

Breakthrough Adolescent Empowerment Project, Gaya Baseline Assessment Report, November 2019

SUBMITTED TO:

Breakthrough India

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BT</i>	Breakthrough
<i>FLW</i>	Front Line Worker
<i>GP</i>	Gram Panchayat
<i>PRI</i>	Panchayati Raj Institution
<i>FPC</i>	Finite Population Correction
<i>SC</i>	Scheduled Caste
<i>OBC</i>	Other Backward Caste
<i>HH</i>	Household
<i>SMC</i>	School Management Committee
<i>FGD</i>	Focus Group Discussion
<i>KII</i>	Key Informant Interviews
<i>AWC</i>	Anganwadi Center

Executive summary

Introduction

Adolescents aged 10–19 years constitute about one-fourth of India's population (Census 2011). This is a critical developmental stage when boys and girls undergo several physiological and psychological changes. While there has been an increasing recognition of adolescence as a unique developmental stage with its specific set of challenges and problems, there is still a need to look at these barriers within the socio-economic and cultural environment they exist. In view of this context, Breakthrough is planning to work with over 12000 adolescents across 200 schools spread over three to four blocks of Gaya District, Bihar. The objective of the program is to empower and prepare adolescents in order to build their agency, self-worth, negotiation skills and enable them navigate through various developmental and social tasks and challenges. The programme lays special emphasis on shaping egalitarian gender attitudes and beliefs. The programme also plans to engage with parents and community and initiate intergenerational dialogues to ensure a conducive and supportive environment for its work with adolescents.

Objectives of the programme are especially relevant with respect to its geographical setting. With low female literacy rate at about 56%, Gaya has one of the highest percentage of child marriage in the state of Bihar. These alarming gender indicators combined with a history of caste conflicts in the district, rigid caste norms and prevalence of discrimination, further establishes the relevance of the program within its geographical context.

It is in this background that the NR Management Consultants has been mandated with conducting a baseline study within the blocks selected for the programme in the district of Gaya in order to establish values of the project indicators (frame of reference) within the intervention areas. This frame of reference shall allow objective monitoring of the progress of the programme at various stages and support in the overall planning process

Methodology

A mixed method approach was followed to capture data on the relevant outcomes. The **quantitative sample** size 'n' has been calculated by using the 'differences method' formula (Cochran's 1977), for a finite population and after adding a buffer of 10% the total sample proposed was 420 adolescents. The sample size of 420 adolescents were proportionately distributed on the basis of schools selected in the 3 blocks where the programme is to be implemented. Based on discussion with the program team a sample distribution of 52:48 representation of younger to older adolescents was arrived at. Consequently, 11 schools were selected where younger adolescents were interviewed and 10 schools were selected where older adolescent were interviewed. The total of 20 student (10 girl + 10 boys) were selected randomly within that age group from each school. Number of schools within the three blocks were distributed across the sample size of 21 proportionate to their representation in the total list of 204 schools. A total of 9, 8 and 4 schools were covered in block of Tekari, Belaganj and Paraiya respectively.

In the context of **qualitative component** a total of 6 FGDs with younger adolescents, 6 FGDs with parents/community members, 25 KIIs with older adolescents and 21 KIIs with teachers were conducted.

Socio-Economic Profile:

The **caste distribution** of the adolescents reflects that the OBC is the predominant caste category (42%) across the three blocks. The second major caste group is SC (36%) and other castes (general category) adolescents constitute 22% of the total adolescents interviewed. In the context of **economic profile**, majority of the households across the three blocks were found to belong to below poverty line category including the poorest of the households covered within the Antyodaya category. Additionally, it also emerged in the quantitative study that of the total SC category adolescents interviewed, around 63% belonged to the below poverty line category. With reference to **access to basic services**, 42% of the adolescents reported having Pucca houses while 28% reported kutchra house. A significant 45% reported defecating in the open. While about 40% household reported using LPG as their primary source of cooking fuel, another 40% reported using dung cakes for cooking purposes.

Findings

Education: This section highlights the **overall attitudes of key stakeholders towards education and status of relevant educational institutions**. It was found that there is positive attitude among adolescent (both boys and girls) towards boys higher education as compared with the girls higher education. In the case of response to 'up to which class should a girl study?', 61% of older adolescent girls and 50% of older adolescent boys stated that girls should study up to any class they want. At the same time the response to 'up to which class should a boy study', greater proportion of all groups responded in affirmative to 'upto any class he wants to study'. Interestingly, it may be highlighted that while higher proportion of respondents across all age and gender categories gave affirmative response to the options of girls/boys should study up to any class they want or complete higher studies, not many were aware of what higher studies really entailed. In cases of education of both boys and girls, dominant castes display a more positive attitude when compared to socially vulnerable classes. Due to the economic vulnerability of certain socially backward groups, while girls are married off at an early age (under 18 years) in order to discharge an important cultural and financial responsibility, older adolescent boys are expected to contribute to the overall family income. This consequently leads to both boys and girls dropping out of the education cycle early.

Only 42% adolescent boys stated livelihood as a reason for girls to pursue education while 78% adolescent boys thinks boys should study to get employed. Overall, attitudes of boys towards girls pursuing employment opportunities is not encouraging. 'Respect' and 'able to teach their children later in life' emerged as important reasons for girls to pursue education as cited by respondents. In fact, to a limited extent marriage itself has become a reason for educating girls up till a certain level to ensure that she can read, write, handle a mobile phone to make calls and not beyond it.

In the case of acceptable reasons for girls to discontinue their education, unaffordability was the highest reported rationale other major reason being safety. In the case of boys, reasons cited had mainly to do with financial constraint. Overall, it may be inferred that there are relatively more acceptable reasons present in the environment for girls to discontinue their education as compared to boys.

In the context of parents, perceived risk to safety, community pressure to get the girl married before the 'socially prescribed age threshold' are some of the rationale provided by the parents

for discontinue girl's education. There is a fear that the family may not be able to find a suitable groom for the girl within the caste group if she is 'too educated' or more educated than the approximated average education levels of men/boys within the community. Therefore, within each caste groups there may be found a socially accepted optimum level of education for girls to ensure their marriage suitability. Beyond this level, the education of girls is often discontinued.

There is a significant difference between the average **absenteeism** in the last two months of the younger adolescents and the older adolescents. Also this difference is higher for older girl adolescents (average 7.9 days in last two months) vis-à-vis older boy adolescents (average 7.1 days in last two months). While in the case of older adolescent girls, domestic responsibilities were found to be a major reason, in the case of older adolescent boys it was chiefly to do with work related activities such as working on the farm or helping out in the family shop/business.

Around 45% of total girls interviewed expressed that coming to school 'will help them continue their education'. This proportion is significantly lower for boys at 16%. This is because regularly coming to school will positively impact the academic performance of girls which in turn will increase their chances of higher education and delaying marriage. Families evaluate basis the academic performance of girls, whether it is worth investing time and money in her education. On the other hand, boys in most cases are not subjected to these conditions. More often than not families would invest in their education as much as they consider within their financial means. Rationale provided by the community members revolve around 'patrilocal'¹ norms built around marriage and traditional euphemism of girls called as 'Paraya Dhan' (wealth of her in-laws) to justify the discrimination.

In the context of status of **institutional platforms**, it was found that while in most of the schools SMCs are present on paper, they are hardly functional. Some teachers reported that members of the SMC meet only to discuss the allocation of funds received by the school. Almost, none of the schools had a Student Council. While teachers from some schools did report meeting parents, such meetings are largely ad-hoc and not institutionalized.

Discrimination: The gender-based discrimination is mainly assessed on the issues of marriage, mobility, division of work and inter-gender communication. In the case of **marriage**, endogamy is strictly practiced in the intervention region. The **age of marriage** depends upon the dominance or vulnerability of the caste group, the number of siblings and the educational level of the adolescent girl. Education is also seen as a productive stopgap activity that girls pursue to prepare for their roles as primary care takers of their children after marriage. In the quantitative study, the third most important reason for educating girls after employment and enhancement of knowledge was to prepare them for their future role as mothers so that they are able to teach their children later in life. Around 21% of boys and 42% of the girls felt that adolescent girls should study so that they can teach their children in future. The **decision of marriage** is taken by the elder members of the family and adolescents especially girls have little say in it. Around 70% of the adolescents agree with the statement that 'A girl cannot say when she wants to get married because elders know best'. A key reason for early marriages is the perceived threat to safety and honor of the girls and family.

¹ Patrilocal: relating to a pattern of marriage in which the couple settles in the husband's home or community

The primary responsibility of **HH chores** lies with the adolescent girls which is substantiated by the quantitative findings where around 76% of the total girls reported that they do household chores daily as compared to 42% of the boys. In fact, almost 43% of the respondents in the quantitative study agreed with the statement that “A boy does not need to help in domestic chores like cleaning, washing utensils, cooking etc. because it is essentially girl’s job/duty”. With respect to leisure time as well, qualitative interactions reveal that **majority of the boys feel that girls do not need as much free time as boys**. Unequal division of household chores in accordance with the socially assigned gender roles is only one of the ways gender based discrimination manifests itself at the household level.

Mobility of adolescent girls comes with several riders and limitations. Almost 46% of the adolescents feel that girls should not be allowed to go outside alone or with peers because it is considered inappropriate in our community. Except for few places (School, friends’ house, Anganwadi Center) girls are almost always accompanied by a family member. In comparison, boys reported having visited almost all the places alone or with friends. Parents cite risk to honor and safety of girls as a major reason for restricting their mobility. At the same time, it may be highlighted that the fear of eve teasing and harassment is not unfounded in the area.

Status of **inter-gender communication (IGC)** is dismal in the intervention area. The teachers are themselves perpetuating the prejudices with respect to IGC in some schools. Among the 25 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with older adolescents, 77% of the adolescents reported that boys and girls sit separately in their classes. Around 69% adolescents expressed that girls are beaten if they are found talking to boys. The restrictions are imposed on IGC to guard the reputation of the girl and the family in the society. Communities with strict caste dynamics and rigidly defined gender roles leave little scope and opportunity for boys and girls (outside family) to interact with each other.

The **discrimination on the basis of caste, class or religion** is evident especially in the case of marriage and sharing of meal. During the study, it was found that inter caste dining is a big issue not only in community but also in schools. Around 45% adolescents feel that a lower caste boy should not marry an upper caste girl and 60% adolescents are not in favor of inter religion marriage. It was evident from qualitative discussions that traditional caste hierarchies are strictly followed and people receive differential treatment based on their group’s standing in the caste order. Interestingly, adolescents reported having friends from different caste groups and playing with them. But even amongst friends, they reported maintaining caste and religious norms.

Violence: The section on violence has been studied from two perspective – violence witnessed and violence experienced. In the context of **witnessing violence**, incidents of threatening and inappropriate comments were most widely reported. In 50% of the cases the victim is of weak caste or of weak economic background. Not obeying elders has emerged as one of top reasons for various forms of violence. During the qualitative interactions with the teachers and parents, it was revealed that such reasons for violence are not considered as violence and are used as a corrective tool for inculcating discipline in children. Some of the teachers of the schools visited during the baseline study were of the opinion that one of the reasons for the deterioration of the education quality is because of the restriction on teachers regarding the use of force (beating) in the class. Another important highlight is that adolescents were clear that incidents such as stalking, inappropriate comments take place merely because of gender

In the case of **violence experienced**, the respondents were found to be hesitant to raise their voice against the violence inflicted against them. Threatening and inappropriate comments were reported the most followed by being insulted and physical violence. Adolescent girls reported that they faced physical violence in the house mostly by the hands of their mother, sister and brother. Incidents of stalking increase with age while inappropriate comments seem to decline. From the total adolescent who experienced violence, 23% of the adolescents report that mother and brother were the perpetrators of physical violence such as slapping, twisting hand, pulling hair, being punched with the fist etc. In the specific context of gender based harassment, adolescents were also asked directly about their opinions regarding the possible reason for women/girls being harassed. Majority adolescents stated that gender is reason enough for the harassment to take place. Interestingly, higher proportion of boys (44%) reported that the way woman/girl is dressed is also a reason for an incident to take place. On the other hand only 26% girls supported this reasoning. While there is clarity with respect to reasons for such incidents, discussions with the community reveal that onus to 'avoid' such incidents lies with the girl by avoiding situations where she may face harassment.

