

Impact Analysis of the NPEGEL

A Study of Udalguri District of the State of Assam

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Abstract

This paper presents the contribution of initiatives undertaken under the National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) for the educational and overall development of tribal girls in two model cluster schools of Udalguri District of Assam. The analysis of initiatives focused on tracing out of the contribution of the NPEGEL programme in the educational improvement of tribal girls and also in raising their level of awareness and knowledge on three indicators concerning the issues of personal health and hygiene, self-esteem and self-confidence, and of girl child's rights and some social issues associated with it. The efforts initiated in the field under the NPEGEL programme also revolved around these aspects. The empirical evidences reflected a significant contribution of two major action-oriented initiatives carried out by the implementing agency with the support of the NPEGEL fund i.e.: (i) development of ambience that promote gender-inclusive environment in the local community through community mobilization, and (ii) capacity-building programmes for girls in the educational and overall development of tribal girls. With regard to the aspects associated with the issue of overall development of tribal girls, it contributed significantly in raising their level of awareness on issues related to personal health and hygiene, self-esteem and self-confidence, and of girl child's rights and some social issues associated with it. However, the study found that the targeted tribal girls were not using this awareness and knowledge into practice fully. With regard to the question of gender sensitivity among teachers, the study observed a misconceived notion of gender and issues associated with it in the minds of the targeted teachers in spite of being they exposed to the nuances of gender sensitivity in especially conducted sessions.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is an outcome of a study undertaken to assess the contribution of the National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) in the educational and overall development of tribal girls of Bhergaon block, Udalguri district in Assam. The assessment has been done by analysing the field evidences collected through survey method from two model cluster schools based on indicators representing the educational and overall development of tribal girls. An attempt has also been made to find out the role of the NPEGEL programme in gender sensitization of school teachers of two model cluster schools under study.

THE NPEGEL SCHEME

In the recent past, the country adopted two major programmes: the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), 1993 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), 2001. These programmes focus on the achievement of Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) up to class V and the achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) up to class VIII. With regard to the issue of women's equality and empowerment, the system of education must provide extra input to meet the specific socio-educational needs related to better schooling, necessary facilities, health and hygiene, sanitation, self-esteem, poverty, etc. of girls.

It is in this context that the government of India launched the National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) in 2003 as a 'gender component plan' with specific budgetary provisions and integrated it into the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) to cater to the specific socio-educational needs of girls for their overall development. Under this programme, provisions were made for additional financial support to states for enhancing girl's education from class I-VIII and also for providing facilities to promote retention of girls in schools, ensure their greater participation in school activities, improve the quality of their social life, including their educational status, stress upon the relevance of quality education for their empowerment and for ensuring their overall development, particularly girls belonging to the disadvantaged and underprivileged groups, living in risk prone difficult circumstances. This was done through intensive community mobilisation, development of 'model cluster schools' as the girl-child friendly schools, development of gender sensitive need-based teaching-learning materials and provisions of need-based interventions like escorts, availability of need-based books, uniforms and stationery, gender sensitization of teachers etc.

The NPEGEL programme covered Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB) in which the rural female literacy rate was less than the national average and the gender gap in the literacy

was above the national average as per 2001 census data. EBB blocks should have at least 5 per cent SC/ST population and below 10 per cent female literacy. The NPEGEL was also applicable to some selected urban slums.

The development of Model Cluster Schools (MCSs) for girls was one of the specifically proposed measures to achieve the improvement in the educational status of girls for their overall development. The MCSs are the girl-child friendly schools which are provided financial assistance under the NPEGEL for facilities like teaching-learning equipment, books, sports materials etc. The model cluster schools were proposed to be opened in areas having density of SC/ST/OBC/ minority population. According to the joint mission report of the SSA 2013, there were 637 blocks of 161 districts across the country where the programme was intended to achieve the improvement in girls' education. A total of 8473 schools were developed into 'model cluster schools' under the programme and the total coverage of girl children under this programme was about 4.12 crore (JRM, SSA, 2013). It is crucial to understand whether the NPEGEL has played a role in the educational improvement of girls? If yes, in what way. How the NPEGEL has benefited in girls' overall development? To what extent the NPEGEL has proved beneficial in gender sensitisation of teachers?

