change in governance is feasible is a question that deserves more reflection.

Gender differentiations in aspirations and mobility

In each of the places studied, it was possible to identify the nature of aspirations among boys and girls, the implications of these for mobility, and gender differences. Primary and upper primary schooling is now available close to place of residence and reasons behind some children being out-of-school did not appear to be a matter of physical access to school. Some mobility is needed particularly in rural areas to continue schooling beyond class 8. Schooling beyond class 8 is also linked to aspirations around work.

In Kalyanpuri for example, for children from the low income households, primary schooling is possible close to the house, as there are primary schools located in each block. A number of secondary schools have been opened in the locality and access is

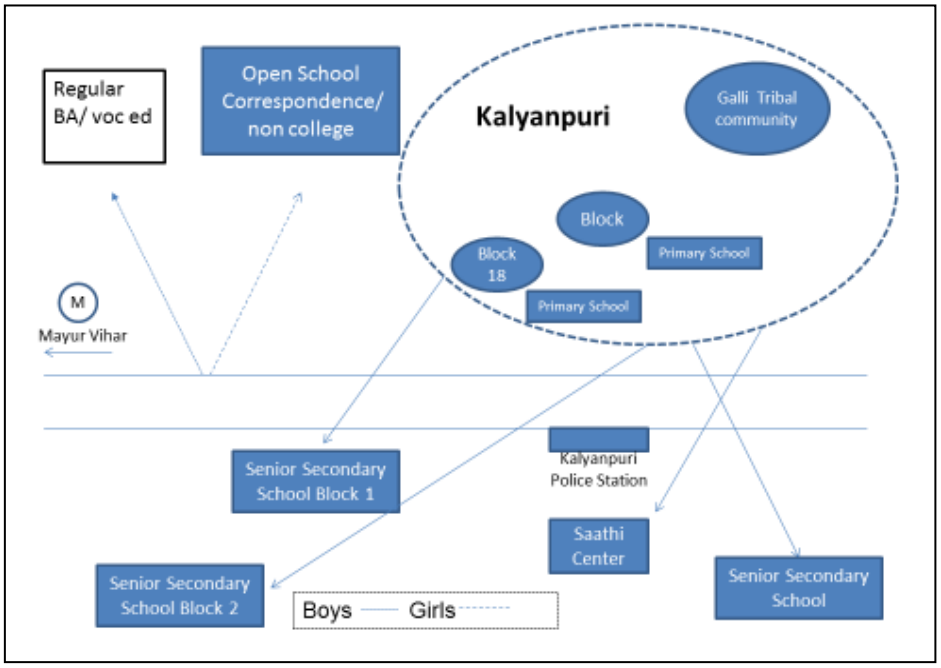
not difficult. Education is a factor in migration into the city, as one father said, '*We mainly moved to Delhi and continued living here with the idea that our children will get better quality education in Delhi as compared to the village*'. Higher education and vocational education generally require physical mobility as these are largely clustered in urban centres.

There are gender differences in mobility, both from rural towards urban areas, as well as within urban areas. Thus the study noticed that in Kalyanpuri, girls often choose to study at under graduate level through correspondence or weekend courses. These require less daily movement and are more compatible with also spending time on a regular basis in household chores or home-based income earning work. Boys would either be in full time regular education or in work, but the part-time study option seemed to be chosen mostly by girls.

The diagrams below show the areas visited for fieldwork, location of schools and NGO partner, and patterns of movement with gender differences where these were observed.

