

UNVEILING THE COMMUNITY'S LENS: ASSESSING NGO- LED EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES ON GIRLS' EDUCATION IN CHANDRADIH VILLAGE, PURULIA

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Abstract:

There is a multitude of evidence in available pool of literature that NGOs play significant role in different aspects of societal development like public health, awareness as well as resolving other social and environmental issues especially in developing countries. In India Government School education system faces different issues regarding quality education, where 100 percent enrolment is a challenge and dropout rate is significantly increasing. As a consequence, the issues of access and equity in education have become more pronounced: socio-economically women and girls are worse off, rural areas more marginalized and minorities are under threat. In this situation, educational initiatives of NGOs helps for mainstreaming or supporting the Government educational mission which further help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals especially goal 04 (i.e. Quality education). Many NGOs are engaged in educational programme at grassroots level particularly in remote, slum and rural backward areas. The proposed study was conducted in Chandradih, a backward village of Purulia district where CESR has been operating their educational centre from the last 5 years. The main purpose of this study is to find out the perception of parents towards CESR's educational activities. For achieving this goal, a qualitative research method will be adopted and data will be collected from 30 parents through a focus group discussion.

Keywords: Parental Perception, Education, NGO's Educational Activities.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is the most important and powerful instrument invented by mankind to shape and mould himself in a desirable manner (*Walia, 2015; Gowder, 2014*). Any modification brought about in the behaviour of an individual, as a result of his interaction with the environment, constitutes learning (*Visser, 2008; Hansbol, 2016*). The history of the world proves that education has been root cause for any change which takes place in social, cultural, spiritual, political and economic aspects of human life. It is education which not only transforms the human animal into a rational human being, but also develops and prepares him to survive and

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adjust with surroundings so as to lead his persona as well as social life successfully. (Ravi,2016). Education is the main instrument of human progress and its importance has been emphasized through fundamental rights, principles, statutes / acts in a number of countries. Tarekegnas (1999) stated that, no country has scored sound economic growth without sound development in its education. In a knowledge-based world, education is the single best investment countries can make towards building prosperous, healthy and equitable societies (Education first Initiatives, 2012). By realising these, many countries accord priority to Educational Development in keeping with Millennium Development Goals. According to the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): “Every person has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the fundamental and elementary stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory... Education shall be directed to the all-round development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26). India also took many initiatives like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Right to Education Act etc. to ensure universal access to education.

Girls’ Education is one of the priority areas of public policies for India as well as all countries. Two MDGs refer directly to education of girls and women. MDG2 aimed to achieve universal primary education: the target being to ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary training. MDG3 aimed to promote gender equality and empower women with its target being to eliminate disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015 (Millennium Development Goals, n.d.). The Economic and Social Council Ministerial Declaration (2010) stressed that ‘investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency, and sustained economic growth’. Investing on Girls’ education can help to transform communities, countries as well as entire world (UNICEF Report).

The reality of Girls education, however, is not satisfactory at all. According to UNICEF report, in the World, 129 million girls are out of school; of them 32 million is at the level of primary school age group. The report stated that *only 49 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education. At the secondary level, the gap widens: 42 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in lower secondary education, and 24 per cent in upper secondary education.*

2. GIRLS’ EDUCATION IN INDIA:

Poverty is one of the main issues for developing countries like India. Girls’ education is one of the most effective ways for ending poverty in developing nations. The benefits of their education are not to be seen from narrow individualistic perspective but these add to their families, and society at large. In the past Vedic period, where Gargi, Maitrayee, Apala, Lopamudra were the intellectual role models for which society hailed them with higher respect. In modern society, however, very poor percentage of women wield power and hold positions at the top levels.

Now a days in India, Female constitute 48% of total population (*UN report,2019*) but they are neglected from different angles like equal rights, job and societal development. Even we have to achieve the 5th sustainable development goals (Gender equality) but this goal exists only in paper and pencil actually we do not practice it in reality.