Recommended Focus Areas: Overall, it may be summed up that gender based discrimination in various forms is widespread in the area. It is closely linked with rigid caste norms that perpetuate gender as well as other forms of discrimination. Violence in the community as well is tinged with gender and caste, class dynamics. In view of these findings, following recommendations may be considered by the programme team : (1) In view of the complex caste norms that have emerged in the study, it is recommended that the **expected outcomes in the first year related to caste based discrimination and violence may be moderated** to account for the unique realities of the project area. Moreover, introducing such sensitive topics within the first year may prove to be a challenge. Therefore, **expected outcomes related to caste based discrimination and violence and other forms of violence may be staggered over the course of the project period.** (2) Pervasive and hardened caste and gender related norms may prove to be a barrier especially during classroom sessions which encourage adolescent boys and girls from different caste groups to sit together and interact. Therefore, it is recommended that in order to build trust in the first year a **caste and gender agnostic, utilitarian topic such as career counselling may be used to break the ice with target adolescents.** Parents of the adolescents may also be involved in these sessions to ensure their buy-in from the onset. (3) Factors such as some of the schools sampled for the baseline existing only on paper, seasonal absenteeism and high absenteeism in senior classes (above Class Ninth) where students missed school to attend coaching need to be kept in view while planning for program activities and classroom sessions as they may have an impact on availability of adolescents and eventual achievement of program indicators and outcomes. (4) Programmes addressing societal norms designed for short to medium term often find it challenging to reach out to the community as a whole effectively given the limited time period. Therefore, it is recommended that the current programme may **focus its mobilization activities on targeted stakeholders conducted through schools based institutional platforms. Consistent and frequent engagement with same set of beneficiaries may prove to be more effective** as compared to perhaps occasional community mobilization events. However, in order to test this approach, it is recommended that it is piloted within a limited programme area and maybe expanded only post assessment of its outcomes. (5) In order to ensure effective monitoring of programme activities as well as assessment of its impact, it is **crucial to maintain participation records for each adolescents enrolled.** Detailed and ideally digitized records of registered students with respect to the level of their exposure to

the programme may help form effective correlations between program intensity and outcome and also bring more nuance and precision while designing program activities. **(6)** It was found that corporal punishment in schools had general approval of teachers as well as parents. At the same time, there were a handful of teachers who did not support the practice. Therefore, it is recommended that **teachers that do not support the practice are highlighted and given platform to share their views on the subject with other teachers.** This approach to highlight teachers with ideas that are congruent with program objectives may be adopted in the context of other issues such as inter-gender communication, caste and gender norms as well.

Distinct Feature of the Study Area: Caste and Gender

It may be relevant to highlight some of the factors observed during the study that distinguish the programme area from other locations where similar programmes are being implemented by Breakthrough. It was noted that caste and caste based norms are much more normalized and pervasive when compared with for instance, project areas in UP. The normalization of caste based segregation is to the extent that adolescents freely admitted to practices such as separate wells for weaker caste groups as well as separate places of worship. Gaya has a long history of caste based violence and it is visible even at the level of adolescents in the form of seething resentment against historically dominant castes. In fact, caste was found to be an underlying factor that impacts multiple themes such as education, marriage, economic status of the household etc. Due to this, it may prove to be especially challenging to loosen norms around marriage (increasing age of marriage in order for the girl to continue education), inter gender communication and mobility as these factors are also looked at from the prism of caste and maintaining caste structures which are built upon the intangible basic units of 'honor of the family'. Honor of the family is majorly a function of the 'conduct' of the daughter. Since it's chiefly through marriage that caste structures are maintained, marriage is a key milestone within almost all families. It is crucial to ensure that the daughter is passed on from her house to her in-laws without any question on her 'character' which equates to 'family honor'. Protecting girl's honor thus becomes an important task for families leading to restrictions on her mobility which impacts her ability to continue education or go out to make a living. In fact, there were almost negligible cases found of women working (beyond ASHA, AWW and Teacher) within the study area. The complex interplay of rigid caste norms and gender and extent of its impact on education, mobility and overall agency of girls is what distinguishes the present study area from other places where similar programmes are being implemented.

1. Introduction

Adolescents aged 10–19 years constitute about one-fourth of India's population (Census 2011). This is a critical developmental stage when boys and girls undergo several physiological and psychological changes. Adolescence in fact stands at the precipice of adulthood marked with several biological as well as social life events that set the stage for adult lives. This transitional phase therefore impacts almost all aspects of the lives of adolescents such as education, reproduction, health, nutrition etc. This period is also full of challenges and vulnerabilities. In the context of India, poor nutrition, lack of quality educational opportunities, risks of physical and sexual abuse, economic exploitation, early marriage, lack of autonomy with respect to key decisions in their lives, gender inequities are some of the risks and barriers faced by adolescent boys and girls.

While there has been an increasing recognition of adolescence as a unique developmental stage with its specific set of challenges and problems, there is still a need to look at these barriers within the socio-economic and cultural environment they exist.

In view of this context, Breakthrough is planning to work with over 12000 adolescents across 200 schools spread over three to four blocks of Gaya District, Bihar. The objective of the program is to empower and prepare adolescents in order to build their agency, self-worth, negotiation skills and enable them navigate through various developmental and social tasks and challenges. The programme lays special emphasis on shaping egalitarian gender attitudes and beliefs and plans to work with both younger (11-14 years) and older adolescents (15-18 years). Specific to gender, it aims to address issues of gender based discrimination in the context of education, mobility, safety of women and girls. Besides gender, the programme also intends to touch upon other forms of discrimination (caste, class and religion) and their recognition and identification. The programme also plans to engage with parents and community and initiate intergenerational dialogues to ensure a conducive and supportive environment for its work with adolescents.

Overall approach entails classroom sessions, assembly sessions, awareness fairs, module specific for older adolescents, community mobilization (parents, teachers, PRIs), strengthening school based platforms such as School Management Committees (SMCs) and advocacy.

It may be highlighted that the objectives of the programme are especially relevant with respect to its geographical setting as well. With low female literacy rate at about 56%, Gaya has one of the highest percentage of child marriage in the state of Bihar. While Bihar itself has a high child marriage percentage at 39.1% (women within 20-24 years married before 18 years); Gaya's figures are even higher at close to 48%. In other words, almost half of girls within 20-24 years are married before 18 years². These alarming gender indicators combined with a history of a caste conflicts in the district, rigid caste norms and prevalence of discrimination, further establishes the relevance of the program within its geographical context.

It is in this background that the NR Management Consultants has been mandated with conducting a baseline study within the blocks selected for the programme in the district of Gaya. The objective of the study is to establish values of the project indicators (frame of reference) within the intervention areas. This frame of reference shall allow objective monitoring of the progress of the programme at various stages and support in the overall planning process

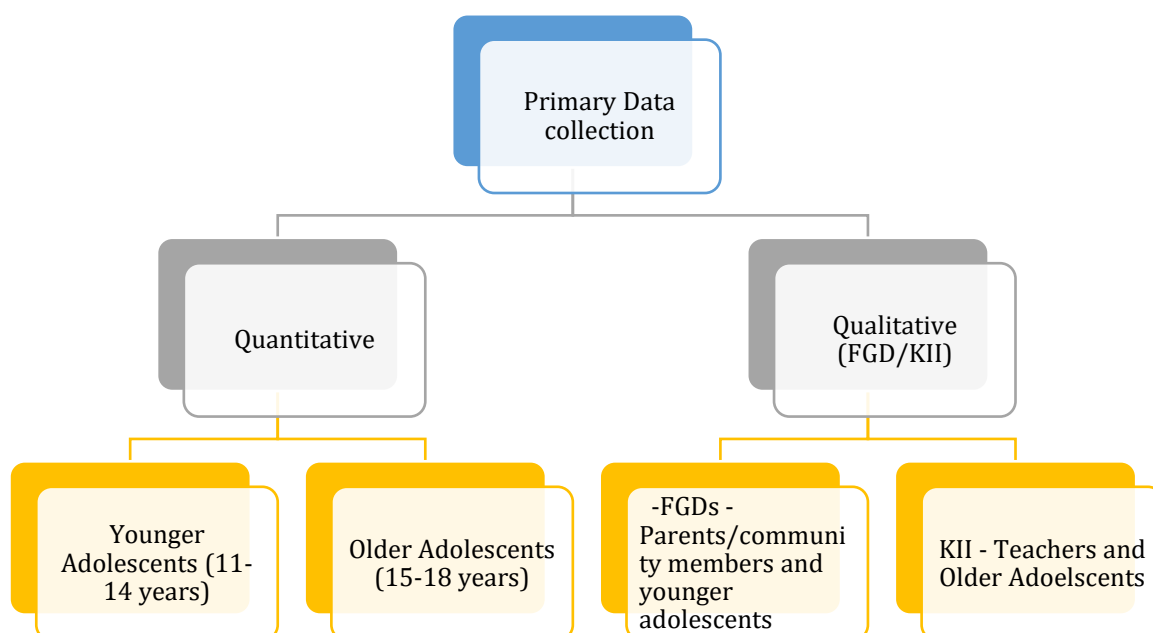
² National Family Health Survey-4

2. Methodology

The baseline study follows an integrated framework with adolescent, teacher and parents as the primary three lenses through which the key indicators were assessed. The frame of reference, established by the baseline, will allow the project to measure the change in status of indicators with respect to education and relevant institutions, discrimination and violence.

A mixed method approach was followed to capture data on the relevant outcomes. While the quantitative component of data collection included structured interviews with the younger adolescent (11-14 years) and older adolescents (15-18 years); the qualitative component of data collection included Focused Group discussion (FGDs) with younger adolescent and parents/community members and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with Teachers and older adolescents. A summary of the design of the study is provided in the schematic below.

Figure 1: Program Design Snapshot



This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section talks about the quantitative component of the study which primarily discuss about the estimation of the sample size. The second section highlights the qualitative component which briefly discusses the qualitative tools and instruments used for the baseline study. The third sections elaborately explains the distribution of the sample size among the schools of the three blocks of Gaya district in Bihar. Finally, the fourth section talks about the method adopted for the selection of sample schools for the Baseline study.

3.1 Quantitative Sample and Sample Distribution

The sample size ' n ' has been calculated by using the 'differences method' formula (Cochran's 1977), as provided below:

$$n = \frac{(z^2)pq}{d^2}$$

Where:

p = estimated proportion of the population, set at 50% for maximum variance;

q = 1 – p;

z = standard score corresponding to the confidence interval set at 1.96;

d = margin of error, set at 5%

Thus, the estimated sample size for the infinite population is 384 units. When adjusted with finite population correction (FPC) factor ($FPC = \frac{N}{N+n}$) where, (N=Population Size and n=Sample Size), the sample size gets reduced slightly. This is due to the fact that a very large population provides proportionally more information than that of a smaller population.

Therefore, for the adolescent empowerment programme which is assumed to reach 12,000 students, the estimated sample size by the Cochran's formula is **372** students. After adding a buffer of 10% and adjusting for equal representation of gender, the total sample size proposed was 420 adolescents.

The sample size of 420 adolescents calculated by using the 'differences method' formula (Cochran's 1977) were proportionately distributed on the basis of schools selected in the 3 blocks where the programme is to be implemented.

Quantitative Sample Distribution: Based on discussion with the program team a sample distribution of 52:48 representation of younger to older adolescents was arrived at. This is the approximate proportion that the program is expected to work with within the two age groups. Consequently, 11 schools were selected where younger adolescents were interviewed and 10 schools were selected where older adolescent were interviewed. The total of 20 student (10 girl + 10 boys) were selected randomly within that age group from each school.

Number of schools within the three blocks were distributed across the sample size of 21 proportionate to their representation in the total list of 204 schools. Care was also taken to ensure that wherever possible there is adequate representation of schools basis their location (urban-rural) and their type (government, government aided and private) in order to capture any variation. It may be noted that some of the schools originally sampled had to be replaced during the field owing to issues such as schools existing only on paper, permission to conduct the study not granted by the school administration etc. To the extent possible it was ensured that replacements of such schools were of similar type. Following table provides number of schools covered within each of the block

Table 1: Number of schools covered within each block

Blocks	Intervention Schools	Number of Sampled Schools
Tekari	90	9
Belaganj	76	8
Paraiya	38	4

Blocks	Intervention Schools	Number of Sampled Schools
Total	204	21

List of schools covered within the study have been provided in the Annexure.

Additionally, as it would have been operationally difficult to list out children age wise in schools for selection. Therefore, for simplification, it was assumed that 6th, 7th and 8th class students would come under the category of younger adolescents (11-14 years) and 9th to 12th class students would cover the category of older adolescents (15-18 years).

3.2 Qualitative Sample

The qualitative component of the study included Focused Group discussion (FGDs) with younger adolescents and parents/community members and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with Teachers and older adolescents. A total of 6 FGDs with younger adolescents, 6 FGDs with parents/community members, 25 KIIs with older adolescents and 21 KIIs with teachers were conducted. Type of qualitative interactions conducted per school have been provided in Annexure.

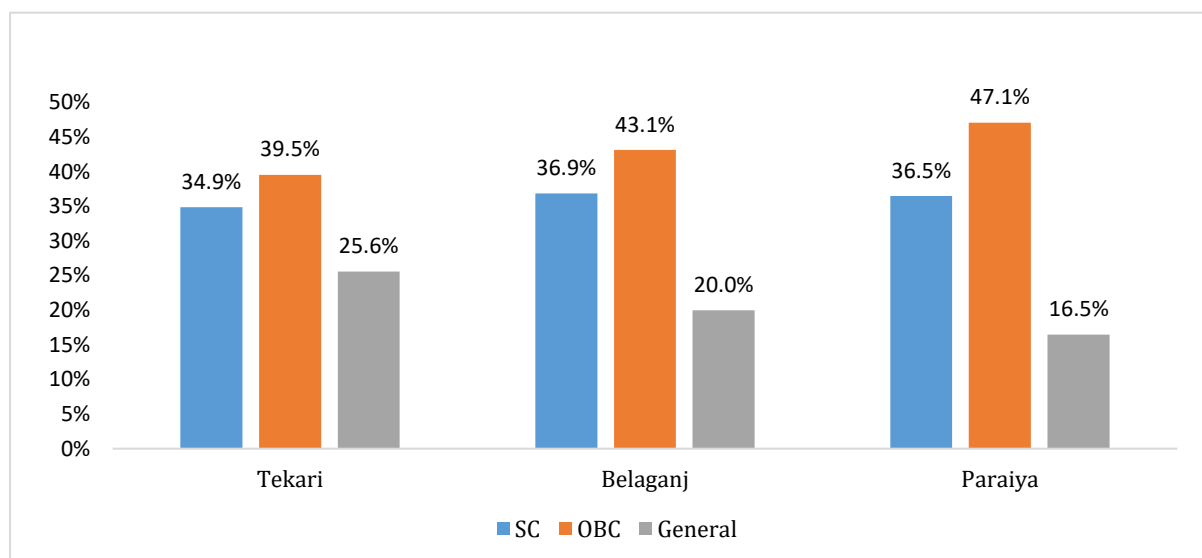
3. Socio-economic Profile

This section provides an overview of the basic social and economic profile of the households of adolescents covered within the study. The objective is to understand the overall implementation environment of the project. Various characteristics include the religion and caste profile along with an indication towards the overall economic background of the adolescents through data on category of ration card.