Over the last decade, few studies have focused on studying the

educational status of girls in the north east region of the country, particularly Assam but none of them has examined the functions of the NPEGEL programme and its impact on school girls in the state of Assam. However, a few studies have been conducted in some states of the country. The study by Roul (2011) in the context of Odisha found out positive impact of the programme on the educational status of tribal girls. Mention may be made of the report of the Joint Review Mission Report (2011) of Uttarakhand that has come out with appreciation of the initiatives undertaken by the Uttarakhand state under the NPEGEL. It found satisfactory results of different skill-oriented activities of the scheme like yoga, judo, karate, painting, computer training meant for the girls. Similarly, the community awareness, as well as, gender-sensitization programmes for the functionaries of school managements of the Mahila Samakhyas, Karnataka found satisfactory results (www.schooleducation.kar.nic.in/ssa/pdfdocs/npegel.pdf) of the initiatives of the NPEGEL programme in the state. Since, there is no study in the context of Assam, it was felt to take up the study to examine how far the gender-component plan under the umbrella of the NPEGEL has succeeded in bringing about changes in the educational status and the overall development of the tribal girls in Assam. It is felt that this kind of study would be of research value and

also contribute to inputs that would help in policy formulation for the upliftment of girls, particularly tribal girls of the state of Assam. With this backdrop, this study was carried out in 2011 with three fold objectives. These objectives were: (i) to study the contribution of the NPEGEL in the educational improvement of tribal girls in the elementary education; (ii) to assess the impact of activities carried out under the NPEGEL in the educational and overall development of targeted tribal girls; and (iii) to examine the role of the NPEGEL in sensitizing teachers with regard to issues concerning gender and gender sensitivity.

PROCESSES AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The study was confined to two model cluster schools located in Bhergaon community development block which is also identified as one of the educationally backward block of Udalguri district of Assam. The study district is one of the districts of Assam with a large proportion of tribal population. It has a total of 2, 67,372 (32.10 per cent) tribal population (Census of Assam, 2011) and the female literacy rate of 59.17 per cent with gap in gender literacy rate (gaps between male and female literacy rates) of 14.62 per cent, being much higher than the state average of 11.54 per cent as per 2011 Census.

In Udalguri, the NPEGEL scheme was implemented during 2007-08 by the Assam Mahila Samata

Society (AMSS), a registered society functioning under the Mahila Samkhya, Assam. During 2009-10, AMSS organized 18 life skill training programmes in all the 9 clusters of the study block (2 training programme per cluster in the block). Each programme was of two days duration. In two clusters that come under the study area, a total of 243 girls were covered in the life skill training programme. The total sample size of the study consisted of 150 tribal girls for face-to face interaction, selected randomly from 243 tribal girls who received life skill training. The girls who were selected for face-to-face interview were those who were not attending schools but traced out by AMSS and mainstreamed after the bridge course training as well as those who were in formal schools and got benefitted under the NPEGEL programme in some other ways. The sample area and sample size of the study is given in Table-1.

The Table-2 shows the school-wise and class-wise distribution of tribal girls who received life skill training and number of girls selected for face-to-face interaction in the study.

Besides, in-depth focus group discussions were held with 60 members randomly selected representing the management of the model cluster schools and the local community. In addition, some case studies with targeted girls were also done. The randomly selected sixty members belonged to a homogeneous background in terms of their literacy

Table 1
Sample Area and Sample Size

Sample State	Sample District	Sample Block	Name of Cluster	Sample Model Cluster Schools	Number of Girls who received Life Skill Training Programme	Number of Girls Interviewed under the Study
Assam	Udalguri	Bhergaon	1 Bhergaon 2 Ghorasal	i) Bhergaon Girls ME School	158	80
				(ii) Khagrabari Janata ME School	85	70
					Total= 243	150

Source: School records obtained during field visit in 2011

Table 2
School-wise and Class-wise distribution of Girls Interviewed

Model Cluster Schools	From Class VI to Class VIII								
	Class VI			Class VII			Class VIII		
	Total ST girls enrolled	Total ST girls received life skill training	Total ST girls interviewed under the study	Total ST girls enrolled	Total ST girls received life skill training	Total ST girls interviewed under the study	Total ST girls enrolled	Total ST girls received life skill training	Total ST girls interviewed under the study
Bhergaon Girls ME School	50	32	20	40	30	29	54	30	26
Khagrabari Janata ME School	49	40	29	63	50	24	62	50	22
Total	99	72	49	103	80	53	116	80	48

Source: School records obtained during field visit in 2011

levels and occupational activities. The average age of the selected members/representatives was around 38 years. Most of them came from rural and illiterate backgrounds; only 6, out of 60 with 'matriculation' and 'graduation'. Most of them as shown

in Table- 3 belonged to vulnerable social background and the girls who were exposed to the activities of the model cluster schools also were from the same, vulnerable parental background.