But still, we are unable to achieve the Universalisation of Elementary Education Goals due to the gaps of lagging of Girls belonging to rural, remote areas who are deprived of higher educational attainment even they have the constitutional safeguards. In most third world countries Girls are deprived from education for different reasons such as poverty, unawareness, child marriage, religious extremity that do not permit girls' education, etc. In the year 2015-16, a total of 81.4 percent females were literate in the urban areas in India. In the same year, a total of only 61.5 percent females were literate in the rural areas (*Kanwal, S.,2021*)

3. NGO AND GIRL'S EDUCATION:

Large numbers of NGOs are working at different sectors like health, education, rural development, health awareness and capacity building activities etc. Different NGOs are putting their energies for achieving the targets. Education is mainly responsibility for the Central and State Government, but now a days because of many limitations, many NGOs are coming forward to aid and assist the state in delivery of services. The education of girls is one such fields which is recognized as crucial input to development leading to higher economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, and improved health. Therefore, understanding the factors linked to gender parity in primary education and identifying the role that NGOs need to play in this process are a key component of the entire process. NGOs could be directly or indirectly part of the process to increase the enrolment of girls, mainstreaming the dropout and first-generation girls, to sensitize young girl students etc. From the review of related literature, it was found that, recruiting the local female teachers from that community in the remedial centres of NGOs can help to increase girls' enrolment and to be effective in improving children's test scores (*Banerjee et al., 2003*).

4. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

The researcher is interested to carry out this study because it is very relevant in this contemporary era. Erna Solberg, the president of Norway aptly said that, when you invest in Girl's education, she feeds herself, her community and her nation. So, Girl's education is very much necessary for multiplier effect including community development by reducing gender discrimination, diminishing domestic violence and so on. Actually, if we want to really educate them, it is essential to promote context-based education by understanding their ground level problems. Even government has started acting on this realization to provide free of cost education, establish primary schools within 1k.m and moreover, the Mid-Day Meal scheme has been going on in full swing. Still absenteeism and drop our related issues have not declined significantly. At present literacy rate of girls is 70.30% whereas boys' literacy rate is 84.70% (*National Family Health Survey,2022*). After the Covid19 Pandemic the status of Girls'

education rapidly increased because of sudden closure of schools, increased the online classes which creates the digital divide that highly affects the rural marginalised girls children. In that situation NGOs played a critical role to help to continue their education by going door to door, understand their problems and took necessary actions. For an example, NGO members and local community members seat together and decide the class timing and others educational activities.

Several NGOs are working at grassroot level by providing quality education along with the government education system. As NGOs are playing a significant role mainly in backward rural areas (*Ramkrishna, 2013*) where governmental initiatives merely reached but it was not fully functional, so a key issue was to understand how they perform relative to the state in those areas. This is the interest of several researchers to find out how NGOs provide quality education for girls, and how they could motivate parents to increase enrolment of girl child in educational centres. By this paper researcher has tried to understand the perception of the parents, who are the main stakeholders of the education system.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of this study are:

1. To know the parental background of those girls who receive the supplementary education provided by the NGO.
2. To know the Perception of Parents about the NGO's activities towards girl's education.

6. STUDY AREA:

The researcher selected Chandradih village of Purulia, which is mainly recognised as a backward village, where a NGO namely as CESR giving their effort for improvement of girl's education. Chandradih village is one of the OBC dominated village where girls' literacy is not so much high. during the pilot study, researcher found that, majority of the girls become dropout or high absenteeism after a certain level. Many factors were responsible for that like illiteracy of Parents, child marriage, poor family background etc.

7. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING OF THE STUDY:

A total of 30 parents (18 Males and 12 Females) of those children whose girls are benefitted from NGO's education, were selected as sample for this study. Purposive sampling technique was used for selecting the sample.

8. DATA COLLECTION TOOL:

This research mainly based on Primary data and that is collected through focus group discussion with the Parents.

9. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

1. This study was confined only to Chandradih village.
2. Educational qualification, Monthly incomes and Occupation were mainly considered as Parental Background.