3.1 Social Profile

About 95% of the adolescents are Hindus and the remaining 5% are Muslims in the selected schools of the three blocks. The caste distribution of the adolescents reflects that the OBC castes are the predominant caste category (42%) across all the selected schools in the three blocks. The second major caste group is SC (36%) and finally the other castes (general category) adolescents constitute 22% of the total adolescents interviewed. The block wise distribution of caste category is given below (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Caste wise distribution



With respect to the SC population, study sample is largely representational of the block level population of the category as per Census 2011³; ST population within the study as well as within the three blocks being negligible. At the same time, it may be difficult to comment on whether OBC and General category are similarly represented at the block level as Census 2011 only provides composition for SC and ST and not the breakup for OBC and General.

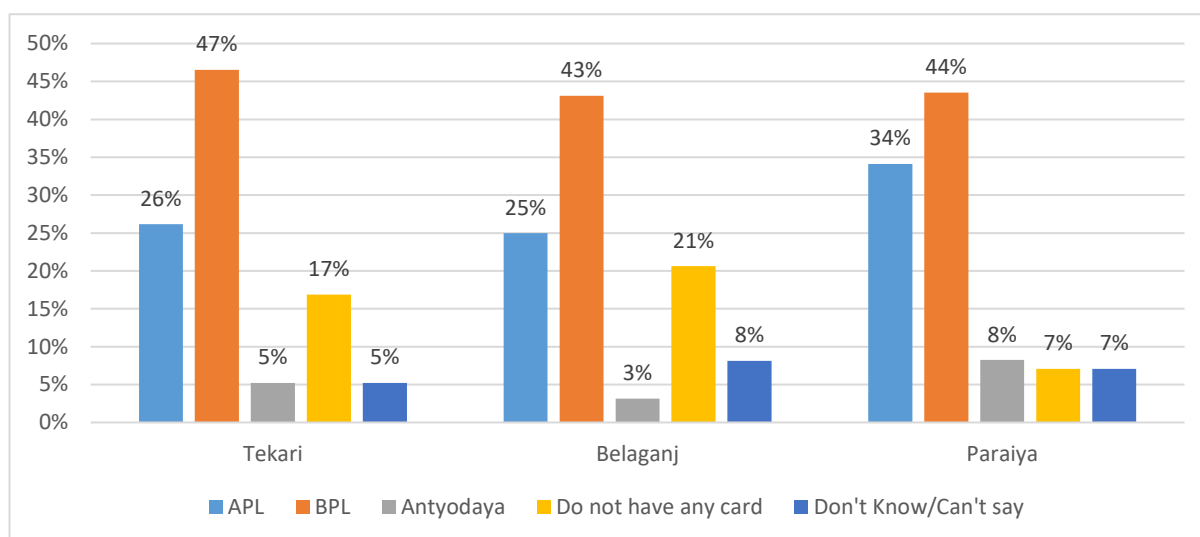
3.2 Economic Profile

The economic status of the households of the adolescents has been presented by capturing information on the category of household ration card owned by the household.

³ Census 2011: Tikari – (SC) 26%; Belaganj – (SC) 26%; Paraiya – (SC) 34%

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Figure 3: Ration Card

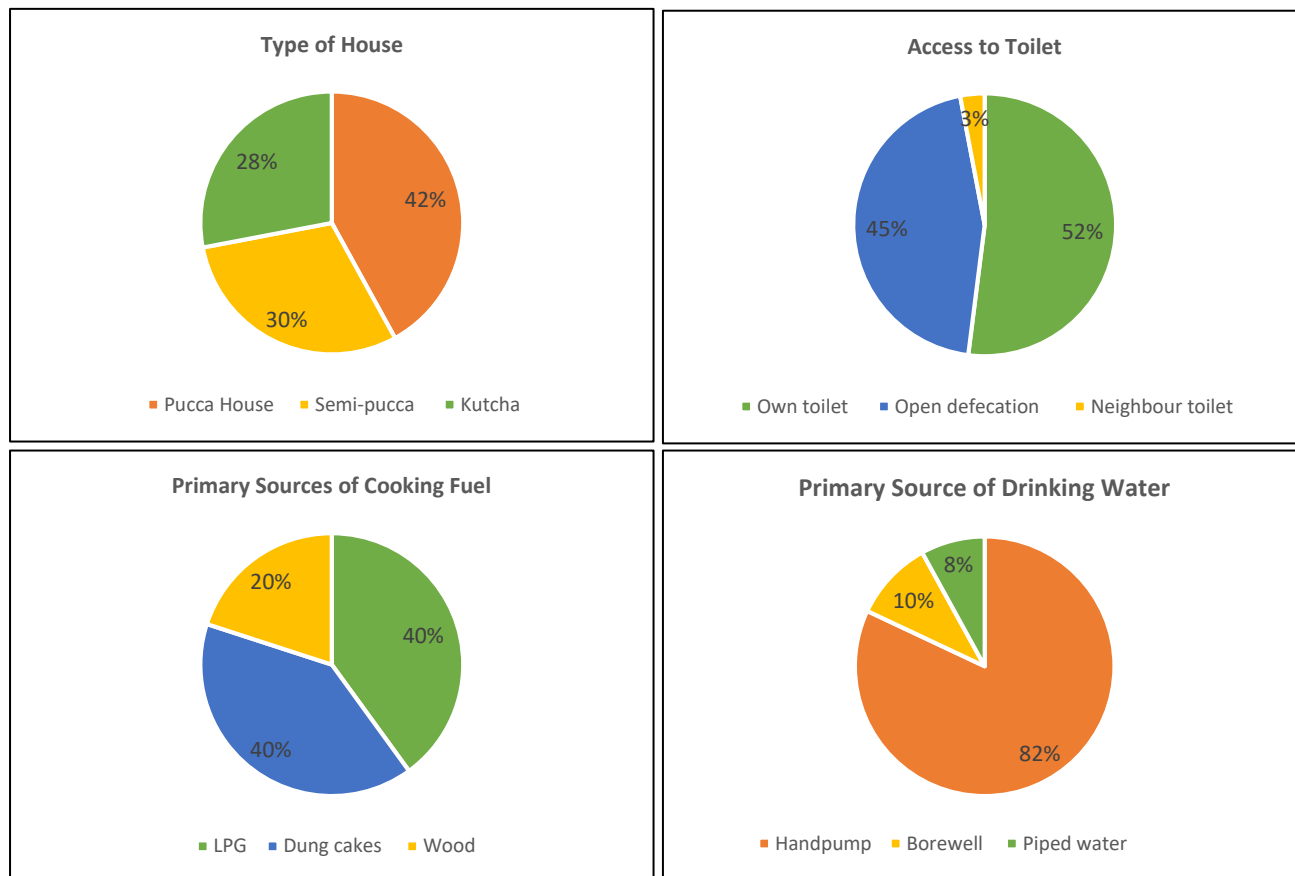


Ration Card ownership along the three blocks has been provided in the figure above. As is evident, majority of the households across the three blocks belong to below poverty line category including the poorest of the households covered within the Antyodaya category. Additionally, it also emerged in the quantitative study that of the total SC category adolescents interviewed, around 63% belonged to the below poverty line category. The qualitative findings also support the fact that the SC category students are amongst the economically most backward. As evident from the figure above, there were also a small percentage of students across the three blocks who were not aware of the type of ration card owned by their household.

3.3 Infrastructure Profile/Asset Ownership

In the context of infrastructure profile, the following figure provides a snapshot of the status of households with respect to type of households and access to basic services such as drinking

Figure 4: Infrastructure Profile



water, cooking fuel and toilet services. As is evident from Figure 4, 42% of the adolescents have Pucca houses while 28% reported kutchha house. A significant 45% reported defecating in the open. While about 40% household reported using LPG as their primary source of cooking fuel, another 40% reported using dung cakes for cooking purposes. For majority of the households (82%) hand pump emerged as a primary source of drinking water.

From the above household characteristics, it may be inferred that a significant proportion of the adolescents come from economically and socially vulnerable households. Considering the program objectives focusing on aspects related to prevailing attitudes and social norms, social and economic vulnerability of the target beneficiaries takes special significance.

4. Findings

The section on socio-economic profile provided a snapshot of the extent of the overall economic and social vulnerability of the selected adolescents. The present section presents the findings of the baseline study. The section has been framed on the basis of the objectives and focus areas of the program and follows the given structure:

Figure 5: Structure of the section on findings



4.1 Education

This section highlights the overall attitudes of key stakeholders towards education and status of relevant educational institutions. It focuses on current norms and practices that directly and indirectly impact education of adolescent girls and boys, prevailing attitudes of adolescents themselves, parents and teachers and presence of varied forms of discrimination within the context of education along gender and community lines. The study has also attempted to assess the existence and functionality of key platforms such as School Management Committees, Student Council, and Parents Teachers Association which are critical institutions to ensure quality of education and for stakeholders to raise pertinent issues. These platforms are also vital as they have the potential to provide safe space for students to express and raise their voices on matters germane to them.

4.1.1 Prevailing Attitudes and Norms

In order to build a nuanced understanding of the prevailing attitudes of adolescents and other stakeholder towards importance of education, respondents were asked their views on the following indicators

- Class up to which a boy and a girl should study
- Reasons for a girl and a boy to educate themselves/Acceptable reasons for a girl and a boy to discontinue their education
- Absenteeism: Reasons for missing classes

Class up to which a boy and a girl should study: The following figures present the responses of the adolescents disaggregated along gender and age lines:

Breakthrough Adolescent Empowerment Project, Gaya Bihar: Baseline Study

Figure 6: Age group wise attitude of boys and girls towards girl's education

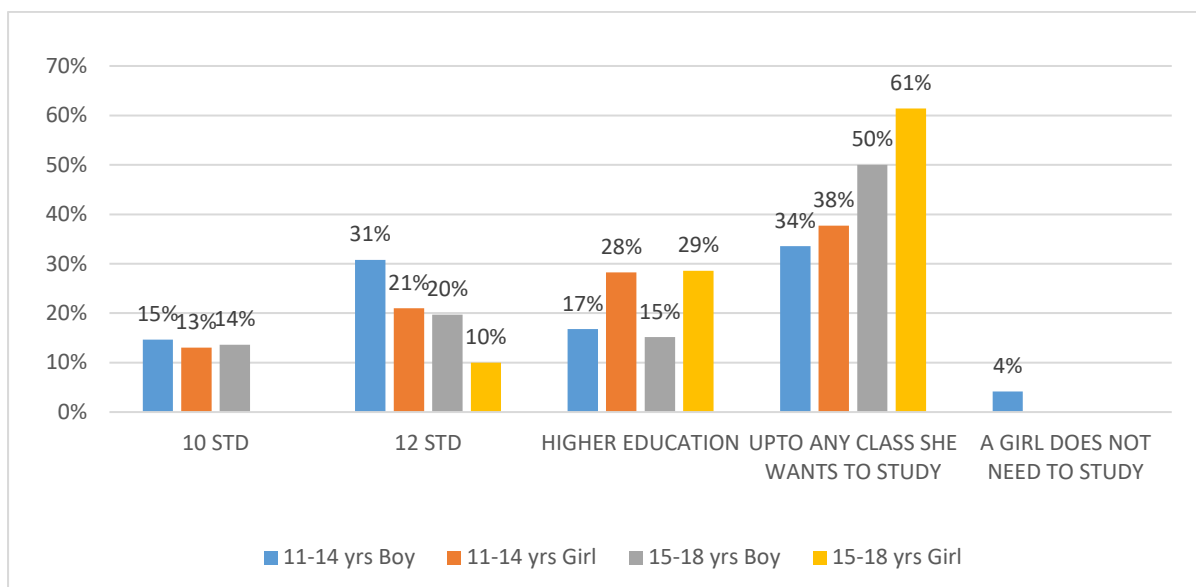
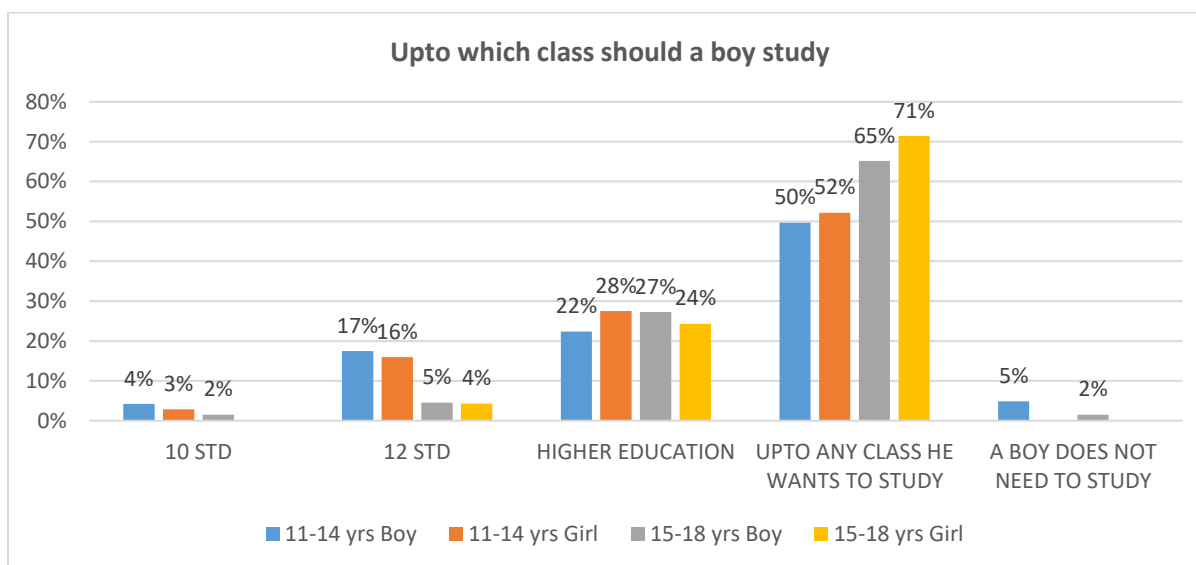


