



Frequently Asked Questions

Our Program

What does Educate Girls do?

As an intervention to address the challenge of girls' exclusion from education, Educate Girls has set up a holistic, community-based program. We aim at improving girls' access to quality education through 3 main programmatic focuses:

- ✓ **enrollment** of each and every identified and eligible out-of-school girl (6-14 years old) into primary and upper-primary schools,
- ✓ **retention** of girl students in school, to ensure they pursue their education post enrollment,
- ✓ improvement of students' **learning outcomes** via implementation of activity-based methodology (Creative Learning and Teaching) in the classrooms.

Bringing along a solid experience and expertise, we tackle the root causes of the problem. We bring change *through* the community via the institution of Team Balika (community volunteers) and *within* the community by sensitization and mobilisation activities.

We ensure sustainability and depth of impact by involving all stakeholders – from the government administration to the girls, including school management committees, teachers, village leaders, and families – and by implementing a comprehensive set of actions.

Our program model substantially differs from an isolated strategy like scholarships, or material support. Our efforts to achieve the objectives of enrollment, retention and improved learning outcomes encompass awareness generation of communities towards girls' education, enhancement of school governance and infrastructure, trainings of girls in leadership and implementation of Creative Learning and Teaching methodology in the classrooms.

Read about our intervention on our [Website](#).

Who are Team Balika?

Team Balika (Community Volunteers) are volunteers who are champions for girls' education and catalysts for school reform in their respective villages. Educate Girls trains one Team Balika per village in community mobilization and outreach, formation of SMCs and Bal Sabhas and facilitation of SMC meetings, life-skill trainings and CLT techniques. They are usually between the ages of 18-25 and are among the most educated members of their communities.

What does Enrollment comprise?

About 3 million primary-school aged girls are out of school in India (SRI-IMRB, *National Sample Survey of Estimation of OOSC*, 2014). We aim to get them back to school and make sure they learn well.

The first step of our enrollment action plan is a door-to-door survey, which ascertains the exact number of primary-school aged (6-14 years) out-of-school girls in every village. The Child Tracking Survey (CTS) provided by the government already holds information concerning out-of-school children. However, since the Census data on which CTS is based is not always up-to-date, verification on the field is required. This allows us to identify and enroll girls who may not have been born when the CTS was conducted or who for various reasons may have not featured on the CTS list.

Having identified all out-of-school girls, the Educate Girls Team Balika (village volunteers) visit families to convince them to enroll girls in school. They talk to parents and community leaders about India's Right to Education Act, which makes elementary education compulsory and free for every child. They also raise awareness about the multiple benefits of girls' education. Due to the prevalence of conservative values, traditional gender roles, peer pressure and economic challenges, parents are often very reluctant at the beginning and it takes repeated visits to persuade them to enrol their daughters into school.

To ensure the full success of the enrollment drive, Educate Girls also facilitates Gram Siksha Sabhas (Village education meets) and Mohalla (neighbourhood) meetings to sensitise the community towards the importance of girls' education.

What is Retention and how do we increase it?

Getting out-of-school girls enrolled into school is just the first achievement. The next step is to make sure they stay, that is, they are retained in school. Retention compares the number of girls still in school at the beginning of year 2 against the number of girls enrolled at the end of year 1.

To achieve retention, we focus on various fronts. One of them is the formation and smooth functioning of School Management Committees (SMCs). SMCs look after the improvement of infrastructure in schools by preparing School Improvement Plans and submitting them to the local government. By supporting SMCs in demanding that public authorities undertake the construction of basic school infrastructure, we increase the chances that children, especially girls, stay in school. The lack of a boundary wall, or of separate toilets for girls and potable water, for instance, causes safety and hygiene concerns and can lead parents to withdraw their daughters from school. The formation of Bal Sabhas (Girl Councils) that impart leadership qualities and life skills to girls aged 10-13 also helps toward retaining girls in schools by empowering them.

How does Educate Girls improve Learning Outcomes?

In many schools in India, students fail to learn much in their primary education. As a case in point, in 2014, only 48% of Indian rural children in Class 5 could read a Class-2-level text (*ASER survey*). Poor learning outcomes can for instance be the result of outdated teaching methodologies in school.