10. RESULT/ ANALYSIS:

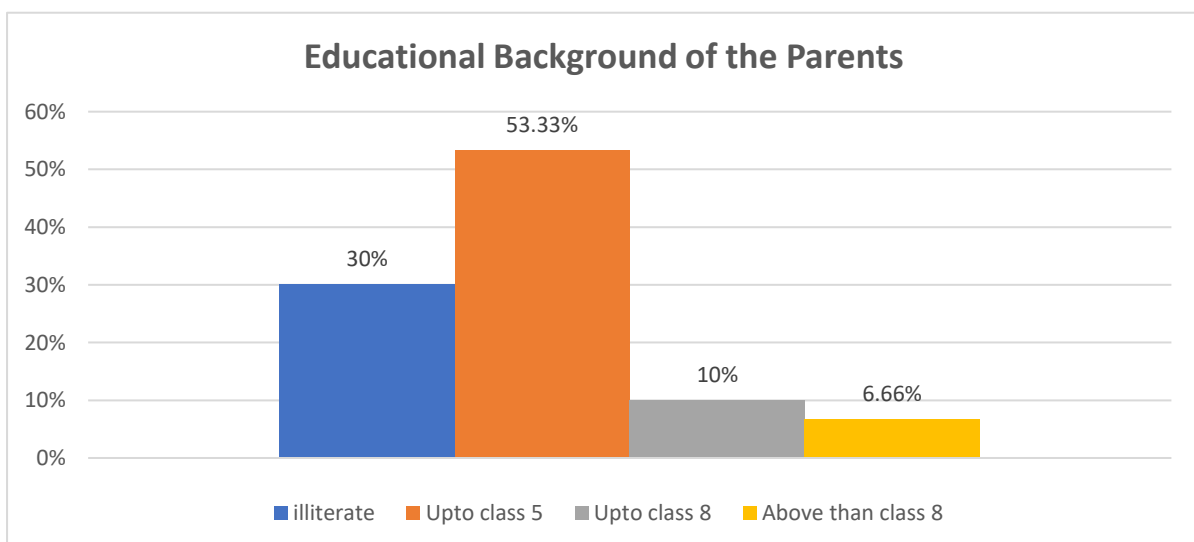
The focus group discussion was held in Manasa Mandir Premises of Namo Kulhi, Chandradih village, where CESR continuing their classes. In the beginning of the discussion, The Researcher asked three basic questions: Why NGO is needed in village? What types of services NGOs are providing? And lastly Are villagers facing any types of challenges if NGOs relocate their centre from village. The duration of this focus group discussion was 2 hours 15 minutes.

Objective-1:

Background of the respondents: Respondents:

Educational Background of the Parents:

Types-	Illiterate	Upto class 5	Upto class 8	Above class 8
Numbers-	9	16	3	2
Percentage-	30%	53.33%	10%	6.66%



From the above table it is found that, educational qualification of the Majority parents are up to class 5. Only 10% parents completed their elementary education and only 6.66% parents continuing their education after class 8. The main focus of this table is a significant number (30%) parents are illiterate.

So, from this table it is clear that, educational background of the parents is not so high. The majority of the parents do not complete their minimum education level which government provided freely and this is their constitutional right also to access the primary education compulsorily. Hence, we can say that majority of villagers who are benefitted from the NGOs education are mainly first-generation learners.