Figure 7: Age group wise attitude of boys and girls towards boy's education



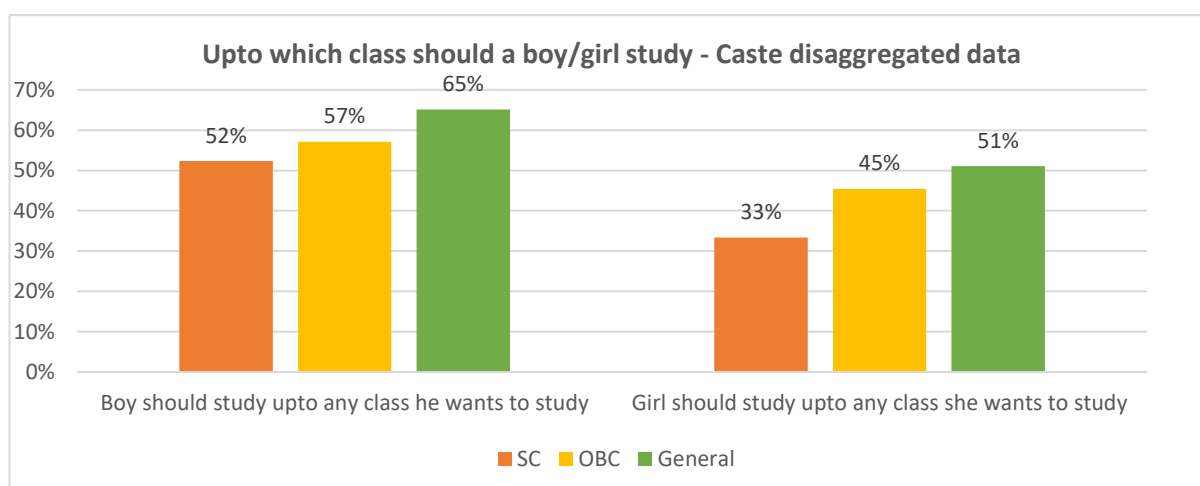
As is evident from the figures, there is a clear difference when responses of adolescent boys and girls are compared across both the age categories. In the case of response to 'up to which class should a girl study?', 61% of older adolescent girls and 50% of older adolescent boys stated that girls should study up to any class they want. If the responses to the option of 'higher education' is also looked at, it is seen that as compared to 15% of older adolescent boys, 29% older adolescent girls responded affirmative to it. Similarly in the case of younger adolescents, response of girls to option 'upto any class a girl wants to study' and 'completing higher education' is greater than the responses of younger adolescent boys. At the same time the response to 'up to which class should a boy study', greater proportion of all groups (older boys and girls, younger boys and girls) responded in affirmative to 'upto any class he wants to study'. The quantitative findings here suggest within both sets of adolescents (older and younger) higher proportion of attitudes in the case of girls' education leans towards educating them up to the level they want to study; this proportion is considerably higher with respect to education of boys. **It may be inferred that**

attitudes of both boys and girls, younger and older, towards boys finishing higher education or studying as much as they want is much more positive as compared to girls finishing higher education or studying as much as they want. At the same time, positive attitudes of girls (older and younger) towards the query of 'girls studying up to any class they want' is higher when compared to boys within their respective age categories. In other words, when it comes to the concept of girls educating themselves as much as they want (completing higher education) girls display a more positive attitude towards it as compared to boys

Interestingly, it may be highlighted that while higher proportion of respondents across all age and gender categories gave affirmative response to the options of girls/boys should study up to any class they want or complete higher studies; on further investigation it emerged that not many were aware of what higher studies really entailed. On detailed probing in qualitative discussions, adolescents especially in the younger age bracket often stated 12th standard as higher education. It may be said that while there is an overall positive attitude of adolescents towards education, its strength may be weak or uncertain in view of their lack of awareness with respect to what higher studies realistically mean.

Another factor that emerged through the quantitative study was the difference in the responses to the query across the three major caste categories.

Figure 8: Up to which class should a boy/girl study - Caste disaggregated data



As is evident from the figure above, in cases of education of both boys and girls, dominant castes display a more positive attitude when compared to socially vulnerable classes. These findings also appeared during the qualitative discussions where teachers highlighted that owing to the economic vulnerability of certain socially backward groups, while girls are married off at an early age (under 18 years) in order to discharge an important cultural and financial responsibility, older adolescent boys are expected to contribute to the overall family income. This consequently leads to both boys and girls dropping out of the education cycle early. **These social and economic realities perhaps find a reflection in the seemingly dispirited and somber attitudes of adolescents from socially weaker groups towards education when compared to their peers from socially and economically better off caste groups.**

Reasons for boys and girls to educate themselves: Respondents were asked about the reasons for boys and girls to pursue their education. The following table presents the responses for the same:

Table 2: Reasons for boys/girls to pursue education

	Reason	Boys' response	Girls' response
Reasons for girls to pursue education	For livelihood/job/work	44%	84%
	For more knowledge	40%	66%
	So girls are able to teach their children later in life	21%	42%
	Educated girl is more respected	21%	42%
Reasons for boys to pursue education	For livelihood/job/work	78%	92%
	For more knowledge	50%	60%
	Educated boy is more respected	18%	49%

It is interesting to note the difference in response of boys when asked about the reasons for girls to pursue their education vis-à-vis reasons for boys to pursue their education. Only 44% of the boys cited livelihood as a reason for girls to pursue their education. However, this response was at 78%, a significantly higher proportion, when it came to livelihood as a reason for boys to pursue their education. **It may be inferred that, the attitudes of boys towards girls pursuing employment opportunities is not encouraging. This finding is of special significance in view of the fact that boys as brothers and later as husbands/fathers have substantial impact on decisions related to education, employment of women and girls in their families.** The reasons for lukewarm response of boys towards girls pursuing education to make a living was not precisely stated by adolescents during qualitative discussions. It mostly centered around their acceptance of what they see take place within their communities. Nonetheless, it emerges that the overall strict patriarchal norms and strictly defined gender roles that became evident during the entire study find an echo in the responses of adolescent boys as well. The interconnection between perceived risks to safety and honor in the context of mobility and inter-gender communication (discussed in later sections) that lead to early marriages and discontinuing education of girls perhaps may also be reasons for boys' subdued response towards girls working for a living.

Interestingly, 21% boys and almost twice as many girls reported 'educated girls are more respected' as a reason for girls to pursue education. For boys as well, almost 49% of girls cited 'respect' as a reason for boys to pursue education. It could be inferred from qualitative discussions that 'respect' and 'honor' are an important concept for girls as the burden of keeping the honor of the family is to be primarily shouldered by them. It is perhaps, therefore 'respect' as a reason for education has emerged as a relatively more important theme for girls. While 'respect' in the case of a boy chiefly centers around tangible factors such as his ability to financially take care of his family, respect in the context of education of girls was about intangible criteria such as 'her being looked up to by others, someone who is 'sensible (*samajhdar*)'.

Another key finding is that 42% girls state a reason for girls to pursue education is so that they may be able to teach their children later in life. The proportion of older adolescent girls who cited this as a reason was much higher at 51% as compared to younger adolescent girls (37%). One of the reasons perhaps for this difference may be that conditioning of girls to prepare for their roles as future primary caretakers of children gets strengthened as they come closer to the marriageable age.

“Shaadi ki baithak mein sabse pehle sawal poocha jata hai ki ladki kitni padhi likhi hai” During marriage discussions, the first question that is asked is upto which class has the girl studied – **Community members/Parents, Bishnupur (Block Tekari)**

In fact, to a limited extent marriage itself has become a reason for educating girls up till a certain level. For instance, while interacting with stakeholders at High School, Bishnupur (Block Tekari), it came up that it has become necessary to educate girls up to at least class 8th for her to get a suitable match. However, the expectation is limited to that she should be able to read, write, handle a mobile phone to make calls and not beyond it. **While parents and community members see education as a productive stopgap activity for girls to engage in till the time they are ‘safely married’, little or no evidence has emerged in the study which indicates towards their intention to allow girls to pursue education for employment opportunities.**

“Ladki ko phadayenge, lekin naukri ke liye nahi phadayenge”
Parents will educate their girls but not for employability - **Teacher interview, Middle School Phurhuriya+G26, Block Paraiya**

In order to gauge attitudes on education vis-à-vis marriage, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed to the statement – *“A girl should not finish higher studies as it will be difficult to get her married then”*. While majority adolescents (girls and boys) disagreed with the statement, almost a third of the boys (31%) agreed with the statement. In comparison only 14% of the girls agreed with the statement. **This indicates that the attitudes of boys when it comes to prioritizing marriage of girls over education is much more prevalent when compared to attitudes of their female counterparts on the subject.** This interlinkage between marriage and education has been addressed in detail within the section on Discrimination.

Conversely, respondents were also asked about acceptable reasons for boys and girls to discontinue their education.

Table 3: Acceptable reasons for boys/girls to discontinue education

Options (Multiple Response Question)	Reasons for girls to discontinue education		Reasons for boys to discontinue education	
	Boys' Response	Girls' Response	Boys' Response	Girls' Response
It is too expensive	28%	36%	41%	43%
It is a risk to the boy's / girl's safety	24%	7%	10%	3%
Parents/elders would not allow/dislike it	31%	31%	15%	20%
Would rather save/spend the money on marriage	21%	18%	5%	16%
No use of studying	4%	1%	3%	7%
Don't know/Can't say/No Answer	19%	19%	40%	22%

As may be seen in the table above, in the case of reasons for boys to discontinue their education, almost 40% of both boys and girls reported unaffordability as a valid reason. Interestingly, almost a third of the total respondents could not state any acceptable reasons (No answer/Can't say) for boys to discontinue their education.

In the case of acceptable reasons for girls to discontinue their education, unaffordability once again was the highest reported rationale. But data threw light on some other notable findings. Almost a quarter of the boys reported safety as an acceptable reason for girls to discontinue their education. However, girls themselves reported this as a reason in significantly lower proportions. In other words, lower number of girls feel safety as an acceptable reasons to discontinue their education. Other options such as 'rather spend the money on marriage', 'parents/elders would not allow/dislike it' feature more prominently on the question of girls discontinuing their education. For both these options, boys have reported them in higher numbers than girls. **Overall, it may be inferred that there are relatively more acceptable reasons present in the environment for girls to discontinue their education as compared to boys. Furthermore, attitude of boys supporting these rationales is much more prevalent when compared to their female counterparts.**

Parents' perspective: During discussions with parents and community members, financial inability emerged as one of the main reason due to which they are unable

"If girls become too educated they are going to stop listening to us (parents/elders). Therefore, it is better if they are not overly qualified" – Community member, Ramnagar Kastha (Block Paraiya)

to continue education of their children. However, in case of girls multiple reasons besides financial constraint were brought to the fore which may be contributing to them not being able complete their education. Perceived risk to safety, community pressure to get the girl married before the 'socially prescribed age threshold' are some of the rationale provided. Additionally, it could be gleaned from multiple discussions that caste customs are followed strictly across the study area. Consequently, endogamy is one of the most critical norms followed within the context of caste. As a result, often there is a fear that the family may not be able to find a suitable groom for the girl within the caste group if she is 'too educated' or more educated than the approximated average education levels of men/boys within the community. **Therefore, within each caste groups there may be found a socially accepted optimum level of education for girls to ensure their marriage suitability. Beyond this level, the education of girls is often discontinued.**

Absenteeism - Reasons for missing classes: A key indicator to understand attitudes towards importance of education is regular attendance. Multiple studies have shown that chronic absenteeism is often a precursor to eventual dropping out. In order to understand and analyze the status within the study area, respondents were asked about the number of days they were absent from school in the last two months. The following table presents the findings:

Table 4: Average number of days respondents absent from school in the last 2 months

Average number of days respondents absent from school in the last 2 months	11-14 years	15-18 years
Boys	5.1	7.1
Girls	4.8	7.9

As is evident from the table above, in case of both boys and girls average absent days are much higher within the older adolescent categories. However, while within the younger age bracket girls' average is lower than boys, it is higher within the older age bracket. Reasons cited by the respondents for their absence sheds some light on the variation in average absent days between genders and age categories.