To counter this problem and ensure that children do learn well once enrolled, Educate Girls developed a Creative Learning and Teaching (CLT) methodology in partnership with Pratham and the UNICEF. Educate Girls trains one Team Balika (community volunteer) per village and one teacher per school in CLT methodology to conduct it in the school. Additionally, pre- and post- tests are carried out to ascertain the effectiveness of CLT implementation. Those evaluations have demonstrated a significant increase in children's learning outcomes across numeracy and literacy. [Read our reports or take a glance at our grade gain analysis infographics.](#)

What is Creative Learning and Teaching (CLT)?

Creative Learning and Teaching (CLT) techniques are activity-based, child friendly and fun pedagogic tools that make learning an interesting and engaging process. The CLT kit includes various activities and games for learning letter recognition, word formation, mathematical calculations, etc. CLT methodology has been developed in partnership with Pratham and UNICEF. Educate Girls trains Team Balika (community volunteers) and school teachers in CLT techniques to improve learning levels of students. CLT is implemented in grades 3, 4 and 5 for English, Hindi and Math. To assess the impact of the CLT methodology, Educate Girls tests students' learning levels before and after implementation of CLT techniques.

Who are the Bal Sabhas?

Educate Girls helps the formation of the democratically elected Bal Sabhas in all the schools it reaches out to. Bal Sabhas (Girls' Councils) comprise of 13 elected girl leaders aged 10-13 years. Being part of a Bal Sabha gives girls a voice and a leadership position in the school. Educate Girls also imparts a training in "life skills" to every Bal Sabha member who then train the remaining girls in their school.

What are life-skills trainings?

Life-skill trainings are dispensed by Educate Girls to the Bal Sabha members, who are girls enrolled in Class 6-8 (aged 10-13). These trainings stimulate girls' participation in matters related to their growth and development so as to build confidence, leadership and self-esteem. They help impart key life skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, communication, self-awareness and creative thinking. Participation in Bal Sabha activities also helps to indirectly impart skills such as coping with stress, conducting interpersonal relationships, coping with emotions and instilling empathy.

What are Gram Siksha Sabhas (GSS) and Mohallas Meetings (MM)?

Educate Girls organizes and facilitates Gram Siksha Sabhas (Village Education Meetings) and Mohalla (neighbourhood) meetings to initiate and sustain change in girls' education. These are held as a starting point to sensitize village communities toward the need and importance for girls' education. The objective of the meetings is also to create a sense of ownership of education in the community and to help distribute responsibility between the village leaders, elders, school administration, the organizational staff and Team Balika.

Does Educate Girls' program benefit only girls?

In the areas where we work, gender biases that positively favour the male child are pervasive. Females rarely enjoy an equal and respectable social and cultural standing. As a result, girls are often excluded from the school system. Many of them are confined to their homes, looking after their siblings and doing house chores. Additionally, child marriage is still a widespread custom that has its own set of negative ripple effects, more so for girls. This is why the bigger challenge is getting girls into school. A society that is ready to educate its girls is assuredly one that had understood the importance of education and therefore will educate both girls and boys.

While Educate Girls focuses primarily on girls as far as enrollment is concerned, our activities for improved quality of learning and retention, such as Creative Learning and Teaching techniques implemented in classrooms and improved school infrastructure, benefit all students.

Why does Educate Girls only work with Government schools?

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (also known as the Right to Education Act) spells out provisions that wholly support free and compulsory education for every child below the age of 14. With all legal provisions in place, what remains to be done is the execution of these policies in the most efficient manner.

Educate Girls believes that, in order to create a long lasting and sustainable impact, it is most important to work hand in hand with the government. To avoid duplication of resources and work, Educate Girls acts within the existing government school system to improve girls' enrollment, retention and academic performance. Leveraging existing government and community resources also enables us to keep costs very low.

How exactly does Educate Girls partner with the Government?