Diagram 6

Kalyanpuri

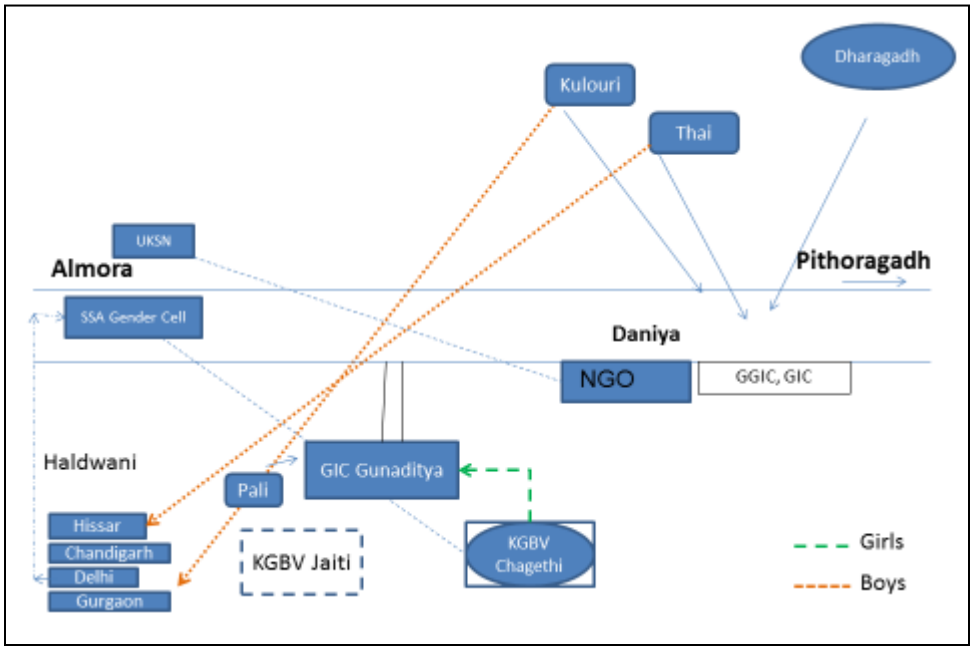


In Almora district, the area selected for study is relatively distant from the district headquarters. Children from the villages nearby to Danya are mostly able to complete elementary education within the village. However after class 8 children need to come to Danya to study. Most commute daily from the villages, and some families rent a place in Danya to make the schooling easier. Beyond Class 12, further movement is necessary in order to study further; usually possible only if the boy or girl can either stay with relatives or if the family moves for the duration to places such as Almora. Work opportunities are also limited locally, and boys were seen to migrate out of the state for work, with destination often depending on village contacts and networks. Thus from a young age the idea that either for study or for work, one will need to move far away from home is accepted particularly by boys. It was seen only in a few cases that families would move to urban centres to facilitate study of girls.

The diagram below shows the villages that were visited during the fieldwork and the location of schools and NGO partners, as well as the existing work- related networks that guide boys from different villages.

Diagram 7

Almora



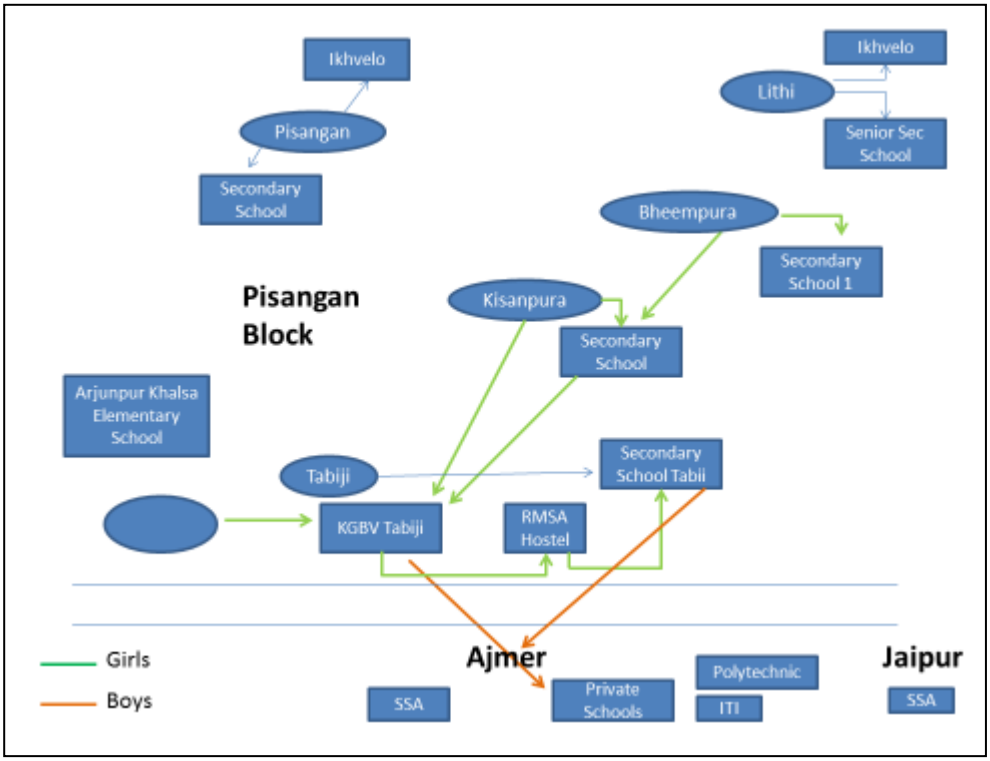
In Ajmer, villages are not dispersed across as large an area as in Almora. The proximity of the villages to the city of Ajmer means that both higher education and work opportunities are physically closer. In that sense, the area studied is peri-urban rather than rural. But the social environment is more restrictive of girls mobility than in the other two places. Girls are largely confined to the home village and study in the KGBV.