Table 5: Reasons cited for absence from school in the last 2 months

Reasons cited for absence from school in the last 2 months	Younger Adolescents		Older Adolescents	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
Respondent himself/herself unwell	66%	57%	39%	44%
Menstruation or menstrual pain		10%		10%
Family member not well so asked to stay back and help in HH chores, take care of siblings etc.	14%	21%	18%	27%
Guests/relatives were coming over so asked to stay back and help in HH chores, take care of siblings etc.	7%	7%	10%	8%
Provide help at family shop/business/asked to help on the farm	14%	18%	18%	11%

From the table above, it may be noted that respondent himself/herself being unwell was cited as a key reason behind being absent from school. While in the case of older adolescent girls, domestic responsibilities were found to be a major reason, in the case of older adolescent boys it was chiefly to do with outside work related activities such as working on the farm or helping out in the family shop/business. In fact, teachers from several schools highlighted that harvest and sowing season witness the most absences in the year. In the case of girls, mobility related restrictions especially in the context of perceived risk to safety also lead to their missing classes (This aspect has been explored in detail within the section on Discrimination). 10% of the girls across the two age groups also cited menstruation or menstrual pain as one of reasons for them missing out on school

The respondents were also asked about **what motivates them to come to school**. Almost 80% of the total respondents said that they attend school because '*they like what is taught in class*'. Almost a quarter of the younger adolescents said they attend school because '*their friends come to school or they get to play with them*'. This proportion is significantly lower for older adolescents. What stands out is that almost 45% of total girls interviewed expressed that coming to school '*will help them continue their education*'. This proportion is significantly lower for boys at 16%. The reasons for this data may be found in the qualitative discussions with stakeholders. It emerged in discussions with community members that often families consider continuing the education of their girls only in the case where girl is considered good in studies. In other words, families evaluate basis the academic performance of girls, whether it is worth investing time and perhaps money in. Coming to school regularly has positive correlation with academic performance and hence has emerged as an important reason for girls to attend classes.

On the other hand, boys in most cases are not subjected to these conditions. More often than not families would invest in their education as much as they consider within their financial means.

Rationale provided by the community members revolve around 'patrilocal'⁴ norms built around marriage and traditional euphemism of girls called as '*Paraya Dhan*' (wealth of her in-laws) to

Dissonance between words and action

During FGD with parents/community members in Middle School, Sanda(Block Tekari) one of the mothers enthusiastically agreed to the concept that there should be no discrimination between the two genders and girls and boys should be given equal opportunities and facilities to study. However, later in the discussion when asked about her own case, she admitted that while her son goes to a private school with high fees and perceived better quality education, her daughter instead is enrolled in a nearby government school.

While most communities agree to gender equality in education as a noble concept; this thought is more often than not translated into action where rigid societal gender norms and attitudes were found to

justify the discrimination. In other words, **while investing in boys' education would benefit the household as it being a patrilocal system, the boy would continue living with his family and earn for them. However, an educated and employable girl would economically help only her in-laws and not her own parents.**

Interestingly, another incentive for coming to school as highlighted by adolescent girls during qualitative discussion was that in school for some time they did not have to bear the burden of domestic chores. Also, school is the only place where

they said they have a safe space to play. Shortage of teachers, poor quality education in government schools, enrollment in coaching classes, seasonal migration of entire households for work are some of the other reasons that were found to contribute to absenteeism within the study population.

4.1.2 Status of Key Platforms and Institutions

Right to Education Act, 2009 mandates the formation of School Management Committees (SMC) in all elementary schools. In the case of private schools it instructs for the establishment of Parents Teachers Associations⁵ (rules/guidelines may vary with states). The objective is to ensure quality education through regular monitoring of the working of the school through parental involvement in decisions pertaining to education of their children. At the same time SMCs, PTAs along with student councils are vital platforms for stakeholders including adolescents to express their concerns and questions for convenient resolutions. The study attempted to gauge the presence and functionality of these platforms and to what extent are they being leverage upon by stakeholders to raise relevant issues.

It was found that while in most of the schools SMCs are present on paper, they are hardly functional. The SMCs scarcely ever meet and even if they do (as is the case at BVHS Ramnaga Kastha) it is mostly when committee receives funds from the government and to discuss any building repairs. Status of PTAs is also quite similar. Almost, none of the schools had a Student Council. While teachers from some schools did report meeting parents, such meetings are largely ad-hoc and not institutionalized. Parents usually approach teachers and school staff to find about any government schemes or benefits.

Teachers reported that low student-teacher ratio along with their involvement in other administrative activities such as elections, implementation of government schemes leaves them with very little bandwidth to hold regular meetings with parents. It is this absence of platforms

⁴ Patrilocal: relating to a pattern of marriage in which the couple settles in the husband's home or community

⁵ <http://eoc.du.ac.in/RTE%20-%20notified.pdf>

that is perhaps reflected in the types of responses received. Despite, almost 85% of the adolescents reporting to have approached teachers/school staff to discuss career aspirations, many who participated in qualitative discussions were unaware of career options available. When asked about career aspirations, several adolescents reported dreams of becoming a doctor, engineer or police. But hardly any of the participants were aware of the career path that may lead to these goals. Amongst those respondents who reported not having approached anyone in school to discuss career goals, 42% reported fear of being scolded or made fun of as a key reason

4.2 Discrimination

In Social Psychology ‘Discrimination’ is the behavioural component of the Stereotype-Prejudice-Discrimination triad where *unjustified negative belief/attitude towards a group (such as gender, caste, religion) with seemingly similar characteristics (Prejudice) leads to unfair treatment towards the members solely on the basis of their group membership (Discrimination)*⁶. This section attempts to highlight the various forms of discrimination that have emerged during the course of the study and to the extent possible, discuss attitudes fuelling such behaviours.

4.2.1 Gender

Gender or gender based discrimination has in fact emerged as a pervasive yet an almost invisible (normalized) form of inequity within the study area. While the presence of this form of inequity reveals itself in several forms, in view of the outline of the program, the subject has been studied under the broad heads of marriage, division of household chores, mobility, inter-gender communication and negotiating life choices.

Marriage: Marriage within the study area emerged to be an essential, non-negotiable institution that is prioritized over almost all other major events and activities especially in the life of an adolescent girl nearing the socially prescribed marriageable age. Parents/community members reported that marrying their daughters is one of the most important and sacred duties of their lifetime. Additionally, areas covered within the study are bound by strict caste norms and rules. As a result, endogamy is practiced with fervor and any deviance to this norm may lead to severe reprisals and backlash. Considering the importance ascribed to the event, marriage within communities is bound and strictly controlled by several interconnected attitudes and norms that manifest at individual, household and community level.

A key decision with respect to this relates to **age at which a girl should get married**. As discussed previously, this average age differs from one community to another and was also seen to be a function of the dominance and vulnerability of the caste group. While average age of marriage within socially and economically dominant caste groups was 18 years and above; for the caste groups at the other end of the economic and social spectrum, average age of marriage for girls was found to be around 15-16 years. Several teachers and school officials also pointed out that early marriage within socially vulnerable caste groups is one of the key reasons for their girls dropping out from schools. One of the reasons for this variance has to do with the economic backwardness of these communities. More educated the girl is, it becomes progressively difficult to find an equally educated groom within the community leading to further delay in marriage (*Parents/Community members FGD, Puhuriya Block Paraiya*). And even if such a groom is found, girl's parents may have to provide for high dowry price. Therefore, it is preferred that the girl is married at an age and educational level where it is convenient to find a suitable groom within the community.

Interestingly, besides a limit up to which a girl can study, increasingly there is a minimum educational criteria as well. For instance, in several FGDs parents highlighted that the first

⁶ <https://opentextbc.ca/socialpsychology/part/chapter-12-stereotypes-prejudice-and-discrimination/>

question asked during marriage discussions is about the educational level of the girl. In most communities this minimum level of education required for marriage suitability was found to be class 8th. Parents highlighted that the idea is to ensure that the girl can at least read, write and handle mobile phones.

Education is also seen as a **productive stopgap activity that girls pursue to prepare for their roles as primary care takers of their children after marriage**. In the quantitative study, the **third most important reason for educating girls after employment and enhancement of knowledge was to prepare them for their future role as mothers so that they are able to teach their children later in life**. Around 21% of boys and 42% of the girls felt that adolescent girls should study so that they can teach their children in future.

Age at which the girl gets married is also a function of the size of the family and number of daughters in it. Several parents/community members admitted that in families with two or more daughters, elder daughters are generally married off early to ensure there is no delay in the marriage of younger girls.

Moreover, as a result of the strictly patrilocal norms (girl goes to stay with husband's family after marriage), **parents do not see any economic benefit in educating their daughters and encouraging them to seek employment**. The underlying sentiment is that even if she is educated and employed, she is '*paraya dhan*' (wealth of in-laws) and will contribute to the household income of her in laws and not parents. A boy on the other hand will stay with parents and provide economic support all his life. These qualitative findings from community members also find echo in the quantitative interactions with adolescents. Of the total boys and girls, 21% boys and 18% girls respectively say that rather than spending money on girls' higher education it should be saved for their marriage. In the similar situation, when the option of spending money for boys education or for boys marriage crop-up, only 5% of boys give more importance to boys' marriage.

The 'threat' of imminent marriage and its impact on mental health of young girls

When asked about her career aspiration in life, a 14 year old girl from class Ninth (B V H S Ramnagar, kastha) says she only wants to focus on her class ninth exams and that's it. She shrugs, "*Aage kisne dekha hai* (Who knows what will happen in the future)". When probed further, she reveals hesitantly that she wants to be a bank manager when she grows up but here is no point in dreaming. After some encouragement to speak, she confides that her father has already found a match for her and plans to get her married after she finishes class ninth. The boy is from her community, not very educated. He came to 'see' her in school and told her categorically that he will not allow her to continue her education after marriage. The young girl admitted that this threat of imminent marriage and discontinuation of education is causing her severe anxiety. She cannot focus on her studies, has lost her appetite, weight and faces sleeplessness. The girl was visibly upset while narrating her situation and admitted that this decision of her family is cruel and has affected her deeply.

What is glaring amongst all these aspects is the **lack of choice for girls with respect to marriage**. In FGD with adolescents in Sanda (Block Tekari), it was stated that during marriage views of the boys are considered to some extent. However, opinion of girls is not taken into account at all. As high as 70% of the adolescents agreed with the attitude assessment statement

that ‘A girl cannot say when she wants to get married because elders know best’. Parents/community members and teachers also have similar views that parents are in a better position to take decisions related to marriage.

Perceived threat to safety and honor of the girls (inextricably linked to the honor of the family) is also cited as a key reason for early marriages. Threat to safety and honor of girls is defined through ambiguous terminology such as ‘ooch-nee na ho jaye’ (something immoral). While parents and community members were not upfront about what it entails, it could be inferred that girls liking a boy of their choice and especially finding/eloping with a boy from some other community is considered as a major threat to the honor of the family. This rationale of threat to honor is also used to restrict mobility of girls.

Division of household chores: Assessment of responses to questions on division of household chores highlighted the highly prevalent attitudes with respect to socially assigned and reinforced gender roles. Analysis of the quantitative findings revealed that the responsibility for domestic chores is considered to be the primary duty of girls. For instance, 65% boys and 59% girls expressed that cooking is the primary responsibility of girls. Similarly, in the case of washing utensils 77% boys and 73% girls felt that it is the primary responsibility of boys. Chores related to going out of the house are somewhat considered responsibilities of boys or responsibilities of both boys and girls. For instance, 57% of the boys feel that going out to buy vegetables is the primary responsibility of boys while another 40% boys feel that it is the equal responsibility of both boys and girls. Activities such as taking care of younger siblings is considered more or less shared responsibility of both the genders.

Table 6: Attitudes of respondents towards household chores being primary responsibility of girls or boys

Chores	Girls' responsibility		Boys' responsibility		Equal responsibility of both	
	Boys' Response	Girls' Response	Boys' Response	Girls' Response	Boys' Response	Girls' Response
Cooking	65%	59%	0%	0%	35%	41%
Cleaning house	56%	63%	1%	0%	43%	37%
Washing clothes	48%	56%	2%	1%	50%	43%
Cleaning utensils	77%	73%	0%	0%	23%	27%
Taking care of animals	2%	10%	59%	23%	39%	68%
Taking care of siblings	11%	30%	13%	1%	76%	69%
Collecting fuelwood	9%	32%	45%	13%	46%	55%
Fetching water	21%	30%	24%	4%	55%	66%
Buying vegetables	3%	5%	57%	34%	40%	61%

Qualitative findings also substantiate the fact that household chores are considered primary responsibility of adolescent girls. Of the total adolescent interviews (25 KII) conducted during qualitative interactions, around 90% of them expressed that activities like cooking, washing and taking care of siblings are the primary responsibilities of girls. In fact, almost 43% of the respondents in the quantitative study agreed with the statement that “A boy does not need to help

in domestic chores like cleaning, washing utensils, cooking etc. because it is essentially girl's job/duty".

