



## Girls Education in India: An overview

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### ABSTRACT

Education is very important for every child whether boy or girl. It is sad that some communities still discriminate against the education of the girl child. Education is the key factor for girls' empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of girl from womb to tomb is well known. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of girls in all sectors- Economic, Education, Social, Political, Health Care, Nutrition, Right and Legal etc. Girls oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walk of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, girls & women have to swim against the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education. And rural transformation will come from girls' education. The paper is an attempt to discuss the opportunities and challenges of girl's education in the country.

**KEY WORDS:** girl child, empowerment, education, opportunities

### 1. INTRODUCTION

"If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women Empowered means Mother India Empowered". PT. Jawaharlal Nehru Women and girls in the developing world are often denied opportunities for education. Lack of education limits prospects, decreases family income, reduces health, puts women and girls at risk of trafficking and exploitation, and limits the economic advancement of entire countries. Education for girls and women is the single most effective way to improve the lives of individual families as well as to bring economic development to poor communities worldwide. Education has a long history of successfully working with local partners to design, manage, and

evaluate community-based initiatives to advance the conditions of girls and women. World Education's programs help girls enroll and stay in school and help women gain access to or create new educational, financial, and social resources in their communities. They also help girls and women improve their own lives, the lives of their families and the conditions in their communities. For parents—and especially mothers—this means creating conditions that ensure their daughters have equal access to basic education, are able to make informed decisions about their futures, and are able to protect themselves from trafficking, sexual exploitation, HIV, for example.

By improving educational opportunities for girls and women, World Education helps women develop skills



that allow them to make decisions and influence community change. In turn, these programs have a positive impact on some of the most profound issues of our time: Population growth, HIV, peace and security, and the widening gap between the rich and poor. There was a time when people thought that it was not necessary to educate girls. Now we have begun to realize that girls' education is essential. The modern age is the age of awakening of girls.

They are trying to compete with men in all spheres of life. There are many people who oppose girls' education. They say that the proper sphere of girls is the home. So, they argue that the money spent on girl's education is wasted. This view is wrong, because girl's education can bring about a silent revolution in the society. Girls' education plays a vital role through up gradation of depriving Marginalized sections, especially girls in society. Because girls are the back bone of society, they are the mother of the race and guardian of future generation, so that education is very much necessary. Girls must be educated, for it is the Girls who mould the next generation and hence the destiny of the country. But present scenario is different girls are consist with 58.65% of the total population but the literacy rate of the girls is 65.5% where as the boys literacy rate is 82.1% (Census Report, 2011) and annual average dropout rate of girls in primary level is 4.14% and in upper primary level is 4.49% (DISE Data, 2014-15). Annual average dropout rate of girls in secondary level is 17.79% and in higher secondary level is 1.61% (U-DISE Data, 2014-15). Although Government has taken many initiatives to promote girls' education in our country, "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme was launched in 2015 with the noble purpose to educate

girls. 'Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana' scheme was launched in 2015 to meet the expense of the Girl child's higher education and marriage" (Ministry of Women and Child Development Report, 2015). Government of India is also taking responsibility to make girls' toilet in every schools for the purpose of minimizing dropout rate in the schools. Because according to the Annual Status of Education Report (2014) "at middle and high schools, there is a correlation between the lack of toilets and drop-out rates." The purposes of the study are to assertion recent status and challenges of girl's education in India; to provide possible suggestions to overcome the challenges of girls' education in India.

## **2. MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN INDIA:**

Government of India has taken different initiatives for improvement in girls' education. These are given below:

**Article 15:** prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth.

**Article 45:** The State shall endeavor to provide early childcare and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

**Mahila Samakhya Programme:** Mahila Samakhya (MS) is an ongoing scheme for women's empowerment that was initiated in 1989 to translate the goals of the National Policy on Education into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly those from socially and economically marginalized groups. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV):** This scheme was launched in July, 2004, to provide education to girls at primary level. It is primarily for the underprivileged and



rural areas where literacy level for girls is very low. The schools that were set up have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below Poverty line) girls. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL):** This programme was launched in July, 2003. It was an incentive to reach out to the girls who the SSA was not able to reach through other schemes. The SSA called out to the "hardest to reach girls". This scheme has covered 24 states in India. Under the NPEGEL, "model schools" have been set up to provide better opportunities to girls. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE)** was launched in May 2008 with the objective to establish an enabling environment to reduce the dropouts and to promote the enrolment of girl children belonging mainly to SC/ST communities in secondary schools. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**Indira Gandhi National scholarship scheme:** is provided for single girl child for pursue both higher and technical education. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**Swami Vivekananda Scholarship for Single Girl Child:** The dropout ratio at various levels of education for girls is much higher than that of boys. Keeping Swami Vivekananda ideas of women education and to promote girls education, UGC has introduced the Swami Vivekananda Scholarship for Single Girl Child for research in Social Sciences with an aim to compensate direct costs of higher education especially for such girls who happen to be the only girl child in their family. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**Saakshar Bharat:** The National Literacy Mission was recast with its new variant, Saakshar Bharat launched in 2009. It aims to accelerate adult education, especially for women's (in the age group of 15 years and above) who have no access to formal education, targeted female literacy as a critical instrument for women's empowerment. This has led to an increase in literacy, amongst women, from 53.67% (Census 2001) to 65.46% (Census 2011). It is also for the first time that of the total of 217.70 million literates added during the decade, women (110.07million) outnumbered men (107.63million) (source: Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India (XII Five Year Plan)).