Table 3
Socio-economic Background of the Members of School Management Committee and Local Community who participated in the Focus Group Discussion

SL. No.	Socio-Economic Background of Respondents	No. of Participants
1	Members, illiterate, working as labour in tea gardens	10
2	Member, illiterate, working as labour in road construction	20
3	Members, literate, engaged in service sector	10
4	Members, barely illiterate, working as members of Village Panchayat (all men)	6
5	Members, literate, working as members of Village Panchayat, as Labourer in Tea Garden, as Aganwadi Workers, as School Teachers and as Housewives (all women)	14
	Total	60

Note: information was collected from them during the field survey in 2011

The AMSS also appointed gender coordinator at the cluster level to orient teachers on gender issues. Since the cluster school teachers were given gender sensitization training, we intended to test the level of their gender sensitivity. A total of 30 school teachers who attended the gender sensitization sessions organized by the gender coordinator were part of the sample of the study.

(i) Tools

The study used five sets of semi-structured interview schedules in order to obtain an understanding of the contribution of the activities carried out under the programme. One set of schedule was used to understand the nature of activities carried out by the AMSS for the assigned task. Impact assessment was made by

measuring the level of awareness of targeted girls about different aspects of three indicators i.e. personal health and hygiene, self-esteem and self-confidence, and girl child's rights and some social issues associated with it, together with their level of practice of the indicator of personal health and hygiene. Each of these indicators is qualitative and, therefore, cannot be directly measured. It was therefore, necessary to develop a set of items which are amenable to quantification. Each selected indicator, therefore, was transformed into item-statements. In all 25 items were prepared. Each item was prepared using a four-point rating system with responses like greatly aware, moderately aware, somewhat aware, and not aware at all. With this tool, the study conducted face-to-face interviews

with 150 targeted girls. The third one helped in carrying out in-depth focus group discussions with members randomly selected representing the management of the cluster schools and the local community. Case studies of five girls were also carried out with the help of semi-structured schedule. To test the level of gender sensitivity of the targeted teachers, a semi-structured schedule that included 10 items related mainly to test teacher's understanding of the concept of gender, roots of gender inequality, gender discrimination, gender relations, gender bias, gender stereotypes and the manner in which they can build a gender-friendly environment in the schools was used. Each item was prepared using a four-point rating system with responses strongly agree, moderately agree, somewhat agree, and don't agree.

(ii) Database and Methodology

The study used a blend of secondary as well as primary data which was collected from the sample population by the researcher herself in collaboration with the AMMS functionaries. The secondary data with regard to the nature of activities carried out by the AMSS under the NPEGEL for the improvement of educational status of targeted tribal girls and their overall development was collected from the field office of the implementing agency during the field survey. The primary data was collected through different methods. In order to understand