In response to attitude assessment statement "A girl must do household chores as she needs to learn this before going to in-law's place", 79% of adolescents agreed with the statement. **Shouldering the responsibility of domestic chores is perceived as preparation for the eventual role of wife and homemaker that a girl is supposed to take on later in life.**

How frequently the two genders contribute to the household chores also point towards the above mentioned findings. Around 76% of the total girls reported that they do household chores daily as compared to 42% of the boys. **Primary burden of household chores being on girls was cited as a key reason for their absence from schools by several teachers.**

The time spent on household chores by adolescent girls is also relatively more than the time spent by adolescent boys. On an average, while adolescent girls spent 115 minutes on household chores adolescent boys spent 84 minutes on household chores. The disaggregated data on time spent on the household chores reveals that around 60% of the girls spend more than 1.5 hours a day, while around 60% of the boys spend less than 1 hour on the household chores.

With respect to leisure time as well, qualitative interactions reveal that **majority of the boys feel that girls do not need as much free time as boys.** There is also a general acceptance of the fact by parents and teachers that girls do not get as much free time as compared to boys due to their engagement in the household chores

Unequal division of household chores in accordance with the socially assigned gender roles is only one of the ways gender based discrimination manifests itself at the household level. Another finding from the qualitative discussion was the support for the practice where women and girls of the family eat only after the men and boys of the family have eaten. While there is no norm with respect to boys/men eating more than girls/women of the family, after the men/boys have eaten often women/girls are left with leftovers which may or may not be sufficient

Mobility: Mobility is another aspect where discrimination between the two genders was visible. While in the quantitative study, adolescents, both boys and girls reported having the freedom to visit all the key places such as market, clinic, school, outside village etc. However, **qualitative discussions revealed that mobility of girls comes with several riders and limitations.** For

instance, adolescents from Puriya (Block Paraiya) revealed that except for school and Anganwadi Center, girls are not allowed to go almost anywhere. On being asked for details, **safety and fear of harassment** in crowded places such as village fair were given as key reasons. At weekly market, girls said that there have been cases of boys passing inappropriate comments on girls and therefore they themselves avoid going there. In fact, almost 46% of the respondents agreed with the attitude assessment statement "A girl may not be allowed to go alone/with peers outside as it

"People do not send their daughters to college for higher education as the nearest college is in Tekari which is 20km from this village. But for boys there is no such restriction. They are allowed to go to Tekari or Gaya for higher studies on cycles and bikes"- Community Members/Parents, GP Men Block Belaganj

"Girls should not go to places where there are boys. If parents are stopping them from going somewhere then they are doing this for the good of the girl. If a girl goes alone somewhere and villagers saw her, they will spread gossip about her"- Older Adolescent Girl KII, Puriya Block Paraiya

is inappropriate for a girl to go alone/ with peers in our community”.

In fact, quantitative data throws light on the fact that except for few places (School, friends’ house, Anganwadi Center) girls are almost always accompanied by a family member. In comparison, boys reported having visited almost all the places alone or with friends. Parents cite risk to honor and safety of girls as a major reason for restricting their mobility. At the same time, it may be highlighted that the fear of eve teasing and harassment is not unfounded in the area.

The following table presents the quantitative findings with respect to places boys and girls are able to visit alone, with friends or family members:

Table 7: Places Adolescents visit alone/accompanied by friends/family

Places	Proportion of Boys Visiting the place (Alone/Accompanied)	Proportion of Girls Visiting the place (Alone/Accompanied)
Friends House	Alone (75%)	Alone (56%)
Market	Alone (42%)	Mother (76%)
Health Centre	Mother (58%)	Mother (80%)
AWW Centre	Alone (46%)	Alone (40%)
Village fair	Friends (45%)	Mother (66%)
Bank	Alone (42%)	Mother (54%)
Post Office	Alone (42%)	Father (57%)
School	Alone (69%)	Friends (78%)
Relative's house	Mother (69%)	Mother (90%)
Outside village	Friends (54%) Alone (46%)	Friends (36%) Mother (35%)

Inter gender Communication: The study has attempted to understand the perceptions of adolescents, parents, community members and teachers towards communication between the adolescent boys and girls.

It was interesting to note that some of the prejudices with respect to inter gender communication are in fact perpetuated by teachers in school themselves. In many cases, teachers while expressing surface level approval to inter gender communication, added a caveat that it should be allowed only when 'necessary'. On the question of whether girls and boys should sit together in class many of the teachers expressed that after a certain age and class it may not be 'safe' to allow it. Similar perceptions are echoed by parents and community members as well. Inter gender communication is more often than not seen with suspicion and mistrust.

Head Master in one of the schools in Tekari block narrated how when he joined the school, he observed that boys do not allow girls to study if girls and boys sit together in the class. As a solution, he created entirely separate rooms for girls and boys. He reserved one entire floor exclusively for girls where no one was allowed to go without his permission not even the parents of the girls. Such approaches may prove to be counterproductive as they do not address the root cause of the problem which is the negative perception built around inter gender communication and it continues being eyed with mistrust and suspicion

Among the 25 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with older adolescents, 77% of the adolescents reported that boys and girls sit separately in their classes. Around 69% adolescents expressed that girls are beaten if they are found talking to boys.

Adolescents as well to a great extent resonate the attitudes of their parents, community members and teachers. The following table presents responses of adolescents to attitude assessment statements relating to inter gender communication:

Table 8: Attitudes of adolescents towards Inter gender communication

Statements	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
A girl may not talk to boys for long in school or outside school	48%	50%
A girl may not sit regularly with boys in classroom	36%	63%

As may be seen in the table above, 63% of the adolescents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the view that girls and boys should not sit together in the class while more than a third of the adolescents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement. While quantitative findings presented a favourable attitude with respect to girls and boys sitting in the class together, this was not corroborated by the qualitative findings. In fact, in the case of conversation between the two genders, attitudes seem to be divided in the middle. Qualitative discussions revealed some of the reasons behind what may be seen as a discouraging attitude towards inter gender communication. FGDs with adolescents revealed that if boys and girls sit together in class, they are teased mercilessly by their classmates. If girls are found talking to boys from outside their families, as mentioned above they are reprimanded and even beaten to discourage repetition of such deviances. This is especially true in the case of older adolescents. In one of the discussions the teacher (School Purhuriya, Block Paraiya) commented that the communities are not mature enough to readily accept older adolescent girls and boys talking to each other.

Communities with strict caste dynamics and rigidly defined gender roles leave little scope and opportunity for boys and girls (outside family) to interact with each other. Therefore, any anomaly is eyed with suspicion and as potential threat to the 'honor' and safety of the girl. 'Honor'

of the girl is closely linked with honor of the family. It is a fragile concept that is threatened even if there is a hint of gossip about the girl's reputation which has to be guarded fiercely till the time she is not safely married. Any kind of inter gender communication therefore is seen as a risk to reputation of the girl and hence carries a negative perception within communities.

4.2.2 Caste, Class and Religion

While gender based discrimination in various forms and intensity was found present across communities, other forms of social categorizations were also found to be the basis of discrimination across multiple facets of daily life. Amongst these caste based discrimination was found to be the most visible basis for discrimination, followed by religion and to a limited degree class as well. Since, class or economic standing of the a household is also to some extent a function of where his/her caste stands on the traditional ladder, caste and class discriminations were found to be interlinked within the context of the study area.

The following table presents the response of adolescents to attitude assessment statements chiefly revolving around caste and religion:

Table 9: Caste and religion - Attitude assessment statements

Statements	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
It is moral to not allow a person from a weaker caste to enter places of worship on special occasions	26%	74%
It is alright if a boy from a weaker caste marries a girl from a more dominant caste	52%	45%
Children from weaker caste should not be allowed to eat from the same plate/tiffin as children from dominant caste	37%	61%
Students from different caste should sit separately from each other at school	30%	68%
A person from a weaker caste should not aspire to do work other than what is traditionally assigned to his community	33%	62%
It is ok if members of different castes do not like to use water of the same well	24%	75%
It is correct to say that over mingling with students from other religion can ruin your own religion and culture	20%	77%
It is ok for a boy from other religion to marry a girl from your community	37%	60%
It is right if people from another religion are not allowed in your places of worship	30%	67%
One should not eat food at the house of family from other religion as it may ruin your culture and religion	34%	65%

It may be gleaned from the table above that majority respondents disagree with or disaffirm caste and religion based prejudicial attitudes. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that caste and religion based prejudices are significantly prevalent within the study area.

These are especially evident with respect to firstly marriage, and secondly sharing a meal.

45% of the adolescents strongly disagreed/disagreed with the possibility of allowing a boy from a weaker caste to marry a girl from a more dominant caste. This percentage is as high as 60% when the possibility of a boy from another religion marrying a girl from the respondent's community is mentioned. This further substantiates the findings with respect to strict rules around endogamy discussed in previous sections.

The negative or prejudicial attitude of adolescents against other caste groups and communities also surfaces when statements related to eating together/sharing a meal are broached. However, here negative attitudes are slightly less prevalent than as is the case in marriage. More than a third of the respondents agree/strongly agree that it is ok for children from different castes to not share a meal. Similarly, more than a third of the respondents agreed with the statement that by eating at houses of families from other religion they may risk ruining their own culture and religion. A significant proportion also display prejudicial attitude with respect to access to places of worship and common resources such as well.

In social functions such as marriage, birthday celebration, etc. food is served separately to people from weaker and dominant castes. Also, individuals from weaker are not allowed to sit next to individuals from dominant caste. The weaker caste people usually sit on the ground while the dominant caste people will sit on the raised platform (chair, bench etc.).

- Parents/Community Members FGD
- Utkramit Highschool Ur Bishnupur

These findings have been substantiated in qualitative discussions as well. In fact, prevalence of caste and religion based discrimination and segregation in the form of actual behavior surfaced quite substantially in the qualitative discussions, somewhat contrary to the generally positive attitudes that emerged in the quantitative study. In other words, there is divergence with respect to attitudes expressed and actual practice on the ground. Of the 25 older adolescent interviews, around half of the adolescents said that they don't share food with students from other castes and religion; more than a quarter adolescents admitted that within their communities drinking water from community well is not allowed for people from certain castes

There is a separate village for Harijan (weaker caste) on the periphery of the main village. The village has one Middle school. Harijan students from that village can go to the other schools, but the upper castes people won't send their children to the school situated in the Harijan village.

- Teacher Interview
- Middle School Sanda, Tekari

The enrolment of Muslim students in the school is around 80, but only 3-4 Muslim students come to school. The probable reason for such absenteeism was the low number of Muslim students' vis-à-vis Hindu students. During FGDs with the younger adolescent, it was revealed that they don't share/eat food with their Muslim schoolmates.

- Teacher and Adolescent interaction
- Middle School Sheikpura

and a similar proportion reported that there are restrictions for some communities on entering places of worship. It was evident that traditional caste hierarchies are strictly followed and people receive differential treatment based on their group's standing in the caste order. Interestingly,

adolescents reported having friends from different caste groups and playing with them. But even amongst friends, they reported maintaining caste and religious norms.

Since, all groups abide by the caste norms, very little inter group conflicts were reported. This may also be because at the village level, families live within the hamlets of their own caste groups and social interaction between groups is limited. This is also true for villages and settlements traditionally demarcated along religious lines.

Teachers also reported witnessing caste based discrimination practiced by students in the schools. At the same time, in many of the schools teachers reported making efforts to keep the discriminatory practices at least out of the school premises

Breaking caste barriers in school

In March 2017 immediately after his appointment, Principal of Middle School Sanda observed that the students from dominant castes leave school during lunch time and come back with their own plates on which they would want school meal to be served. He realized that the students from dominant caste groups did not wish to eat from common plates that may be used by students from weaker castes. The teacher then decided to put a stop to the blatantly discriminatory practice. He started closing the gate of the school during lunch time so that students who went back home to get plates could not come back inside the school for their lunch. The head master also himself started eating from the same plate which was used by students from the weaker caste.

For around one week students from upper castes did not eat the meal served at lunch in school as their parents had strictly warned them to not eat from the plates also used by the weaker caste students. After one week, the parents of the dominant castes students came to meet the head master and insisted that he allow their children to bring plates from home. But the headmaster remained steadfast on his decision. Gradually, after some resistance the situation became normal and now all the students eat from the same plate irrespective of their caste.

-Principal
Middle School Sanda

4.3 Violence

This section deals with the norms and attitudes prevalent in the community regarding gender based violence. It highlights different forms of violence and other associated aspects such as the victim of violence, his/her background, reasons, who committed the act, frequency of violence and the response of the victim.

The issue of violence has been analyzed in two ways. Firstly, respondents were asked about the **violence witnessed** by them and second about violence experienced by them. For more nuanced understanding violence has been categorized into 7 distinct forms which includes insult, threatening, passing lewd/inappropriate comments/leering, stalking, physical coercion, physical violence (physically hurting) and attacking with deadly weapon.