A very few girls from the KGBV go on to secondary school, even though hostel facilities are available in the same complex. Girls staying in the RMSA hostel and attending the senior secondary school study in a co-educational environment. For those girls who do not go to the KGBV or to other schools in Pisangan/Ajmer, mobility and exposure depends on what is available in the village, for example the DD run Ikhvelo in Pisangan and Lithi brings in some learning on science and general knowledge.

The diagram below maps the villages visited and the location of schools.

Diagram 8

Ajmer



Although the three areas are geographically, economically and socially very different, somewhat similar patterns of gender-difference in mobility emerge across all three areas in so far as mobility and movement towards higher study or work opportunities is concerned.

Twelfth Plan Working Group Report on Elementary Education and Literacy

It is interesting to see that many of our findings resonate with comments contained in the Working Group Report on Elementary Education and Literacy, 12th Plan (MHRD 2011). The WG report attributes shortcomings in SSA achievements to the fact that SSA has not been supported adequately by the mainstream educational structure.

The WG report made the following observations

Weaknesses of SSA include:

a) SSA not integrated with mainstream system: One undeniable fact is that SSA was created and functioned as a parallel structure within the government system…. The success of the quality aspect of the programme hinged a lot on the strength of DIETs, but SSA could do little to address the problems like large number of vacancies in the DIETs, absence of a separate cadre of teacher educator, lack of training facilities and adequate resources, out dated pre-service course materials etc., as teacher education fell outside the province of SSA.

b) Less impact on retention and completion: SSA's accomplishments in expansion of schooling facilities and improvement in enrolment of children are there for all to see, but the high rate of drop out and low completion rate continue to be an area of concern.

c) Inadequate effort on curricular and quality aspects: The programmatic nature of SSA has been such as to preclude it from active engagement in the curricular renewal and textual material development processes. Its mandate was confined to providing training to the teachers, organizing regular onsite support to them through BRCs and CRCs and development of supplementary materials. The responsibility of curriculum and textbook development rested with the SCERTs or some other bodies under the state government. This is definitely not an ideal situation and has resulted in the quality aspect of the elementary education not receiving due attention.

d) Insufficient school supervision: SSA did strengthen the academic support system for the schools, but the administrative supervision of the schools remained a neglected area. The BRCs and CRCs were neither mandated nor had the ability to carry out duties of administrative nature. The mainstream departmental structures also remained weak, under staffed and under-trained to do this job effectively. As a result, some of the basic requirements of fully functional school, punctuality and regularity of attendance of the teachers, maintenance of records, effective liaison with the parents and community, follow up action on the training programmes etc., could not be ensured.

(e) Inadequate attention to teacher vacancies in the state sector: The fact is that despite recognizing the central role of teachers in improving the quality of education, the progress in filling up the teacher vacancies has not been encouraging, particularly in states faced with greater shortage of teachers. Equally unsatisfactory has been the progress in redeployment of surplus teachers. It has also not been able to take effective stand on the quality and service conditions of the teachers, even those teachers sanctioned under SSA. State after state recruited contract teachers with meager salaries and poor service conditions.

f) Inadequate encouragement to non-government initiatives: NGOs' involvement in areas like management of alternative education centres and inclusive education has been there, but a robust institutional mechanism to involve NGOs in various aspects of programme implementation and encourage those doing good work is missing.

