

Strategies Adopted for Enrolling Girls in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas Managed by Different Agencies in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat An Exploratory Study

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The nation is committed to promote gender equality and education to all children up to the age of 14. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has made Universalisation of Elementary Education justifiable. Further, for promoting equity and equality to all, the Constitution empowers the States to adopt measures of affirmative discrimination in favour of women and imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. The government has initiated several schemes and programmes to increase accessibility to education even among the marginalised communities. With an objective to bridge gender disparities in education with a special focus on girls from the most marginalised communities, the country has launched popular programmes, such as District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), 1994; the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), 2001; and the latest being the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), 2010. The two promising programmes conceptualised under SSA for addressing gender disparity in education at the elementary stage are National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) 2003, and the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) 2004, which became an integral part of SSA in 2007. KGBV is a unique formal intervention of providing residential cum schooling facilities at the elementary stage to cover a large section of out of school girls across the country.

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The scheme has inbuilt provisions for holistic development of girls by building up their capacity to exit from persistent intergenerational poverty and illiteracy. It focuses on providing academic and other related skills designed for aesthetic development, self protection, and self reliance. The scheme is meant to enable girls to complete elementary education, i.e. classes VI to VIII. National Evaluation of the Scheme in 2007 and in 2013 and research studies on the scheme undertaken by NCERT (2010-2013) have highlighted that all provisions in KGBVs have stimulated greater demand for enrolment of marginalised girls in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) and in all catchment areas of their locations. In this backdrop, the present evaluation study examined the realistic picture of enrolments of girls in KGBVs and the strategies adopted by different agencies to identify the most needy and educationally deprived girls. The states selected for the study were Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. In these states, the KGBVs managed by different agencies were covered in the study.

The data for this qualitative study was collected using interviews and focus group discussion. In each state (Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar), two KGBVs run by different agencies were selected. Focus group discussions were organised with parents, community members, teachers and the beneficiaries of the scheme in each KGBV. Interview schedules were canvassed to senior level State officials to get an in-depth understanding of the procedures adopted for enrolling girls. Structured interview schedules were given to teachers, wardens and girls to know their perceptions about different mobilisation strategies and limitations for enrolment of girls. Efforts were also made to elicit from them whether the selection procedure adopted by the State covered the most needy and educationally deprived girls as per the norms of the RTE Act.

The results revealed that KGBVs have succeeded in generating demand for education among girls from the most deprived sections of the society in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat. Multiple strategies have been adopted by the States for enrolling girls in the scheme. Some of the strategies identified by stakeholders, but are not limited to community mobilisation, included involvement of the local media, door to door campaign, interpersonal contact of teachers with parents, success stories of pass out girls and girls becoming agency of mobilisation for their peers. The other initiatives for enrolling the girls included

the pro-active role of State officers, panchayat members and other senior citizens of the block and the district. In these States the SSA, Mahila Samakhya and different government societies are managing the scheme of KGVB. The results highlighted the need for the implementing agencies to come together on a common platform to share their strengths and limitations. No documents were available relating to the methodology adopted for enrolling girls in the visited KGBVs. The girls, as well as the stakeholders, reported that sometime written, oral assessment or both methods was adopted to know the learning levels of girls. Once the learning level of girls was identified they were grouped accordingly and bridging was done for them to be admitted to Class VI. The period of bridging varied between KGBVs in a State. The bridge courses were developed by Andhra Pradesh in Telugu and the other states mentioned the use of State textbooks for concept clarification and better understanding of subjects related to languages, mathematics, environmental studies, social sciences and science.

The transition of girls from elementary to secondary level was ensured in Gujarat by providing transport allowance and hostel facilities. In Andhra Pradesh, girls continued their education up to the Class IX. The findings revealed that in Bihar a register was maintained to track the girls who graduated from the KGBV.

All the stakeholders expressed that the KGBV Scheme should be scaled up to Higher Secondary Stage to enable girls to complete their schooling. Since the scheme had existed for more than five years in all the States, there was demand for increasing the intake capacity of girls. Also, there is a need to promote unconventional skills in KGBVs. The financial outlay for various parameters of the scheme needs to keep current cost of index in mind. Teachers' availability and their capacity building need to be addressed for concepts clarification and better understanding of different curricular areas.