4.3.1 Violence Witnessed By Adolescent

The following table presents the findings of the study with respect to percentage of adolescent boys and girls who witnessed various types of violence:

Breakthrough Adolescent Empowerment Project, Gaya Bihar: Baseline Study

Table 10: Percentage of adolescents who reported witnessing violence

Incidences	Percentage of boys who witnessed the incident (N=209)	Percentage of girls who witnessed the incident (N=208)	Percentage of total adolescent who the incident
Insulted	41%	48%	44%
Threatened	71%	68%	70%
Inappropriate comments/leering	66%	63%	65%
Stalking	43%	43%	43%
Physical violence	48%	56%	52%
Attacked with deadly weapon	5%	13%	9%

It has been reported by both boys and girls that the incidences of threatening and inappropriate comments/leering are widely prevalent in the region. About 70% adolescent have witnessed incidence of threatening with an intention to hurt someone. Major incidences witnessed by older adolescent girls include threatening, inappropriate comments/leering and stalking. Witnessing physical violence was also reported by a significant proportion of both genders.

Reasons for various forms of violence witnessed: The following table presents reasons cited for various forms of violence witnessed:

Table 11: Reasons for various forms of violence witnessed

Incidences	Top reasons cited for the violence witnessed	Reasons cited by Proportion of those who witnessed the incident	No. of adolescents who witnessed violence (N)
Insulting	Not obeying elders	13%	185
	Because it was from a weaker caste	13%	
Threatening	Not obeying elders	12%	290
	Fight with brother/male members	11%	
Inappropriate/lewd comments, leering	Because it was a girl	31%	269
	Not doing HH chores	6%	
Stalking	Because it was a girl	32%	179
	Wearing dresses of own choice	7%	
Physical Violence	Not completing Homework	16%	217
	Not obeying elders	14%	
Threaten by deadly weapon	Fight with people outside family	18%	39
	Revenge of past matter	13%	

As is evident from the table above, not obeying elders has emerged as one of top reasons for various forms of violence. During the qualitative interactions with the teachers, community

members and parents, it was revealed that such reasons for violence are not considered as violence and are used as a corrective tool for inculcating discipline in children. Teachers and parents feel that it is necessary to beat children in order to teach them discipline and protect them from indulging in bad practices. Some of the teachers of the schools visited during the baseline study were of the opinion that one of the reasons for the deterioration of the education quality is because of the restriction on teachers regarding the use of force (beating) in the class. Another important highlight is that adolescents were clear that incidents such as stalking, inappropriate comments take place merely because of gender. Victim merely belonging to the weaker caste has also featured as one of the reasons for insulting a person

Background of the victim: In order to further understand the nature of violence, this sub-section highlights the background of the victims such as gender, caste, class and religion. It tries to explore the relation of the violence with the background of the victim. The respondents reported that in majority of the cases the victims are males in incidences such as threatening and physical violence while the victims of stalking are mainly female.

Table 12: Background of the victim of violence as witnessed by the adolescents

Incidences	Percentage of victims reported to be male	Percentage of victims reported to be female	No. of adolescents who witnessed violence
Insulted	55%	51%	185
Threatened	71%	35%	290
Verbal inappropriate comments	49%	57%	269
Stalking	41%	64%	179
Violent physical coercion	53%	57%	98
Physical violence	66%	44%	217
Attacked with deadly weapon	56%	49%	39

When respondents were asked about the caste, class and religion of the victims, it was found that in around 50% of the total witnessed cases the victim was of weak caste or of weak economic status. Of the total respondents who witnessed violence reported that victim was from weaker caste in incidences such as insulting, threatening with an intention to hurt and threatening by deadly weapon in the proportion 58%, 50% and 49% respectively. Of the total respondents who witnessed violence reported that victim was from weaker economic status in incidences such as insulting, threatening with an intention to hurt and threatening by deadly weapon in the proportion 58%, 43% and 46% respectively (Table below).

Table 13: Caste, Economic status and Religion of the victim of the violence witnessed by adolescents

Incidences	% of victim from Weak Caste	% of victim from Weak Economic status	% of victim from Other religion	No. of adolescents who witnessed violence (N)
Insulting	58%	58%	23%	185
Threatening	50%	53%	21%	290

Inappropriate/lewd comments, leering	39%	44%	18%	269
Stalking	41%	37%	21%	179
Physical Violence	35%	35%	17%	217
Threaten by deadly weapon	49%	46%	18%	39

About 40% of the total respondents who witnessed stalking, inappropriate/lewd comments, leering reported that the victim was either from weaker caste or belonged to weaker economic status.

Response of the adolescent to the witnessed violence: It may be gleaned from the findings that adolescents are either not aware or do not have any platform at all to raise their voices against violence. In majority of the cases, the adolescents either reported avoiding/ignoring the incidence or informed an elder member in the house.

Table 14: Response of the adolescents to violence witnessed

Incidences	% of adolescent who avoided the incidence	% of adolescent who informed an elder in the house	No. of adolescents who witnessed violence
Insulting	54%	16%	185
Threatening	55%	19%	290
Verbal inappropriate comments	64%	17%	269
Stalking	55%	22%	179
Physical Violence	57%	24%	217
Threaten by deadly weapon	41%	36%	39

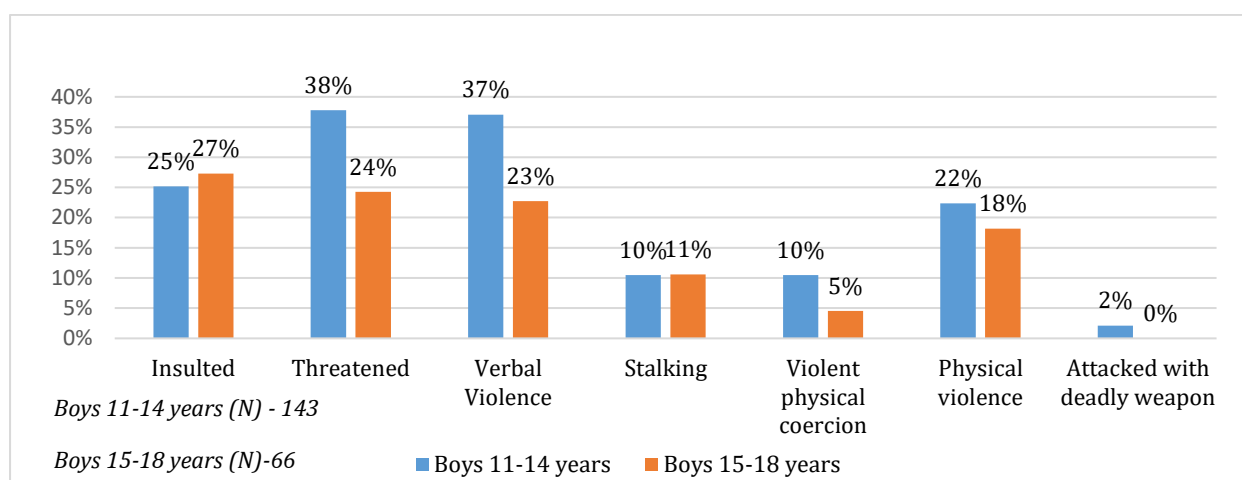
In most of the cases, the respondents reported that the perpetrator of the violence was an unknown person or a male member outside family. Around 50% to 60% of the total respondents who witnessed violence do not have any idea about the perpetrator of the violence.

4.3.2 Violence Experienced

There is significant difference between the percentage of adolescent who witnessed violence and the percentage of adolescent who experienced violence. The adolescent were comfortable in reporting the violence that they witnessed but were hesitant to report their own experiences of violence. It may be observed from the figure below that threatening and inappropriate comments were reported the most followed by being insulted and physical violence. It is also interesting to note that most of these violence decline from the younger age category to the older. This may also be because younger boys are more vulnerable than their older counterparts.

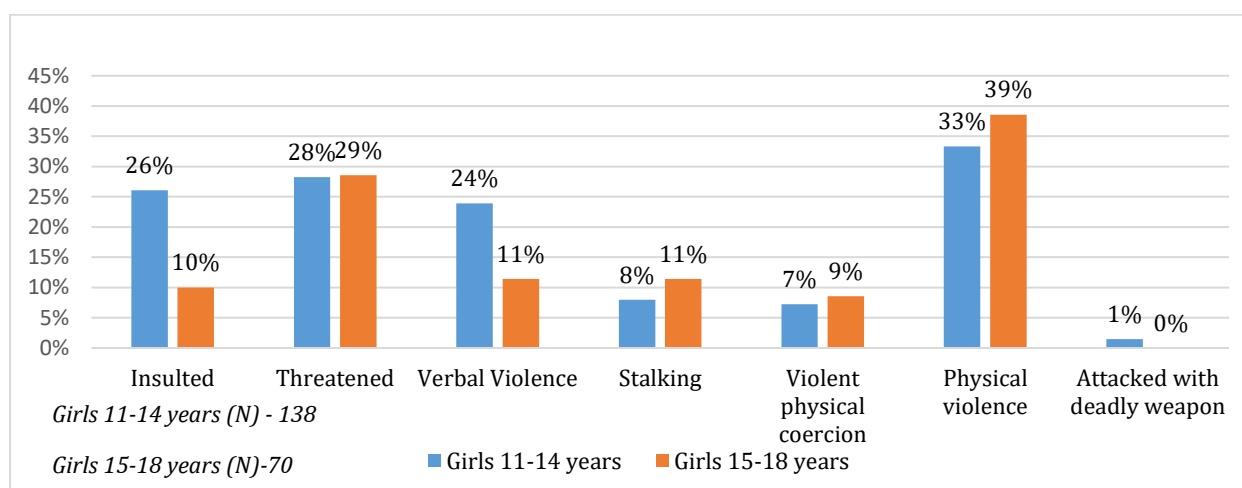
Breakthrough Adolescent Empowerment Project, Gaya Bihar: Baseline Study

Figure 9: Violence experienced by adolescent boys



*Verbal violence: Inappropriate/lewd comments, leering

Figure 10: Violence experienced by girls



*Verbal violence: Inappropriate/lewd comments, leering

In the case of adolescent girls physical violence was reported the most amongst both age categories. The adolescent girls reported that they faced physical violence in the house mostly by the hands of their mother, sister and brother. Incidents of stalking increase with age while inappropriate comments seem to decline.

From the total adolescent who experienced violence, 23% of the adolescents report that mother and brother were the perpetrators of physical violence such as slapping, twisting hand, pulling hair, being punched with the fist etc.

Reasons for violence experience by the adolescents: The respondents when asked about their own experience regarding violence were found to be hesitant to raise their voice against the violence inflicted within their house. The incidences such as insulting, threatening, verbal abuse, physical violence etc. were not reported in the qualitative discussions, while the quantitative findings show the evidence of significant level of physical violence whose perpetrators are mainly the family members.

Table 15: Reasons for violence experience by adolescents

Incidences	Top reasons cited for the incident	Proportion of reasons as cited by adol. facing the incident	No. of adolescents who experienced violence (N)
Insulting	Not completing Homework	23%	97
	Going outside	14%	
Threatening	Fight with people outside family	14%	129
	Not doing HH chores	13%	
Verbal abuse	Not obeying elders	11%	109
	Going outside	9%	
Stalking	Because it was a girl	29%	41
	Fight with people outside family	15%	
Violent Physical coercion	Because it was a girl	18%	34
	Fight with people outside family	15%	
Physical Violence	Not completing Homework	38%	117
	Not obeying elders	26%	

During the qualitative discussions with adolescent girls in the Middle School Phurhuryi, Paraiya, it was revealed that the incidences of stalking is widely prevalent in the society. But they are not aware of any platform/avenue where they could raise their voice against such cases. Stalking was reported to happen even in the presence of family members

Gender Based Harassment: Adolescents were also asked directly about their opinions regarding the possible reason for women/girls being harassed. 55% boys and 66% girls said that just the fact she is a woman/girl is reason enough for harassment. This was closely followed by the reasoning that if the girl/woman being alone is a reason for harassment. Interestingly, higher proportion of boys (44%) reported that the way woman/girl is dressed is also a reason for an incident to take place. On the other hand only 26% girls supported this reasoning.

These findings are consistent with assessment from the previous section where top reasons for incidents such as stalking and inappropriate comments was the gender of the victim. While there is clarity with respect to reasons for such incidents, discussions with the community reveal that onus to 'avoid' such incidents lies with the girl by avoiding situations where she may face harassment. This reasoning is closely linked with restrictions on mobility of girls, inter gender communication and even early marriages.

5. Summing Up

The current section summarizes the findings of the study under the key heads of Education, Discrimination and Violence. The section also broadly recommends potential focus areas that the programme team may consider.

Education

Study findings suggest that marriage and strict gender roles and related norms are key barriers when it comes to education of girls. In the context of the attitudes of adolescents towards education, it emerged that attitudes of both boys and girls, towards boys finishing higher education or studying as much as they want is much more positive as compared to girls finishing higher education or studying as much as they want. Moreover, in the context of girls pursuing employment opportunities attitudes of boys towards it did not emerge to be encouraging. In fact, girls themselves cited traditional reasons such as able to teach their children in life later as a reason for them to study. Parents and community members as well see education for girls only as a productive stop gap activity, to be provided just enough to find a suitable match. It was quite evident that for parents and boys marriage as an event takes priority over education of girls. Safety in fact, came up as another important reason cited by boys for girls to discontinue their education. Other reasons such as rather spend money on marriage or disapproval from parents featured prominently as some of the reasons cited by girls to discontinue their education. Interestingly, it was also found that within each caste groups there may be found a socially accepted optimum level of education for girls to ensure their marriage suitability. Beyond this level, the education of girls is often discontinued. Another key finding with respect to education was that often families consider continuing the education of their girls only in the case where girl is considered good in studies. In other words, families evaluate basis the academic performance of girls, whether it is worth investing time and perhaps money in. This is mainly because it is believed that investing in boys' education would benefit the household as it being a patrilocal system, the boy would continue living with his family and earn for them. However, an educated and employable girl would economically help only her in-laws and not her own parents.

