

By;

Dr. Suchitra Devi

Associate Prof.

Education Deptt.

N.A.S College

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Problems & Challenges of girl education in India

India's rapidly deteriorating sex ratio (2011: 918 girls for 1,000 boys) has been linked to many factors, but primary among these is the perceived value of a girl child. However, if girls are not given equal access to education, then they cannot truly shine, and prove that they are valuable. Keeping this in mind, the Indian government initiated the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programme in October 2014, aiming to provide survival, safety and education to the girl child. Along with focusing on education, the program celebrates the girl child, fights bias, and offers inclusiveness benefits. However, there are many challenges that India's girl child education mission is facing.

1. Getting civic support for girl child education initiatives

The many backwards practices that compromise a girl child's access to education must be addressed in real-time. This requires on-ground, constant civic body support, in the form of local governance in districts. However, in areas with poor sex ratios often stubbornly, even administration members do not support women empowerment. Fighting this requires civil society workers to first understand, and then address issues like female foeticide, education, and welfare services for females. The Divisional Commissioner and other representatives must be open to a dialogue to regularly meet and chart out action plans with civil society. NGO workers and government workers must also be supported by local police, members of legislative assembly, and other influential people.

2. Administration

It takes a substantial amount of time and effort to establish relationships at the local governance level, yet these officers are soon transferred, forcing officials, NGO workers, and those who volunteer and donate for education must then develop new relationships. Transfers to prime posts are common for top local officials. Newly appointed officials must then be educated and sensitised for girl child education. The support of newly appointed police and other officials also must be won again. The success of any girl child empowerment program, especially in a crisis situation like the one India is facing, requires firm and measurable

accountability from civic administration. For example, the Divisional Commissioners are assessed for showing a 10-point increase in the child sex ratio.

3. Poverty in India

People in India's poorer regions often ogle women officials and make unwanted advances, as they are surprised to see a woman in a position of power and success. Decades of patriarchal thinking and regressive local governance has created this environment.

4. Obsession with marriage

Rural India's obsession with getting girls getting married as soon as possible defines a woman's real role only as a homemaker. They must, therefore, be a subservient housewife, instead of achievers with their own victories. As women become inferior in this context, female foeticide is the logical conclusion - women are considered 'someone else's wealth', and hence useless in the homes they are born in.

Major Initiatives for Improvement of Girls' Education in India:

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

- Article 15: prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth.
- Article 45: The State shall endeavor to provide early childcare and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.
- Mahila Samakhya Programme: Mahila Samakhya (MS) is an ongoing scheme for women's empowerment that was initiated in 1989 to translate the goals of the National Policy on Education into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly those from socially and economically marginalized groups. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV): This scheme was launched in July, 2004, to provide education to girls at primary level. It is primarily for the underprivileged and rural areas where literacy level for girls is very low. The schools that were set up have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below Poverty line) girls. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL): This programme was launched in July, 2003. It was an incentive to reach out to the girls who the SSA was not able to reach through other schemes. The SSA called out to the "hardest to reach girls". This scheme has covered 24 states in India. Under the NPEGEL, "model schools" have been set up to provide better opportunities to girls. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15). National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE) was launched in May 2008 with the objective to establish an enabling environment to reduce the dropouts and to promote the enrolment of girl children belonging mainly to SC/ST communities in secondary schools. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).
- Indira Gandhi National scholarship scheme: is provided for single girl child for pursue both higher and technical education. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).
- Swami Vivekananda Scholarship for Single Girl Child: The dropout ratio at various levels of education for girls is much higher than that of boys. Keeping Swami Vivekananda ideas of women education and to promote girls education, UGC has introduced the Swami Vivekananda
- Scholarship for Single Girl Child for research in Social Sciences with an aim to compensate direct costs of higher education especially for such girls who happen to be the only girl child in their family.(MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).
- Saakshar Bharat: The National Literacy Mission was recast with its new variant, Saakshar Bharat launched in 2009. It aims to accelerate adult education, especially for women's (in the age group of 15 years and above) who have no access to formal education, targeted female literacy as a critical instrument for women's empowerment. This has led to an increase in literacy, amongst women, from 53.67% (Census 2001) to 65.46% (Census 2011). It is also for the first time that of the total of 217.70 million literates added during the decade, women (110.07million) outnumbered men (107.63million) (source: Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India (XII th Five Year Plan).
- Udaan: The Scheme is dedicated to the development of girl child education, so as to promote the admission of girl students. The aim is to address the teaching gap between school education and engineering entrance examinations. It seeks to enhance the enrolment of girl students in prestigious technical education institutions through incentives & academic support (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

- Pragati - Scholarships for Girl Child for Technical education. It aims at providing encouragement and support to girl child to pursue technical education (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).
- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao: This is newly announced Scheme of the Govt. of India for enhancing girls' education in India. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme: The gender gap in school participation tends to narrow, as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme helps erode the barriers that prevent girls from going to school. Mid-Day Meal Scheme also provides a useful source of employment for women and helps liberate working women from the burden of cooking at home during the day. In these and other ways, women and girl children have a special stake in Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

From the above discussion, it is clear that Government of India has taken so many initiatives for the improvement of girls' education. In spite of that the status of girls' education has not been increased in expectation level because these initiatives have not been reached to

the grass root level. So, Government of India must have to take responsibility to implement these schemes and provisions at grass root level.