the impact of activities carried out under the programme, data was collected through face-to-face interaction with sample girls through personally canvassed schedule. The schedule included in the first part socio demographic details of sample girls and in the second part it included questions covering 25 item-statements associated with different aspects of three indicators included in the study, together with their level of practice of the indicator of personal health and hygiene using a three-point rating system with responses always, often and sometimes. Face-to-face interaction was carried out with the targeted girls in both the cluster schools under study. Interaction with sample girls lasted for 60-70 minutes and data collected through interaction was systematized and quantified. Item wise analysis of girls' responses was done in respect of these indicators. Analysis was done manually using a frequency method. The frequencies were undertaken. The frequency tables were used to quantify the amount of girls' level of awareness of different aspects of three indicators mentioned above. The qualitative data collected through focus group discussions and selected case studies was analyzed and presented in the form of statements in the study. The frequency analysis was done to quantify the amount of teachers' understanding about gender, gender relations and gender sensitivity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The evidences collected from the field indicate that the AMSS as a nodal agency traced 67 out of school girls in the age group 6-14 in a block under the study during 2007-08 and got them enrolled in the bridge course programme carried out by the AMSS. The nodal agency organised two bridge courses: one at the Bartangla cluster school and the other at Nizgaruajhar cluster school. The out of school girls were first enrolled in the 'bridge-course' to upgrade their understanding of subjects upto the standard of class V. The duration of each bridge course was three months (90 days). The teachers who were assigned the task of teaching the courses were paid Rupees 2000/- per month from the fund of the scheme. After the completion of classes in bridge course, all the girls who attended were mainstreamed into the school and placed in various classes as per their academic ability and understanding. In addition to the exercise of the bridge courses, the implementing agency carried out community mobilization campaigns with the help of a student unit of Bodoland Territorial Council. The community mobilisation reached to more than 20,000 community people during the years 2009-11 and the AMSS succeeded in mobilising community to join hands in the efforts of the AMSS in identifying issues girls confront in the area and also helped in developing strategies

for the improvement of educational status of girls in their areas. The AMSS gender coordinators took an initiative to celebrate National and the International 'Girl Child Day' on January 24th and September 24th respectively every year wherein they invited community members to participate in the interaction. The analysis of information ascertained through focus group discussion with the members associated with the school management and the representatives of the local community indicate that the interaction gave people an opportunity to know and understand about various initiatives launched by the government for the promotion of educational and overall development of girls in general and of tribal girls in particular. The community mobilization coupled with other measures like support for running sibling care services etc. under the programme motivated the community to send their daughters to schools. An in-depth interview with Nilima Bhagwati (name changed), a school teacher working in an elementary school attached to the Bhergaon Girls ME School, a model cluster school, shows that the support provided by the AMSS in running sibling care centre in her village proved beneficial in the improvement of educational status of those girls belonged to families living in scattered habitations around the tea gardens. She narrated as under *'many parents in her village were not sending their daughters to schools*

regularly as they go to tea gardens for work and keep daughters at home to look after their younger siblings. The agency on behalf of the programme provided financial support to villagers to appoint a lady who can look after their siblings during school hours so that girls can be relieved from the responsibility of sibling care. The lady was paid an honorarium of rupees 500/- per month for her services. This effort proved beneficial in providing opportunities to those girls to attend school regularly who were irregular in school.'

Further, the analysis revealed that the AMSS hired community volunteers to impart remedial teaching to those girls whom performance was poor in the previous year's academic evaluation. The remedial teaching programme was run in the month of February. Community volunteers engaged in this task were paid an amount of rupees 2000/- from the NPEGEL fund. The remedial teaching proved beneficial not only in addressing the issue of drop out among those tribal girls who were at the risk of dropping out of school because of their low academic performance but also contributed in enhancing their academic achievements.

Similarly, the initiatives taken up under the scheme to set up 'mobile' library at the level of model cluster schools contributed in the educational development of tribal girls positively. The 'mobile' library contained short story books, school

books, periodicals and biographies of eminent scholars. The model cluster schools received financial grant under the programme for the initiative. The facility of 'mobile library' available in the model cluster schools rotates from one school to another along with the gender coordinator. Library books were kept for a week's time in one school. The gender coordinator holds the responsibility of issuing books to girls and getting them back. An interview with the mother of a tribal girl studying in class VIII in Bhergaon Girls ME School reflected that the concept of 'mobile library' helped in the improvement of girl's educational understanding. She narrated that *'setting of a 'mobile library' is a gift in such remote places of the state and this initiative has promoted a healthy reading habit among girls. She hoped that this would further help in enriching children's knowledge and understanding.'* The other initiative taken up under the NPEGEL i.e. the 'best school award' is also worth mentioning. The selection of a school for the 'best school award' was done on the basis of performance of a school in getting girls enrolled in schools and also initiating efforts to promote retention and quality education in schools. It was found from the records of the sample schools under study that the implementing agency had given one dictionary, grammar books, short stories books, reading materials upto worth rupees 5000/- to the school selected for the 'best school award'.