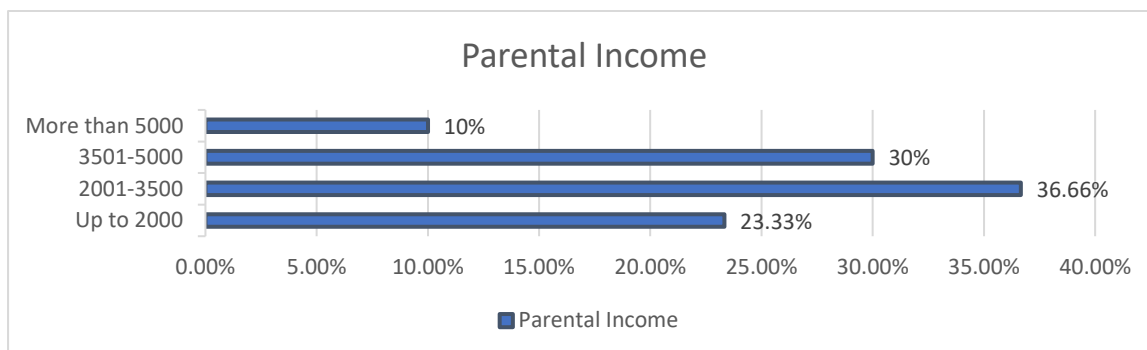
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Monthly Income of the Parents:

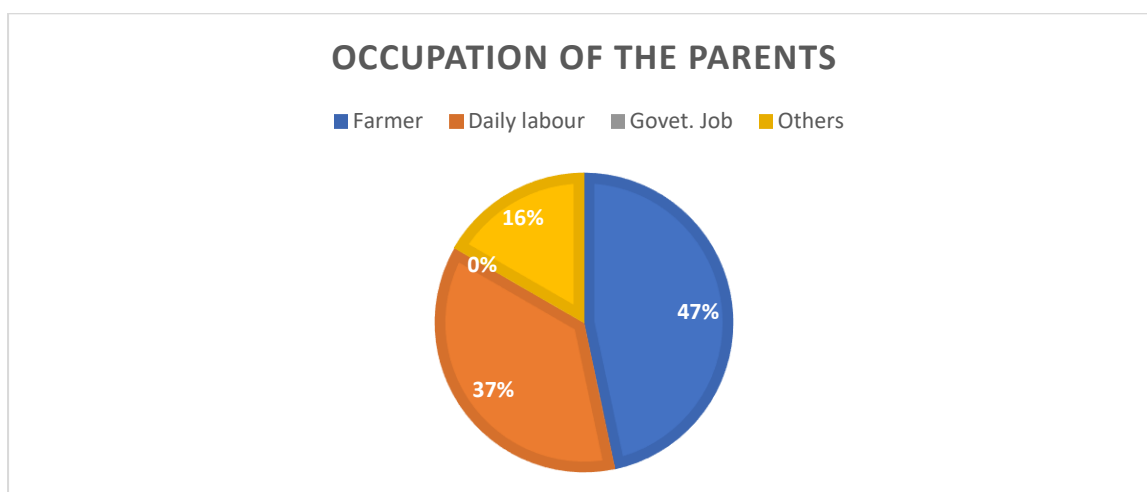
Income group	Upto 2000	2001- 3500	3501-5000	More than 5000
Number	7	11	9	3
Percentage	23.33%	36.66%	30%	10%



In the question related to monthly income, data reveal that the highest percentage (36.6%) of the participant's monthly income is up to 3,500. 30% parent's income is up to 5000 and 23.33% participant's monthly income is up to 2000. Only 10% parent's monthly income is more than 5000.

Occupation of the Parents:

Types	Farmer	Daily Labours	Government jobs	Others
Number	14	11	0	5
Percentage	46.66%	36.66%	0%	16.66%



From the following Occupational table, it can be said that, Majority of the parents are farmer (46.66%). As indicated in the monthly income table, majority parents belong to low-income

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group, a significant percentage parents are daily labour (36.66%). Apart of this 16.66% parents do menial types work like carpenter, electrician and work in private farm. No government job like teacher, official job was found as an occupation among the participants.

Objective-2: To know the Perception of the parents

The analysis of focus group discussions is presented as under:

Questions 1: Why NGO is needed in village?