Educate Girls' program aligns with India's Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 and with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which is a Government of India's flagship scheme under the RTE. The SSA scheme is implemented in partnership with all the State Governments to cover the entire country and aims at providing access to free and quality elementary education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years, with a special focus on girls' education and children with special needs.

Since Educate Girls works exclusively with government schools to leverage the existing Government infrastructure, it has to sign an agreement with State Government in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU contains a detailed account of the background, scope, main components of the project, project deliverables, data on outreach, required human resource, financial implications, expectations from both the parties (Educate Girls and Government) and the duration of the project.

Before preparing the MoU, Educate Girls selects the educationally backward districts, and then the blocks, villages and Government schools within those districts, on the basis of the existing gender gap, the number of

out-of-school girls in that particular area, the quality of education etc. and then accordingly calculates the number of staff and Team Balika required for our operations there.

As a next step, Educate Girls puts up the proposal to the State Government. They check the feasibility of the proposed operations and after being satisfied with our objectives, genuineness of the proposal, and our financial status the State Government sign a legal MoU with Educate Girls.

Instructions are then issued by the competent State authorities to the concerned district officers. The district officers cooperate with Educate Girls staff and Team Balika in conducting Educate Girls' programmatic interventions, which are reviewed on a quarterly basis by a District Task Force (DTF) constituted under the chairpersonship of the District Collector. The Secretary of the DTF sends its reports to the State, where a State Task Force (STF), headed by the Director, Elementary Education, reviews Educate Girls' projects from across the State.

How does Educate Girls choose the districts it supports?

Educate Girls works in educationally backward areas, i.e., mostly in rural, remote villages. To ensure the areas with the greatest needs are selected, Educate Girls conducts a thorough research using a comprehensive set of education and gender indicators.

Educate Girls started in Pali, Rajasthan, one of the districts with the worst gender indicators in India at the time. Operations were then extended to similarly characterized districts of the State of Rajasthan.

For its next phase of expansion, Educate Girls has identified 9 of India's educationally backward districts.

Why only primary education and what happens after grade 8?

In regions where gender discrimination is prevalent, such as Rajasthan, thousands of girls are not enrolled in primary school. Overall, about 3 million girls are out-of-school in India (SRI-IMRB, *National Sample Survey of Estimation of OOSC*, 2014). Helping girls to enroll into and then complete their primary education is the first milestone towards achieving greater gender equality. It is in this nascent stage that mindsets can be tackled. Successfully winning the battle here opens doors within the community to advocate secondary education for girls.

Furthermore, Educate Girls' goal to provide all girls with access to quality education at primary level aligns with the focus of India's Right to Education Act, 2009, as well as of the global agenda (Millennium Development Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education).

Having significantly progressed in the area of girl's enrollment into primary school in its operational areas, Educate Girls envisions to tackle access to secondary education too. A secondary education pilot will be conducted in 2016-17.

How does Educate Girls track activities and impact?

Educate Girls has a rigorous monitoring system, designed to provide regular feedback to allow changes in service delivery and implementation strategy to achieve the best possible results for out-of-school girls.

Data on activities (e.g., number of community meetings) and results (e.g., number of girls enrolled, improvement of learning levels, etc.) is regularly captured by the field staff through innovative technology that uses GPS-enabled mobile phones (every village has been geo-tagged) and a standalone application.

Has Educate Girls' program model been tested?

Complementing a full-fledged Monitoring & Evaluation system using mobile technology, several external evaluations have assessed and validated Educate Girls' program effectivity. A quasi-experiment design measured the impact of our programmatic activities against a control group of schools where Educate Girls was not running any programmatic interventions. In addition, Educate Girls has had its programme evaluated through a Randomized Control Trial (experiment design) for impact evaluation led by Dr. Rebecca Thornton from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Praxis Institute for Participatory Practices recently conducted another evaluation in Pali.

I've read all the FAQs but my question is still unanswered...

FAQs are split into three different sections: *About Us*, *Our Program*, and *Donating*. You can also find plenty of useful information by visiting our Website. However, in case you couldn't get hold of what you were looking for, you can get in touch with us using info.in@educategirls.ngo for general queries or donate@educategirls.ngo for donation-related questions.

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