In addition to the initiatives of setting up of 'mobile library' and the 'best school award', it emerged from the analysis that the AMSS organised various other programmes from the NPEGEL fund like the life skill education, health check up camps, exposure visits and vocational education training etc. for the overall development of targeted girls. For the health related aspects, medically trained personnel were invited once in two months on payment basis to organise 'health check up camps' for the targeted girls. The 'exposure visits' were also organized for girls by the AMSS to give them a chance to have an interaction with officials especially women officials working in the education department and also in other departments at the district level. In addition to these, AMSS supported schools to organise *Kishoree Samaroh* at the cluster level. On the day of *samaroh*, various cultural programmes were organised. Girls were given an opportunity to take part in these programmes. The girls who got first, second and third positions in a particular programme were awarded. Girls who secured highest attendance in the entire current academic year in class VI, VII and VIII and also those who got first position in class VI, VII and VIII were awarded prizes on the day of the *samaroh*.

The AMSS also carried out life skill education programme for the targeted girls with the help of volunteers, who were paid honorarium from the NPEGEL fund. Findings of the study

reveals that that life skill education programme contributed significantly in raising the level of girl's awareness about issues related to personal health and hygiene, self-esteem/self-confidence, and girl child's rights and some social issues related to it as shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 given below.

(i) PERSONAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

The analysis at Table 4 given below revealed that girls underwent life skill education programmes experienced higher level of awareness of different aspects of personal health and hygiene. When we combined the greatly aware and moderately aware responses of the girls, more than 70 per cent of the girls were found highly aware of all the eight aspects/items related to the indicator of personal health and hygiene. It shows an impressive contribution of the programme in raising the level of girl's awareness of different aspects of personal health and hygiene as shown in Table 4.

However, item wise analysis revealed wide variation in responses of the girls and the variation was between 53 per cent to 65 per cent. The awareness about 'comprehensive hand cleanliness before every meal' was ranked on the top with highest value of 65 per cent and 'protection of body from harmful effects of detergents, powders, sprays, pollution, cosmetics, etc.' and 'comprehensive cleanliness of nails' ranked at the low with values 52.7 and 52 per cent respectively.

Table 4
Level of Girls' Awareness of Basic Aspects of the Indicator of Personal Health and Hygiene

Item statements	Respondent's Level of Awareness				Total Respondents
	Greatly Aware	Moderately Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not at all Aware	
Personal cleanliness is the first step to good health	90 (60.0)	50 (33.3)	7 (4.7)	3 (2.0)	150
Personal hygiene is comprehensive dental protection	89 (59.3)	29 (19.3)	26 (17.3)	6 (4.0)	150
Personal hygiene is comprehensive environmental cleanliness, including public places	90 (60.0)	28 (18.7)	30 (20.0)	2 (1.3)	150
Personal hygiene is comprehensive hand cleanliness before every meal	98 (65.3)	13 (8.7)	38 (25.3)	1 (0.7)	150
Personal hygiene is comprehensive hair cleanliness	89 (59.3)	23 (15.3)	36 (24.0)	2 (1.3)	150
Personal hygiene is comprehensive personal cleanliness during menstruation	91 (60.7)	16 (10.7)	26 (17.3)	17 (11.3)	150
Personal hygiene is comprehensive cleanliness of nails	78 (52.0)	29 (19.3)	39 (26.0)	4 (2.7)	150
Personal hygiene is comprehensive protection of body from harmful effects of detergents, powders, sprays, pollution, cosmetics, etc. needed	79 (52.7)	29 (19.3)	29 (19.3)	13 (8.7)	150

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages to the total

If we look further at Table 5 given below showing the extent of girl's level of practice of various aspects/items of personal health and hygiene, we find an alarming inconsistency

between their level of awareness and their level of practices of different aspects of personal health and hygiene. Analysis indicates that only 43 (28.7%) of those 98 girls who were

Table 5
Girls' Level of Practice of Various items of the Indicator
of Personal Health and Hygiene

Item statements	Respondent's Level of Practices			Total Respondents
	Always	Often	Sometimes	
Ensure personal cleanliness	72 (48.0)	37 (24.7)	41 (27.3)	150
Ensure comprehensive dental protection	49 (32.7)	26 (17.3)	75 (50.0)	150
Ensure comprehensive environmental cleanliness, including public places	68 (45.3)	30 (20.0)	52 (34.7)	150
Ensure hand cleanliness before every meal	43 (28.7)	38 (25.3)	69 (46.0)	150
Ensure comprehensive hair cleanliness	42 (28.0)	36 (24.0)	72 (48.0)	150
Ensure comprehensive personal cleanliness during menstruation	39 (26.0)	26 (17.3)	85 (56.7)	150
Ensure cleanliness of nails	29 (19.3)	19 (12.7)	102 (68.0)	150
Ensure comprehensive protection of body from harmful effects of detergents, powders, sprays, pollution, cosmetics, etc. needed	29 (19.3)	17 (11.3)	104 (69.3)	150