Problems of Girls' Education in India:

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

(1) Negative parental attitude towards educating daughters is one of the important challenges to promote girl's education in India.

(2) Lack of female teachers is another potential barrier to girls' education (Latha, P.S.-2014). Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement, if they have female teachers. Currently, women account for only 47.70 % of teachers at the Elementary level (U-DISE, 2014-2015).

(3) Lack of infrastructural facility in schools is one of the major problems in development of girls' education in India (Sivakumar, M.A.-2012). Annual Status of Education Report

(2014)agreed that due to lack of girls' toilet facility, dropout rate at elementary and secondary levels have been increased than the past decades.

(4) Many girls desirous of pursuing education above middle level, facilities for which are available away from their homes, cannot avail themselves of these facilities due to lack of hostel arrangements. (Worah, H.-2014)

(5) Parents often complain about insecurity for girls attending schools. Instances of abduction, rape and molestation of girls dampen the enthusiasm of parents and girl students in pursuing education beyond a certain age; thereafter they remain bound to their homes (Kumar, J. &Sangeeta -2013).

(6) Though education should be free, there are a lot of costs associated with sending children to school. The cost of uniforms, textbooks or bus fare can be too much to bear for a family living in poverty (Latha, P.S.-2014). Too often, parents choose to keep their girls at home and send the boys to school instead.

(7) In many parts of the country, the nearest primary school to a particular community might be a 4 or 5 hour long walk away. On top of that, girls may face dangers or violence on the long way to school; so many parents select to keep their daughters at home and out of harm's way. (Latha,P.S.-2014).

(8) Typically, girls are asked to fetch the water, take care of their younger siblings and to help their mothers cook and clean (Sivakumar, M.A.-2012). Due to this, girls may not have the opportunity to attend school because their contributions to the household are valued more than their personal education.

(9) In many parts of the country, children's health is a big concern, especially if they're facing poverty. If there's not enough food or sufficient clean water to keep girls nourished and healthy,they may not be well enough to attend school.

(10) When girls are forced to marry young, they are often pulled out of school at a very critical age in their development. The transition from primary to secondary education is key for girls to gain the life skills they need to escape the cycle of poverty. Yet, this is often the same time that many girls leave school due to early marriages. (King, E. & Winthrop, R. - 2015)

(11) Lack of enthusiasm and interest of the officials in charge of education is another problem for promoting girls' education.

(12) Lack of awareness among implementing agencies and community members to implement different schemes and provisions of girls' education at grass root level.

Suggestions for Overcoming the Barriers of Girls' Education in India:

The education of girls is an integral part of national development. We can help girls get the education they deserve by supporting the following:

(1) Equal Access to Education: Plan supports community initiatives that promote positive attitudes towards equal access to education, and that raise awareness on its importance for both boys and girls. Plan also supports the creation of gender-sensitive learning environments to ensure both boys and girls enjoy their right to education.

(2) Educating Boys about Gender Equality: Gender equality is good for everyone; boys and girls, women and men. Plan engages boys in solutions to achieve gender equality to help change social norms in entire communities.

(3) Girls' Scholarships: Scholarships help girls with tuition fees, school uniforms, school supplies and safe transportation.

(4) Challenging Gender Roles: Raising awareness at family and community levels will promote positive attitudes towards education for girls. It's also important to engage parents in open dialogue regarding commonly held gender stereotypes.

(5) Preventing Violence in Schools – Plan works with communities to ensure that their schools are violence-free and that they provide a safe learning environment for girls. Plan also works with schools to build networks of peers, role models and mentors, train female teachers, and offers social support to help create a safe space for girls to learn.

(6) No Fixed Schooling Hours: Fixed schooling hours do not suit for girls in rural areas, as they are needed for domestic work at home or in farms and fields during these hours. This is one of the causes of lower participation rates of girls in education. The enrolment rates of girls and their retention can be improved if educational facilities are made available to girls during periods suitable to them when they are free from domestic chores. Flexible school

timings have been tried in Rajasthan through the Shiksha Karmi Project and Lok Jumbish, and the results are encouraging (Khan, 2004).

Higher authorities, community members, NGOs and all people of India must have to take responsibility to eradicate different barriers related to girls' education from our society. Each and every citizen of our country must have to remember that national development cannot be achieved without girls' education.

Conclusion

After having read the backwards practices that keep a girl child from her full potential, you might want to give a donation to drive India's leading child rights NGO Save the Children's various programs. The NGO established has special initiatives to empower every Indian girl child. For example, in a CSR relationship with P&G, the NGO's Shiksha project facilitates education across schools in Jharkhand and imparted training in extra-curricular activities. Gender-sensitive education material is provided to over 30,000 children, and families are counselled to send their daughters to school. Many of these girls are today their family's first generation learners, and today have earned laurels at national academic events. The NGO also organises community events which seek to sensitise families and communities about the importance of girl child education.

Sources;

- Wikipedia
- Reference Books
- Save the Girl Child.com
- Other Resources