There is one primary school in the village and one higher secondary school within t1 k.m radius of the village. They are not satisfied with the quality education which is provided by the Government because some of the parents claimed that teachers of government schools did not carefully understand the level of the children as many of their children are first generation learners. Parents put allegations that teachers remain absent or come late. These villagers mainly belong to the backward classes and these parents are from low-income groups. So, they cannot afford the private tuition for their girls for bridging what they know and what they expected to know. Some parents also added that, even their have the government high school within 1 k.m radius, but sometimes their girls are denied to go there because they have to cross a small river. As majority of the parents are illiterate or those even who are literate, have forgotten the lesson once what they had learned. So, they cannot help so much to their girls.

In this context, they think that CESR is beneficial for them as it is continuing their educational centre in their own villages, recruit local teachers and educate their children through culture cum context-based education by using local resources. When the researcher ask about the role of CESR for educating their girls, the villagers acknowledged it without any hesitation that, their children do not miss the centre for single day and their children felt motivated to go to the centre run by the NGOs. Parents also said that, besides the education, CESR also help to reenrol their girls in formal school and give necessary advice for any problem. In the educational centres run by NGOs girls do not face any type of safety and security problems because of their local and known teacher.

Question 2: What types of services NGO have providing?

Regarding of this question, parents said CESR providing all types of educational materials like pen, pencil, book etc. free of cost. Actually, CESR is engaged in helping to mainstreaming the girls by providing the quality education. Their girls visited science museum for gaining practical knowledge rather than bookish knowledge. NGO organised different types of programmes like celebrate different days, dramas, dances etc. which directly or indirectly indicate learning with joyfulness. The parents also said that particularly during the Covid 19 pandemic situation it was due to the role of NGOs the girls got the opportunity for continuing their education as Government schools remained shut for an uncertain time. The NGOs provided a toll-free number 1098 (Child Line) to every girls for prohibiting the child marriage or other girls problems.

Question 3: What are the problems you face if CESR stopped their Activities in this village?

When the researcher asked this question the parents directly said that the dropout rate is increased. Some parents said that they rely on government education, but because of economical constraints they are unable to send their girls regularly. During the formal school timing, they usually engage their daughters in domestic work. In a way, they said that they were dependent upon the services provided by NGOs specifically relating to the education and wellbeing of their girl children.

11. DISCUSSION:

When UNO emphasises the universal achievement of primary education, no one can deny to provide education irrespective of gender bias. India also put effort to implement it through various educational schemes, programmes etc. But it is still a challenge to enrol and retain all girls up to secondary level mostly in backward districts. Purulia is no exception from this perspective. In this research, the researcher explores the reasons behind the girls' dropout or high absenteeism and role of NGOs for minimising these problems. The result clearly indicated that, parents want to enrol their girls in the government schools but regular attendance is impossible for them as they engage their child in domestic work during formal school hours. Poverty is reflected as many parents belong to below poverty line; their monthly income is not so high, educational qualification of parents is low. Majority of parents are not satisfied with government education system. Hence, NGOs got to play a significant role for educating girl children in remote and backward rural pockets.

12. CONCLUSION:

We talk about women empowerment and new feminist activism on one hand. On the other hand, millions of girls in our country remain deprived from school education despite the Constitutional guarantee of it as their fundamental right. While world realise the importance of girl's education, both individuals and countries are going to be benefitted from girl education (*Gupta, 2014*). Our Indian government took so many initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, KGBV, NPEGEL scheme at central level and different states are also continuing different girl education programmes, scholarship, scheme etc. But we are far behind the 100% enrolment achievement target which our recent New Education Policy also bemoan. Different NGOs also help to increase the girl literacy through their different activities. No one can succeed alone. NGOs are working at ground level with low financial support. Govt. is unable to realise the context-based problems. NGOs are working in those areas where even government support cannot reach. NGOs can realise and understand the educational issues of local girls but they cannot successfully solve it because of dearth of resources. The situation of chandradih village shows that there are government schools with different facilities but girls students are not able to benefit from these. The parents claim that there is some gender disparity and teachers are also unable to understand the standard of their students as many students are of first-generation learners. So, there is an urgent need to bridge these types of gaps with the help of NGOs.

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