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages to the total

'greatly aware' of the item-statement of 'hand cleanliness before every meal' stated using the skill 'Always'. More or less similar trend was found in responses of other aspects/items associated with the indicator. It seems that whatever understanding girls developed during the training that was not transformed in action. This reflected a wide gap between planning level commitments (awareness and practice) and the ground realities.

(ii) Self-esteem and Self-confidence

Like the personal health and hygiene, self-esteem/self-confidence was another indicator included in the analysis to assess the level of awareness of sample girls. Seven item-statements were included in the analysis as given in Table 6. The overall level of awareness of different items associated with the indicator was found comparatively higher among the girls. The highest

Table 6
Level of Girls' Awareness of the Indicator of Self-esteem and Self-confidence

Item statements	Level of Awareness				Total
	<i>Greatly Aware</i>	<i>Moderately Aware</i>	<i>Somewhat Aware</i>	<i>Not at all Aware</i>	
Person with high self-esteem always feel confident	86 (57.3)	58 (38.7)	4 (2.7)	2 (1.3)	150
Persons with high self-esteem feel confident to take day-to-day decisions independently	89 (59.3)	49 (32.7)	8 (5.3)	4 (2.7)	150
Persons with high self-esteem never feel inferior in comparison with others	92 (61.3)	48 (32.0)	9 (6.0)	1 (0.7)	150
Persons with high self-esteem always feel easier to face challenges of life	103 (68.7)	23 (15.3)	16 (10.7)	8 (5.3)	150
Persons with high self-esteem develop self-confidence and unleash their talents and potentials to grow and develop	89 (59.3)	42 (28.0)	18 (12.0)	1 (0.7)	150
Persons with high self-esteem feel confidence in expressing their ideas	113 (75.3)	29 (19.3)	6 (4.0)	2 (1.3)	150
Persons with self-confidence tends to be decisive and able to take decision without external constraints	80 (53.3)	45 (30.0)	15 (10.0)	10 (6.7)	150

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages to the total

level of awareness was found about the item-statement 'that persons with high self-esteem feel confident in expressing their ideas' with value 75.3 per cent. With regard to the other aspects associated with the indicator, the study again found wide gaps in item wise responses. The gaps between the highest value and the lowest value was measured as high as 22 percentage points as shown in Table 6.

But what is more important is the need to examine how far their awareness of different aspects of the indicator of self-esteem empowered them to handle issues in the day-to-day life. The information collected through case studies carried out with the sample girls indicates girls were confident and stated that they always raise their voices, if required, to save their personal interests. Case study of a girl Kaya (name changed) who was

studying in class VIII in Bhergaon Girls ME School of Udalguri is a good example of the contribution of training she received in school under the NPEGEL programme. Kaya said *“there are 4 children including me in my family: two brothers and one sister. I am the fourth born in my family of four children. My sister who is older to me in age completed class twelve the year 2011 from the same school in which I am studying. My sister is also one of the beneficiaries of the NPEGEL programme and as a beneficiary she underwent vocational training courses in the school. After the completion of school education, my sister wanted to join course in fashion designing. Since there is no institute that imparts such courses in the district, my sister wanted to join course outside the district we live in. My sister asked my father to get her admitted either in Guwahati or in Delhi. My sister was more interested in getting admission in Delhi as one of our brothers was already studying in Delhi. My father was not interested in her higher studies. My father resisted upon her decision. We have learnt from the life skill training programme that no one can discriminate between boys and girls in matters of opportunities. The only thing is girls must have high self-esteem and confidence to take care of day-to-day challenges they confront in the society. We also learnt that girls should raise voices against any injustice, if required. I and my sister realized this is injustice. The confidence developed among me and*

my sister through the training gave us a ray of hope to convince our father. We talked to our father and made him understand that education is everyone's right. We convinced our father that if he can send his son to Delhi for higher studies, he can also allow us to continue higher studies. Finally, the exercise emerged fruitful and my sister got admission in Guwahati. The school training made us aware of life situations; and my sister's admission empowered her to aspire for the future”.