**Udaan:** The Scheme is dedicated to the development of girl child education, so as to promote the admission of girl students. The aim is to address the teaching gap between school education and engineering entrance examinations. It seeks to enhance the enrolment of girl students in prestigious technical education institutions through incentives & academic support (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**Pragati** - Scholarships for Girl Child for Technical education. It aims at providing encouragement and support to girl child to pursue technical education (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao:** This is newly announced Scheme of the Govt. of India for enhancing girls' education in India. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

**Mid-Day Meal Scheme:** The gender gap in school participation tends to narrow, as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme helps erode the barriers that prevent girls from going to school. Mid-Day Meal Scheme also provides a useful source of employment for women and helps



liberate working women from the burden of cooking at home during the day. In these and other ways, women and girl children have a special stake in Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

From the above discussion, it is clear that Government of India has taken so many initiatives for the improvement of girls' education. In spite of that the status of girls' education has not been increased in expectation level because these initiatives have not been reached to the grass root level. So, Government of India must have to take responsibility to implement these schemes and provisions at grass root level.

### **3. CHALLENGES OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN INDIA:**

It is generally accepted by many that schooling has innumerable benefits for the child. But the irony of the fact is that even after 62 years of its independence, a vast majority of Indian children, especially girls are deprived of these benefits. Girls are often taken out of school to share the family responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings (Das, 2010 & Sivakumar, M.A.-2012).

- (1) Negative parental attitude towards educating daughters is one of the important challenges to promote girl's education in India. (Hickey, M.G. & Stratton, M. – 2007 & Kumar, J. & Sangeeta -2013).
- (2) Lack of female teachers is another potential barrier to girls' education (Latha, P.S.-2014). Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement, if they have female teachers. Currently, women account for only 47.70 % of teachers at the Elementary level (U-DISE, 2014-2015).
- (3) Lack of infrastructural facility in schools is one of the major problems

in development of girls' education in India (Sivakumar, M.A.-2012). Annual Status of Education Report (2014) agreed that due to lack of girls' toilet facility, dropout rate at elementary and secondary levels have been increased than the past decades.

- (4) Many girls desirous of pursuing education above middle level, facilities for which are available away from their homes, cannot avail themselves of these facilities due to lack of hostel arrangements. (Worah, H.-2014)
- (5) Parents often complain about insecurity for girls attending schools. Instances of abduction, rape and molestation of girls dampen the enthusiasm of parents and girl students in pursuing education beyond a certain age; thereafter they remain bound to their homes (Kumar, J. & Sangeeta -2013).
- (6) Though education should be free, there are a lot of costs associated with sending children to school. The cost of uniforms, textbooks or bus fare can be too much to bear for a family living in poverty (Latha, P.S.-2014). Too often, parents choose to keep their girls at home and send the boys to school instead.
- (7) In many parts of the country, the nearest primary school to a particular community might be a 4 or 5 hour long walk away. On top of that, girls may face dangers or violence on the long way to school; so many parents select to keep their daughters at home and out of harm's way. (Latha, P.S.-2014).
- (8) Typically, girls are asked to fetch the water, take care of their younger siblings and to help their mothers cook and clean (Sivakumar, M.A.-2012). Due to this, girls may not have



- the opportunity to attend school because their contributions to the household are valued more than their personal education.
- (9) In many parts of the country, children's health is a big concern, especially if they're facing poverty. If there's not enough food or sufficient clean water to keep girls nourished and healthy, they may not be well enough to attend school.
  - (10) When girls are forced to marry young, they are often pulled out of school at a very critical age in their development. The transition from primary to secondary education is key for girls to gain the life skills they need to escape the cycle of poverty. Yet, this is often the same time that many girls leave school due to early marriages. (King, E. & Winthrop, R. - 2015)
  - (11) Lack of enthusiasm and interest of the officials in charge of education is another problem for promoting girls' education.
  - (12) Lack of awareness among implementing agencies and community members to implement different schemes and provisions of girls' education at grass root level.
2. Child centred classrooms with adequate teaching and learning facilities should be established.
  3. Women teachers can understand the girl's problems easily so recruitment of more women teachers should be made who can serve as role models for girls and parents.
  4. Appointment of qualified female teachers and extra incentives should be given to them particularly in rural and remote areas.
  5. Sports activities should be organised for the girls so that they can be promoted to be leaders and improve their confidence and motivation.
  6. Opening of girl's schools in each area having facilities of fresh drinking water, proper classrooms and adequate number of female teachers.
  7. Provide residential facilities, Free and concessional buses pass facility to the school students.

#### 4. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE GIRL'S EDUCATION

Girls are the equal partner with the boys in the society's development and the education of the girls is very important in a country like India where huge literacy gaps exist, but there are some hurdles in the way of girl's education which should be removed through some strategies which can be discussed as under these points.

1. It is a moral duty of every parent/guardian to send their children to the school.

These are some of the strategies by which we can improve the girl's education in the country. With this, there is a great need that women themselves should take the first step to improve the girl's education in the country.

#### 5. CONCLUSION:

Eliminating the gender disparities is the biggest challenges for the today's world. In the modern era new efforts are being made in the form of the programmes and schemes by the GOI to improve the girl's education because there is no effective tool for development than the education of girls but there is lot of work to be done to achieve the targets



of girl's education in the country. The Indian Education Commission 1964-66, rightly emphasized, "For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of their infancy, the education of girls is of greater importance than that of boys". However, the change in the attitude of the public towards girls' education would go a long way in improving the situation.

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