In the case of **absenteeism**, it was found higher in the case of older adolescent girls as compared to all other categories (younger and older adolescent boys and younger adolescent girls). Besides, missing class for health reasons, in the case of older adolescent girls, domestic responsibilities were found to be a chief reason. In the case of older adolescent boys it was chiefly to do with outside work related activities.

In the context of **presence and functionality of key platforms** such as SMCs, PTAs and Student Council, the status is dismal. Most such committees exist on paper and are largely inactive. As a result, there are limited platforms for students to discuss and raise issues relevant for their careers and future.

Discrimination

Study findings point towards prevalence of resilient discrimination stemming from gender, caste and class based norms. Therefore, the aspect of discrimination has been looked from the perspective of Gender, Caste, Class and Religion.

Gender based discrimination has emerged as pervasive and ubiquitous to all aspects of life from education, marriage, mobility, inter gender communication and division of household chores. It was noted that **marriage** related norms are some of the most rigid. It is non-negotiable, essential

and strictly governed by caste rules. Age of marriage of a girl which is a key decision in a household is chiefly a function of caste, size of the family and number of daughters in it. More socio-economically vulnerable the caste group, likelihood is that marriage age is lower and an important cause of girl dropping out from school. Additionally, community members highlighted that it is difficult to find a suitable groom for an educated girl and may lead to more demand for dowry. Ironically, there is also a minimum educational requirement for marriages which ranges from class 8th to 10th. This is to ensure that the girl can at least read and write which may be useful for her day to day domestic responsibilities. These practices stem from the patrilocal norms and the belief that an educated girl would benefit only her husband's family while an educated son would earn for the parents. Perceived threat to the honour and safety of girls is also cited as a reason for prioritizing marriage. Overall, there is a clear lack of choice and autonomy with respect to marriage especially in the case of girls. In the context of **division of household chores**, they are divided clearly on the basis of socially prescribed gender roles. Almost 43% of the respondents in the quantitative study agreed with the statement that *"A boy does not need to help in domestic chores like cleaning, washing utensils, cooking etc. because it is essentially girl's job/duty"*. With respect to leisure time as well, qualitative interactions reveal that majority of the boys feel that girls do not need as much free time as boys.

With respect to **mobility**, mobility of girls comes with several riders and limitations. Safety and fear of harassment in crowded places were given as key reasons for restrictions. Almost 46% of the respondents agreed with the attitude assessment statement *"A girl may not be allowed to go alone/with peers outside as it is inappropriate for a girl to go alone/ with peers in our community"*. Additionally, except for few places girls are almost always accompanied by a family member. In comparison, boys reported having visited almost all the places alone or with friends.

Barriers to **inter gender communication** are more often than not perpetuated by teachers themselves. While teachers give surface level approval to it, almost always it comes with the rider that it should only be allowed when necessary. Similar misgivings were also expressed with respect to girls and boys sitting together in class and it was labelled 'unsafe' after an age. Among the 25 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with older adolescents, 77% of the adolescents reported that boys and girls sit separately in their classes. Around 69% adolescents expressed that girls are beaten if they are found talking to boys. This is especially true in the case of older adolescents.

Caste, Class and Religion: Besides gender, other forms of social categorizations were also found to be the basis of discrimination within the study area. It was gleaned from the study that caste and religion based prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors are significantly prevalent within the study area. These are especially evident with respect to firstly marriage and secondly sharing a meal. 45% of the adolescents strongly disagreed/disagreed with the possibility of allowing a boy from a weaker caste to marry a girl from a more dominant caste. This percentage is as high as 60% when the possibility of a boy from another religion marrying a girl from the respondent's community is mentioned. The negative or prejudicial attitude of adolescents against other caste groups and communities also surfaces when statements related to eating together/sharing a meal were broached. Qualitative findings suggested that practices such as separate wells for separate castes and restrictions of certain communities' entry to places of worship still persist.

Violence

The section on violence has been studied in two key ways – violence witnessed and violence experienced. It was noted that violence witnessed was reported in higher proportion as compared to violence experienced. Even in qualitative discussions, incidents of violence were discussed tentatively and that too in context of others. In the context of **witnessing violence**, incidents of threatening and inappropriate comments were most widely reported. In the case of older adolescent girls threatening, inappropriate comments/leering and stalking were reported the most. Not obeying elders emerged as one of the top reasons for various forms of violence. This type of violence was justified by teachers, community members and parents as a necessary tool to discipline children. With respect to the background of the victim there was a strong element of caste and class noted as 50% of the total witnessed cases the victim was of weak caste or of weak economic status especially in incidences such as insulting, threatening with an intention to hurt and threatening by deadly weapon. About 40% of the total respondents who witnessed stalking, inappropriate/lewd comments, leering reported that the victim was either from weaker caste or belonged to weaker economic status. In majority of the cases, the adolescents either reported avoiding/ignoring the incidence or informed an elder member in the house. The perpetrator of the violence in most cases was either reported to be an unknown person or a male member outside family.

Violence Experienced: There is significant difference between the percentage of adolescent who witnessed violence and the percentage of adolescent who experienced violence. Threatening and inappropriate comments were reported the most followed by being insulted and physical violence. It was also interesting to note that most of these violence decline from the younger age category to the older. This may also be because younger boys are more vulnerable than their older counterparts. In the case of adolescent girls physical violence was reported the most. The adolescent girls reported that they faced physical violence in the house mostly by the hands of their mother, sister and brother. Incidents of stalking increase with age. The respondents when asked about their own experience regarding violence were found to be hesitant to raise their voice against the violence inflicted within their house. The incidences such as insulting, threatening, verbal abuse, physical violence etc. were not reported in the qualitative discussions, while the quantitative findings show the evidence of significant level of physical violence whose perpetrators are mainly the family members. In the specific context of **Gender Based Harassment**, adolescents were also asked directly about their opinions regarding the possible reason for women/girls being harassed. Majority adolescents stated that gender is reason enough for the harassment to take place. Responsibility of avoiding such incidences lies squarely on the shoulders of the women as reported by the community.

6. Recommended Focus Areas

Overall, it may be summed up that gender based discrimination in various forms is widespread in the area. It is closely linked with rigid caste norms that perpetuate gender as well as other forms of discrimination. Violence in the community as well is tinged with gender and caste, class dynamics. Interestingly, the role of stakeholders such as teachers was found to be mixed. While there were cases of teachers fighting against caste, class based discriminations. At the same time, practices such as barriers to inter gender communication and 'disciplinary violence' has the teachers' tacit/up front approval. In view of these findings, following recommendations may be considered by the programme team which include some suggestions in the context of programme implementation as well.

1. It could be gleaned from the logframe that the programme is aiming at a phased achievement of its overall objective. In the first year, amongst other themes, programme plans to touch upon the issue of identification of caste based discrimination and violence. In view of the complex and deeply rooted caste norms that have emerged in the study, it is recommended that the outcome expectations in the first year related to this aspect may be moderated to account for the unique realities of the project area. Also, experience from monitoring of previous such BT programmes show that first year is largely spent in building trust and rapport with stakeholders. Introducing such sensitive topics within the first year in an area that has a long history of caste based conflicts may prove to be a challenge. Therefore, it is recommended that expected outcomes and activities related to caste based discrimination and violence may be staggered over the course of the project period. This may also be applicable with respect to indicators on identification of other forms of violence including gender.
2. The caste and gender related norms within the communities were found to be much more solidified and pervasive when compared to other locations (such as UP) where Breakthrough is implementing similar programmes. This may prove to be a barrier especially during classroom sessions which encourage adolescent boys and girls from different caste groups to sit together and interact. Bringing them together in the first place may prove to be a task. Therefore, it is recommended that in order to build trust in the first year a caste and gender agnostic, utilitarian topic such as career counselling may be used to break the ice with target adolescents. Parents of the adolescents may also be involved in these sessions to ensure their buy-in from the onset. Career counselling has emerged as a major gap in the study area and has synergies with the programme outcomes in year 2 as well. Institutionalizing participation of parents during career counselling sessions may prove beneficial. Other caste and gender agnostic activities may be designed to put adolescents and their parents at ease within the first year.
3. During the course of the study it was found that some of the schools sampled for the baseline existed only on paper and in some cases, students only came to these schools for appearing in exams. This was especially true for government aided schools and was observed across all three intervention blocks. Moreover, seasonal absenteeism especially during agricultural seasons (sowing and harvest) was found to be high. Additionally, absenteeism was found to be high in higher classes (above Class Ninth) where students missed school to attend coaching classes. Therefore, it is recommended that program activities, number of classroom sessions targeted within a year may be planned keeping

these factors in mind as they may have an impact on availability of adolescents and eventual achievement of program indicators and outcomes.

4. Monitoring of similar programmes in the past have revealed that often outcomes at the level of community show tangible movement only in the long term. Programmes addressing societal norms designed for short to medium term therefore may find it challenging to reach out to the community as a whole effectively given the limited time period. Therefore, it is recommended that the current programme may focus its mobilization activities on targeted stakeholders. Mobilization activities such as Kishori Mela, Video Van, Theatre of Oppressed etc. may be conducted through schools via platforms such as SMC, Parents-Teachers meetings etc. targeting adolescents, parents and teachers. These stakeholders are key decision makers with respect to education and also perpetuate gender and caste related norms at school, household and community level. Consistent and frequent engagement with same set of beneficiaries may prove to be more effective as compared to perhaps occasional community mobilization events spread across a larger area. It may also be highlighted that the program plans to reach out to more than 12,000 students through its classroom sessions. This implies access to an approximately same number of households. This is a substantial reach and focusing on these particular households over the course of the programme period may yield better results. However, in order to test this approach, it is recommended that it is piloted within a limited programme area and maybe expanded only post assessment of its outcomes. In addition, it may be considered by the programme team to leverage upon platforms such as PTMs, SMCs, Kishori Melas to encourage inter-generational dialogues, especially in the context of mobility, early marriage, adolescent aspirations etc.
5. In order to ensure effective monitoring of programme activities as well as assessment of its impact, it is crucial to maintain participation records for each adolescents enrolled especially in the classroom sessions and their exposure to other program activities such as video van, theatre of oppressed, Kishori Mela. Detailed and ideally digitized records of registered students with respect to the level of their exposure to the programme may help form effective correlations between program intensity and outcome and bring more accuracy to the monitoring exercise as well. This data may be further used to bring more nuance and precision while designing and planning for program activities.
6. It was found that in the context of corporal punishment in schools, it had general approval of teachers as well as parents. In fact, it is often considered a necessary tool to 'discipline' children. At the same time, there were a handful of teachers who did not support the practice. While tacit support for corporal punishment is much higher, it may be difficult to counter the belief directly. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers that do not support the practice are highlighted and given platform to share their views on the subject with other teachers. This approach to highlight teachers with ideas that are congruent with program objectives may be adopted in the context of other issues such as inter-gender communication, caste and gender norms as well. This may also contribute towards ensuring sustainability of the program impact by developing school level leaders.

Annexure: List of Schools

List of Schools and Type of Interactions Conducted Per School

Block	Name of the School	Class	6-8 class students (Quant. Survey)	6-8 class students years (FGD)	9-12 class students (Quant. Survey)	9-12 class students (KIIs)	Teachers KIIs	Parents FGD
Belaganj	Ms shekpur ll	1-8	20	1	0	0	1	
Belaganj	A.d.m v.silanja	1-8	20	-	0	0	1	
Belaganj	U.h.s.amjhar	1-10	20	0	0	2	1	
Belaganj	+2 high school men	1-12	20	1	0	0	1	
Belaganj	rajkiye nagalal midle school	1-8	20	1	0	0	1	
Belaganj	b.n.high.school.aganda.shahpur	9-10	0	0	20	2	1	
Belaganj	Utkramit m.s chiralala belaganj	1-10	0	0	20	3	1	
Belaganj	High school balapur	9-10	0	0	20	3	1	
Paraiya	B V H S ramnagar kastha	9-10	0	0	20	2	1	
Paraiya	M S kajari	1-8	20	1	0	0	1	1
Paraiya	Middle School Dharamshala	1-8	22	1	0	0	1	
Paraiya	M S phurhuriya+G26	1-10	0	0	23	2	1	
Tekari	Shiv mudrika high school Sanda	9-10	0	0	16	2	1	
Tekari	R P Mission HS Dariyapur Tekari	9-10	0	0	20	2	1	1
Tekari	Middle school Sanda , Tekari	1-8	20	1	0	0	1	1
Tekari	Utkramit Highschool Ur Bishnupur	1-10	0	0	15	4	1	1
Tekari	Madrassa Irshudul Ulum, Tekari	1-8	2	0	0	0	0	1
Tekari	Rameshwar M.S Salempur	1-8	18	0	0	0	1	
Tekari	MS Pura	1-8	20	0	0	0	1	1
Tekari	Utkramit Highschool Noni	1-10	0	0	19	1	1	
Tekari	+2 Sahdev H.S kamalpur	9-12	0	0	22	2	1	
Tekari	M.S Usri Bajitpur	1-8	20	0	0	0	1	
Total			222	6	195	25	21	6
Target			220	6	200	20	21	6