She was feeling very confident and happy. This is an idea of self-assertion which developed among girls after the exposure to the activities carried out by the nodal agency of the scheme. The case study shows a move among girls from a passive acceptance of their situation, to looking beyond and being assertive.

(iii) Girl Child's Rights and some Social Issues Associated with it

A total of 10 items were included in the analysis of assessing the level of awareness of the targeted girls about girl child's rights and some social issues associated with it. The analysis suggested though the girls were highly aware of the different aspects associated with the indicator, a significant difference found in item wise analysis of responses. The responses varied within range of 13.3 per cent to 82 per cent. The response to item of every child irrespective of sex has right to education emerged at the top with highest value of 82

per cent followed by the item of no one can discriminate between boys and girls in matters of opportunities (75.3%), every child irrespective of sex has right to free and compulsory education upto the age of fourteen (68.7%), child abuse is against Indian law (59.3%). The level of

Table 7

Level of Girls' Awareness of Girl Child's Rights and Some Social issues Associated with it

Item statements	Level of Awareness				Total Respondents
	Greatly Aware	Moderately Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not at all Aware	
Every child irrespective of sex has right to free and compulsory education upto the age of fourteen	103 (68.7)	16 (10.7)	23 (15.3)	8 (5.3)	150
Every child irrespective of sex has right to education	123 (82.0)	19 (19.3)	6 (4.0)	2 (1.3)	150
Every one irrespective of sex has right to freedom of expression	42 (28.0)	89 (59.3)	1 (0.7)	18 (12.0)	150
No one can discriminate between boys and girls in matters of opportunities	113 (75.3)	29 (19.3)	2 (1.3)	6 (4.1)	150
Sex based discriminatory social practices must come to an end	92 (61.3)	48 (32.0)	9 (6.0)	1 (0.7)	150
Child abuse is against law in India	98 (65.3)	13 (8.7)	38 (25.3)	1 (0.7)	150
Child labour is against law in India	89 (59.3)	39 (26.0)	21 (14.0)	1 (0.7)	150
Female feticide is against law in India	42 (28.0)	46 (30.7)	40 (26.7)	22 (14.7)	150
Traditional tribal social practices favour gendered division of labour	29 (19.3)	12 (8.0)	19 (12.7)	90 (60.0)	150
Everybody has the right to live in dignity and enjoy all the rights guaranteed to them	20 (13.3)	22 (14.7)	18 (12.0)	90 (60.0)	150

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages to the total

awareness among the girls was found very low on items associated with the awareness of child's right to live in dignity and enjoy all the rights guaranteed to them (13.3 %) followed by traditional tribal social practices favour gendered division of labour (19.3%), every one irrespective of sex has right to freedom of expression (28%), and female feticide is against Indian law (28%). It depicts less gain of the activities carried out under the umbrella of the NPEGEL in creating awareness and knowledge of those issues that may be not much in practice in the local society in which the sample girls live in.

(iv) Gender Sensitivity Analysis of Targeted Teachers

The targeted teachers were those who were exposed to the gender sensitization programmes organized by the AMSS. We interacted with 30 targeted teachers to ascertain their responses of understanding of the concept of gender, roots of gender inequality, gender discrimination, gender relations, gender bias, gender stereotypes and the manner in which they can build a gender-friendly environment in the schools was used. The item-wise analysis of teachers' responses indicated that all the beneficiary teacher-respondents had agreement on the first item that terms 'sex' and 'gender' are the same and interchangeable with 76.7% of them having strong agreement. There was no teacher who did not disagree with the item statement. It was surprising

to learn from their responses that in spite of capacity building enrichment programme for the teachers, almost all the teachers had the misconceived notion of the term 'sex' and 'gender' as indicated in Table 8. This shows their stereotype mind-set manifesting into their responses, although 50 per cent of the teacher respondents strongly agreed and favoured gender-parity and 60 per cent favoured the need of interrogating teaching-learning from a gendered perspective. Hence, findings of the study tell us a mixed story with greater stress on the misconceived notion of gender and gender related issues.