Source: Working Group Report on elementary education and literacy, 12th plan (MHRD 2011)

Emerging Recommendations for policy and programming in schools

(a) Locale-specific gender analysis and programming

Based on the field observations, it was seen that even though enrolment targets for girls education are being met, there is less change observable in gender norms. This means that girls are educated but not necessarily encouraged therefore to play different roles within families or communities. The incentives and infrastructure created to provide a more conducive school environment have helped with enrolments; but the teaching process and practice tend to reinforce existing gender norms.

Accepting that the stated goals of the SSA and education policy go beyond achieving gender parity in enrolment, it seems that the suggested strategies have not been implemented or have not had the expected effects. The main suggestion in the policy document has been around training and sensitization, a suggestion to use gender-disaggregated data for this purpose, and to engage men and boys. The field study found that training continues to be confined to subject training (with the occasional exception). There are some messages of equality and women's rights that are transmitted in a top-down manner. Given that the thinking around appropriate gender roles in society appears to have shifted only slightly, it is suggested that greater effort be given towards encouraging other approaches.

Given the large differences across regions, schools, rural and urban localities, a starting point might be to encourage local level analysis of what are the gender differences in school and society, and based on this to identify what change is possible towards greater equality and what might be the best strategies to encourage this.

For example, in the areas studied, it seems that in Danya, as a result both of availability of schooling facilities and the village-level awareness-generating work of local NGOs, girls are ready to think of new opportunities and ways to apply their skills and schooling. Providing continuous counselling, information, and support to girls and their families is needed to enable new choices. The schools can enable the first two; linking up to local NGOs (as is happening in a few schools) the latter. Together, this would

greatly enhance girls' opportunities. Attitudes towards 'gender' have not changed in any significant degree, but encouraging girls to be more pro-active about their choices might be a first step towards wider changes.

In Ajmer, in contrast, there was little to suggest a search for new roles or opportunities and any change here would need to happen within households, as a consequence of education alone. The Sandhan inputs which encourage critical thinking and problem solving among the girls in the KGBV, if they sustain in later years, could be a catalyst for this.

Kalyanpuri in Delhi stands somewhere between these two, in that girls do seek new opportunities but with less family support, perhaps because of their economically very disadvantaged backgrounds. The support of the NGO not only in educational support but in counselling and enabling wider exposure has helped to encourage girls to make thoughtful choices.

Locale-based analysis and developing locality based networks of support could help in strengthening the links between school and society. So one recommendation is for schools to make links with reputed NGOs in the area if they are able to supplement school activities. This field study found very valuable contributions being made by NGOs whether or not they were formally 'connected' to the school system, both in strengthening the learning processes, in opening up new possibilities and building self-esteem and self-confidence of girls and boys. Where there are good NGOs or other kinds of progressive civil society activities in the vicinity of schools, recognizing and forging links with these could help to strengthen and improve the overall learning environment.

At present, it is only in Rajasthan where the NGOs have entered into a formal collaboration with the government that a government-NGO platform for regular discussion could emerge. However it is equally desirable to strengthen the sharing of views, debate, dissent and co-operation where there are no such formal linkages.

(b) *Strengthening school curriculum*

There is little doubt that improving the quality of the teaching-learning process would substantially alter children's ability for critical thought, which is arguably an essential pre-requisite to any critical reflection on gender roles.

School-based efforts could include small steps that would indirectly influence behaviour and norms, such as

- Encouraging the play of girls at least within the school, at all ages. Within homes and communities, girls were seen to be discouraged from playing after reaching puberty. For schools to encourage play in the school compound would help to build confidence among girls and is an approach wholly within the mandate of the school itself.

- Encouraging participation of girls and boys equally in extra curricular activities. This, again, is in recognition of the need for schooling and education in general to be holistic in nature and not only concerned with textbook learning, and would also help to build well-rounded personalities, which in turn can be expected to improve the negotiation skills and capabilities of both girls and boys.

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