Conclusion

Findings emerged from the analysis reveals that the programme overall has made a significant contribution in the improvement of educational status of tribal girls in the study area. Agency's effort in creating an ambience that promote gender-inclusive environment in the local community through community mobilization and organisation of various capacity-building activities for the educational improvement and overall development of tribal girls emerged is worth mentioning. Agency mobilized more than 20,000 community people in just three years times from 2009-11. According to the responses emerged through focus group discussions, community awareness programmes really contributed significantly in the improvement of girls' education

Table 8
Level of Awareness of Gender Sensitivity of Targeted Teachers

Item statements	Level of Awareness				Total Respondents
	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Somewhat agree	Don't agree	
Terms sex and gender the same and interchangeable	23 (76.7)	5 (16.7)	2 (6.7)	0 (0)	30
Gender a biological construct	20 (66.7)	6 (20.0)	2 (6.7)	2 (6.7)	30
Gender a cultural construct	10 (33.3)	5 (16.7)	7 (23.4)	8 (26.6)	30
Patriarchal values integral parts of Indian tradition	23 (76.7)	4 (13.3)	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	30
Patriarchal values acceptable to India people	22 (73.3)	3 (10.0)	4 (13.3)	1 (3.3)	30
Gender- parity needed in the society	15 (50.0)	4 (13.3)	6 (20.0)	5 (16.7)	30
Male dominated society to continue in the society	19 (63.3)	5 (16.7)	3 (10.0)	3 (10.0)	30
Education teaches social selectivity and patriarchal values	20 (66.7)	3 (10.0)	5 (16.7)	2 (6.7)	30
Contents of schooling need to be interrogated from a gendered perspective	18 (60.0)	4 (13.3)	2 (6.7)	6 (20.0)	30
Gendered division of labour to exist in the society	20 (66.7)	2 (6.7)	2 (6.7)	6 (20.0)	30
General consensus to be evolved on basic issues of the society	20 (66.7)	4 (13.3)	3 (10.0)	3 (10.0)	30

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages to the total

and their overall development in the study areas. Findings emerged from the focus group discussion with community people indicate that community mobilisation coupled

with other measures like support for running sibling care services initiated under the programme also motivated many parents to send their daughters to schools regularly. Besides, 'mobile

library' and 'best school award' contributed in improvement of girl's education in the study area.

With regard to the issue of overall development of tribal girls, it seems that the awareness level of the targeted tribal girls has strengthened although, it has own limitations, contradictions and inconsistencies. The assertion of economically poor tribal girls for continuing their higher studies is pertinent, as they exemplify voice against violation of their educational rights being daughters in the family. This result has been supported by various studies also. There are researches indicating that teaching skills in this way, as part of teaching-learning process, is an effective approach for empowering children, especially girls. Cutinha (2012) and Srikala and Kishore (2010) found that the life skill education of school children improves adjustment of the adolescents with teachers, and school, increases pro-social behavior, coping with stress and self-esteem. Rajib Acharya et. al. in 2009 found a positive and net effect in the study on impact of the life skills based training in the attitude of adolescents girls. An interventions study for providing life skill education to girls in tribal community in Gujarat in 2005 by Bharath and Kumar also found that the programme helped students and empowered them in a better manner about their physical changes, build self-confidence and understand gender related issues. In fact, findings of the study suggest

that these kinds of interventions may bear fruit gradually and can prove to be sustainable solutions in the empowerment of girls living in remote tribal areas, as more positive responses have come from comparatively large number of the sample girls.

Experiences gained through interaction with teacher-respondents suggested that interventions of the programme in creating gender awareness and gender sensitisation have not found much satisfactory results. Continuous efforts are required in this direction, as gender issues are deeply rooted in the minds of people. Hence, the findings of the study recommend continuous efforts in this direction which need to be taken up seriously as the study felt the need to equip the teachers' understanding of gender and gender issues regularly to be enable them to deal with the ideologies behind gender representation in class rooms' situations. The study also highlights the need for the government to support such programmes with zeal of more pro-active role in the release of fund in time.

In the light of above discussion, it could be said that such programmes are of great value as they can specifically address the needs of girls growing up in disadvantaged environments that lack opportunities provided programmes are sustained for a long period by providing regular and in-time financial support to the authorities concerned.

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